

Synopsis

Airmail Special Delivery

Issues of 1934 and 1935

The first combination airmail special delivery stamp (6¢ airmail and 10¢ special delivery) which properly so states was conceived by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, a stamp collector, who used the design of the Great Seal of the United States as the basis of the design.

The stamps was prepared in horizontal format in the traditional blue color for special delivery. It was issued for the APS convention in August, 1934. The stamp was widely used and the printing was large. Few uses to foreign countries have been found and even fewer have been located which originated abroad.

When the uproar over the limited edition imperforate national park series stamps surrounded James A. Farley, the political power, and the Postmaster General of the United States, the special delivery airmail stamp was included in the issue known as Farley's Follies of March 15, 1935. The sheet of 200 stamps was issued in that form to collectors so that four arrow blocks, and a center-line block are available to exhibit. Commercial postal usages of the imperforates was rare and proper in period of use covers are difficult to find.

The Farleys provided some easy money for the special delivery messengers. They teamed up with stamp dealers seeking to satisfy their greed and the collector's need by obtaining canceled to order plate blocks. How was this accomplished? The dealers would have the special delivery messengers, who were paid eight cents of the ten cent stamps' face value for delivering the letters, buy the special delivery stamps at the post office, affix a plate block to six "special delivery envelopes", have them favor canceled, give the envelopes numbers, and deliver the letters to dealers who probably were standing in the post office lobby.

A regulation prevented the payment of special delivery fees to messengers if letters were addressed to General Delivery, so another scheme had to be arranged. Probably splitting the 48¢ fee the messenger received from the six letters was the way dealers profited on the buy side of the scheme, and then they probably charged a premium on the sale side. Illustrated in the exhibit is a matched set of these favor canceled plate blocks of the 1934 perforate issue. An imperforate favor plate block is also shown.

Title page, synopsis page and an award history may be accessed on the worldwide web:
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