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Author(s): Michael C. McClung

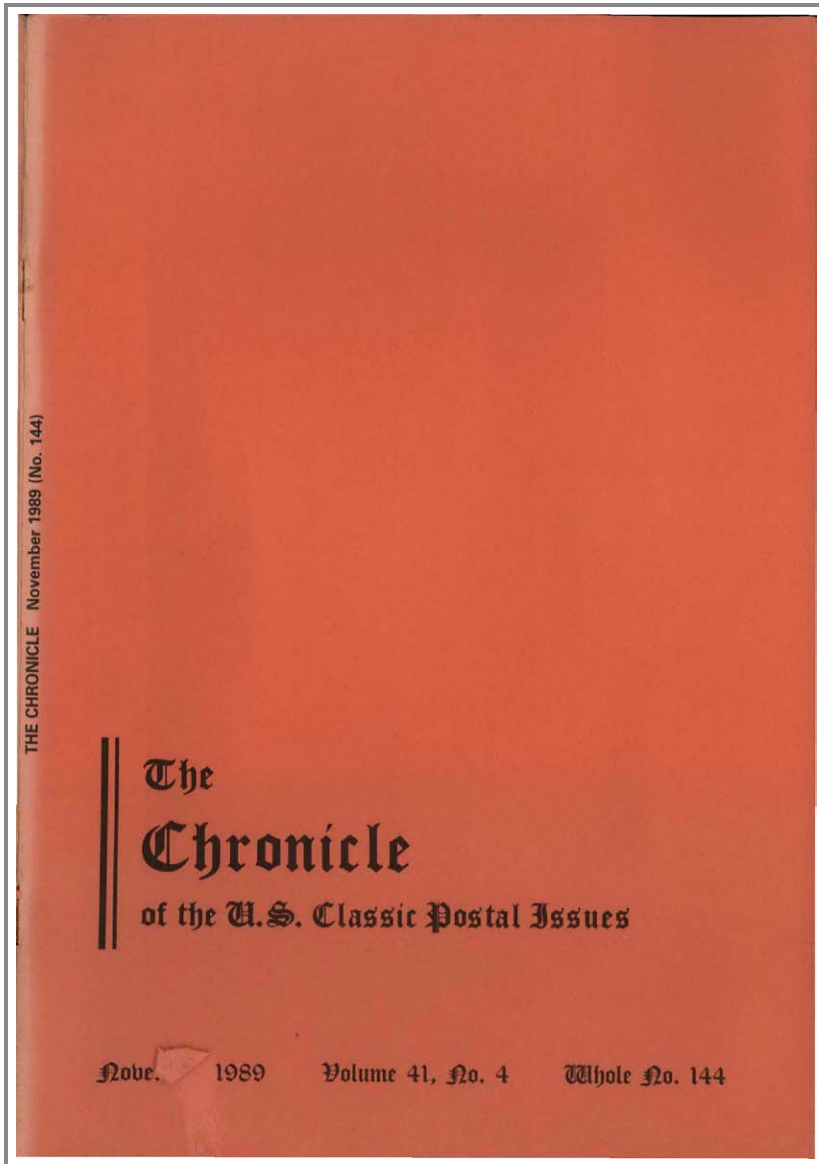


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PINK

MICHAEL C. McCLUNG

Pink was the color chosen for the three cent denomination of the 1861 issue of U.S. postage stamps which was scheduled for release in June of that year. Early on in the production process, it was discovered that the pink stamps were fading. A couple of attempts were made to adjust the recipe of the ink before pink was abandoned in favor of a more stable rose shade. Because of the problems with the three cent, the first day of issue for all denominations was pushed back to August 17 or possibly later for some. A high demand necessitated the distribution rather than the destruction of these "defective" pink stamps.

We assume that the true pink (Scott #64) was the original shade because it matches (approximately) the die proofs. The adjustments to the mix of the pink ink resulted in what we now call pigeon blood pink (Scott #64a) and rose pink (Scott #64b). These shades are difficult to identify, in that they tend to blend into each other so that there are no sharp lines of demarcation between the shades listed in the catalog. This is why the pinks are sometimes a source of disagreement among collectors, dealers, specialists and others. One of the basic questions is, "What's the difference between pink and rose?" An answer might be ... pink is light carmine and rose is light red (Ok, so what's red?). Common grocery store examples are: Pepto-Bismol is pink, and Strawberry Flavored Philadelphia Cream Cheese is rose.

Color in philately is not absolute; rose for the three cent 1861 is different from rose for the three cent 1857 or for any other stamp that the catalog lists as rose. Also, the pigments used in the nineteenth century produced more subdued shades than we see from modern inks and printing processes. Below are a few things to look for when trying to decide if a stamp is some kind of a pink:

- 1) If present on a used stamp or cover, the datestamp will usually be between August 17, 1861, and the Spring of 1862.
- 2) The paper is normally thin, semi-transparent and white; when a pink stamp is wet, it appears quite transparent, especially when compared to a later rose shade. This is caused by the thinness of the paper and the paleness of the ink. The white paper can become toned and appear yellowish; often the agent that brings about this toning causes the true pink stamps to take on a lavender-tinted glow. These toned stamps are eye-catching but are not



Figure 1. Blurring of latticework, especially at the upper left (arrow) is a common characteristic found on the pink shades of the 3¢ stamp of 1861.

the original shade. The toning and glow can be removed with hydrogen peroxide, but the result is usually a faded, less attractive stamp.

3) The ink usually appears to be fairly heavy; this results in the latticework looking somewhat blurred, especially in the upper left (Figure 1). On the more heavily inked stamps, the scrollwork around the outside is faint, with the ball in the lower left corner being almost invisible (Figure 2). Some stamps are more lightly inked, and the scrollwork seems sharper. The rare deep, bright shade of true pink is heavily inked, but the impression is sharp.

Figure 2. The ball in the left corner (arrow) of most pink shades is nearly invisible, and the scrollwork around the outside of the design is faint.



4) There is contrast and sometimes an absence of color between the latticework and the shading under the upper left "3" (Figure 3). This characteristic is seen on many other shades, but some of the "pinkish" shades from 1863 printings show no contrast or color

Figure 3. The area between the latticework and the shading under the upper left "3" usually shows little or no color, evidently to produce contrast.





Figure 4. The pinkish shades of 1863 show no contrast below the left “3” as is shown in Figure 3.

break (Figure 4).

5) The true pink shade defies description because no two are exactly alike. It has been compared to silk ribbon, cake icing, Pepto-Bismol, lipstick, etc. It is in the same family as the stamped envelope of the same period (Scott #U34-U37), but not as deep a pink. It is pastel and has a bluish tint when viewed at an angle, and it has an almost metallic glow or brightness that usually sets it apart from other shades.

The bluish tint is considered a requirement for a stamp to be a true pink; if the blue is not there, it is not a pink. Also, it does not contain any rose or red. The pink varies from pale to deep, and it ranges from dull to bright. Most copies are faded to some extent; a deep, bright pink is a remarkable stamp and is quite rare.

6) Pigeon blood pink may seem like a rather fanciful description, but ours would be a dull hobby if we did not have such colorfully named treasures to seek as the Atherton shift and the pigeon blood pink. “Pigeon blood” to a gemologist, is a deep crimson red and the highest standard of color for a true ruby; it is also used to describe a ruby color that was popular in decorative glassware from Victorian times through the art-deco era. So pigeon blood pink translates to *ruby pink*. It appears that a ruby-colored pigment was added to the pink recipe in an attempt to correct the fading problem. The shade is deeper and richer and “rubier” than the true pink; it has a glow, similar to the true pinks. Pigeon blood pink varies from pale to deep, and it has another range based on the amount of ruby pigment in the ink. When a pigeon blood pink is wet, it appears very pink.

In the *U.S. Mail & Post Office Assistant*, September 1861, under “DISTRIBUTION OF THE STAMPS,” we read, “We learn from the Department, that the three cent stamp is not quite satisfactory, or what was required of the contractors. It is understood that they will experiment until they get a good, decided carmine, or dark pink — similar to the color of the stamp on the new white envelopes. On the buff envelopes, the color shows imperfectly.” This probably describes events that took place in early August. At that time, the true pink stamps had already been printed, and the experimentation produced pigeon blood pink (which must have been unsatisfactory also) and then rose pink.

7) The rose pink shade is the result of another mixture of the pigments in an effort to correct the fading problem. The stamp has the characteristics of a pink, and it is a pink shade, but it has a rose or rose pink pigment added to the recipe. It has a glow, but it is not

as bright as the true pink, and it does not have the bluish cast. This shade varies quite a bit depending on the heaviness of the ink, fading and the proportion of pink to rose. Faded copies of the true pink are often placed in this category, and that is probably the most practical way to handle them within the framework of the current catalog listings.

One of the reasons that the pinks are difficult to identify is that there are other shades of the three cent which can easily be mistaken for them. Below are the primary ones:

1) The first rose shades (or "near pinks"), including Ashbrook's "deep pinkish rose," were rich and bright (some quite intense) and were printed from the same plate as the pinks, so they resemble the pinks and rose pinks. They do not exhibit the bluish tint of the true pinks, but that is about all that separates them. Some of these early shades may be varieties of pink, but we currently do not have a classification for them; therefore their place in the catalog is under Scott #65.

2) In late December 1861, a carmine rose appeared; this shade is very different from the many red and rose hues of this stamp. It is deep and bright and can be confused with the pigeon blood pink, but it could be more accurately named "pigeon blood rose" because it does not actually contain any pink. It is about as scarce as the rose pink with the most dated copies being from January and February of 1862. When this stamp is wet, it does not turn pink as the pigeon blood pink does.

3) Starting in late 1862 and throughout 1863, several "pinkish" shades were released. These stamps are pale and bright (some are very bright) and have been referred to as "Brooklyn pinks" and "commercial pinks." The impressions are normally very clear, and there is usually no contrast between the latticework and the shading of the upper left "3." The color of these stamps is rose, but it is not far removed from pink; an 1863 year date is a dead giveaway.

The best way to identify a pink or one of its shades is to compare it to a certified reference copy in natural light. The pinks were classified by Ashbrook and Perry, and their work forms the basis for the catalog listings. It is hoped that our perception of the shades has not deviated from their original interpretations.

The pink stamps were widely distributed. They are known from large cities as well as small towns and DPO's. We have seen covers from all the northern states except Kansas and Oregon, but it is possible that some post offices in these states received them as well. There may also be territorial usages. We have seen rose pinks from occupied Port Royal, S.C., and Old Point Comfort, Va. There seems to be no discernable pattern to the distribution.

The earliest known usage of a 3¢ 1861 stamp is August 17, 1861; only one cover has been reported, that being the Baltimore usage from the Troth correspondence (Figure 5). The stamp is a rose pink; the pigeon blood and true pinks do not show up until later in the month. This is to be expected since the first sheets printed (true pinks) would have been at the bottom of the stack and the latest ones (rose pinks) would be on top when the first delivery was made to the Stamp Agent. Assuming the Stamp Agent dealt from the top of the deck, the first stamps distributed would have been the rose pinks. It has been established that Order #1 for the new stamp designs was delivered to the Stamp Agent in New York on Friday, August 16, 1861, and that Order #2 was delivered on August 17 (see *Chronicle* 82, May 1974). Therefore, it is possible that an August 16 usage could exist, and it is possible that an August 16 or 17 usage could exist from a town other than Baltimore. It is surprising that only one cover, dated August 17, 1861, has been discovered and that only one other stamp from this issue, a loose one cent with the same date (also from Baltimore) is known to exist.

Lester Brookman reported that 100,000 pink stamps were printed. This means that one pink stamp would be found in an unpicked lot of 15,000 ungrilled three cent 1861s. This seems believable for the true pinks and pigeon blood pinks; Brookman may not have

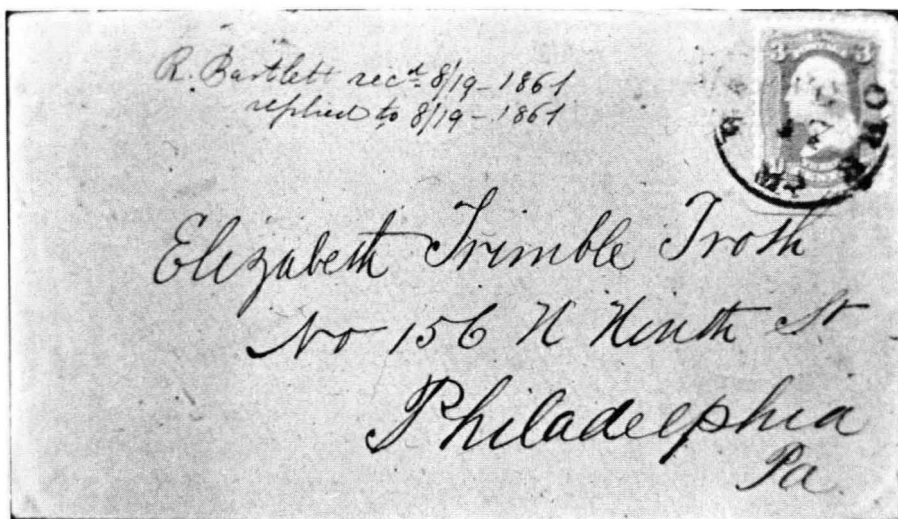


Figure 5. The earliest known use of the 3¢ 1861 stamp, from Baltimore on Aug. 17, 1861, the first stamps having been delivered to the Stamp Agent at the National Banknote Co. the previous day. The stamp is reportedly in the rose pink shade.

included the rose pinks in this accounting. Rose pinks seem to outnumber true pinks at least five to one. True pinks outnumber pigeon blood pinks about ten to one.

There are no known plate varieties. A vertical double perforation exists, as well as a horizontal stitch watermark.

The pink is one of the prettiest of U.S. stamps, and it has an important place in any collection of classic issues. It and its shades are well worth pursuit and study. We welcome information about identification, distribution, usages, or anything else concerning this stamp.

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ADDITIONS: A LISTING OF 24¢ "F" GRILL COVERS

WILLIAM K. HERZOG

The original article on known 24¢ "F" grill covers, which appeared in *Chronicle* 119 (August 1983), revealed 30 examples. This was increased to 32 in *Chronicle* 126 (May 1985). Since that last report, the total has increased to 37. Included in the five new listings is one new destination (Sweden) and one new city of origin (Holmes Hole, Mass.). These five new listings are shown under Table I. An updated summary of the data for all 37 covers is shown under Table II.

There is additional information on the "NYC (2/20)" cover to England (*Chronicle* 119). The original Table I listing of "Liverpool ?? 69" can be improved to "Liverpool 4 MR 69," as shown in *Chronicle* 143:191, Figure 5.