



## 1851 THREE-CENT WASHINGTON

THE 3-CENT STAMP PRINTED BY TOPPAN, Carpenter, Casilear & Co. was issued with the 1c and 12c on July 1, 1851. The basic design, portraying the bust of Washington by sculptor Jean Antoine Houdon, remained current through the end of 1861, when existing supplies of 1851-57 Issues were demonetized by the Federal government to ensure that seceded states could not use or sell them.

The three basic 3c types differ in the configuration of the outer framelines. Type I, with the frameline complete all around, was issued both imperforate and perforated from nine plates. The Type I stamp was the first to be issued with perforations, beginning in February 1857. Types II and IIa were printed from twenty plates and issued only with perforations. On both types the framelines at top and bottom have been removed—the side framelines are continuous on Type II and broken between stamps on Type IIa. 28 of the 29 plates used to print 3c stamps were numbered (1-28), and one of the plates that produced only imperforate stamps was not numbered (Plate O).

Although these plates produced a multitude of varieties, surpassing even the 1c stamp, the Scott classification of 3c stamps is restricted to colors of the imperforate (Orange Brown, Scott 10, or various Red shades of Scott 11) and types of the perforated (Types I, II and IIa, Scott 25, 26 and 26a, respectively). There are differences other than color that distinguish Orange Brown printings from other shades, such as the presence or absence of recut lines within the design.

Most of our knowledge of this complex stamp originates with Dr. Carroll Chase, who published his first book on the 3c 1851-57 Issue in 1929 (revised in 1942). The Chase book is still regarded as the definitive work on the subject, although other students of the issue have augmented his plating and color studies. Dr. Chase's personal collection of the 3c 1851-57 was dispersed many years ago.



*3c 1851 Issue, used on First Day of Issue*

## The Three-Cent 1851-57 Issues: An Overview

THE UBIQUITOUS 3¢ 1851-57 STAMP PAID THE BASIC LETTER RATE FOR A decade, beginning on July 1, 1851, and ending in 1861 when the Post Office Department demonetized circulating postage stamps to prevent the rebellious South from selling or exchanging its supplies.

Under Postmaster General Nathan K. Hall, the contract to print the 1851 Issue was awarded to the Philadelphia firm of Toppan, Carpenter, Casilear & Co. (Casilear retired in October 1854, but his name was included in plate imprints as late as 1857). To start, only the 1¢, 3¢ and 12¢ (and the General Issue Carrier stamps) were produced. A 10¢ stamp was added in 1855 to meet the new transcontinental rate, and a 5¢ stamp was added in 1856 for use on transatlantic mail. The firm's original six-year contract was extended to 1861, during which time stamps were perforated and three new denominations were issued (24¢, 30¢ and 90¢), for a total of eight different stamps under Toppan Carpenter's contract.

The 3¢ 1851-57 design depicts a bust of George Washington facing left, his hair tied back and his shoulders draped with a Roman toga. This engraved image of Washington was based on one of the sculptures by Jean-Antoine Houdon, a French neoclassical sculptor. Houdon's portrait sculpture of Washington was the result of an invitation by Benjamin Franklin to cross the Atlantic specifically to visit Mount Vernon, so that Washington could model for him. Washington sat for wet clay life models and a plaster life mask in 1785. These models served for many commissions of Washington and for images on numerous postage stamps.

### THE 3-CENT 1851-57 PLATES

More than one billion 3¢ 1851-57 Issue stamps were produced from 29 engraved steel plates of 200 subjects. All 3¢ stamps were issued without perforations from 1851 through the end of 1856. In February 1857 the first 3¢ perforated stamps were distributed to seven cities on an experimental basis, and the government contract requiring perforations took effect on June 10, 1857.

As recently pointed out by Wade Saadi (*Chronicle* 227, August 2010), the basic 3¢ 1851 stamp is one of only five face-different 19th Century postage stamps designed with rectangular framelines. Saadi theorizes that the preference for ornamental borders was the result of the difficulty experienced in precisely aligning subjects on the plate. Misaligned entries are more noticeable on plates (and sheets) of stamps with rectangular framelines than those with ornamental borders.

The plates used to print 3¢ 1851 imperforate stamps are Plates "0" (unnumbered), 1 (Early, Intermediate, Late), 2 (Early, Late), 3, 4, 5 (Early, Late) and 6 through 8. All of the subjects on Plates 0 through 8 were entered from one (or possibly two) 3-relief transfer rolls. Perforations were applied to sheets of stamps printed from Plates 2L, 3, 4, 5L, 6, 7 and 8; therefore, varieties from these plates exist both imperforate and perforated. Plates numbered 9 through 28 (including the three states of Plates 10 and 11) were made from a 6-relief transfer roll, and these plates only produced stamps that were issued with perforations.

Imprints were added to the 3¢ plates after printing from Plate 1 had commenced. Plate 1 Early was the only plate put to press before imprints were added; therefore, it is possible to have Plate 1E sheet-margin positions without the imprint where it would later appear (see lots 3010-3012). Imprints were added to certain plates before numbers were engraved. The first plate used to print the 3¢ stamps did not receive its number until October 1851; therefore, it is possible to have imprint examples without the plate number where it would later appear (see lots 3013-3015). Plate 0 is the only 3¢ plate that was taken out of service before plate numbers were first used, hence its designation as plate "0."

## THE 3-CENT 1851-57 TYPES

Starting with the 2008 edition of the Scott U.S. Specialized Catalogue, the 3¢ 1851-57 types were reclassified as follows:

**Type I**—outer frameline on all four sides; outer framelines at sides always recut, but **inner lines along tessellated lathework are not recut.**

Type I stamps:

Scott 10, Imperforate, Orange Brown (Plates 1E, 1i)

Scott 11, Imperforate, Dull Red shades (Plates 4, 6, 7, 8)

Scott 25, Perforated, Rose shades (Plates 4, 6, 7, 8)

**Type II**—outer framelines on all four sides; outer framelines at sides always recut and **inner lines along tessellated lathework are recut.**

Type II stamps:

Scott 10A, Imperforate, Orange Brown (Plates 1E, 1i, 2E, 5E, 0)

Scott 11A, Imperforate, Dull Red shades (Plates 1L, 2L, 3, 5L)

Scott 25A, Perforated, Rose shades (Plates 2L, 3, 5L)

**Type III**—no outer framelines at top or bottom; outer framelines at sides recut so as to be continuous from the top to bottom of plate. All Type III stamps were issued with perforations.

Type III stamps:

Scott 26, Perforated, Dull Red shades (Plates 9, 12-28)

**Type IV**—no outer framelines at top or bottom; outer framelines at sides recut individually on each subject and extend only to the top and bottom of the stamp design. Type IV stamps come only from Plates 10 and 11 (three states each), and these plates produced only Type IV stamps with perforations.

Type IV stamps:

Scott 26A, Perforated, Dull Red shades (Plates 10E, 10i, 10L, 11E, 11i, 11L)

The myriad transfer and recutting varieties found on the 3¢ 1851-57 plates were summarized in a very useful article, “The Three Cent Issue of 1851-1861: Condensed Plain Information,” by William K. McDaniel (*Chronicle* 77, pages 13-22, available in digitized format at [www.uspcs.org](http://www.uspcs.org)).

## THE 3-CENT 1851-57 COLORS

The basic color of the 3¢ 1851-57 stamp was produced by a nearly incalculable number of ink mixtures over a ten-year period. Specialists have devoted considerable time and effort to the consistent classification of 3¢ 1851-57 shades. The Scott Catalogue lists many of these shade varieties and assigns major numbers (10 and 10A) to the 1851 Orange Brown, while the other imperforate stamp shades are listed under Scott 11 and 11A.