

Summary of the History of Blue Paper

Dates	Examples of use	Materials	Regions
1400's	<i>St. Nicholas of Myra</i> , ca.1480 (Venetian woodcut, National Gallery of Art): earliest known example Carpaccio (1490s)	Blue cotton and linen rags, dyed with indigo and/or woad.	Vicinity of Venice; northern Italy.
1500's	Dürer (1508); Leonardo (1510); Bassano (2nd half of century); Barocci Goltzius (1580s-1590s)	" " Blue cotton and linen rags, dyed as above, but with an overall enhancement of color achieved by adding a dye extracted from logwood, a South American tree, directly to the pulp.	Remained principally associated with northern Italy, but probably spread gradually into the rest of Europe. Probably originated in the Netherlands.
1600's	Lambert Doomer; Jacob Backer; Claude Lorrain. Blue paper also used for wrapping sugar, linen, candles.	" "	The Netherlands became a major supplier of blue paper throughout Europe. Continued to be produced in Italy.
1700's	Blue paper in regular use for figure drawing and for pastel portraits. Deeper blue varieties used for mounts (e.g., Mariette) as well as wrapping paper. J.-B.-S. Chardin; Richardson; Copley; M. Q. de laTour; R. Carriera. Advent of uniformly colored, pale blue papers: used for letters, printing, albums, as well as for drawing.	Options for blue colorants included turnsole, solubilized indigo, and logwood, which were added separately or mixed together directly to pulp made of either blue or white rags. Prussian blue (discovered by 1710) used for production of light blue papers (1770s). In the latter part of the century, smalt (powdered cobalt glass) used for "blueing".	Probably throughout Europe. Geographic distribution uncertain, but use of Prussian blue by papermakers probably began in France. Smalt used frequently in England.
1800's	Use of "variegated" blue papers (made from blue rags) continued. Expanded use of uniformly colored light blue papers (made both by hand and by machine), especially for elegant writing paper as well as for sketching and watercolors. Turner; Homer; Edward Lear; Delacroix; Victor Hugo.	Considerable expansion in the range of possible colorants. Synthetic ultramarine (1830) as well as Prussian blue, logwood (and other dyewoods), and smalt. Other tints (e.g., purple, purple-blue, green, blue-green) achieved by adding red dyes and chrome yellow.	International.

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