

More Color Added to the Prexies

Scott Lists \$1 Wilson Color Variety

by Ronald Blanks

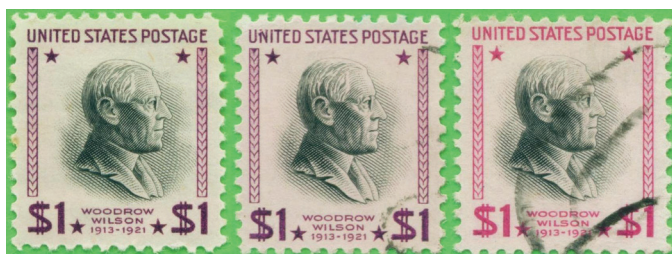


Figure 1. \$1 Wilson cataloged colors. (Left-to-right) Purple (wet-print), Red violet (dryprint), Bright magenta (dry-print).

It's not every decade that the *Scott U.S. Specialized Catalog* adds a numbered listing for a color variety of a regular stamp almost 60 years old. But it happened recently for a stamp you might likely have, if you keep accumulations of older used regular stamps as many do.

Starting with the *Scott 2011 Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps & Covers*, Scott 832g (or as some prefer, 832cg) "bright magenta" is the listing for a color variety of Scott 832c, the 1954 dry-print version of the Presidential Series (Prexies) \$1 Wilson.

Scott describes the original wet-print \$1 Wilson (Scott 832) as "purple & black," and Scott 832c as "red violet & black." If you have a \$1 Wilson with frame elements that appear a much brighter color hinting of pink in contrast to dry-print copies of a darker red-purple, you likely have an 832g.

The bright magenta color is relatively easy to distinguish, as far as older color varieties go. Limits of color reproduction in these pages can restrict what shows well, but not so in this case.

The \$1 Wilson bright magenta is unlike the intended red violet of Scott 832c (which appears a lighter shade of wet-print's purple.) Figure 1 shows the wet-print and two dry-print colors for side-by-side comparison. (*Special note: With the 2012 edition, a new "red violet" shade is now listed for the wet-print issue.*)

However, as you might expect when it comes to a topic as subjective as color, we don't have an open-and-shut case. Figure 2 shows three used dry-print \$1 Wilsons that appear to have a magenta color. Here the color reproduction might not convey their distinctions.

The first stamp's frame ink is darker than the middle stamp's (the bright magenta in Figure 1). The

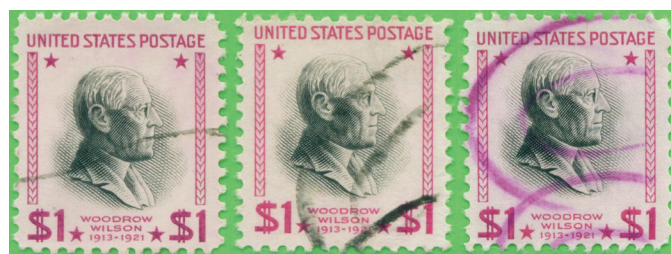


Fig. 2. Three "bright magenta" \$1 Wilson candidates.

last stamp's shade appears to fall in-between the other two. For used stamps, the loss of color fidelity must always be considered. Lighter colors can fade from light exposure, and handling such as soaking can affect inks. Color fidelity among mint copies can also diminish if storage care is not taken. This is a strong hint of one of the factors that explain why the Scott listing took decades to happen.

Briefly, a convincing case is required to merit adding a numbered Scott listing, for it will result in making a new space in specialized albums to fill for collectors who define their goals accordingly. Such variety cases usually involve scholarly research, expert certifications by widely recognized authorities, and collector interest (usually represented by public auctions).

The three shades in Figure 2, which might all be deemed "magenta" by many collectors, highlight the need for expertization certificates for purchases you consider expensive. While not foolproof, certificates do represent experts' consensus. They are recognized (if agreed before purchase) in order to allow for remedy when a mis-description results.

In the case of color, expertization often requires specialized laboratory equipment to ascertain that the ink is both genuine and materially different from the "normal" (or common) ink. At time of writing, the 2013 edition of the *Scott Specialized Catalog* was just released. Before then, it remained to be seen over time if all three of the Figure 2 examples are considered shades of Scott 832g, or if the first and last items are distinctive themselves. (Simply see the four 1919 3¢ Victory listings of violet shades as an extreme case... and no, I do not consider myself an expert on telling those apart!)

Interestingly, the 2013 edition amended its \$1 Wilson footnote to add: "No. 832g is known in bright magenta and in deep bright magenta; both shades qualify as No. 832g."

The bright magenta variety is not particularly scarce, at least among used copies. (I picked out the stamps shown above and a few more, about ten years ago before seeing other recognition in the past two years.) Some have known about the color and related shades for decades. An early example of scholarly research is George Brett's two-article set in *The United States Specialist*, "Shades of the U.S. \$1 Presidential, 1938-1955" (July 1978, pp. 312-315; August 1978, pp. 362-363).

Now that the catalog listing is added, market prices for 832g mint plate blocks of four (or larger) might not reflect an adequate supply. Rather, they could reflect the newness of the catalog recognition and collectors' interest in quickly acquiring a plate block before stocks are fully examined for color types. The 2013 edition's mint valuations are \$75 for a single and \$350 for a plate block of four. The value for used is denoted "—", meaning insufficient used sales have occurred.

Also note it has long been a tendency for hobby dealers and collectors to acquire most plate blocks shortly after a new issue appears. By the time later printings occur, fewer collectors remain that have an empty album spot. Varieties that appear especially in the last print runs might not be recognized, let alone set aside in sufficient quantities for future demand in line with the original version.

Realized auction prices in 2012 include \$220 (May) for a bottom plate #25016 block of 8 without certificate, and \$360 (July) for a plate block of 4 (bottom #25026) with certificate⁽¹⁾ (before commissions). (Figure 3 shows an image of the latter, copied from a Sam Houston Philatelics public ad.)

A plate block of 4 (top #25026) went unsold at \$250 (May), while an open auction in July asked \$310 for a bottom plate #25027 block of 8. (Only frame plate #s given; catalog values for red violet 832c mint plate blocks of 4 in recent years is \$30-\$35. Only one premium pair of plates is shown in the Durland Standard Plate Number Catalog, 25025-24836 [\$300 in 2012 edition, down from \$400 in 2008 edition].)

Interestingly, in late November 2012 only two auctions on eBay were offered, both bottom plate blocks of 4 with certificate from two sellers: #25016 for "\$400 or best offer,"⁽¹⁾ and #25027 for "\$995 or best offer."⁽²⁾ The latter public inducement to buy reminds one of a seller not inclined to do homework, perhaps to justify the price:

#832G FIRST AUTHENTIC ONE OFFERED ANYWHERE PSE CERTIFICATE. NOT SURE? LOOK CAREFULLY AT THE CARMINE COLOR AND THEN AT OTHERS OFFERED WHICH ARE VIOLET SHADES NOT RED. MY PERSONAL OPINION IS THIS IS A COLOR ERROR. IF YOU COMPARE THIS COLOR TO US 834 IT IS IDENTICAL. SEE PHOTO OF 834.

Besides the offputting all-upper-case text, the offer includes the smallest pictures ever shown online for Sc. 832g. And, a picture showing both mentioned items "side-by-side" is lacking for color comparison. ("US 834" is the Prexy \$5 Coolidge. Color types are generally impossible to convey accurately online as it is, but very few actually show items photographed together to address this limitation.)

More important, frame plate numbers are listed in this article to show that certified magenta copies come from at least three plate numbers—certainly not a "flash in the pan" of an isolated color error as was suggested.

In regards to certificates, many auction houses will only recognize those of the one or two most established services. John Hotchner in reviewing this text noted that he had not seen any for Sc. 832g from APEX;⁽³⁾ its director, Mercer Bristow, confirmed that only one submission had been made but it was deemed not a Sc. 832g.

Of the Philatelic Foundation's⁽⁴⁾ first 15 certificates issued, one was withdrawn and 14 state that the Sc. 832g is genuine.

We will have more to share about color of older stamps in a future issue. In the meantime, be careful when planning to buy or trade for a color variety.

Certification Sources

- (1) Philatelic Stamp Authentication and Grading, Inc., Miami, Fla.
- (2) Professional Stamp Experts, Newport Beach, Calif.
- (3) American Philatelic Expertizing Service, American Philatelic Society
- (4) Philatelic Foundation, New York City, N.Y.

Ronald Blanks has collected stamps since 1968. He specializes in post-World War II U.S. postal history, especially mail markings from postal mechanization and automation. He can be contacted at rblanks_stamps@yahoo.com, or P.O. Box 9282, Chesapeake, VA 23321.



Fig. 3. Certified \$1 Wilson Sc. 832g plate block sold in May 2012.