

# Designing the 1861 3c stamp of the USA

## Purpose

This one frame exhibit shows the design process that led to the 1861 3c stamp of the United States.

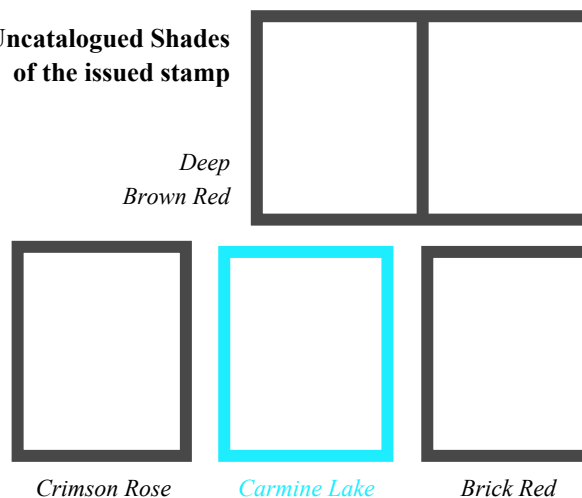
## Scope

When the Civil War broke out in 1861, the United States demonetized the stamps of the 1851/7 issues to prevent their fraudulent use by rebel states. In March, the postmaster general, Montgomery Blair, called for tenders for a new issue. This exhibit tells the story of the design process that led to the 3c stamp.

The exhibit opens with essays by companies that were not awarded the contract: the American Bank Note Company (ABNC) and Toppan, Carpenter & Co. Then follows a comprehensive overview of the design experiments that led to the National Bank Note Company's (NBNC) winning design. An epilogue introduces the new stamp and its first day of use.

Exhibit Plan	
Chapter 1: Essays by unsuccessful companies	2
- American Bank Note Company	
- Toppan Carpenter & Co.	
Chapter 2: First designs by the NBNC	6
- Primary and secondary dies	
- How the design evolved	
Chapter 3: The approved design	11
- Trial colors and plate proofs	
- Approved colors and Specimens	
Chapter 4: Epilogue – the issued stamp	16

### Uncatalogued Shades of the issued stamp



## Importance

The United States has only demonetized postage stamps twice: first, in 1851 when the cost of postage was reduced; and second, in 1861 when the Civil War forced demonetization of the 1851/7 issues to prevent fraud. The 1861 issue is therefore **the first** that has never been demonetized. The 3c stamp was at the heart of the issue since it paid the standard domestic letter rate from 1863 on. More than 2 billion were produced. This compares with only 128 million for the second most used stamp, the 1c.

## Research

The exhibit showcases personal research that eventually resulted in changes to the Scott Specialized catalogue in 2021. I've highlighted original research in **bold cyan**. Note:

- Research relating to the **formal identification of shades** 1, 16
- The **dies** on which the ABNC models are based 2, 3
- **Census numbers** for the vignette and first design dies 6, 7
- The first **accurate descriptions** of the primary and secondary dies for the NBNC's design 7
- The **discovery copy** for stage 4 of the design process that led to the issued stamp 10

## Exhibit highlights

**Unique** items are boxed in **blue**. Census numbers are noted in **bold blue** script. Highlights:

- Two of the **unique ABNC model** essays 2, 3
- The **unique die with pencil-sketched frame** for the ABNC's proof experiments 3
- The Toppan, Carpenter die on card showing a **shadow of the design** on its side 5
- The die in pink showing the **intermediate stage 4** in the evolution of the final design 10
- The **unique signed specimen** on card 15
- The **First Day Cover** which is one of only two for the entire issue 16