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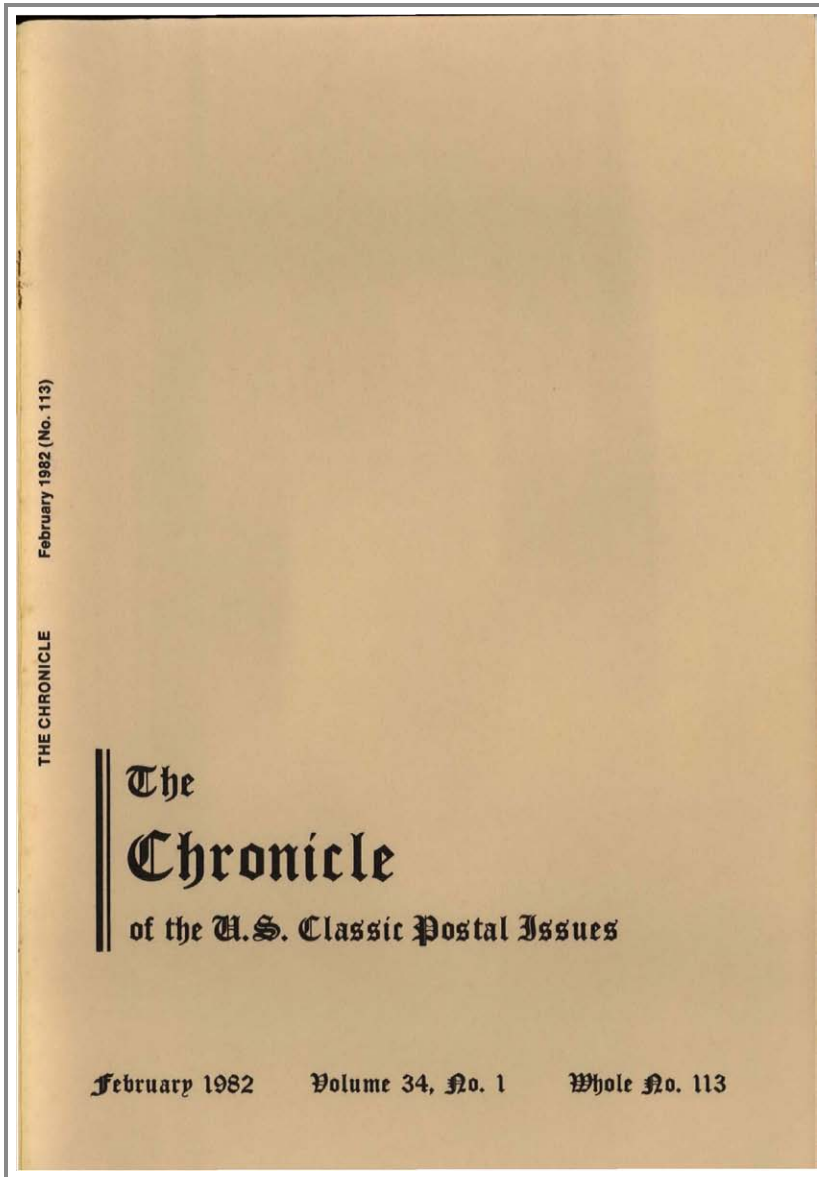


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THOUGHTS ON COLOR

DAVID T. BEALS III

The publication of Vol. 1 of Roy H. White's *Encyclopedia of the Colors of United States Postage Stamps*¹ (reviewed in the previous issue) brings to mind a number of ideas and activities concerning color which have interested me and others over the years. These activities point up many problems, the solution of which may be materially assisted by this new philatelic tool.

I have always been very interested in the colors of the stamps which I have collected, so much so that my collection of U.S. stamps of 1847 to 1861 is largely a series of color studies.

My first real specialty was the colors of the 3 cent 1851-1857. I had the great privilege of being instructed in this field by Dr. Carroll Chase for several years before his death, and thereafter by his successor, Dr. W. F. Amonette (our Society's leading authority on this stamp). Thereafter, I moved on to the perforated 3 cent stamps of 1857-1861, (*Scott* 25, 26, 26a) and, to a lesser degree, the 3 cent stamps of 1861 (*Scott* 64, 65).

I'm sure that every collector with any interest in color has dreamed of the perfect color guide with which one could compare any stamp and immediately have an authoritative answer as to its color or shade and the catalog number. Unfortunately, the perfect answer is still to be devised.

Based on the work of Dr. Chase and his successors, the colors and shades of these stamps are completely categorized and agreed upon by recognized philatelic authorities. The problem has been, and still is, to educate interested collectors and dealers as to what they are.

For the 3 cent imperforate stamps there was first the chapter on color in Dr. Chase's book,² and a fine article by Dr. Wilbur F. Amonette in *Chronicle* 78:85 to guide the novice. In spite of the value of these articles, it is one thing to read about color, and quite another to properly visualize and recognize it. From the beginning Dr. Chase prepared charts of typical colors for interested collectors, a practice carried on after his death by Dr. Amonette. So there are now quite a number in philatelic hands, and they are offered at auction with some frequency. They vary in size from one example of each of the typical colors (eight to ten examples) to a number of examples of each basic color, including the paler, deeper, redder and browner shades (50 or more examples). Naturally, the larger the chart the more questions it will answer. The amazing and subtle variety of colors and shades in which these stamps were printed (or as they now exist) is such that much study, including some knowledge of plate characteristics (at least the general differences between the orange brown and non-orange brown plates) is necessary to correctly recognize them.

I was greatly surprised to find a few years ago that the Philatelic Foundation had no color chart of this stamp, and it was our pleasure to lend them Tracy W. Simpson's own chart, which he had very kindly made available. It consists of about 50 examples; quite a good-sized chart.

As any interested 3 cent buff knows, there has always been a considerable number of errors in auction lot color descriptions, particularly with regard to the plum and copper

1. *Encyclopedia of the Colors of United States Postage Stamps*, Volume I by R.H. White. Published by Philatelic Research Ltd. 1981.

2. *The 3c Stamp of the United States 1851-57 Issue* (revised) by Carroll Chase. Published 1975 by Quarterman Publications Inc., 5 South Union Street, Lawrence, Mass. 01843.

orange brown shades. With this in mind, Tom Alexander and I conceived the idea of requesting donations to our Society of stamps (regardless of condition) with a view to producing color charts. While a number of generous contributions were received, the key colors and shades were not forthcoming. In the end, we were able to produce only two charts of about 50 examples each, which we presented to two leading New York dealers with our Society's compliments. We hope their describers are still making good use of them.

The range of colors and shades of the perforated 3 cent stamp (*Scott's* 25 and 26), while comparable in many instances to the imperforate stamps, is generally neither as dramatic nor as varied and hence has not had quite the interest paid to it by specialists other than Dr. Chase. In the absence of other volunteers, I wrote an article on colors of these stamps in *Chronicle* 81:14. Fewer color charts of the perforated stamps seem to be in existence and hence available on the market.

As to color guides, the first one I became familiar with was *Ridgway*.³ This book was used by Dr. Chase in his later years to designate some newly recognized imperforate shades and he assigned *Ridgway* color names to most of the rare and unusual perforated shades. Everyone to whom I have talked likes *Ridgway* tremendously. The 1,215 different color chips are hand painted rather than printed. The problem is that there are few *Ridgway* books in existence, and they are too expensive for general use, the last example I recall seeing sold bringing over \$300.

In about 1970 the *Methuen Handbook of Colour*⁴ became available in this country. For those not familiar with this book, it is small, compact, and includes 1,266 different color samples. In 1978 it cost about \$20.00. In addition, a complete key of color names is included. They are, of course, different from the traditional philatelic color designations as adopted by Dr. Chase, Stanley Ashbrook, *Scott's Catalog* and other recognized authorities. It was soon apparent that *Methuen* comparisons were not acceptable to properly illustrate the subtlety and variety of the 3 cent 1851-61 stamps, but it was felt (and still is by some students) that it is useful for most other stamps.

In 1973 Richard B. Graham invited a number of us to his home for a weekend to study *Methuen's* possible applications to philately, particularly the 3 cent stamp (*Scott* 64 and 65). Other 1861 students present included Clifford Friend, Scott Gallagher and Clarence Taft. I was honored to be included, and naively assumed that this was a perfect opportunity to have the experts arrange a color chart by recognized shade and year out of my accumulation. I also assumed that with fewer colors to be worked with (as compared with the 3c 1851-57) the job could be done quickly. Things proceeded in an orderly manner through Pigeon Blood, Pink and Rose Pink (*Scott* 64). However, from there on I was greatly surprised to find so little unanimity of opinion among the experts as to what constituted proper examples of the Luff and Ashbrook colors and shades (*Scott* 65), and the dividing line between them. Finally a chart which was generally acceptable to those present was hammered out.

It is the only extensive chart of this stamp that I have ever seen. Along with this study, representative examples were checked in *Methuen* by each individual and the surprising thing was the great variance in readings obtained by different individuals for the same stamp. However, Dick produced an average reading for each example studied and, as I

3. *Color Standards and Nomenclature* by Robert Ridgway, published by the author in Washington, 1912. It might be of interest to know that Mr. Ridgway was an ornithologist but fortunately his book is equally adaptable to philately. An earlier smaller edition is not considered philatelically useful.

4. *Methuen Handbook of Colour* by A. Kornerup and J.H. Wanscher, published by Methuen & Co. Ltd., London, England, Third Edition 1978. I also have a copy of the second edition 1967, and casual comparison of the red plates shows little variation (to me anyway). Mr. Roy White advises that some more substantial variations have recently been reported to him (possibly a new edition?).

recall, most of those present felt *Methuen* would be useful for the 1861 issue (and undoubtedly for others).

The question of attempting to adopt a uniform system of color names for philately (such as *Methuen*) was discussed at length. A number of the present conflicts were mentioned, the 3 cent 1857 Plum, and the fact that the 5 cent 1857 and 3 cent 1861 Indian Red shades are quite different, being two examples. However, it was soon agreed that the task of changing traditional names stemming from the works of Luff, Chase, Ashbrook, and others, and presently generally accepted in *Scott*, was an impossible task. It was also agreed that much remained to be done to instruct most collectors and dealers on what had already been accomplished. The results of this meeting were later checked with Bert Christian and Perry Sapperstein (other knowledgeable 1861 specialists).

Another problem will always be the question of proper light. Lack of uniform lighting undoubtedly contributed considerably to the lack of uniform *Methuen* readings at the Graham symposium. Some years ago Dr. Amonette commented that it was hard for the average student to arrange his studies in accordance with Dr. Chase's direction that stamp colors be viewed only under north daylight between the hours of 10 am and 2 pm, and started using color corrected fluorescent lamps for his philatelic color work.

Color corrected fluorescent tubes have been available for some years, but at least in Kansas City we had a hard time obtaining them (GE-F15TB-C50 Chromium 50 Tube). I understand they are more readily available now, and Mr. White lists five manufacturers in Appendix A of his book. He advises that Sylvania now also makes one, and that even a special daylight (blue) tube is much better than the standard fluorescent light. The important thing is that the student recognize the vital importance of a standard source of light in making color comparisons. Several of us dream of the day when a top show will be held under corrected lighting (some of these tubes are also available in 36" sizes), and of seeing the gorgeous range of colors that are lost under ordinary exhibition lighting.

To my knowledge the first successful effort to show stamps in their true colors was Mortimer Neinken's color plate in his monumental work on the 1c 1851-57.⁵ From my association with him I recall that the proper production of this plate was one of his most difficult and frustrating problems in the publication of the book. The plate was deemed sufficiently good by Mr. White that he did not do another one for his work.

We come now to Roy White's *Encyclopedia of the Colors of United States Stamps*, Volume I which is reviewed at some length in the previous issue. In my opinion it is by far the best tool for the proper recognition of colors which has yet been produced. It shows the normal range of shades in which almost all of the stamps of these issues exist. It is a thoroughly scientific work and includes a great deal of chemical analysis of inks used (which resulted in a number of fascinating conclusions). The most modern four color printing techniques were used, which produced the closest approximations to engraved stamps possible with present printing technology. Even so, Roy advises 30 percent of the run had to be discarded as not good enough.

Properly studied (including careful reading of the text) and used under a proper lighting, it has already answered for me a number of questions and I'm sure it can and will for interested collectors. The fairly extensive charts of #10 and #11 (26 examples), #25 and #26 (21 examples); and #64 and #65 (26 examples), to say nothing of the other values, provide far more information than anything previously available. It might be noted that under ordinary light, the plates containing the reds and browns appear somewhat redder to me than the actual stamps, so again proper light is the key. I cannot wait for Volume II to arrive, and strongly feel this book will help solve many of the problems previously discussed in this article. Certainly it is easier and far more interesting to compare stamps than small

5. *The United States One Cent Stamp of 1851 to 1861* by Mortimer Neinken, published by U.S.P.C.S. in 1972.

color chips. Roy White has produced a monumental work, well worth the price. In my opinion it is indispensable to the collector who has any interest at all in the color of his stamps. My deepest thanks and appreciation to Roy White for a job so well done!

Mr. White makes some mention in his book of the *Munsel* color charts, and in Appendix D has keyed his illustrations to it. Interestingly enough, there is an article in the August 1981 *American Philatelist* entitled "APS Manual for Determining Color Designations of Stamp Colors" by Kenneth Kelly and F.W. Billmeyer, Jr. (both are professional colorists). It is a report of the Inter Society Color Council (an organization with which I am regrettably not yet familiar). The article summarizes many of the problems discussed in this article and as a solution recommends the adoption of a general philatelic color standard based on the *Munsel Book of Color* (a very sophisticated and expensive system). It then proceeds with an interesting and detailed description of the Munsel System and its use. The authors state at the outset that this plan has been submitted to but not approved by the Directors of the ISCC (and no mention is made of any APS action). It does seem improbable to me that such an expensive book (\$1,500 according to Roy White) could ever become a tool of wide spread philatelic use. Possibly our Society should familiarize itself with these investigations.

In closing, it would seem to me that a color buff might make a great contribution to philately by keying *Methuen* to Roy White's new book.

I might ask any readers who have any comments, criticism or suggestions on the subjects covered in this article, or where we should go from here, to communicate their ideas to me. I'm sure there is great potential for other USPCS seminars or workshops in this field.

U.S. POSTAL MARKINGS: 1851-61

Wording	Tracing Number	Type	Shape & Size	Rarity Number	Reported by/ Notes
Straight Line, Oval & Fancy Townmarks					
California					
WEAVERVILLE/msD/ CAL.	22		o-40x24	5	Red, black.
New York					
TOWNSENDVILLE, N.Y./ msD	A		b-38½x3½		Box incomplete, not measured.
Unusual Circular Townmarks					
California					
JACKSON/D/CAL	B		K11 29		3c 1851, S2.
OPHIRVILLE/msD/CAL	26		K18 35	8	Red.
H B CAL/D/UNIONTOWN	34		K3 dc-35	9	Blue. Reduce rarity number.
Connecticut					
LITCHFIELD/D/bar/Ct.	C		K14 32½		J.R. Kesterson.
Illinois					
-CHICAGO./D/ILL.	D		K1 32		G. A. Hyatt. 1852, red.
LODI STATION/D/ILL	E		K5 38½		G. A. Hyatt.
-PECATONICA/D/ILL.	F		K1 35		G. A. Hyatt.
New York					
NEW YORK/Mo./bar (12x5)/day	241		K14 30	6	Better tracing than in <i>USPM</i> . Earliest: 8/18/51. Latest: 8/26/51.
Oregon Territory					
WINCHESTER/msD/O.T.	G		Ks 37		1857, blue. Serif & sans-serif letters.
Pennsylvania					
SUMMERS,/D/PA.	H		K1 dc-31½		3c 1851, S2.