



# Stamps and Color

By Tom Fortunato

A 2020 presentation for the Rochester Philatelic Association

# Introduction

There are two different approaches one can take to tackle the subject of stamps and color...

- **The Scientific**- discussing colorimetry, colloidal systems of fine pigment particles dispersed in a solvent (otherwise known as ink!), additive and subtractive color systems, X-ray diffraction to determine composition, spectral analysis, etc. For something like that, do a Google search and have fun.

A good site to start... <http://inventorartist.com/primary-colors/>

or...

- **The Relatable**- something understandable by everyone. If that's you, continue on!

# Introduction

Take a good look at this stamp.  
What color is it? Purple, dark purple, lilac, grape? Are you sure? How did you decide? How do stamp printers and catalogs describe its color? This brief presentation explores the role color plays in our philatelic hobby.

- What is Color?
- Describing Color
- Stamp Inks
- Printer Samples
- Stamp Color Guides
- Comparing Catalog Colors
- Fun with Stamp Color



# What is Color?



As defined on the Crayola crayon web site, “Color is the aspect of things that is caused by differing qualities of light being reflected or emitted by them. To see color, you have to have light. When light shines on an object some colors bounce off the object and others are absorbed by it. Our eyes only see the colors that are bounced off or reflected.”

# What is Color?

Start with the primary colors of blue, red and yellow.

Mixing these make others- blue and red make purple, red and yellow make orange, yellow and blue make green, and so on. Back in grade school you probably learned the acronym “ROYGBIV” to help remember the order of the color spectrum.

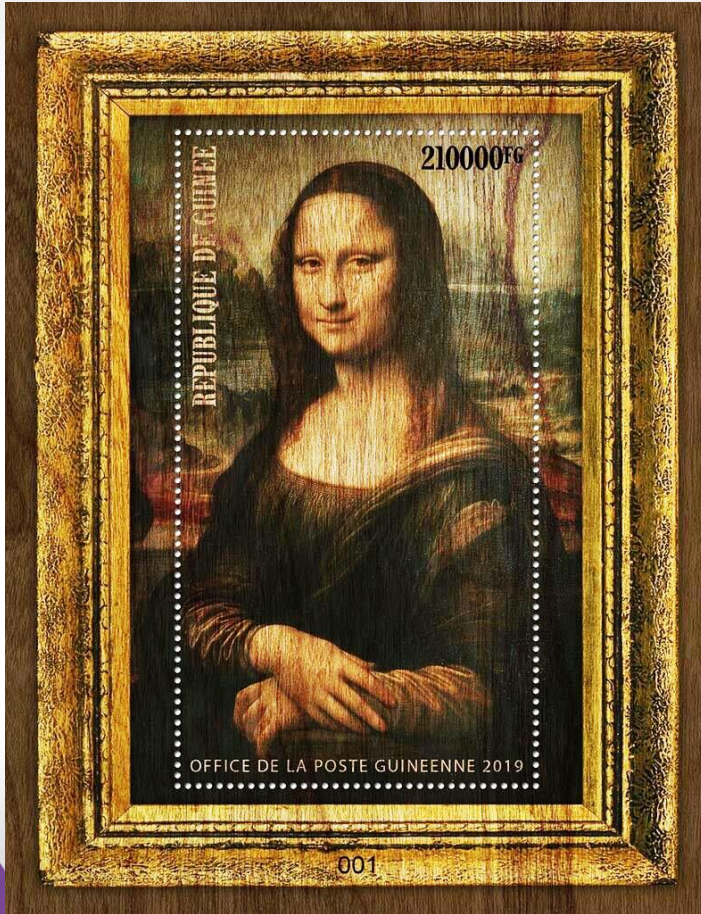


# Describing Color

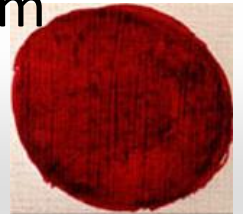
So, how can one describe a color? Think about it. While there are basic color names whose origins are perhaps lost to history, like “white,” many color shade and tone names come from flora, fauna and other natural things around us, like...

white	pearl	alabaster	snow			orange	tangerine	merigold	cider				
ivory	cream	egg shell	cotton			rust	ginger	tiger	fire				
chiffon	salt	lace	coconut			bronze	cantaloupe	apricot	clay				
linen	bone	green	chartreuse	juniper	sage	honey	carrot	squash	spice	brown	coffee	mocha	peanut
frost	porcelain	lime	fern	olive	emerald	marmalade	amber	sandstone	yam	carob	hickory	wood	pecan
		pear	moss	shamrock	seafoam					walnut	caramel	gingerbread	syrup
		pine	parakeet	mint	seaweed					chocolate	tortilla	umber	tawny
		pickle	pistachio	basil	crocodile					brunette	cinnamon	penny	cedar

# Describing Color



The color pallet of Renaissance artists was created by mixing oils and natural ingredients from plants and animals. One of the red pigments was made from cochineal beetles found on oak twigs. The color "Carmine lake" comes from the Latin word *carminium* from Sanskrit *krmija* (red dye) produced by a worm *krmī*=worm and from Latin *minium*=cinnabar/red lead.



# Describing Color

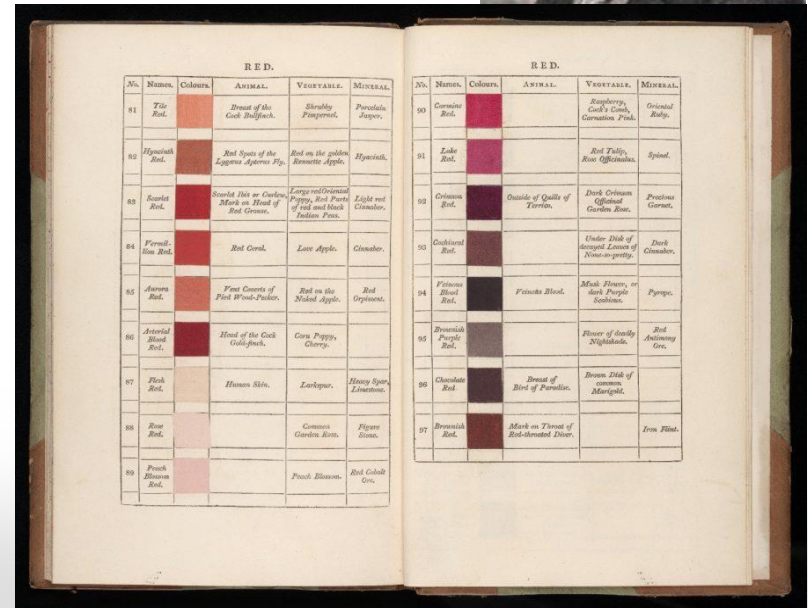
An early effort to standardize the nomenclature of color was by German mineralogist Abraham Gottlob who wrote, “Werner’s Nomenclature of Colours.” In 1814 it was updated by Scottish painter Patrick Syme who added color swatches using Gottlob’s specs. It was used by scientists and naturalists to describe the world around them. Printers used it to help identify ink colors.

Page through the English 1821 edition of the book online at:

[https://archive.org/stream/qri\\_c0003\\_3125012743312?ui=embed](https://archive.org/stream/qri_c0003_3125012743312?ui=embed) and

additional info at

<http://www.openculture.com/2018/09/an-interactive-online-version-of-werners-nomenclature-of-colours.html>



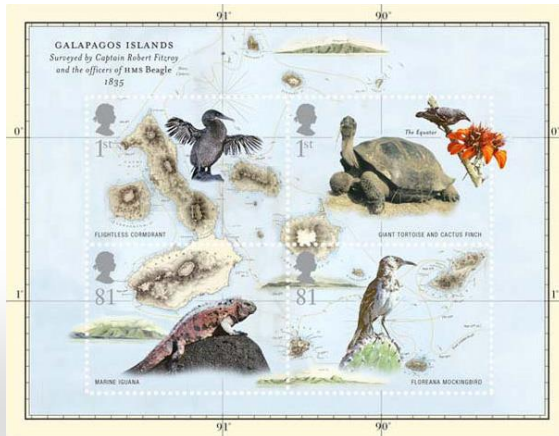


# Describing Color



The book had color tiles to compare the item in question with. It was found so useful that Charles Darwin referred to his second edition copy to describe the flora and fauna he found on his various expeditions around the world. Some of

these color names found their way into stamp printer vernacular.



# Stamp Inks

Fast forward to 1840 and the production of the world's first postage stamps. The consideration of their color was secondary only to the design itself. Black and blue were eventually decided on in part to best display the engraving artistry of the design and make them readily noticeable on an envelope.



# Stamp Inks



Red cancel ink formula: 1 pound printer's red ink, 1 pint linseed oil, 1/2 pint sweet oil droppings, all mixed well\*



Black cancel ink formula: black letterpress printer's ink\*

Within a month of their May release, a problem developed. Powder of creosote was being used to remove the red ink used to cancel the stamps. A black colored ink formula was then tried, again without success. On June 27 Rowland Hill wrote, "I shall prepare a report on the subject of obliteration, and propose to adapt (sic) a light colour for the penny stamps."

\* *"The Line Engraved Postage Stamps of Great Britain, vol. 1," Bacon, pp 90-91*

# Stamp Inks

Thus was born the “Rainbow Trials,” a series of experiments using different stamp ink formulations on different papers tested against various cancellation inks to determine the best combination to prevent stamp re-use.



# Stamp Inks



The eventual “winner” of the trials was, as Hill expected, a lighter colored stamp that could become well cancelled with black ink, the 1d “penny red.” The initial printing came from the same seven penny black plates, numbers 1A, 2, 5, 8, 9, 10, and 11. Plates 12 to 177 were used to print further imperf penny reds with corner alphabet sets I and II.

*Later printed block from plate 132 onward based on the margin star*

# Stamp Inks

But what color was it?

Like its predecessors, these were printed by Perkins, Bacon and Company. Claimed to be “pink” by J. B. Bacon, he said it was made from “rose-pink, prussiate of potash, cochineal, carbonate of potash, and oil.” The result was red-brown, but the nickname “penny red” stuck and is used to this day.



EXTERIOR OF MESSRS. PERKINS, BACON & CO.'S PREMISES  
WHITEFRIARS STREET, E.C., WHERE THE STAMPS WERE PRINTED.

# Stamp Inks



Color shades have several causes...

- inks and oils used obtained from different sources
- wrong ink formulations mixed
- absorbency of the paper
- viscosity of the ink when applied
- temperature and humidity of the printing room
- oxidation of ink over time
- chemical alteration after printing

# Printer Samples

Put yourself in the shoes of a stamp printer a century ago and even today. How could you best display your work to prospective clients and standardize specific colors by combining inks to be used in their various issues?

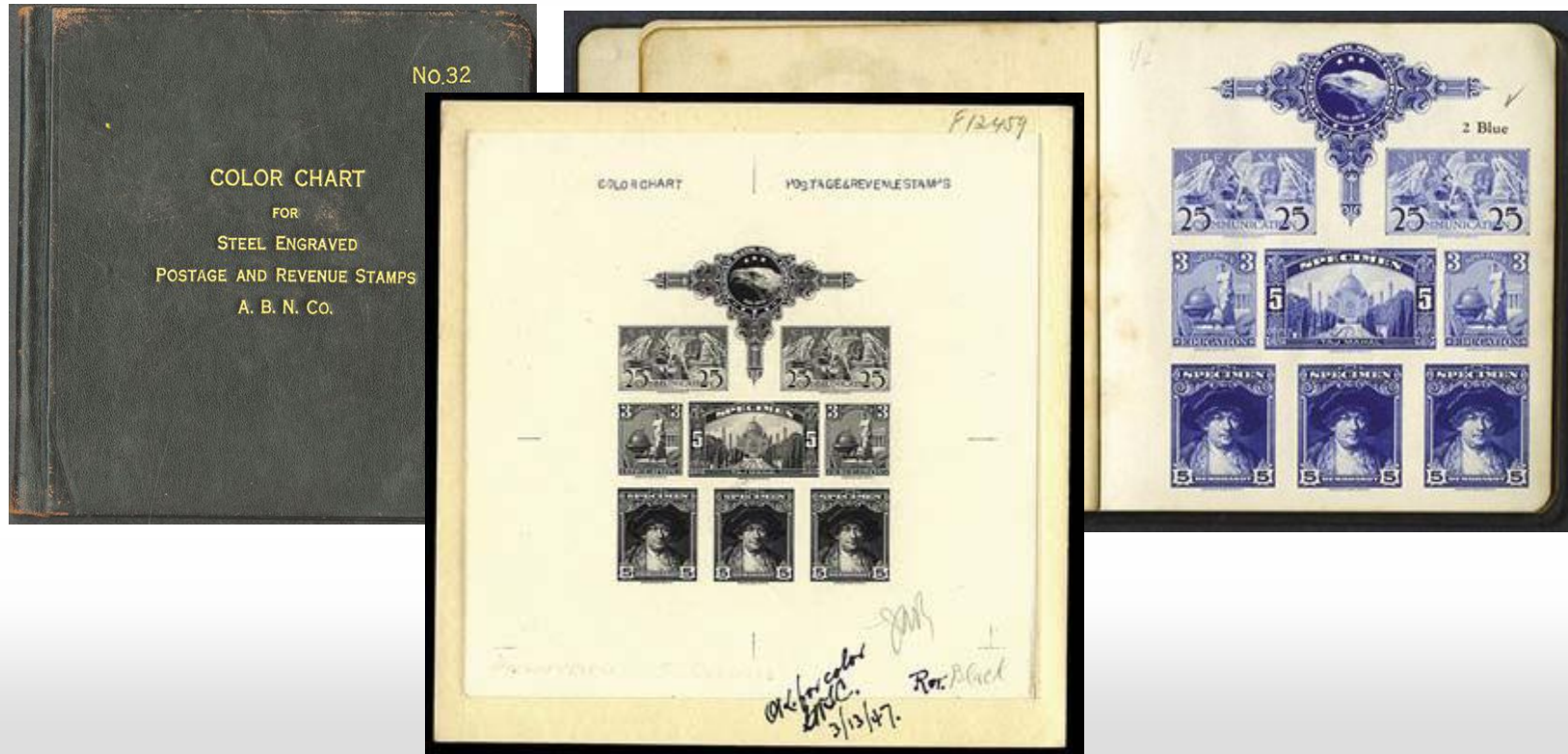
... By creating sample books and “dummy stamps.” The following pages give a representative look at these from several British and US printing firms.





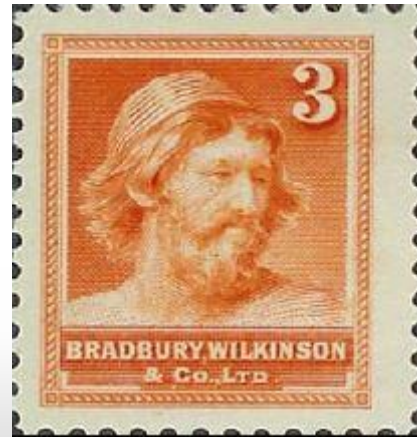
# Printer Samples

## American Bank Note Company (USA)



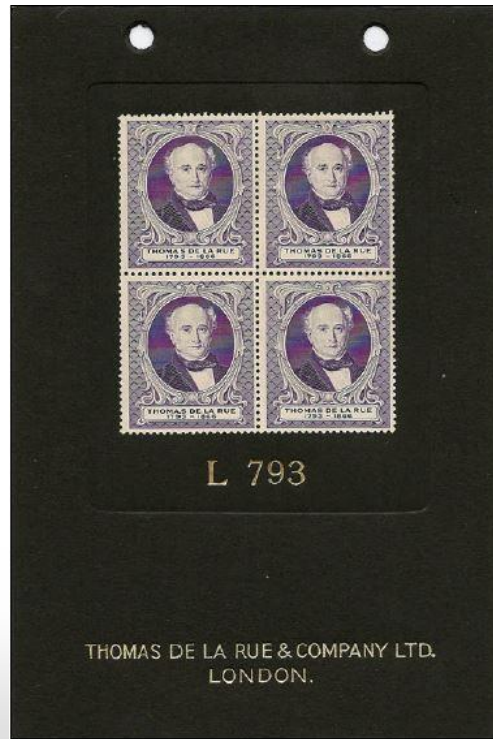
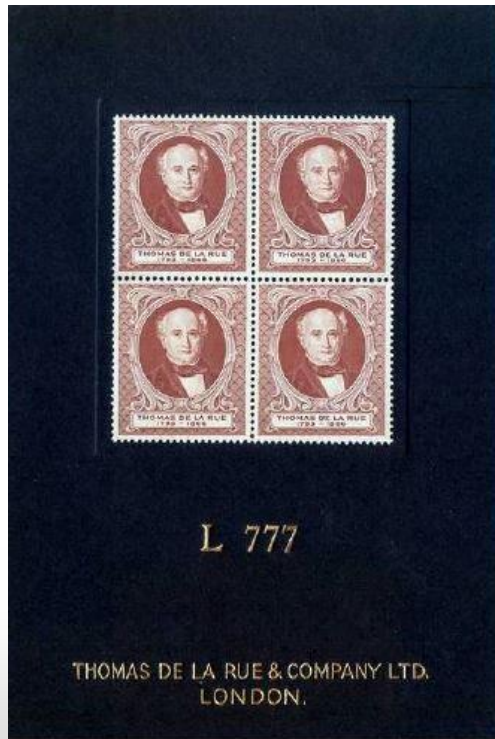
# Printer Samples

## Bradbury Wilkinson (Great Britain)



# Printer Samples

## Thomas De La Rue (Great Britain)



# Printer Samples

## Thomas De La Rue (Great Britain)

Samples made to distribute to printers taking over the Machin De La Rue production contract.



Amethyst

Ash Pink



Bright Pink

Cobalt Blue

Dark Blue

Dark Brown



Dark Green

Dark Grey

Dark Maroon

Dark Turquoise



Emerald Green

Flame

Grey Blue

Light Blue



Light Green

Light Grey

Light Tan

Lime Green



Mauve

Old Gold

Olive Green

Orange



Purple

Red

Rust

Sage Green



Salmon Pink

Sand

Sea Green

Shocking Pink



Slate Blue

Stone

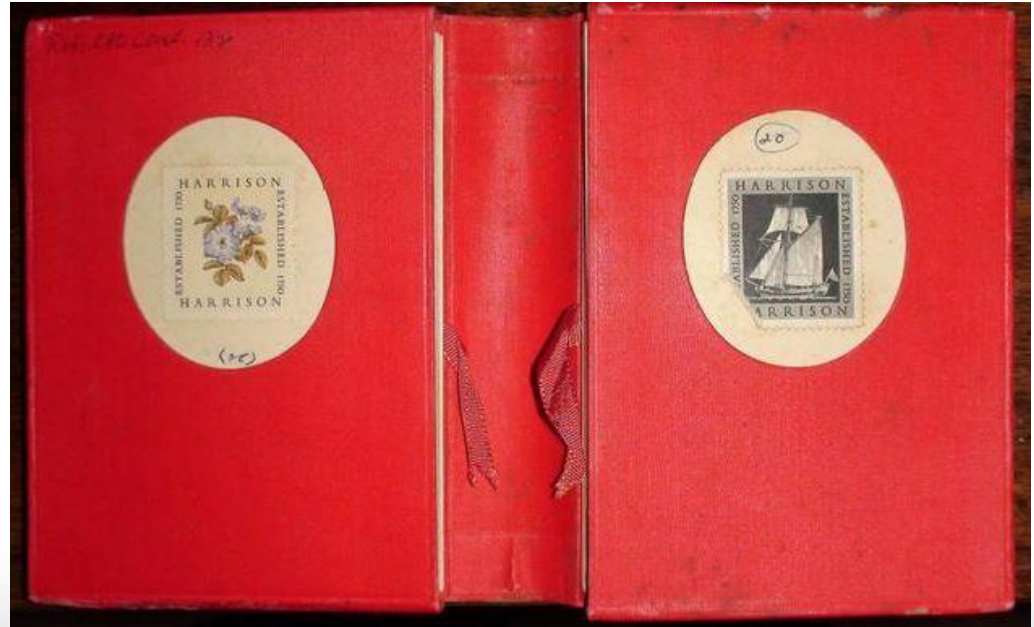
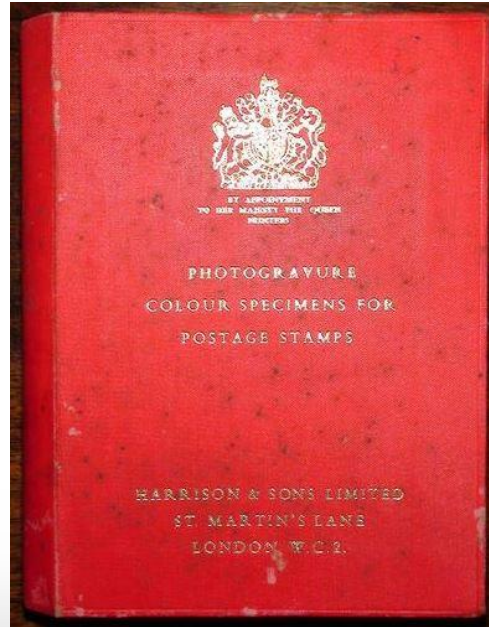
Terracotta

Ultramarine



# Printer Samples

## Harrison and Son (Great Britain)



Twenty color variation cards of both designs in each pocket.

# Printer Samples

## Harrison and Son (Great Britain)



*Maroon*  
No 11  
ONE COLOUR PHOTOGRAVURE SPECIMEN  
HARRISON & SONS



*Magenta*  
No 12  
ONE COLOUR PHOTOGRAVURE SPECIMEN  
HARRISON & SONS



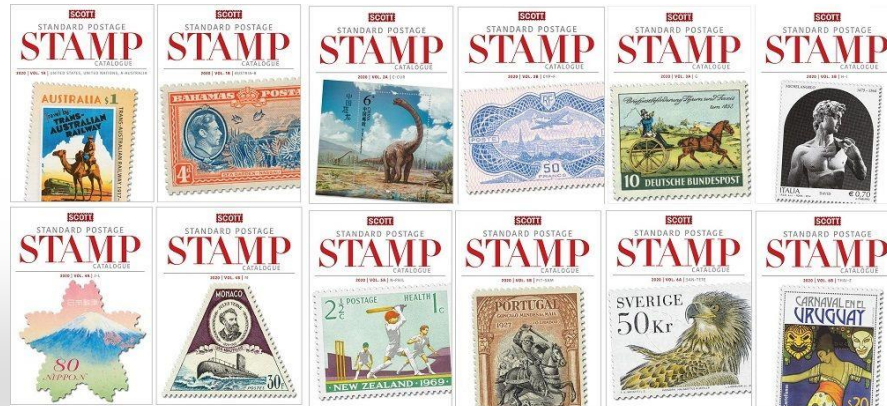
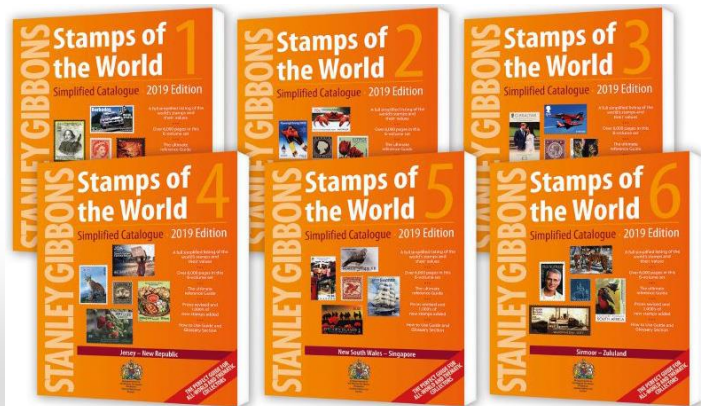
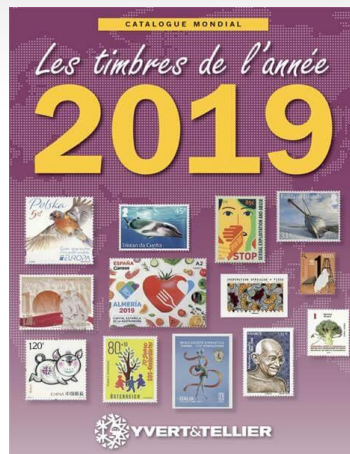
*Crimson*  
No 13  
ONE COLOUR PHOTOGRAVURE SPECIMEN  
HARRISON & SONS



*Scarlet*  
No 14  
ONE COLOUR PHOTOGRAVURE SPECIMEN  
HARRISON & SONS

# Stamp Color Guides

So how do stamp catalog publishers determine a stamp's color for their listings and how do you tell what color your stamp is? Unfortunately, there are no easy answers to these basic questions!



# Stamp Color Guides – Stanley Gibbons

12

Stanley, Gibbons, & Co.'s

	Un- used	Used	Un- used per Doc.	Used per Doc.		Un- used	Used	Un- used per Doc.	Used per Doc.
<b>GRANADA CONFEDERATION (continued).</b>					<b>GREAT BRITAIN (continued).</b>				
1867. <i>Various designs.</i>					6d. Oct. . . . . violet 3 0 2 1 6				
5 Centavos, oct. . . . . yellow	0	60	6	6	10d. . . . . brown	3	0	0	6
10 " rect. . . . . lilac	1	0	0	6	1s. " . . . . green	4	0	0	6
20 " " . . . . . blue	1	0	0	6	1857-8. <i>Without letters in angles.</i>				
40 " " . . . . . green	4	0	2	6	4d. Rect. . . . . rose	0	4	1	6
1 Peso " . . . . . vermilion	8	0	3	6	6d. " . . . . lilac	1	0	0	9
5 Pesos " . . . . . green	27	0	10	0	1s. " . . . . brown	0	3	0	6
10 " " . . . . . red	60	0	12	6	1862-5. <i>With small letters in angles.</i>				
1868. <i>Various designs.</i>					3d. Rect. . . . . pink				
5 Centavos, rect. . . . . yellow	0	0	0	6	4d. " . . . . red	0	8	0	6
10 " " . . . . . lilac	1	0	0	4	6d. " . . . . lilac	1	0	0	1
20 " " . . . . . blue	2	0	0	6	1s. " . . . . straw	1	0	0	6
25 " " . . . . . black on blue	2	0	0	9	1s. " . . . . green	2	0	0	2
50 " " . . . . . green	4	0	2	6	1865-73. <i>With large letters in angles.</i>				
1 Peso " . . . . . red	0	3	6	6	1d. Oblong . . . . . rose	1	10	1	0
5 " " . . . . . green	1	0	0	6	1d. Rect. . . . . red	0	20	1	0
10 " " . . . . . red	0	0	0	6	1d. " . . . . " "	0	20	1	1
1871-73. <i>Various designs.</i>					2d. " . . . . blue				
1 Centavo . . . . . green	0	2	1	6	3d. " . . . . pink	0	4	0	1
1 " " . . . . . rose	0	2	1	6	4d. " . . . . orange	0	4	0	1
2 " " . . . . . brown	0	4	2	6	6d. " . . . . lilac	0	5	0	1
5 " " . . . . . pale yellow	0	9	0	6	6d. " . . . . purple	0	5	0	1
<b>STAMPS FOR ADDITIONAL POSTAGE.</b>					6d. " . . . . brown				
1865. <i>Black imp.</i>					6d. " . . . . buff				
25 Centavos, rect. . . . . blue	2	61	6	6	6d. " . . . . grey	0	9	0	1
50 " " . . . . . yellow	4	6	2	6	10d. " . . . . straw	1	0	0	3
1 Peso " . . . . . rose	10	0	0	6	10d. " . . . . brown	1	3	0	2
1866-70. <b>UNPAID LETTER STAMPS.</b>					1s. " . . . . green				
21 Centavos, tria. . . . . lilac	6	4	6	6	2s. " . . . . blue	3	0	2	1
24 " " . . . . . violet	4	3	0	6	5s. " . . . . rose	0	0	6	4
1865-70. <b>REGISTRATION STAMPS.</b>					<b>ENVELOPES.</b>				
5 Centavos, square (A) . . . . . black	1	0	0	6	1d. Mulready, or cover . . . . . black	3	6	2	0
5 " " (B) . . . . . " "	1	0	1	0	2d. " . . . . blue	1	6	3	6
5 " " (C) . . . . . " "	1	0	9	0	1d. Oval, without date . . . . . pink	0	2	1	6
5 " " (A) . . . . . " "	1	0	9	0	1d. " with date . . . . . pink	0	4	2	6
25 " large obl. brown, yellow, &c. . . . . " "	2	6	2	6	3d. " without date . . . . . blue	1	0	1	6
50 " " . . . . . " "	5	0	0	6	2d. " with date . . . . . blue	0	4	0	2
50 " " . . . . . black	4	0	0	6	3d. Wavy border . . . . . rose	0	6	0	4
<b>BOLIVAR.</b>					4d. Circular . . . . . red				
1863-66. <b>ADHESIVE STAMPS.</b>					6d. Octagon . . . . . violet				
10 Cent, small rect. . . . . rose	2	0	0	6	7d. (3d. and 4d.) . . . . . rose and red	1	6	0	6
10 " " . . . . . green	1	0	0	6	9d. (3d. and 6d.) . . . . . rose and violet	1	6	0	6
1 Peso " . . . . . red	9	6	0	6	10d. (4d. and 6d.) . . . . . red and violet	1	8	0	6
<b>CUNDINAMARCA.</b>					1s. Octagon . . . . . green				
1870-3. <i>Arms.</i>					1s. 3d. (3d. and 1s.) . . . . . rose and green				
5 Centavos . . . . . blue	0	9	6	0	1s. 4d. (4d. and 1s.) . . . . . red and green	2	6	0	6
10 " " . . . . . red	1	3	0	6	1s. 6d. (6d. and 1s.) . . . . . violet and green	3	0	0	6
20 " " . . . . . green	1	0	0	6	1870. <b>BANDS FOR PRINTED MATTER.</b>				
1 Peso " . . . . . red	1	0	0	6	1d. Long rect. (no date) . . . . . green	1	10	10	0
<b>TOLIMA.</b>					1d. " (with date) . . . . . " "				
1870.					POST CARDS.				
5 Centavos . . . . . brown	1	0	0	6	1d. Rect. . . . . lilac	1	10	10	0
10 " " . . . . . blue	1	0	0	6	1d. " . . . . . rose	0	2	0	6
50 " " . . . . . dark green	6	0	0	6	<b>GREECE.</b>				
1 Peso " . . . . . red	1	0	0	6	<b>ADHESIVE STAMPS.</b>				
<b>GREAT BRITAIN.</b>					1860. <i>Without figure at back.</i>				
1840-47. <i>Letters in lower angles only.</i>					1 Lepton, rect. . . . . maroon				
1d. Rect. . . . . black	1	60	1	0	2 " " . . . . . light buff	0	8	0	6
1d. " " . . . . . red brown	0	60	1	0	5 " " . . . . . green	1	0	0	6
1d. " V.R. . . . . black	0	60	1	0	20 " " . . . . . blue	1	0	0	6
2d. " <i>Without white lines.</i> . . . . . blue	0	2	1	6	40 " " . . . . . violet	1	0	0	6
2d. " <i>With white lines.</i> . . . . . " "	0	1	3	0	80 " " . . . . . rose	0	9	0	6
					1861. <i>With figure at back.</i>				
					1 Lepton, rect. . . . . light brown	1	10	10	40
					2 " " . . . . . light buff	1	10	10	60
					5 " " . . . . . green	2	11	11	30

Here's a page from the 1874 Stanley Gibbon's Stamp Catalogue describing worldwide issues, their denominations, colors and pricing. The colors listed seem rather basic, including those of Great Britain's earliest issues.

## GREAT BRITAIN.

### ADHESIVE STAMPS.

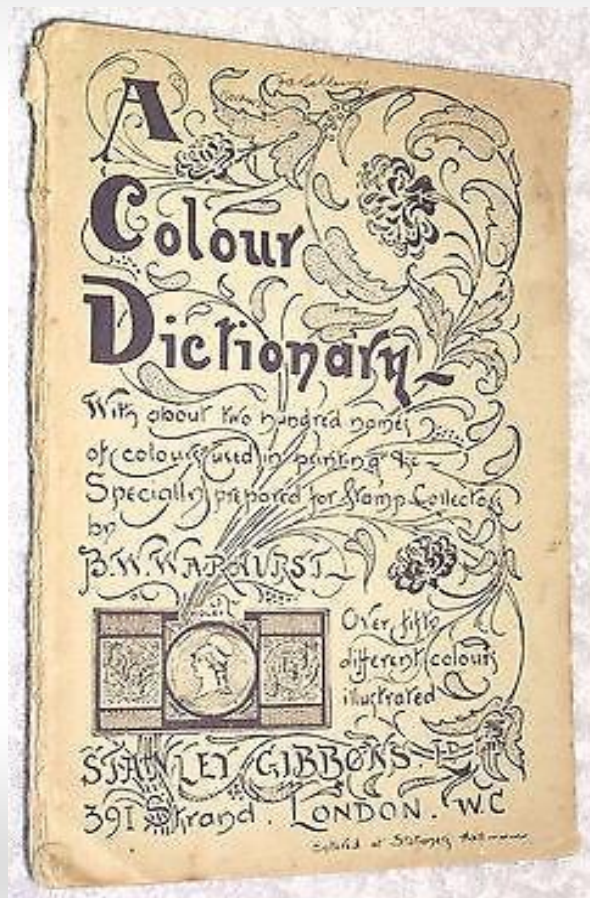
1840-47. *Letters in lower angles only.*

1d. Rect.	.	.	black	1	60	1	0	6
1d. " "	.	.	red brown	0	60	1		
1d. " V.R.	.	.	black					
2d. " <i>Without white lines.</i>	.	.	blue	0	2	1	1	6
2d. " <i>With white lines.</i>	.	.	" "	0	1			



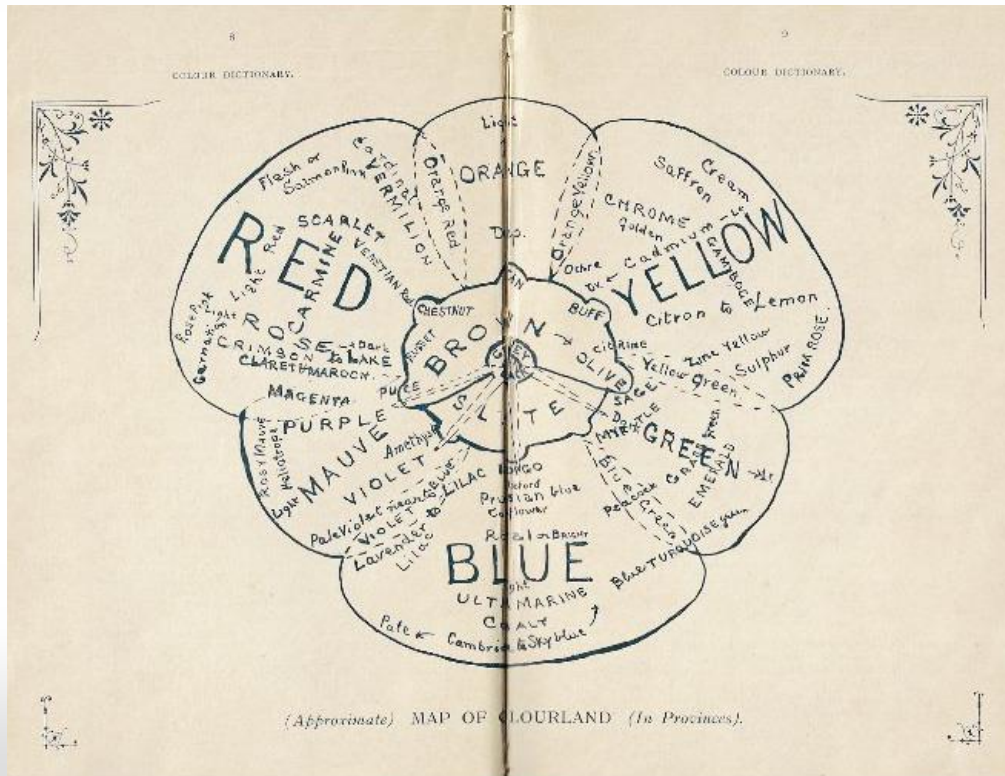
# Stamp Color Guides – Stanley Gibbons

As time went on, color names for stamps and shades became more descriptive, especially when identifying more pricey varieties and newer issues. Stanley Gibbons took the lead by publishing “A Colour Dictionary” in 1899 as a listing naming 200 colors and reproducing 56 color images in concordance with catalog listings. This booklet underwent two revisions published in 1908 and 1913.

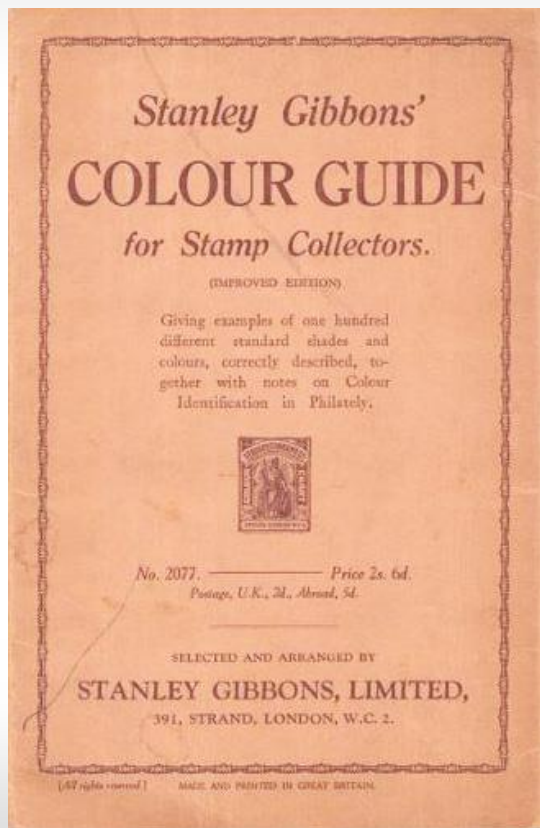


# Stamp Color Guides – Stanley Gibbons

Pages from Stanley Gibbon's 1899 "A Colour Dictionary."



# Stamp Color Guides – Stanley Gibbons



Stanley Gibbons teamed up with two stamp printers to produce an updated “Colour Guide for Stamp Collectors” in the 1920s. Perkins, Bacons & Co., Ltd. printed 100 color reference labels found in the booklet. Attaching the labels was very labor intensive. Interestingly the back cover refers to Harrisons and Sons, Ltd. as the manufacturer of the guide. Colors were matched by Perkins to Gibbons’, “actual stamps chosen by us as samples.”

# Stamp Color Guides – Stanley Gibbons

## Pages from the 1920s “Colour Guide for Stamp Collectors”

### Colour Identification in Philately.

OUR recent attempt to provide collectors with a COLOUR GUIDE composed of actual stamps representing standard shades, has met with such success, that we have been encouraged to pursue the idea still further and the present larger and improved Guide is the result.

In any case, it would have been impossible to continue turning out the previous COLOUR GUIDE in sufficient numbers to meet the demand, both on account of the difficulty of procuring enough of the particular stamps chosen to represent the colours and also owing to the variation in shade of many of these, through successive printings. We have now overcome this difficulty by having printed by the famous firm of experienced stamp printers, Messrs. Perkins, Bacon & Co., Ltd., a series of “labels” specially designed for us. The printing, gumming and perforating of these have been done by actual processes used for the production of postage stamps, while the colours are matched to those of actual stamps chosen by us as samples. We have thus been able to standardise the colours shown and to give a much larger selection of shades.

The identification of stamp-colours is a task of some difficulty to many collectors. While there is an infinite range of shade variations as a result of actual printing, there is also considerable divergence of opinion regarding the naming of even standard colours. Our catalogue lists, for example, have been compiled from time to time by different expert philatelists, who have not always been in agreement in the matter of colour description. Then, too, certain of the “classic” stamps have come to be recognised under a particular name, e.g., France, 1 franc, “orange-vermilion,” and the “scarlet-vermilion” and “orange-vermilion” of the early Newfoundland issues. Some modern collectors may not agree with every such description, but the stamps are generally known under these names and alterations would therefore be inadvisable.

The use of colour-names in Philately is for identification, and must be largely comparative, as between stamps of the same issue. Thus it might be necessary (as in the case of the 3d, King George V, Great Britain) to use the terms red-violet and blue-violet to denote distinct shades, while elsewhere, where only one shade was in question, the name “violet” would be sufficient to describe it.

The modern resources of the colour-trade have brought into use shades and colours unimagined by the pioneers of stamp-printing, and even the same ink-mixing would give different effects according to the different printing processes used, as line-engraving, typography, lithography, etc. Thus we get infinite gradations of a particular shade, which must all be classed under the same general heading, helped out by such modifications as “dull,” “deep,” “bright,” “pale” and so on, when distinction becomes necessary. Such are only some of the difficulties of this question, but we shall try to make the present GIBBONS’ COLOUR GUIDE our standard in future additions to the catalogue.

By the use of the accompanying labels in key-colours, however, the collector should be able to classify the majority of the shades he will meet with, bearing in mind the fact that in compound names the second is the predominant and the first the qualifying colour; thus orange-yellow designates yellow tending to orange, whilst yellow-orange would describe a redder shade, nearer to true orange.

Colour identification is best done in daylight, as artificial light changes the appearance of many shades, while shades which differ by daylight cannot always be readily distinguished under other conditions.

A few remarks on colour in general may perhaps be helpful. Treating the whole colour system as a circle, we get broadly red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, to red again. Dividing these, we may commence the “red” group with crimson, the nearest to purple; carmine, a bright pinkish but not pure red, familiar in cookery as “cochineal”; rose; red proper, which is brick red, and by a side line, shades readily into a class of the browns; scarlet, a bright pure red without admixture of either blue or yellow; vermilion, the brightest and lightest of the reds, and easily shaded to orange, which brings us to the next group, one that is easily followed by decreasing tones of yellow, through chrome, a full bright yellow, down to lemon-yellow, whence the greens may be reached. But first there is another side track to the browns, through buff, to bistre, yellow-brown, etc.; this is really a loop line which can be followed through bistre and ochre by shades to cinnamon and chestnut, eventually to meet the reds again. Continuing on the main line, we get varying intensities of yellow-green, pale or deep, up to full grass-green, and then through emerald we begin to approach the blues. But in the greens, too, there is a considerable hinterland where the influence of greys and browns gives us sage-green on one side and olive on the other. Peacock, midway between blue and green, is not to be found in the Catalogue, but a deeper and bluer colour is Prussian blue. A very large number of widely divergent hues are included amongst the blues. The Catalogue is not too precise in particularizing some of these, except as “deep,” “bright,” “dull,” etc., in fact both in this colour and in several others, we have a shortage of names in general philatelic use to describe the numerous shades of different quality which may be found. Cobalt is used, described in our original COLOUR DICTIONARY as “a delicate grey sky-blue”; while “Royal” must be taken as a very pure full blue. Ultramarine is frequently used; this is a pure blue without any trace of green; it may be pale or deep, and in the latter state it comes near to Royal, or what is more often described as “bright” blue. Indigo demands a generous toning with black. Continuing the circle, the influence of red begins to make itself felt again and nearest to blue we get violet, which may be called indigo-violet in some of the deepest shades; still, blue predominates over red as far as the lilacs, which commonly have a tinge of slate in their composition. With mauve, we are about half-way between violet and purple, but a wide range of shades is classed under this name by many people (particularly in America), including the paler shades of purple, “pale purple” not being a very happy description. Admixtures of purple with various browns produce maroon, plum and chocolate, whilst the further shading into red gives us the shades known as claret, purple-lake, crimson-lake, and we are then back again at our starting point.



1. Brown-Lake.

2. Lake  
(Newfoundland 1861-2).



6. Carmine.

7. Carmine-Red.

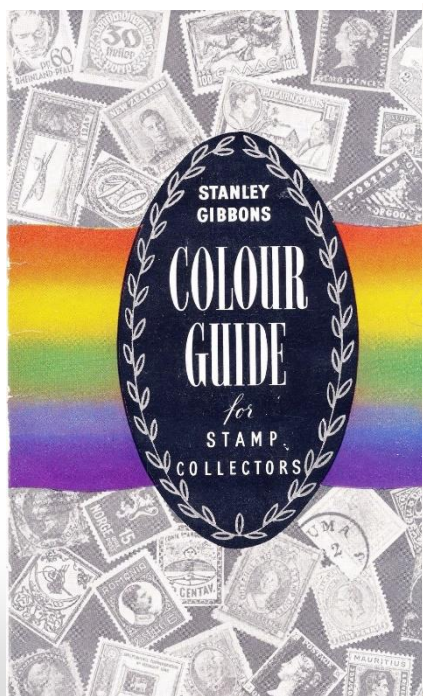
# Stamp Color Guides – Stanley Gibbons

## Pages from the 1920s “Colour Guide for Stamp Collectors”



# Stamp Color Guides – Stanley Gibbons

Gibbons' circa 1960 guide (Publication 3333) listed 75 “most useful” colors for stamp descriptions using labeled color blocks.



# Stamp Color Guides – Stanley Gibbons

Publication 3333's 1966 edition increased to 100 color tiles.



# Stamp Color Guides – Stanley Gibbons

Later Gibbons' guides are much smaller and user friendly with holes in the 200 color tiles to allow better comparison viewing.



2020 Listing of Stanley Gibbons Stamp Colour Key shades: <http://www.acsc-history.info/Dshades.aspx>

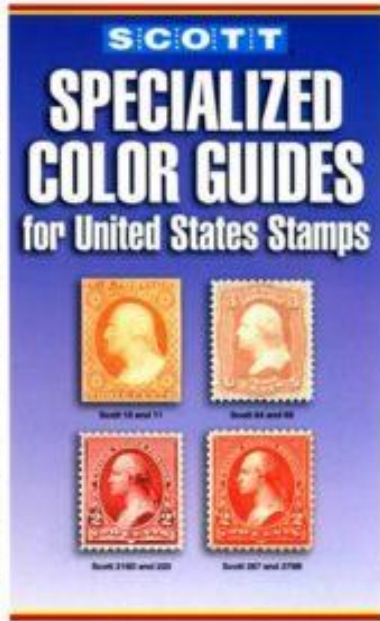


# Stamp Color Guides – Others

Of course Stanley Gibbons was not the only firm producing color guides for collectors. Here is an unidentified German guide dated from 1917 with French and English translations.



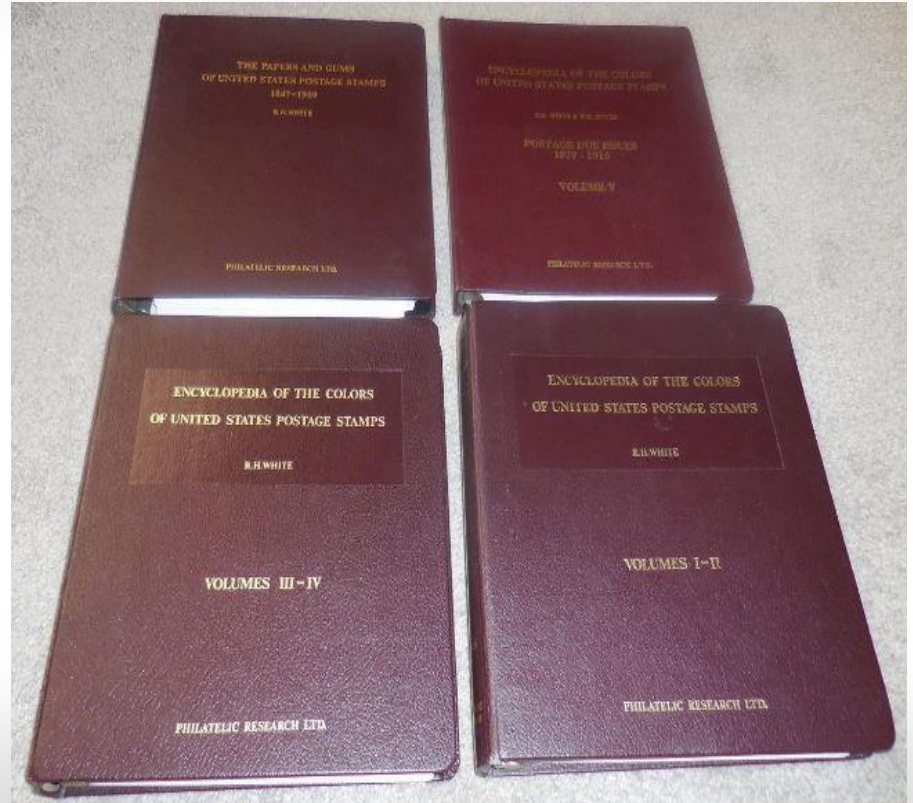
# Stamp Color Guides – Others



Amos Hobby Publishing, parent company of both Scott Publishing Company and Linn's Stamp News, released a 39 page book in 2005, "Specialized Color Guides for United States Stamps" with Munsell color system chips covering four early US definitive issues.

# Stamp Color Guides – Others

The masterwork of US color guides is, “Encyclopedia of the Colors of United States Postage Stamps,” five volumes in four binders. It covers 1847 to 1918 issues complete with Scott color shades for most issues. When available the 1981 set can sell for \$500+.



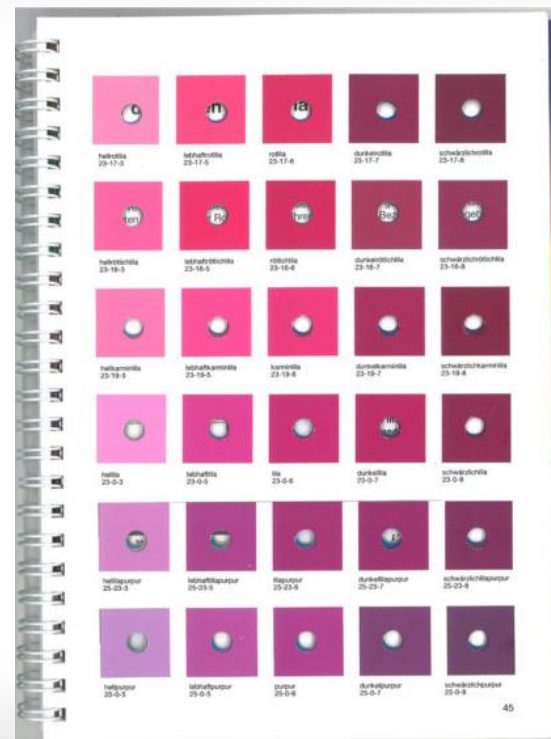
# Stamp Color Guides – Others



Sample reduced sized pages from the loose-leaf, “Encyclopedia of the Colors of United States Postage Stamps.”

# Stamp Color Guides – Others

German catalog publisher Michel has their own color guide, “Farbenführer,” that coordinates 600+ shades with those used in their worldwide catalogs.



# Stamp Color Guides – Others

English Colour Designation	German Colour Designation	Code Number from the MICHEL Colour Guide
black	schwarz	3 – 0 – 6
black grey-blue (indigo)	schwarzgraublau (indigo)	31 – 2 – 9
black-grey	schwarzgrau	2 – 0 – 9
blackish blue	schwärzlichblau	31 – 0 – 8
blackish blue-green	schwärzlichblaugrün	39 – 31 – 8
blackish blue-violet	schwärzlichblauviolett	27 – 31 – 8
blackish bluish green	schwärzlichbläulichgrün	39 – 30 – 8
blackish bluish violet	schwärzlichbläulichviolett	27 – 30 – 8
blackish brown	schwärzlichbraun	11 – 0 – 8
blackish brown-carmine	schwärzlichbraunkarmin	19 – 11 – 8
blackish brownish carmine	schwärzlichbräunlichkarmin	19 – 10 – 8
blackish brownish lilac	schwärzlichbräunlichlila	23 – 10 – 8
blackish brownish olive	schwärzlichbräunlicholiv	7 – 01 – 8
blackish brownish red	schwärzlichbräunlichrot	17 – 10 – 8
blackish brown-lilac	schwärzlichbraunlila	23 – 11 – 8
blackish brown-ochre	schwärzlichbraunocker	9 – 11 – 8
blackish brown-olive	schwärzlichbraunoliv	7 – 11 – 8
blackish brown-orange	schwärzlichbraunorange	13 – 11 – 8
blackish brown-purple	schwärzlichbraunpurpur	25 – 11 – 8
blackish brown-red	schwärzlichbraunrot	17 – 11 – 8
blackish brown-violet	schwärzlichbraunviolett	27 – 11 – 8
blackish brown-yellow	schwärzlichbraungelb	5 – 11 – 8
blackish carmine	schwärzlichkarmin	19 – 0 – 8
blackish carmine-brown	schwärzlichkarminbraun	11 – 19 – 8
blackish carmine-lilac	schwärzlichkarminlila	23 – 19 – 8
blackish carmine-red	schwärzlichkarminrot	17 – 19 – 8
blackish chrome yellow	schwärzlichchromgelb	6 – 0 – 8
blackish cobalt	schwärzlichkobalt	33 – 0 – 8
blackish cobalt-blue	schwärzlichkobaltblau	31 – 33 – 8
blackish cyan-blue	schwärzlichcyanblau	31 – 34 – 8
blackish emerald-green	schwärzlichsmaragdgrün	39 – 43 – 8
blackish green	schwärlichgrün	39 – 0 – 8
blackish green-blue	schwärlichgrünblau	31 – 39 – 8
blackish greenish blue	schwärlichgrünlichblau	31 – 38 – 8
blackish greenish olive	schwärlichgrünlicholiv	7 – 38 – 8
blackish greenish yellow	schwärlichgrünlichgelb	5 – 38 – 8
blackish green-olive	schwärlichgrünoliv	7 – 39 – 8
blackish green-yellow	schwärlichgrün gelb	5 – 39 – 8
blackish grey	schwärlichgrau	2 – 0 – 8
blackish grey-brown	schwärlichgraubraun	11 – 2 – 8
blackish grey-green	schwärlichgraugrün	39 – 2 – 8
blackish grey-lilac	schwärlichgraulila	23 – 2 – 8

English Colour Designation	German Colour Designation	Code Number from the MICHEL Colour Guide
blackish grey-olive	schwärlichgrauoliv	7 – 2 – 8
blackish grey-purple	schwärlichgraupurpur	25 – 2 – 8
blackish grey-red	schwärlichgraurot	17 – 2 – 8
blackish grey-turquoise	schwärlichgrautürkis	35 – 2 – 8
blackish grey-ultramarine	schwärlichgrauultramarin	29 – 2 – 8
blackish grey-violet	schwärlichgrauviolett	27 – 2 – 8
blackish grey-yellow	schwärlichgraugelb	5 – 2 – 8
blackish lilac	schwärlichlila	23 – 0 – 8
blackish lilac-brown	schwärlichlilabraun	11 – 23 – 8
blackish lilac-carmine	schwärlichlilakarmin	19 – 23 – 8
blackish lilac-pink	schwärlichlilarosa	21 – 23 – 8
blackish lilac-purple	schwärlichlilapurpur	25 – 23 – 8
blackish lilac-red	schwärlichlilarot	17 – 23 – 8
blackish lilac-ultramarine	schwärlichlilaultramarin	29 – 23 – 8
blackish magenta	schwärlichmagenta	22 – 0 – 8
blackish ochre	schwärlichocker	9 – 0 – 8
blackish ochre-brown	schwärlichockerbraun	11 – 9 – 8
blackish olive	schwärlicholiv	7 – 0 – 8
blackish olive-brown	schwärlicholivbraun	11 – 7 – 8
blackish olive-green	schwärlicholivgrün	39 – 7 – 8
blackish olive-yellow	schwärlicholivgelb	5 – 7 – 8
blackish opal-green	schwärlichopalgrün	39 – 41 – 8
blackish orange	schwärlichorange	13 – 0 – 8
blackish orange-brown	schwärlichorangebraun	11 – 13 – 8
blackish orange-red	schwärlichorangerot	17 – 13 – 8
blackish orange-yellow	schwärlichorange gelb	5 – 13 – 8
blackish pink	schwärlichrosa	21 – 0 – 8
blackish pink-lilac	schwärlichrosalila	23 – 21 – 8
blackish pink-red	schwärlichrosarot	17 – 21 – 8
blackish prussian-blue	schwärlichpreußischblau	31 – 37 – 8
blackish purple	schwärlichpurpur	25 – 0 – 8
blackish purple-violet	schwärlichpurpurviolett	27 – 25 – 8
blackish red	schwärlichrot	17 – 0 – 8
blackish red-brown	schwärlichrotbraun	11 – 17 – 8
blackish red-carmine	schwärlichrotkarmin	19 – 17 – 8
blackish reddish brown	schwärlichrötlichbraun	11 – 16 – 8
blackish reddish carmine	schwärlichrötlichkarmin	19 – 16 – 8
blackish reddish lilac	schwärlichrötlichlila	23 – 16 – 8
blackish reddish orange	schwärlichrötlichorange	13 – 16 – 8
blackish reddish yellow	schwärlichrötlichgelb	5 – 16 – 8
blackish red-lilac	schwärlichrotlila	23 – 17 – 8
blackish red-orange	schwärlichrotorange	13 – 17 – 8

Michel also utilizes color code numbers that can be used to identify shades.

# Comparing Catalog Colors

Stamp catalog color listings continue to be more divergent as additional varieties and shades come to light for older and newer issues. Do a quick color comparison among them for a few issues.

Australia 1914  
KGV definitive,  
4d denomination



5



5a

Stanley Gibbons  
Commonwealth and  
British Empire  
catalogue, 2004 edition


22	4d. orange (6.1.15)	27-00	2-8
	a. Yellow-orange (1915)	27-00	3-2
	b. Lemon-yellow (3.16)	70-00	14-0
	c. Pale orange-yellow (1.17)	65-00	11-0
	d. Dull orange (1920)	42-00	3-2
	e. Line through "FOUR PENCE" (PI 2 right pane R. 2/6) (all shades)	From £300	90-0
	w. Wmk inverted	40-00	12-0

Scott's Catalogue,  
Volume A-B, 2009 edition

31	A4	4p orange ('15)	40.00	3.50
		Never hinged	80.00	
	a.	4p yellow	120.00	27.50
		Never hinged	525.00	

Yvert & Tellier Overseas  
Volume III, 1972 edition

- yellow-orange
  - a. yellow

25	2 p. orange	6	»	0	35		
26	2 p. rouge	2	50	0	30		
27	4 p. jne-orange	16	»	4	»	b	
	a. jaune	20	»	10	»		
28	4 p. violet	10	»	5	25		
29	4 p. outremer	.	.	24	»	6	»

# Comparing Catalog Colors

## Germany 1922-23 Airmails

1922-23. — Fil. B. Dentelés 14.			
3	25 p. marron	1 35	2 50
4	40 p. orange	1 50	3 »
5	50 p. violet	0 50	1 25
6	60 p. rouge	1 50	2 75
7	80 p. vert	1 50	2 75
Format plus grand (22×28). Dentelés 13×13½.			
8	1 m. vert et vert-jaune	0 50	0 75
9	2 m. carmin et gris . .	0 50	0 75
10	3 m. bleu foncé et gris. □	0 50	0 75
11	5 m. vermillon et jaune	0 50	0 75
12	10 m. violet et rose . .	0 55	0 75
13	25 m. brun et jaune . .	0 55	0 75
14	100 m. olive et rose. . .	0 55	0 75



C12	AP3	10m vio & rose ( <sup>23</sup> )	.20	10.50
C13	AP3	25m brn & yel ( <sup>23</sup> )	.20	8.50
C14	AP3	100m ol grn & rose ( <sup>23</sup> )	.20	7.25

Scott's Catalogue, Volume I  
A-B, 2009 edition

Yvert & Tellier Europe Volume II,  
1972 edition

- violet and rose
- brown and yellow
- olive and rose



1923, Febr./April. Flp.-Erg.- Werte (Fe 1). Bdr. mit farbigem Unter- druck; Wz. 2; gez. K 13:13¼.					
Fe 1) Holztaube		*	**	⊙	✉
235.	10 Mk. dkl'- bis schw'rötl'- lila/karmin (28.2.) . . . . .	—40	1.50	35.—	50.—
236.	25 Mk. sienna/mattgelb (28.2.) . . . . .	—40	1.50	28.—	45.—
237.	100 Mk. dkl'oliv/matt- orangerot (April) . . . . .	—40	1.50	24.—	45.—
Satzpreis (3 W.)		1.20	4.—	85.—	
Paare mit Zwischensteg siehe vor Probedrucke.					
Weitere Werte in gleicher oder ähnlicher Zeichnung: Nr. 210 bis 218, 263-267, 344-350.					

Michel Germany Specialized 1998 edition

- dark red lilac and carmine
- sienna brown and pale yellow
- dark olive and pale orange-red



# Comparing Catalog Colors

## Italy 1965 Commemoratives



Jet Plane,  
Moon and  
Airletter  
Border  
A491

Design: 40 l, Control tower and plane.

1965, Nov. 3

922 A491 40 l dk Prus bl & red .20 .20

**Unwmk.**

923 A491 90 l red, grn, dp bl & buff .20 .20

Night air postal network.

Scott's Catalogue, Vol 3 G-I,  
2009 edition



935 40 l. ardoise et rouge. . . . . 0 75 0 30

936 90 l. polychrome . . . . . 1 50 0 70

Yvert & Tellier Europe Volume II,  
1972 edition

- slate and red
- multicolored



Dis.: L. Gasbarra (40 l.) e S. De Stefani (90 l.).

1009 40 l. azz. nero e rosso . . . . . 0,25 0,25  
1010 90 l. policromo . . . . . 0,25 0,25

Sassone Italy Spec., 2007 edition

- blue black and red
- multicolored

1965, 3. Nov. So.-Ausg. zur Einrichtung eines  
nächtlichen Flugpostnetzes. RaTdr.; Nr. 1193 Wz. 4,  
Nr. 1194 oWz.; gez. K 14.



abp) Flug-  
zeug und  
Flughafen-  
turm ☐ L.  
Gasbarra

abr) Luft-  
post-Brief-  
umschlag,  
im Kreis  
stil. Flug-  
zeug ☐ De  
Stefani

1193. 40 L. dunkelgraublau/rot . . . . . abp —.50 —.40  
1194. 90 L. mehrfarbig . . . . . abr —.50 —.60  
FDC 2.75

Auflagen: Nr. 1193 = 14 772 347, Nr. 1194 = 7 284 492 Stück.

Gültig bis 31.12.1966.

Michel Europe West 1997/98 edition

- dark grey blue and red
- multicolored



425. Douglas DC-6B  
Airliner passing  
Control-tower.

1965. Night Airmail Service.  
1145 425 40 l. red and blue . . . . . 15 10  
1146 — 90 l. multicoloured . . . . . 15 10  
DESIGN: 90 l. Sud Aviation Caravelle jetliner  
within airmail envelope "border".

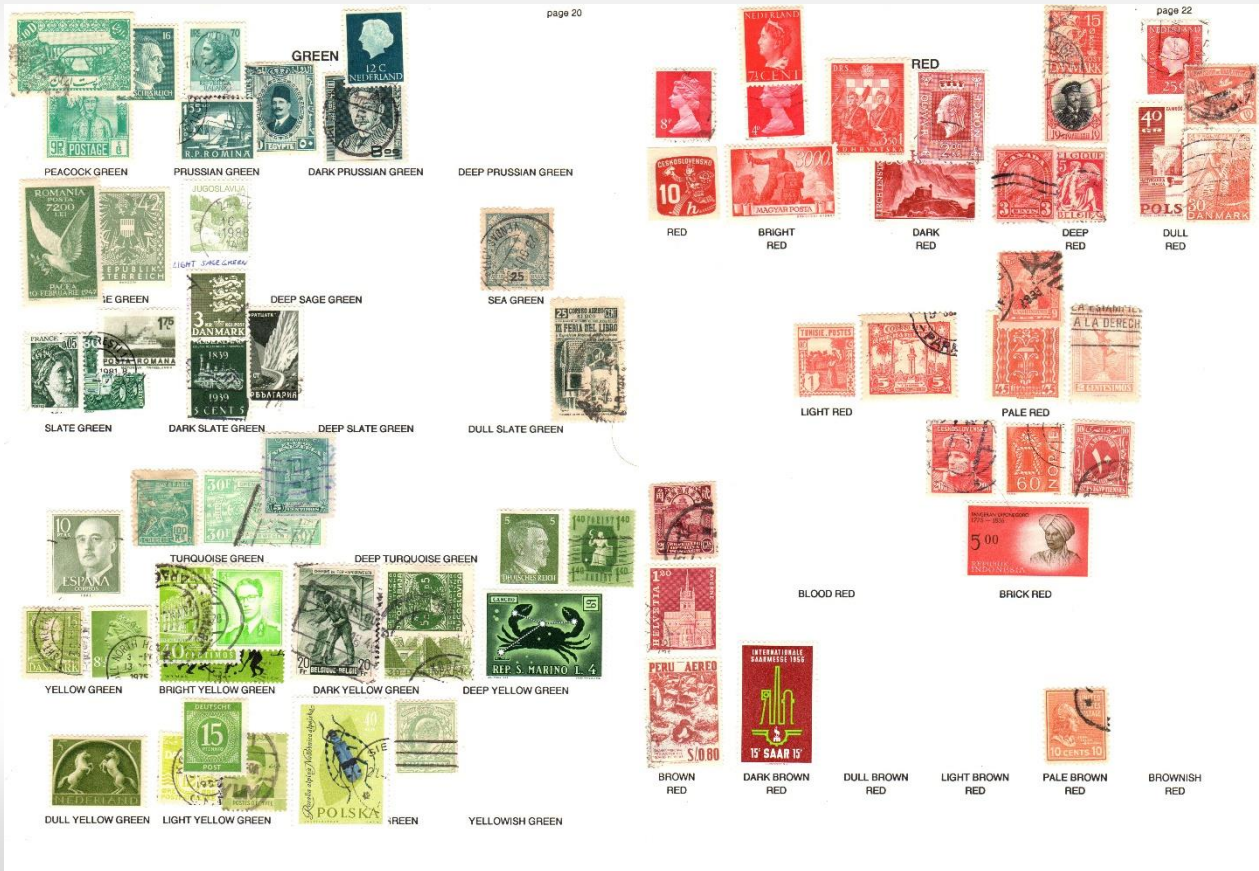
Stanley Gibbons Stamps of the World,  
Volume I A-J, 1999 edition

## Comparing Catalog Colors

When asked to comment about his role in listing stamp colors, Martin J. Frankevicz, New Issues Editor for Scott's at Amos Media wrote,

*“We do have a color guide that we use in the office. It’s a notebook full of stock pages that have older stamps on them along with the color names they were assigned. I don’t use it all that often, however. For the most part, I don’t really have to because 99% of the stamps that I list are multicolored. I will give colors for engraved stamps of one color, and some stamps produced by other methods having one or two colors, provided they are not produced with a mixture of colors. And yes, when I use our color book, I go compare the stamp I have to the stamps on the stock pages and generally find that the shade of the new stamp doesn’t totally match anything on the stock page.”*

# Fun with Stamp Color



Yes, stamps in a catalog with the same color name also show shade differences. Here are pages using Scott stamp colors.

# Fun with Stamp Color

The previous slide showed pages from "Filacolor," a loose leaf thematic stamp album by color created by Donald M. Harper of Evanston, IL in 1959 who also copyrighted a list of worldwide Scott stamp catalogue numbers sorted by different shades.

<b>BRIGHT GREEN</b>		<b>BLUE GREEN</b>	
Philippines	(527)	China —	1171
Romania —	1056	Spanish Guinea —	358
Siam —	323	Vatican City —	234
Syria —	409	United Nations —	2
Venezuela —	673	Egypt	413
		<b>ADEN</b>	(50)
<b>DARK GREEN</b>		<b>BRIGHT BLUE GREEN</b>	
Germany-German Dem Rep	362	Italy	464A
Netherlands	(253)	United States	859
Romania —	536	Argentine Republic	664
British Guiana —	254	Uruguay	628
Pakistan —	84	Venezuela	685
Japan	264		
<b>DEEP GREEN</b>		<b>DARK BLUE GREEN</b>	
Andorra-French	125	Netherlands	248
Bulgaria —	977	Romania —	949
China	492	"	C50
Poland	(560)	Chile —	C146A
San Marino	203	Guatemala	364

The colour of a stamp has become an increasingly difficult task with the advent of photogravure printing in which a very large number of distinct shades are possible. Philatelists all over the world will be grateful to Mr. Donald M. Harper (P.O. Box 584, Evanston, per's reference list gives all these different shades with a list of the stamps, by Scott Catalogue numbers, on which they are found. Whilst selecting the stamps, he has taken special care to choose cheap items so that even people of moderate means can build up such a col-



books.google.com > books

The Illustrated Weekly of India - Volume 80, Part 2 - Page 221

1959 - Snippet view

HARPER, DONALD MALCOLM.  
Filacolor reference list, 1959.  
© Donald M. Harper; 11Mar59;  
A380694.

FOUND INSIDE - PAGE 221

Philatelists all over the world will be grateful to Mr. Donald M. Harper (P.O. Box 584, Evanston, Illinois, U.S.A.) for his Filacolor (price \$6.70), a loose-leaf album solely devoted to collecting "Colours on Stamps". Thus one more theme is added ...

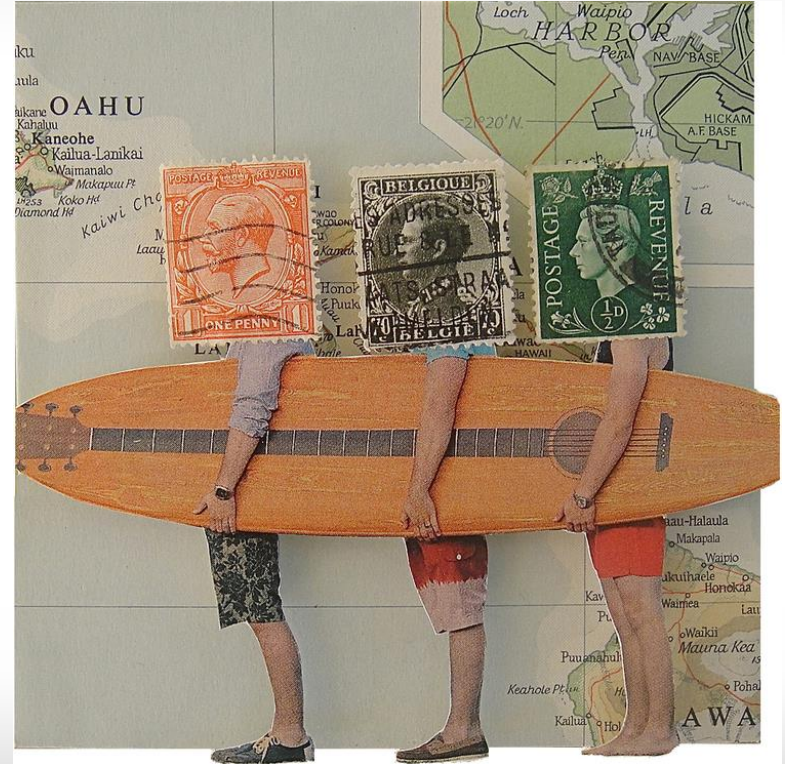
# Fun with Stamp Color

Collectors and non-collectors have found artistic and clever ways to use stamps in a non-traditional ways. Here are a few!



<https://www.tanglecrafts.com>

# Fun with Stamp Color



<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/552183604287038377/>

# Fun with Stamp Color



Color Me Thrifty

<https://colormethrifty.com/2020/01/decoupage-table-makeover.html>



Color Me Thrifty

<https://colormethrifty.com/2020/01/decoupage-bracelets-with-postage-stamps.html>

# Fun with Stamp Color



*Barack Obama – 26" x 34", 4,000 U.K. and U.S. stamps*



Works by Peter R. Mason

<https://thepostpopartman.co.uk>

<https://artgallery.co.uk/artist/peter-mason>



# Conclusion

All in all, a stamp's color is a difficult subject to tackle. Noted philatelic writer Kathleen Wunderly probably summarized it best in a Linn's Stamp News article from July 22, 2002:

*“Color naming is an issue that required some sort of resolution prior to the publication of the first stamp catalog. I doubt that anyone now living knows the rationale for many of the choices. Not surprisingly, catalog publishers today continue to use whatever names were decided by their predecessors, even though some names may be confusing. Trying to change to new color names would likely result in catalog color chaos.”\**

\* <https://www.linns.com/news/postal-updates-page/stamp-collecting-basics/2002/july/color-presents-challenge-for-stamp-collectors.html>



# Stamps and Color

Thanks for visiting!