

U.S. SPECIAL DELIVERY

1922 - 1997 — The Last 75 Years

Commencing July 12, 1922, modern transportation methods were depicted on the U.S. Special Delivery stamp, no longer was the messenger on foot or bicycle. Twenty-six days short of 75 years, the final domestic Special Delivery bell tolled, appropriate for the exhibitor, at the Pacific International Exhibition ending June 7, 1997.

Special Delivery fees escalated from 10¢ for a first class item in 1922 to \$9.95 in 1995, for Special Delivery only upon arrival at the item's destination. At the end, virtually no Special Delivery mail was being sent, however, examples of all rates on first class mail are included in this exhibit. Most envelopes in the final years were legal size since only business mail could justify paying the rates charged.

This collection is based on traditional philatelic concepts from trial color proofs, large and small die proofs, mint and used pieces, varieties and postal history, showing most domestic and many foreign rates and usages from abroad. Many foreign Special Delivery treaty rates are shown in part by first day of rate covers as well as through commercial mail. The first such treaty was with Canada commencing July 1, 1923 after an informal arrangement had been in effect for about 25 years.

The earliest U.S. airmail stamps included fees for both airmail and Special Delivery service. By the time the Franklin Delano Roosevelt designed issues of 1934, 1935 and 1936 came out, the Scott catalog established a new category for the combined fee issues.

The rarest modern Special Delivery plate number 18686, one of two recorded, is shown. Only 350 impressions were pulled from this plate. Plate varieties including part perforate ones of the 1927 and 1936 air mail Special Delivery issues (25 pairs of the latter are recorded) are in the collection as well as scratches, gouges, overinking, and other mistakes of printing by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing which was responsible for printing all of the issues shown.

For 59 years, the fee was 10¢ for first class mail under two pounds. Rate changes begun in 1925 increased, mainly on heavy mail, which can only be shown by package pieces which rarely survive and several are included.

As of July 1, 1907, regular postage stamps could be used to pay the Special Delivery fee, but Special Delivery stamps legally could not be used to pay for any other postal service. This rule never changed and these stamps were eventually demonetized.

Once the Special Delivery fee for first class mail reached 60¢, the U.S. Postal Service did not issue any new stamps, although the service lingered for more than 20 years before Express Mail was firmly established. Special delivery to foreign countries finally ended in 2001.

The strength of the postal history portion is usage to and from foreign countries, from the inception of the treaty periods. Postage due was charged on Special Delivery but service was provided even though first class postage was not paid. Until the Postal Service created postpaid mail, free mail required Special Delivery fees to be paid. Even presidential widows had to pay for this service as did Members of Congress, Diplomats of the Pan American Union, military and government agencies. Usages to and from U.S. possessions and military engagements broaden the collection's scope.

Attempts at illegal usages of the stamps and multiple usages of more modern issues, attempting to get rid of the supply before demonetization are important sections of this collection. Usage of regular postage stamps to pay Special Delivery fees is highlighted by a block of six including the 5¢ error. Rarities are backed with blue.



Highlights by Issue

- 1922: Large die trial color proof, Plate number 18686 single, Illegal revenue use • Non-Special Delivery stamp use: Regular issue 5¢ error in block of six, Shanghai overprint use, Canadian War Tax issue use • 1925 (4/11): "Colonias" overprint for UPU, Bisect, Special printing plate block of six • 1925 (4/25): Large Die Trial Color Proof, "Colonias" overprint for UPU, First Day cover with wrong year slug • 1927: Earliest known use, Presidential widow usages • 1931: Pre-first day use, Korean prisoner of war forwarding • 1934: Small die proof • 1936: Small die proof, imperforate pair • 1944: Small die proof • 1954: Large die proof • 1976 and later: 80¢ three month rate, examples of all high rate fees.