

Introduction to the Viktor and Yekaterina Shmirnov Collection of Chinese Paper Money

Viktor Shmirnov was born in 1874 to a noble family of Petersburg, Russia. After obtaining his education, he was fortunate to gain employment at the court of Czar Nicholas II. While in Moscow, he met Yekaterina. They married in 1899 and in 1901 he was sent to work in the Russian Consulate in Shanghai.

During their long stay in Shanghai, both Viktor and Yekaterina developed a fascination for the vast diversity of Chinese currency. Amazed by the beautiful artwork, engraving, color, and detail of the currency, the Shmirnov's began to amass this signature collection. Viktor's work with the Consulate ensured travel to far-flung areas in China. During these trips, he would visit the local banks and merchants, seeking additions to his currency collection. He also developed contacts with many of the Shanghai banks, as well as the Bureau of Engraving and Printing in Peking.

During the Bolshevik revolution, Viktor and Yekaterina naturally sided with the White Russians. With the change in government after the Communist victory, Viktor lost his job at the Consulate. Rather than return to Russia, he chose to remain in Shanghai where he aided numerous White Russian refugees leaving the Far East for countries of safe haven. Finally, in the early 1930's, Viktor and Yekaterina emigrated themselves, ultimately arriving in Southern California. Viktor died there in 1981, followed by his wife five years later.

The collection offered here has been kept in the family all these intervening years. The collection has never been on the market. As such, it contains numerous bank notes never before recorded. There are also, no doubt, some that likely rank as the finest known. We hope you enjoy perusing this catalog as much as we enjoyed producing it. We are sure that today's collectors will be proud to own a small part of Viktor and Yekaterina Shmirnov's "lost" treasures.

We are pleased to present within these pages Part II of this exciting collection. Prospective bidders will notice that there are many notes, including rarities, that were also included in Part I. By way of explanation, the Shmirnov's preferred, when possible, to acquire two examples of each item so that they could mount them on their album pages showing both the front and the back.

The final part of the Shmirnov collection will be sold as part of our Fall coins and paper money auction. Additional consignments are currently being accepted, for what promises to be another exciting sale. Prospective vendors should contact Ian Hui in our Hong Kong office or myself in our United States office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "George Eveleth". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "G".

George Eveleth
Director of Numismatics, John Bull Stamp Auctions, Ltd.