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SERIES 1934 LIGHT GREEN SEAL \$500 FEDERAL RESERVE NOTES

The focus of this article is Series 1934 Light Green Seal \$500 Federal Reserve Notes, a specialty within the area of high denomination Notes and sub-category of collectible United States currency. Often abbreviated as "LGS," Light Green Seal \$500 FRNs have come full circle from once practically unnoticed, to now highly collectible and prized.

Series 1934 LGS \$500s have characteristics unlike their 1928, 1934 Dark Green Seal "DGS" or 1934A counterparts. The LGS \$500s were printed on snow white paper with the Treasury seal and serial numbers inked in vivid lime green. It's this look, or this contrast, that makes these Notes so appealing. Additionally, these Notes are all found with relatively low serial numbers as they were the earlier printings for Series 1934. Single digit examples have been encountered, and have garnished huge sums of money. Contrarily, Series 1934 DGS and Series 1934A \$500s will never be found with low numbers.

Light Green Seal \$500 FRNs can be collected in a variety of ways. The most popular method is the completion of the district set. (That is a 12 Note set with one Light Green Seal \$500 from each of the 12 issuing Federal Reserve Banks.) The task is quite achievable in lower Circulated grades. A considerable step up would be a nicely matched set in XF/AU condition. Completion of this set with an emphasis on originality, centering and overall eye appeal should be considered a challenge.

The finest 1934 Light Green Seal \$500 district sets would contain CH-GEM CU examples. In this grade range, survival rates are very low, and in some cases, only one or two high grade examples are known to exist. Nevertheless, in LGS format, all 12 issuing banks can be obtained in original CH CU or better. The balance of this article is dedicated to acquiring these 12 different LGS \$500s in CH-GEM CU. Addressed herein is relative rarity, pricing, and some of the pitfalls collectors should be aware of.

For our purposes, the assignment of rarity is based on two factors. (1) Combined PMG and PCGS population reports in CH CU 63 EPQ/PPQ and higher; (2) What we call "frequency of encounter" which is what we have actually observed in the field, raw or certified. It also needs to be noted that PMG/PCGS combined population totals don't take into consideration the same Note (same serial number) having been submitted to both of the major grading services. Actual totals may therefore be even lower than combined totals suggest. This is where serial number recordings in the field become important.

The most "available" districts of Uncirculated LGS \$500s are from the Cleveland, St. Louis and Minneapolis Federal Reserve Banks. Combined PMG/PCGS population reports show 10 or more known examples of each of these banks in CH CU or better. In January 2008 a Cleveland LGS \$500 in PMG 65 EPQ sold for \$3,220 at Heritage Auctions. The real surprise though is the Minneapolis District in this grouping. This low printing bank has a reputation of being elusive, but CH-GEM CU runs have been observed and graded by both major grading services.

The next group of slightly tougher Notes would be from the Kansas City, Chicago, and Philadelphia banks. Combined PMG/PCGS populations show



less than 10 examples of each of these districts are known in CH CU or better. In September, 2008 a Kansas City LGS \$500 in PMG 66 EPQ sold for \$13,800 at Heritage Auctions. The real sleeper out of this group though is the Chicago \$500 FRN. This District was one of the most prolific issuers of Series 1934 \$500s, yet in Light Green Seal variety, this bank is almost non-existent in GEM CU. Authors note regarding Fr. 2201-G: Beware of third-party graded examples misattributed Light Green Seal. Seal color charts may be necessary to verify seal variation.

The second toughest grouping of light green seal \$500s are from the following Federal Reserve Banks: New York, Richmond and Boston. Combined PMG/PCGS populations show less than five examples of each of these districts known in CH CU or better. In true GEM CU the Boston and Richmond Notes are very rare. As with the Chicago District (see above) beware of Boston District examples that may be misattributed LGS by third-party graders. These two banks in particular (Boston and Chicago) produced quantities of transitional Green Seal \$500s that have been known to receive erroneous designation.

The rarest group of Light Green Seal \$500s are from the Atlanta, San Francisco and Dallas Federal Reserve Banks. Districts 6 and 11 are extreme rarities in high grade LGS. There are currently no GEMs known on Atlanta or Dallas. One example of each is known in original CH CU. The San Francisco District was (until recently) unknown in original CH CU or better. The pop report now shows a mere two original Uncirculated examples for District 12. It still remains one of the banks for set completion. All three of these banks should be considered exceedingly rare in original CH CU and higher.

In summary, combined population report totals indicate that completion of a 12 Note district set in CH CU or higher may be limited to just a few collectors. For those unwilling to wait years if not decades to find these 12 Notes in high grade, an evenly matched district set of original XF/AU Notes would be more obtainable. A set of Notes in this grade still offers great eye appeal, challenge, and rarity at a fraction of the price.

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GRADING *Sight-Seen wholesale prices are for accurately graded Notes — Certified or Raw.*

Superb Crisp Uncirculated-67	A nearly flawless Note with perfect centering. Full wide margins all around. Colors are totally bright, crisp and vibrant. Quality is outstanding.
Gem Crisp Uncirculated-65	An almost perfect Note. Better than average margins. No aging or fading.
Very Choice Crisp Uncirculated-64	A bright Note that's slightly below Gem quality. Margins and color are above average. A Note that may have slight centering problems.
Choice Crisp Uncirculated-63	A nice new Note but not quite Gem. Centering may be a little off. May show some aging or light counting smudges or wrinkles.
Crisp Uncirculated-60	No trace of circulation. Can have centering problems, pin holes, counting smudges, wrinkles, close margins, or a corner tip fold (not into design).
Almost Uncirculated-50	(Almost new) These will be much the same as a "new" Note except for a single fold or several corner folds.
Extra Fine-40	Circulated; may have some folds; still has some crispness.
Very Fine-20	Some circulation; may show several folds and will have lost some of its crispness and color.
Fine-12	Well-circulated with little crispness remaining; edges may be rough.
Very Good-8	Will be fairly well-soiled; may be significantly worn; might have roughness around the edges with only minute problems.