

THE U.S. 3¢ 1851 STAMP: NEWLY DISCOVERED PLATE FLAW ON 91R1L, by Charles J. DiComo, PhD

This article describes a previously unrecorded plate flaw on Position 91R1L of the 1851 3¢ stamp (Scott #11A). The flaw is positioned approximately 5 millimeters below the lower frame line in the bottom margin. It appears as a prominent dot with a surrounding aura of color. Dr. Carroll Chase does not appear to have recorded this variety in his monographs or in his books, nor in his notes along the left edge of his plate reconstruction. Chase was very meticulous in describing accidental marks of color that might result from plate defects. As with any new plating discovery, confirmation is required to prove the feature is part of the plate, not just stray ink unique to that particular stamp. In examining my archive of 3¢ 1851 imperforate stamps, I came across another example of 91R1L with wide left and bottom margins with the same prominent dot of color with the surrounding aura. A stamp from the same position (91R1) from the intermediate state of the plate shows no evidence of the flaw. The conclusion must be that the flaw was created sometime after the Intermediate state stamps were printed but before the printings from the late state of the plate. While we will never know the true cause of the dot and aura plate flaw on 91R1L, it is satisfying that after more than a century of study and hundreds of published pages by very astute philatelists, new constant varieties like this one can still be identified on the 3¢ 1851 stamp.