

The Interesting Irish Republic “Fenian” Bonds of the 1860s

The word **Fenian** served as an umbrella term for the Irish Republican Brotherhood and their affiliate in the United States, the Fenian Brotherhood. They were a secret political organization in the late 19th and early 20th centuries dedicated to the establishment of an independent Irish. A Fenian is “a member of a 19th-century revolutionary nationalist organization among the Irish in the US and Ireland. The Fenians staged an unsuccessful revolt in Ireland in 1867 and were responsible for isolated revolutionary acts against the British until the early 20th century, when they were gradually eclipsed by the IRA.

To support their efforts to free Ireland from England, these "Fenian Pound" notes were produced, dated 1866, with a vignette of Theobald Wolfe Tone, the originator of the United Irishmen. The note says in part, "Five Dollars, redeemable...after the acknowledgement of the Independence of the Irish Nation at the Treasury of the Irish Republic". It is signed by John O'Mahoney, founder of the Irish revolutionaries.



Description: "It is hereby Certified that Irish Republic Is Indebted to Bearer Five Dollars Redeemable Six Months after the acknowledgement of the Independence of the Irish Nation. treasury of the Irish Republic, **March 17th, 1866,**" signed in the plate by John O'Mahony. With vignette of Wolfe Tone and Erin with American soldier. Serial numbers 1022 and 1979. Border with counties' names. Printed by Continental Bank Note Printing Company of New York. These bonds were issued in America to fund the Fenian Rising of 1867. They were redeemed almost eighty years later by the Irish Government

The Bond as stated on its face was repayable six months after the acknowledgment of the independence of the Irish Nation. The Fenians mobilized thousands of American Civil War veterans who wished to act for Ireland in accordance with the principles of the French and American revolutions. The U.S. government was sympathetic to “the cause” especially in the light of British assistance to the Confederacy. The successors to the Fenians proclaimed the Irish Republic during the revolution of 1916 and in 1949 some few years after the War of

Independence and the Civil War the Republic of Ireland was formally proclaimed though still in fact without the six northern counties whose star emblems are part of the Fenian Revolutionary Flag. The Bonds were honored by the Republic of Ireland.

- ***“Those who are still hoping to see the independence of Ireland realized contend that there has been no fraud practiced whatever.”***

The newly-formed government upheld the original condition of the Fenian bond – they could be redeemed once an Irish republic had been established. Or in this case declared.

For 10 years – between June 1927 and October 1937 – there was an office operated by the now-independent Irish state at 117 Liberty Street, New York City where bond holders could redeem their bonds.

By 1973, the last Dáil Act relating to these bonds had expired and the New York office had closed. There were no longer arrangements in place for redeeming un-exchanged bonds.

The final date was 30 June 1936.

None of these are common, but the \$5 dollar note is the easiest to find, most affordable to the public. A release date to the public on St. Patrick’s Day was planned in order to garner support and money for the cause.

Below are some of the other denomination of bonds that actually “look” more like bonds. These are far more scarce.





Uncut sheet of \$5 bonds

