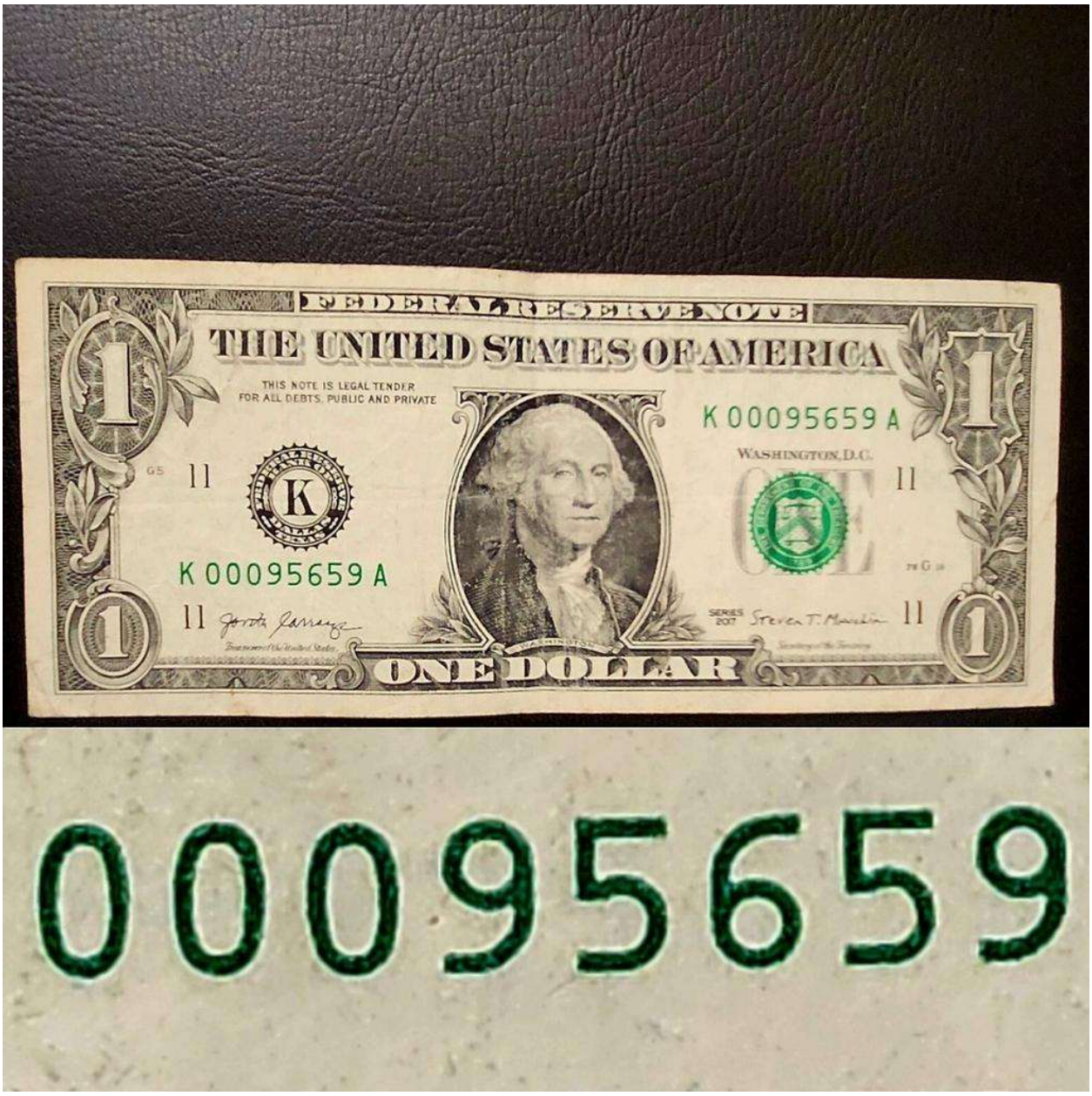
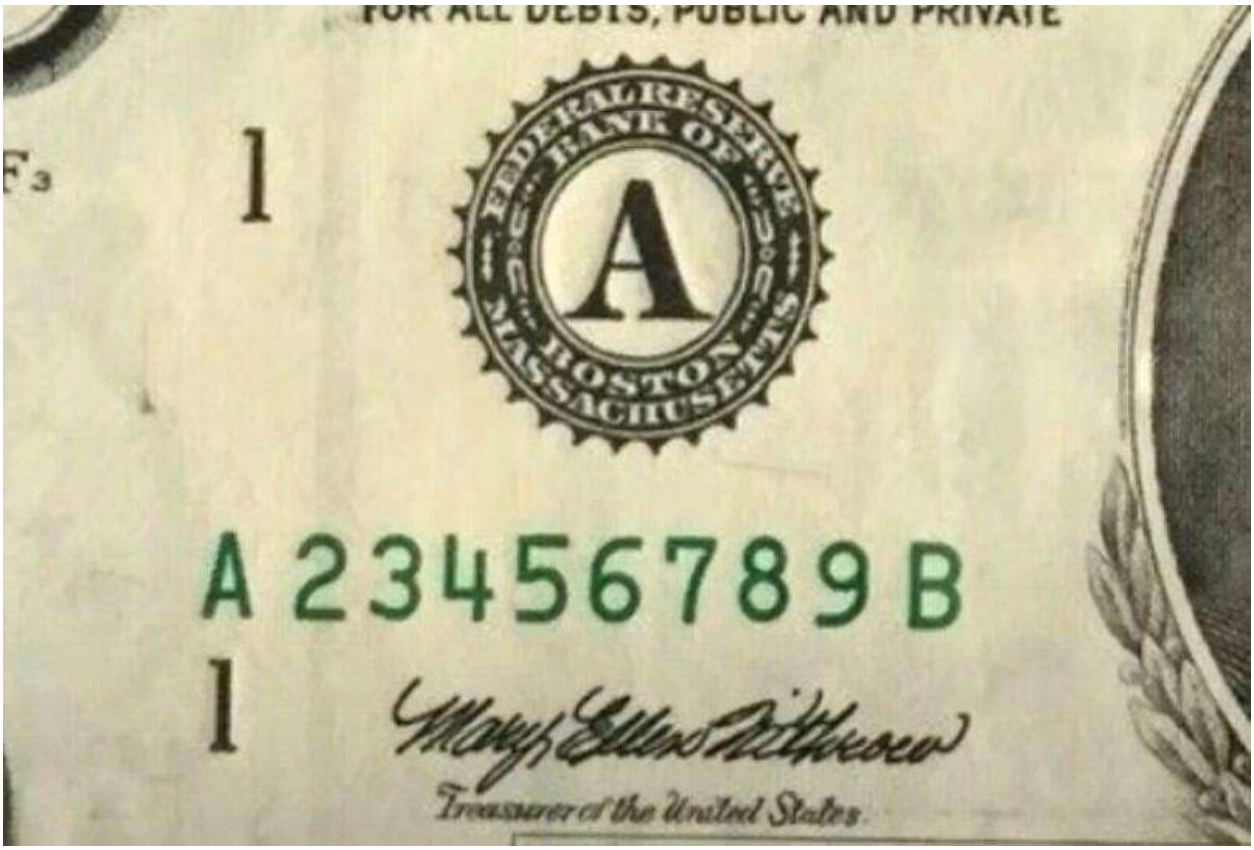
Fancy Serial Numbers on U.S. Paper Money: A Collector's Guide




FOR ALL DEBTS, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE
F3
1
FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF BOSTON MASSACHUSETTS
A
A 23456789 B
1
Treasurer of the United States


J12681268B
WASHINGTON, D.C.
10
FW C 28
SERIES 2017
Steven T. Mnuchin
10
Secretary of the Treasury

One of the fastest-growing areas of paper money collecting is the pursuit of **fancy serial numbers**. While millions of U.S. notes are printed every year, only a tiny percentage receive serial numbers with unusual or memorable patterns. These notes often command premiums far above face value, even if the note itself is modern and common.

Collectors enjoy fancy serial numbers because they combine rarity, mathematics, and the thrill of searching through everyday cash. Many remarkable notes have been discovered in circulation at banks, cash registers, and even inside birthday cards.

What Is a Fancy Serial Number?

Every U.S. banknote receives a unique eight-digit serial number. Most appear completely random. Occasionally, however, the numbering creates a pattern that is visually striking or statistically uncommon.

The scarcer and more attractive the pattern, the more collectors are willing to pay.

Solid Serial Numbers

A **solid** serial number contains the same digit repeated eight times.

Examples:

- 11111111
- 77777777
- 99999999

These are among the rarest serial numbers possible.

Because only nine true solids exist in every 100 million notes printed (excluding 00000000, which is generally not issued), they can sell for hundreds or even thousands of dollars.

Radar Notes

A **radar** note reads the same forwards and backwards.

Examples:

- 12344321

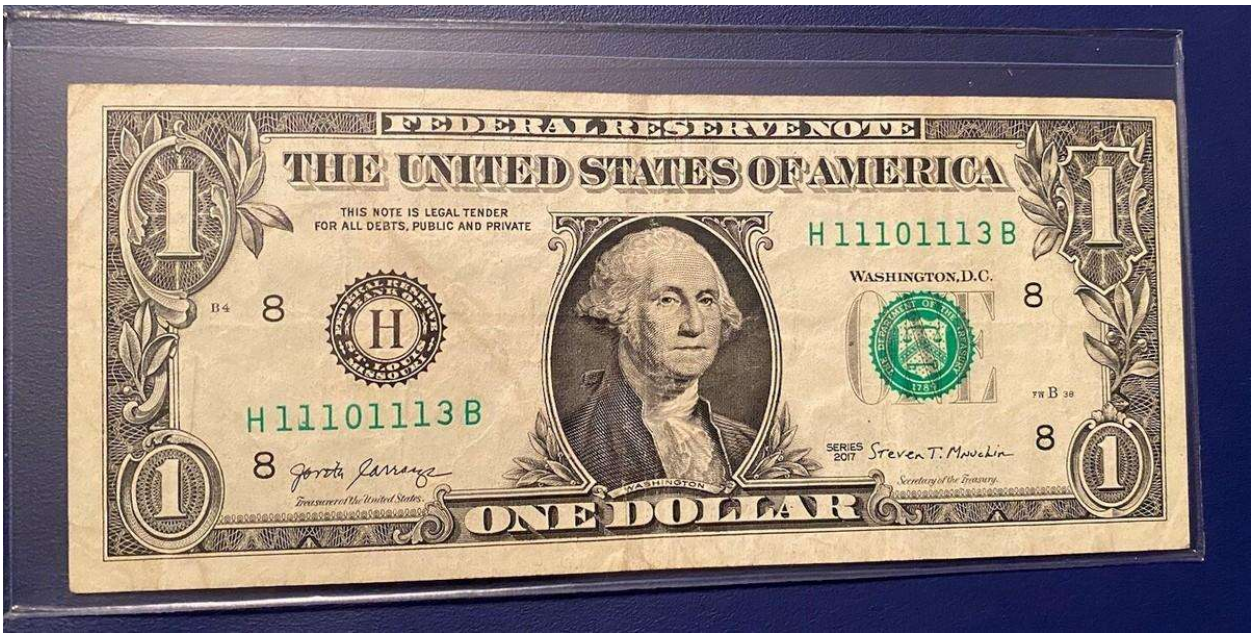
- 02888820
- 34488443

Collectors compare these to palindromes in language.

Radar notes are much more common than solids but still bring significant premiums.

Repeaters




FEDERAL RESERVE NOTE
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
THIS NOTE IS LEGAL TENDER
FOR ALL DEBTS, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE
H11101113B
WASHINGTON, D.C.
H
H11101113B
SERIES 2017
Steven T. Mnuchin
Secretary of the Treasury
ONE DOLLAR



4

Repeaters consist of the first four digits repeating in the last four.

Examples:

- 12341234
- 80808080
- 45674567

A **super repeater** repeats every two digits.

Example:

- 12121212

These are especially popular because the pattern is easy to recognize.

Binary Notes

Binary notes use only two different digits.

Examples:

- 01010101
- 11110000
- 22222233

The fewer digits used, the more desirable the note generally becomes.

True Binary Solids

Some collectors seek binary notes that are almost entirely one number.

Example:

- 11111110

These are much scarcer than ordinary binary notes.

Low Serial Numbers

Collectors prize notes with very low numbers.

Examples:

- 00000001
- 00000010
- 00000100

The closer the serial number is to one, the more valuable it usually becomes.

The very first notes of a print run often sell for thousands of dollars.

High Serial Numbers

Examples include:

- 99999998
- 99999999

These are less common than most collectors realize and are very desirable.

Ladder Notes

A ladder contains digits that rise or fall in perfect sequence.

Ascending:

- 12345678

Descending:

- 87654321

True ladders are among the most famous fancy serial numbers.

Near Ladders

Examples:

- 12345679
- 87654320

Although not perfect, these still attract collector interest.

Million Number Notes

Examples:

- 01000000
- 02000000

These represent exact million-number positions in a printing run.

Birthday Notes

Collectors enjoy notes matching birthdays.

Examples:

- 01011990
- 12251976

People often buy these as gifts or keepsakes.

Date Notes

Any serial number representing a valid calendar date can become collectible.

Examples:

- 07041776
- 12252025

Historical dates are especially popular.

Bookend Notes

Bookends have matching digits on each end.

Examples:

- 10000001
- 45555554

The symmetry makes them attractive.

Trinary Notes

Trinary notes contain only three different digits.

Example:

- 11221133

While less valuable than binaries, many collectors enjoy assembling sets.

Double Quads

Example:

- 11112222

These are highly sought after because they display two groups of four identical digits.

Quad Doubles

Example:

- 11223344

Each pair repeats twice, producing a pleasing visual appearance.

Seven-of-a-Kind

Example:

- 55555552

Seven identical digits on one note are surprisingly scarce.

Star Notes

A star note is identified by a star replacing the final letter of the serial number.

Star notes were printed to replace defective notes removed during production.

Not every star note is valuable, but a **star note with a fancy serial number** is especially desirable.

Value Factors

The value of a fancy serial number depends on several factors:

- Rarity of the pattern
- Overall eye appeal
- Condition of the note

- Denomination
- Age of the note
- Whether it is also a star note
- Collector demand

A crisp, uncirculated fancy serial number will usually sell for much more than the same serial number in heavily worn condition.

Tips for Finding Fancy Serial Numbers

Many collectors search bank straps or examine every bill they receive in change.

Look for:

- Repeating digits
- Low numbers
- High numbers
- Sequential patterns
- Palindromes
- Birthday dates
- Binary or trinary combinations

Many valuable discoveries have been made simply by checking everyday cash.

Final Thoughts

Fancy serial numbers have transformed modern paper money collecting into a treasure hunt. Unlike rare coins that may cost thousands of dollars to purchase, fancy serial numbers can still be found in circulation by anyone willing to look closely.

Whether you dream of finding a perfect ladder, a solid serial number, or a radar note, every bill in your wallet offers the possibility of an exciting discovery. That's what makes this area of numismatics one of the most enjoyable and accessible hobbies for collectors of all experience levels.