COLOR STUDY OF THE 3¢ STAMP OF THE UNITED STATES 1851-57 ISSUE: AN UPDATE

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This article updates what we know about the various color shades of the 1851-57 3¢ imperforate stamp of the United States. The number of collectors and students of these shades has grown tremendously in recent years. Many of the shades are now listed in *Scott's Specialized Catalogue* and the rare and scarce colors bring strong prices at auction. There was a time when few collectors or dealers made an effort to learn more than a few basic colors. Today, the shades are still frequently misidentified, but there is a growing number of individuals who can colorize the stamps correctly using reference color charts of actual stamps that have been properly identified. Despite this increased interest not many articles have been written on the topic. Dr. Chase's last known write-up was in the 1942 revised edition of his book, *The 3¢ Stamp of the United States 1851-57 Issue*.[1] The most detailed article is W.F. Amonette's "Color Study of the Three-Cent Stamp of the United States 1851-57 Issue," in the May 1973 *Chronicle*.[2] This article updates that 1973 article.

After publication of his book, Dr. Chase expanded his ideas on color and incorporated changes in his master color chart. This color chart consists of 210 stamps identified as to color and he used it for colorizing stamps until he died. It is important to understand that Dr. Chase's chart still exists today. As such it is figuratively the equivalent of the Rosetta Stone in that we are able to understand what Dr. Chase was seeing when he described and named the various colors. This master chart and a second color chart made by Chase are essential sources of continuity in studying these shades and these two charts have been used by us as the basis for this article. We have made minor changes and additions to his work to provide a more complete classification.

It is said that people see color differently but, while this may be true to some extent, we think the largest part of seeing color differently is lack of training the eye to distinguish the various colors. This can be improved by study and by having a complete color chart for reference when needed. It is possible to identify many colors without direct comparison to a known color but others require study and direct comparison in the proper light. Regarding proper light, it is best to study colors in the same light at all times. Dr. Chase had his desk at a large window facing north to identify colors in the daytime. Fluorescent bulbs can be purchased from several companies that simulate daylight at noon. An OTT-Lite has been satisfactory. Incandescent light bulbs and regular fluorescent bulbs should not be used to study colors.

It must be understood that there is no fine dividing line between the various colors as they merge gradually with one another with in-between shades, and only typical color samples should be used to illustrate the various colors. There is also no fine dividing line as to the time the colors were used, as there is some overlapping. The colors are identified by the year in which they were most commonly used with some overlapping into the year before and the year after to be expected. One must expect some minor variations from the

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[1]Carroll C. Chase, *The Three-Cent Stamp of the United States 1851-57 Issue*, rev. ed.

[2]W.F. Amonette, "Color Study of the Three-Cent Stamp of the United States 1851-57 Issue," *The Chronicle* (May 1973).

usual range of shades for each of the colors; however, it would unnecessarily complicate matters to attempt a separate sub-classification for each minor variation.

There are two methods by which the colors can be classified. One method is strictly by color without any regard to the year used, while the second method is by the year used. Each method has its merits, but we have chosen the latter even though a classification by color alone would be a more scientific approach. We think the year of the use method is a more interesting approach and also allows one to use knowledge of the various plates in identification of colors. It is true that the plate from which the stamp was printed should not affect the color; however since only plates 2^L and 3 were used in each of the years 1852-1857, knowing the plate from which the stamp was printed can restrict the possible colors. The following table notes the colors seen from the 13 plates:

Table 1 - 1851-57 3¢ Plates and Corresponding

Plate	Year	Color
Plates 1^E - 1^I - 2^E - 5^E - 0	1851	Orange browns
Plate 1^L	1851	Experimental Orange browns
Plate 1^L	1852 - 1855	All shades
Plates 2^L - 3	1852 - 1857	All shades, although yellow rose red is very rare
Plates 4 - 5^L	1855 - 1857	All shades, except plum and deeper claret from Plate 5^L
Plates 6 - 7 - 8	1856 - 1857	All shades, except plum and deeper claret

A description of the colors for each year follows. This classification would be of more help if an actual color chart were available for the study as it is impossible to describe a color so that one can identify it without an actual comparison. However, it is a starting point and gives one some idea as to the scope of such a study. We will describe in some detail the orange brown colors that involve use in 1851, 1852 and 1856.

1851 Orange Brown

The orange brown (O.B.) color was the only color used from the first day of issue on July 1, 1851 until early October 1851 when plate 1^L came into use. The O.B. shades vary from pale to deep and, in addition, there are several distinctive shades. The first printings from Plate 1^E were pale and yellowish with very clear impressions but they cannot be separated by color alone.

A comment should be made on the Orange Brown Scott Catalogue #10. All of the Scott #10 orange brown colors come from five plates: 1^E, 1^I, 2^E, 5^E and Plate 0. Not all stamps from these plates are true orange brown. Such examples cannot be confirmed to be Scott #10 unless the item is plated. In spite of this, the color classification should stay as it is based on the five plates to avoid complete confusion as to what is a Scott #10.

Table 2 - Shades of the 1851-57 3¢ Orange Brown

1851 Orange Brown Shade	Comments
Bright O.B.	Seen only from Plate 1^E. The paler of these shades is brighter because of more orange color.
Yellowish O.B.	Seen only from Plate 1^E. Yellowish O.B. can be so yellow as to be confused with the 1856 yellowish rose reds.
Copperish O.B.	Seen only from Plate 2^E. Often incorrectly identified. It is not the rich color seen from Plate 5^E but rather a "rusty" color with the stamp paper discolored.
Intense O.B.	Seen only from Plate 2^E. Can be confused with copperish O.B. unless compared directly. It is a deep rich color with the paper slightly discolored, but not as much as copperish.
Brownish and Reddish O.B.	Each appears to have a brown or red color without the orange color as seen in the usual pale to deep shades.

1851 Experimental Orange Brown

This color, seen only from Plate 1^L, appeared in early October 1851 when Plate 1^L was put into use with the earliest recorded date of use being October 6, 1851. This color was used for only a short time, as the earliest recorded use of the brownish carmine color is October 22, 1851. This color varies from pale to deep and is slightly different from the true O.B. shade. Some of the shades are very bright due to more orange color. There is also a dull shade that is rather distinctive and rates a separate classification. There is very little orange in this shade and it is quite rare. Some of the experimental orange brown shades are close to the brownish carmines; however, it is best to use only typical examples.

1852 Plate 2^L and 3 Orange Brown

Plates 2^L and 3 are found in an O.B. shade that was used early in 1852. We consider these accidental printings rather than a distinctive shade used for any length of time. Some of these colors are almost identical to the true O.B. color.

Mid-1852 Orange Brown

There is another color that seems to have been used mostly in mid-1852 that has an O.B. tint and does not go with the brownish carmines. It is somewhat close to the bright brownish carmines, but has more orange rather than carmine or red. It has been seen from plates 1^L, 2^L, and 3. It is very scarce.

1856 Orange Brown

The 1856 orange brown closely resembles the 1851 O.B. printings and an exact match has been seen but is very rare. We consider this an accidental mix of ink rather than a color used for a length of time.

1852 Brownish Carmine

The predominant color used during 1852 was brownish carmine, although it was also used in late 1851. All of the 1852 impressions are generally good. These vary from pale to deep with some printings containing more brown or more red color. These have been classified as "brownish carmine with more brown" or "with more red." Some of the shades with more brown have very little carmine or red color, but one must expect extremes of shades when brown, carmine and red are involved. There is also a rather bright color with no carmine or red that does not fit with the pale to deep brownish carmine but we call this bright brownish carmine to avoid another classification.

1852 Yellowish Brown

This is a color that Dr. Chase did not have in his color chart, but it is a definite 1852 color that has no carmine, red or orange. The color is a yellowish brown that is close to the 1857 yellowish brown but not an exact match. It varies from pale to deep. The color is scarce.

1852 Clarets

The 1852 clarets are a source of some confusion as there were two distinct colors used in 1852 that approach the 1857 clarets. There was a color used early in 1852 that is definitely "clarety" but slightly different from the 1857 clarets. It is a deep shade that was used for only a short period of time. Most of these are seen from Plate 1^{L}; however, some are also known from Plate 2^{L}, and a very few from Plate 3. The infrequent occurrence from Plate 3 is probably due to the fact that Plate 3 did not come into use until March 1852, and most of the printings in this color must have been made in January or February of that year. This color has also been seen on covers used as early as November 11, 1851. We call these the "early 1852 clarets." There is another color that appeared in December 1852 that is also close to the 1857 claret; however, it is not as deep a color as the early 1852 clarets. This is best identified from Plate 1^{L} as this plate was not used in 1857. We have classified this as the "late 1852 claret."

1853 Dull Red

This color first appeared in the fall of 1852 and the earliest we have seen was used in late September 1852. The first printings in this color were very clear impressions made in late 1852; however, many of the copies used in early 1853 were not so clear. As early as May 1853 some of the printings contained the rose tint of the rose reds. When the rose red color appeared, the impressions were less clear then the impressions of 1852. During the last six months of 1853 there is much overlapping of the dull red and the rose red colors. It is often difficult to separate the two colors, and is perhaps the reason that Dr. Chase grouped them together into the "1853 pale dull red and dull rose red." The typical 1853 shade is usually thought of as having a clear impression; however, the dull red printings are uncommon and the majority seems to have blue cancellations. The dull red shade was not used to any extent in 1854. There are shades of dull red with much more yellow and these are classified separately as yellowish dull red. The yellowish dull red is uncommon.

1853-1854 Rose Red

The rose red color first appeared in the spring of 1853 and was used until early 1855. The shades vary from pale to deep and have varying amounts of red color. There is a shade with less red and a different hue that is classified due perhaps to plate wear as well as the color. Some of the bright 1854 shades actually have a "clarety" appearance but the poor impressions make them easy to distinguish from the 1852 and 1857 clarets. The impressions in this color are fair to poor.

1855 Orange Red

The orange red color was used during primarily in 1855. The impressions are generally poor due probably to a poor quality of ink as well as dirty or worn plates, as many of the impressions from Plates 4 and 5^{L} are poor even though these plates first came into use in 1855. The shades vary from pale to deep with some bright shades, but the bright shades are not given a separate classification.

1856 Yellowish Rose Red

As early as September 1855 the printings changed color and once again the impressions became clear. The ink used from late 1855 and more extensively during the first six months of 1856 presented a wide variation of shades. This makes it difficult to assemble the shades in an orderly manner as is possible for the other years, with the shades varying from pale to deep, and it is for this reason that the classification is rather general. They are grouped into "paler and yellower shades" and "medium and deep shades." Some of the paler shades have a lot of yellow color and the medium and deep shades have varying amounts of rose and red. We attempted to divide these into groups with more yellow, rose or red, but the shades were difficult to separate. Some of the most striking colors come from this group, especially from Plates 5^{L} and 8 which seem to have some shades of yellowish rose red that are not seen from the other plates. It is interesting that this color is rarely seen from plates 2^{L} and 3 suggesting that these plates were taken out of use for a period of time, perhaps for cleaning. Some of the more striking of the yellowish rose reds resemble the 1851 orange brown printings at first glance; however, a direct comparison will reveal the difference.

1856 Pinkish

There is a rare pinkish color used in 1856 that is probably a variation of the yellowish rose red color that came out with more pink. This is one of the most difficult colors to find.

1856 Brownish Carmine

About mid-1856 the colors became very similar to the 1852 brownish carmines, so are called the 1856 brownish carmines. Plates 2^{L} and 3 are seen in both the 1852 and 1856 brownish carmine colors and at times it is difficult to distinguish them. The 1856 printings usually show a slight degree of plate wear and Washington's head usually has less hair than the 1852 printings. These vary from pale to deep with varying amounts of brown and red, just as the 1852 color, so the classification is the same.

1857 Claret

The clarets were the predominant color used in 1857 and first appeared in the fall of 1856. There is no difference in the 1856 and 1857 clarets. There is a wide variation of shades in the clarets, but they fall into a rather orderly classification in spite of that wide variation. The plain clarets very from pale to deep; other shades contain more brown or purple so they are put in a separate classification of brownish or purplish claret. Dr. Chase identified a darker color without the clear look of pale to deep clarets. He called this "deeper claret" and this is a separate classification as is the brownish and purplish claret. We do not use the term "rose claret" as this refers to the pale and medium shades of the plain clarets and does not require a separate classification. There is a wide range of shades of the brownish and purplish clarets, so they vary from pale to deep.

1857 Rose Brown, Yellow Brown

The 1857 browns are rarely identified as such by those studying color. They are distinctive colors that were used mostly in 1857, although also seen in 1856. The yellow brown is much rarer than the rose brown. Some of the deeper shades of yellow brown and brownish claret are hard to distinguish and there are quite a few in-between shades found between these colors and the 1856 brownish carmines.

1857 Plum

This is the rarest of the 1857 colors. The name is a misnomer as the actual plum color of the fruit is closer to a deep claret or deep purplish claret. We have seen an early color chart by Dr. Chase made perhaps in the late 1920s or early 1930s. The plum in this chart appears to be deep purple claret. We have also a small Dr. Chase chart dated April 1954 in which he has an example of the present plum he calls "The Real Plum," suggesting he changed his original idea as to the color. This "real plum" has more brown

Table 3

Year	Color	Rarity
1851	I. Orange Brown	
	a. Pale to Deep	
	b. Brownish	
	c. Reddish	3
	d. Bright	4
	e. Yellowish	4
	f. Intense	4+
	g. Copperish	4+
	II. Experimental O.B.	
	a. Pale to Deep	4
	b. Dull	4+
	c. Bright	4+
1852	I Brownish Carmine	
	a. Pale to Deep	
	b. With More Brown	2
	c. With More Red	3
	d. Bright	4+
	II. 1852 Clarets	
	a. Early 1852 Claret	3
	b. Late 1852 Claret	3
	III. Plate 2^{L} and 3 O.B.	4+
	IV. Mid-1852 O.B.	4+
	V. 1852 Yellowish Brown	4+
1853	I. Dull Red	
	a. Pale to Deep	2
	b. Yellowish	3
1854	I. Rose Red	
	a. Pale to Deep	
	b. Bright	
1855	I. Orange Red	
	a. Pale to Deep	2
	b. Bright	3
1856	I. Yellowish Rose Red	
	a. Pale and Yellowish Shades	4
	b. Medium and Deeper Shades	3
	II. Pinkish	4+
	III. Brownish Carmine	
	a. Pale to Deep	
	b. With More Brown	
	c. With More Red	3
	IV. 1856 Orange Brown	4+
1857	I. Claret	
	a. Pale to Deep	2
	b. Deeper Claret	4
	c. Brownish	2
	d. Purplish	4
	II. Plum	
	a. Pale to Deep	4+
	III. Rose Brown	
	a. Pale to Deep	3
	IV. Yellowish Brown	
	a. Pale to Deep	4