

Synopsis

U.S. SPECIAL DELIVERY

Running Messenger Designs (1885-1902)

The U.P.U. established the basis for a special service to speedily deliver mail for an extra fee in 1885. The United States issued the world's first express stamp on October 1, 1885; only 555 first class post offices provided service. On October 1, 1886 service was extended to all 4,000 first class post offices. In late 1888, the text tablet changed to "at any office", and in February, 1893 the stamp's color changed. The first three stamps were printed by the American Bank Note Company (ABNC) of New York. Commencing in 1894, the U.S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP) printed these stamps with minor modifications of the ABNC dies.

No Special Delivery treaties with foreign countries existed until 1923, although the United States and Canada enjoyed an informal arrangement from about 1896. 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. Many Americans attempted to get foreign Special Delivery service by adding a Special Delivery stamp, but they received no such service abroad. U.S. Territorial destinations are included as well as uses from the newly acquired Spanish-American War possessions.

Some business entities such as the American Express company also stocked these stamps at foreign locations for employee and customer use to the United States. Such usages are among the rarest.

The exhibit focuses on the U.S. Special Delivery issues from inception to 1902 when young foot messengers began using bicycles to deliver Special Delivery mail. The exhibit is organized in a traditional manner - Design sketches, essays, proofs, stamps and postal history including domestic as well as territorial usages, followed by foreign destinations and origins for each issue.

Highlights (dark matting) 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: Design Sketch, Proofs, combination use of 1885 & 1888 issues
- 1893: Multiple delivery attempts, Guam origin (Scott listing item), illegal revenue use (marriage), used block of four
- 1894: Signed large die proof, imperforate block on stamp paper, Boston Eagle & Thunderbolt cancel, foreign origin cover
- 1895: Unique (in private hands) imperforate plate block, unique arrow position pieces (one sheet of fifty stamps sold), offset block with plate number, 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, early receiving 'clock' markings, New York non-delivery labels

References:

Henry M. Gobie, *The Speedy*

Robert L. Markovits, 1962 Congress Book, *The 1894-5 Special Delivery Issues*

Robert L. Markovits, *Collector's Club Philatelist*, *First Day Covers and Earliest Known Dates of Use*

Robert L. Markovits, *U.S. Special Delivery Plate Number Checklist (1962 BIA Hopkinson Award)*

Robert L. Markovits, Website: <http://www.usspecialdelivery.com>

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