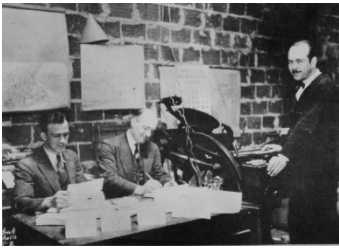


Tenino's Wooden Money

On December 5, 1931, the Citizens Bank of Tenino failed. The local Chamber of Commerce held an emergency meeting to discuss how local businesses would be able to survive during the Great Depression if no one had any access to their money. The bank had been assigned a liquidator who would eventually pay out a certain percentage of everyone's frozen accounts from the remaining assets, but that would take time.

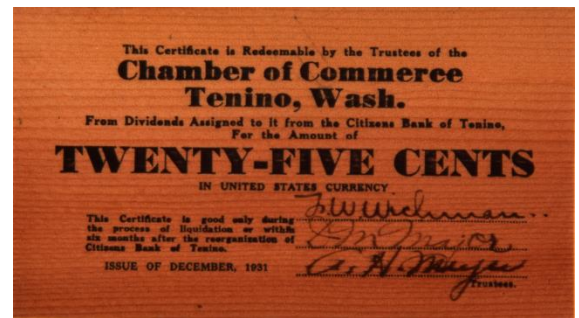
Don Major, the Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce and publisher of the Tenino Independent newspaper, proposed a plan to use his newspaper press to print the town's own money or local scrip. Citizens could then assign up to 25% of their bank account to the Chamber in exchange for that value in locally printed certificates. Local businesses would then accept this currency and redeem it through the Chamber once the liquidator paid out.



The Chamber appointed three Trustees to oversee the project: Dr. Al Meyer, Chamber Treasurer and local dentist, and Dr. F. W. Wichman, the town's doctor, and Don Major.

The first issue of the new currency was printed on paper stock in December 1931. About \$1280 was circulated among the citizens of Tenino and about \$1080 was eventually redeemed.

Don Major had been using his newspaper's press for other printing jobs as well. That December he had begun using a new stock called "slice wood" to print novelty Christmas cards. Slice wood was made from spruce and cedar shaved into 1/80 of an inch slices by Eckersly of Aberdeen. This novel printing stock was being marketed by Albert Balch of Seattle. Don used this wooden material to print 40 twenty-five cent certificates in late December 1931. This was the first Tenino Wooden Money.



In February 1932, a large print run of wooden money, in \$1, \$.50, and \$.25, was printed. News of this unique solution to local banking woes reached the newspapers of Seattle and Tacoma. Their stories quickly became national news! Washington State Senator Dill had the story entered into the Congressional Record. Pathé News came to Tenino and produced a newsreel.

Collectors from across the country and around the world wrote to Tenino asking for pieces of this unique wooden money. The Chamber of Commerce would continue to print several more issues throughout 1932 and into 1933. By the end they had produced \$10,000 worth of wooden money, of which only \$40 was ever redeemed. Many still reside in collections around the world.

The printing press continued to be used to print commemorative wooden pieces celebrating various local events and organizations and people for decades to come. The press currently resides in the Tenino Depot Museum, where it is still used to print wooden commemoratives and was used in 2020 to print new Tenino Wooden Money as part of city grants for Covid-19 relief.