

Synopsis

U.S. Special Delivery 1885 - 1917

The U.P.U. established a basis for a special service to speedily deliver mail for an extra fee in 1885. The United States issued the first express stamp on October 1, 1885; only 555 first class post offices provided service. On October 1, 1886 service was extended to all offices. In late 1888, the text tablet changed to "at any office", and in February, 1893 the stamp's color changed. In 1902 and continuing for 20 years, messengers were issued bicycles. Designs changed to reflect this progress. In mid-December 1908, the U.S. adopted the 'Helmet of Mercury' design for a short period.

No Special Delivery treaties with foreign countries existed until 1923, although the United States and Canada enjoyed an informal arrangement much earlier. Foreign and U.S. territorial destinations are included. Canada made U.S. Special Delivery stamps available at border post offices and important mail entering the U.S. from abroad with express indications often had the stamps added for express delivery.

Some business entities such as the American Express company also stocked these stamps at foreign locations for employee and customer use. Such usages are among the rarest as the stamps were canceled at point of origin.

This exhibit focuses on the U.S. Special Delivery issues from inception to 1917 when motorized service became the norm since that is the period covered by E1-11. Essays, proofs, stamps and domestic as well as territorial usages are followed by foreign destinations and origins for each issue.

Highlights include but are not limited to:

- 1885: Essay in trial color, trial color proofs, Pre- & First Day covers; held for postage, forwarded to non-Special Delivery office, remailing
- 1886: First Day to all first class offices, earliest postage due combination, earliest Canadian origin, earliest foreign origins (Hawaii & Europe)
- 1888: Proofs, combination use of 1885 & 1888 issues
- 1893: Multiple delivery attempts, Guam origin (Scott listing item), illegal revenue use (marriage)
- 1894: Signed large die proof, imperforate block on stamp paper, Boston eagle & thunderbolt cancel, foreign origin cover
- 1895: Offset block with plate number, imperforate plate block, arrow position pieces, illegal revenue use (block of 6), multiple delivery attempts, territorial origin (Philippines), missing dot variety plate strip (Cuba), Guam special printing imprint copy, Saipan local cover, Philippine overprint first day of issue, US-Philippines plate block
- 1902: Signed large die proof, unlisted trial color proofs, earliest use, combination 1888 and 1902 issue cover
- 1907: Canal Zone origins, Philippines special printing overprint for internal affairs department plate block of 8
- 1908: Original signed sketches, BEP essays, signed large die proof, precancels, territorial usages (to and from Alaska), international forwarded transit
- 1909: Re-issue cover, plate modification with and without -09
- 1911: Missing frame line, Shanghai local overprint, U.S. offices in Vera Cruz, consulate usage
- 1914: Plate without imprint, earliest Presidential Widow use
- 1916: Used block, earliest use
- 1917: Printing flaws, free frank/special stamp, international transit, WWI revenue use, A.E.F. (to and from usages), foreign origin cover (China).

This exhibit is the product of over forty years of collecting Special Delivery issues and usages. It also includes catalog unlisted materials as well as original research not previously published.

Title page, synopsis page and an award history may be accessed on the worldwide web:
<http://www.franadams.com>