

Synopsis

U.S. Special Delivery 1922 - 1997 — The Last 75 Years

The special delivery service of the United States commenced October 1, 1885 and ended on June 7, 1997. From its inception to 1925, the rate was ten cents without regard to the weight or class of mail carried. Philately recognized eleven different issues through July 12, 1922 and twelve more thereafter before adding five additional stamps, two of which were officially designated air mail special delivery stamps (Issues of 1934 and 1936 -- Sc. CE1 and CE2). Also, one imperforate commemorative issue (Sc. 771) carried both air mail special delivery mail. On and after July 1, 1907, by statute, regular issue stamps and later meters could be used to pay special delivery fees if the envelope was so marked. Towards the end of the service, various government agencies and departments were granted the special delivery franking privilege without the payment of fees or the use even of stamps. Special delivery stamps were eventually demonetized since they could pay for no other services.

Escalation of rates commenced in 1925 for letters and packages weighing more than two pounds, and from November 1, 1944, the fee increased from 13¢ for first class mail under two pounds until almost 55 years later, it was \$9.95. Very few special delivery covers above the \$2.95 rate exist and none are shown in the "U.S. Domestic Rates 1872-1999". This collection includes commercial covers paying \$5.35 and \$7.65 rare rates, the former on mailings from both the United States and Canada.

This collection shows all known large die proofs, virtually all known trial color proofs and two unlisted ones. Missing is the only known trial color proof in black of the 1936 air mail special delivery stamp (Sc. CE2 TC 1). Several pieces are the only ones in private hands.

First day covers of the 1922, 1925 and 1927 issues are decidedly rarer than one would expect. It is estimated that no more than 125 covers of the 1922 issue are known, and probably 200-250 of the other two issues. The earliest known uses of the 1927 and 1931 issues are displayed. The first one is proved by a notation on the back of a first day cover prepared by William Siebold, a preparer, indicating that the stamps were shipped before the first day at the Philatelic Agency, and the famous Easton, Pa. first day associated with Hugh Southgate, one of the founders of the United States Stamp society; five of these covers are known.

Until Fee Paid and similar privileges were granted by several statutes, special delivery service had to be paid even by those who enjoyed the free franking privilege. The most exciting of those uses were covers sent by Presidential Widows. Early in the period covered, government agencies had to prepay special delivery fees.

The expansion of special delivery service to foreign countries was by matter of courtesy until the first foreign treaty was enacted. The US and Canada entered into such a treaty as of January 1, 1923 and its first day is shown in the frame. Almost 40 additional treaties were entered into and Henry Hammelman, a first day cover dealer, commemorated at least 19 of them, shown here. A two cent post card treaty rate cover to England is another highlight.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt designed the three air mail special delivery stamps. A small die proof of the 1936 issue, one of the 25 part imperforate pairs (from the Henry Harris discovery sheet) and the plate layouts are shown by means of plate blocks, including precanceled ones. Train wreck covers are shown illustrating that mail went by surface and received speedy delivery only at destination.

Uses to and from foreign countries abound. Forwarded covers, converted to special delivery, are shown and are difficult to locate.

Most plate and printing varieties recorded are included. In the 1922 issue, the rarest plate with 350 impressions, plate 18686 and the plates with which it went to press, all short printed, and included. The flat bed press was used to print the stamps to 1927 when the rotary press was used by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing which printed all of these stamps; the electric eye was first used for these stamps in September, 1941.

The Post Office experimented with a special delivery for special delivery mail, colored with green and yellow, but it really did not catch on as the air mail envelopes did in blue and red.

This is a traditional presentation of the last 75 years of the service; and I know it covers only 74 years, 11 months and 4/5 days.

References;

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4. The Special Delivery Issue of 1908, the Merry Widow, 1975 Philatelic Congress, pps.
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6. Special Delivery plate number checklist, publ. by Morris X. Weiss, Chicago, 1963.
7. The Numbers Game, several short articles in the Bureau Specialist, circa 1965.
8. Contributor, "The Speedy", A History of U.S. Special Delivery Service, by Henry M. Gobie, 1st edition, 2nd edition presently being written by the author who owns the copyright to this work.
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21. Bibliography of United States Special Delivery literature, Philatelic Literature Review. Circa 1970s, prepared by the exhibitor and soon to be updated in the appendix to The Speedy, 2nd Edition.
22. Rules and Regulations for Special Delivery mail, contained throughout The Speedy, Gobie, op. Cit.
23. Wawrukiewicz, Anthony and Beecher, Henry, U.S. Domestic Rates, and U.S. International Postage Rates 1972-1996, giving outstanding rate summaries and other useful information.

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>*