

Oldest Florida Paper Money to be Exhibited at ANA Show in Jacksonville

Text here A unique note issued in 1817 on Amelia Island adjacent to the northeast coast of Florida, will be one of the many items on exhibit at the American Numismatic Association's (ANA) National Money ShowSM in Jacksonville, Florida, March 7-9.

The 6 1/4-cent note is the only surviving piece of scrip from the independent Republic of the Floridas, also known as the Green Cross Republic, found on the barrier island of Amelia, near present-day Jacksonville. Although the island is named for the second daughter of Britain's King George II, it remained under Spanish control with the remainder of Florida until 1821.

Four years earlier, adventurer and soldier of fortune Gregor MacGregor briefly took control of Amelia Island and founded his republic. A grand-nephew of famed Scottish national Rob Roy and a former British Army captain who fought in the Iberian Wars in Spain, MacGregor served with Simón Bolívar in the Venezuelan Army of Liberation before trying to pry Florida from Spanish rule for the United States.

Holding the rank of brigadier general from Bolívar, MacGregor obtained financial support in Philadelphia and Baltimore for his planned rebellion on Amelia. After recruiting soldiers and sailors in nearby Charleston, South Carolina, and Savannah, Georgia, MacGregor captured the small island on June 29, 1817. He promptly raised a white flag with the green cross of St. George, thereby establishing his Green Cross Republic. MacGregor quickly created a government, opened a post office, started a newspaper and issued currency for his new republic.

MacGregor then attempted to sell the island to the United States, but failed because President James Monroe was involved in sensitive negotiations with Spain to acquire all of Florida. Realizing the Spanish army would soon return, MacGregor sold his republic to Luis Aury less than three months after founding it. Aury turned the island nation into a haven for pirates and slave traders. Displeased with the activities on Amelia, President Monroe sent federal troops to the island on December 23, 1817, just three days short of the Republic of the Floridas' six-month anniversary. Spain ceded control of Florida to the United States in 1821, and the peninsula became the 27th state on March 3, 1845.

Of the scrip issued by MacGregor during his very short tenure as leader of the Green Cross Republic, only one example remains - the piece on display at the ANA show. The 75 x 110mm note was printed on the same press the adventurer used to publish his newspaper. It is hand signed by MacGregor and his secretary, Joseph de Yribarren.

Several writers have cited a second surviving specimen from the Green Cross Republic. However, research of each report has found that the other specimens were copies or, in one instance, a \$1 note signed by MacGregor in 1822 for a colony on the coast of Honduras.

The display in Jacksonville will be part of the competitive exhibits at the ANA National Money Show. For further information on exhibits or the show, contact the ANA Convention

Department, 818 N. Cascade Ave., Colorado Springs, CO 80903-3279; telephone 719/632-2646; fax 719/634-4085; E-mail convention@money.org; or visit the ANA web site at www.money.org.

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