

# RURAL SCENE SPECIMENS

by Roger Fox

Forty years ago this year, A.J. Billes began the "Cash Bonus Coupon Profit Sharing Program" by issuing cash bonus coupons at the newly created gas bars in Ontario.

As with any new program, it had to be "sold" and part of the selling was to have advanced copies or samples of the new coupons available for the gas bars and stores. Especially for the store dealers so they could see what was coming, since they would be on the receiving end. (Gasbar coupons could not be used or redeemed at gasbars). So the British American Bank Note Company printed up Specimen Coupons in all five denominations in advance of the program launch.

These coupons had no serial number and had the word "SPECIMEN" printed in outline red in large letters on a slight angle across the face of both the obverse and reverse of the notes. The signatures were punched out by what looked to be a hand punch resulting in two holes in the signature panel on each note. All other features of the notes would be identical to the new notes soon to be issued, which included the type of paper, ink, colours, text, designs, layout and a single red serial number. Of course these Specimen notes were designed not to circulate, and for the most part didn't, remaining with dealers in desk drawers, put on bulletin boards for employee display, or being disgarded or destroyed once the regular coupons were in circulation. This explains why most specimen coupons that have survived are usually in good shape.

Now for some unexplained reason a new series of Rural Scene Specimen notes has surfaced which do not follow the above criteria.

These "new" rural scene coupons are regular serial numbered coupons but are from the last 100 coupons in the

respective denominations run. That means that 100 notes later, we would be into the next series, with middle serial numbers and the map of Canada on the reverse. The fact that these have been found confirms how many rural scene coupons were issued at least for the 5¢, 10¢, and 25¢ denominations. (The 50¢ & \$1.00 coupons were not included in this discovery) On the obverse of each coupon is the word "SPECIMEN" printed in solid red lettering in the lower center of the coupon. It is the same format and size as used on the 1961 first Specimen series of Store Coupons. There is no overprinting of any kind on the reverse of these rural

scene examples. The two signatures have been again punched out by what looks to be a hand punch, but smaller holes, and two holes per signature, or four in total across the signature panel.

These notes were found in pristine condition attesting to exceptional preservation over the last 40 years.

My guess is that since they have the similar overprinting to the 1961 SPECIMEN Store coupons, that the last bundle of each denomination of rural scene notes was overprinted to maybe help promote the launch of the Store series in 1961, since the Rural Scene coupons were

still in circulation and the next gasbar series was not yet ready. This scenario could make sense as there were no more, (or maybe not enough) specimen sets as first described in this article available, (now 3 to 4 years old), and it would be less expensive to have the last bundle overprinted and punched out rather than have new sets of specimens printed by BABNC!??

It is fun to surmise, however, of course, we will never know for sure!

