

Wrong Country!

Images on banknotes of people and places not from the country. Canada

This is the third of a series stressing world currency with peoples, buildings, or locations that are not from the country of issue. The causes of these provide for interesting insights.

This example involves yet another case involving the American Bank Note Company – this time the North American country of Canada. Actually, the ABNC unit in Ottawa printed the errant 1900 \$4 banknote for the Dominion of Canada. By 1936, the ABNC unit was spun off as the Canadian Bank Note Company.

Unlike the Costa Rican cases of basically convenience and probable cost savings, this ABNC wrong country vignette was a case of a simple error. Completed in 1895, the locks of the Sault Ste. Marie canal linking Lakes Huron and Superior canal connected Lake Superior to a major shipping route leading to the Atlantic Ocean. To highlight Canadian scenery and an example of impressive, new infrastructure in the Dominion of Canada, the 1900 \$4 banknote featured a central vignette with a view of the locks. The error is that it shows the view of an unidentified ship passing through the locks from the U.S. state of Michigan side instead of from the Ontario side¹! As it turns out, the layout of the two locks are quite similar, thus the error. It was engraved by William Brown, a picture engraver at ABNC with engravings attributed to Brown at ABNC from 1882 to 1920². Canadian money usually features a portrait of Canada's ruling monarch, but the \$4 bill doesn't. Instead of Queen Victoria there are portraits of the Earl of Minto, Gilbert Elliot-Murray-Kynynmound (1845-1914), and his wife, Mary. The Earl of Minto was the 8th Governor General of Canada, from 1898 to 1904. In this role, he was the British monarch's representative in Canada.

Here's a sample banknote sold with no 3rd party grading by Heritage in 2008 for nearly \$15,000, including buyer's premium.



\$4 front dated 1900 (P25, B-NL)

There were 420,000 error notes produced before the bank note was replaced with two 1902 versions with the proper Canadian side of the locks. Here's a proof of the front of a later version. The Pick P26 of 1902 corrected the error by showing the locks at the Ontario side and a closer view of a similar ship, this time with its name emblazoned on the side (United Empire). The United Empire, a Wooden Great Lakes passenger and package freight vessel was built at Sarnia, Ontario by Parry & Dyble in 1883. By adding a decidedly Canadian ship, the error was doubly corrected. Pick P26A also changed the "4" numerals at top with "FOUR".



\$4 front dated 1902 (P26A, B-NL)

The \$4 denomination preceded these notes, starting in 1892 and continued afterwards until 1912 when it was replaced with the previously used and sensible \$5 denomination. The best reason available for

the use of the \$4 denomination for 20 years is at the then current exchange rate, 4 Canadian dollars equaled one British pound.

1 – Standard Catalog of World Paper Money – General Issues, Schmidt, Tracy.

2 – The Engraver's Line, Hessler, Gene.