

U.S. AIR MAIL SPECIAL DELIVERY ISSUES OF 1934-1936

Introduction

Three different U.S. 16c Air Mail Special Delivery issues [1934 blue, 1935 imperforated blue and 1936 bicolor—red and blue] were produced to combine two separate postal services—the 6c air mail rate and the 10c special delivery fee. This unique stamp concept was successful in expediting the franking and delivery of AMSD for a decade until the postal rate and fee for these services were increased in 1944. These dual-purpose issues were the only such stamps ever produced by the Post Office and all Philatelic Agency sales for the 1936 16c bicolor AMSD issue were suspended on Aug. 20, 1948.

Scope and Presentation

This is a traditional exhibit that explores the preproduction, production and postal usages to 1948 of the three 16c AMSD issues. The 10 frame display presents a panorama of the finest known and previously unknown material on these stamps that were acquired over the past 32 years by the exhibitor. For the AMSD issues, there are 3 different recorded proofs, of which 2 samples [Frame 1, Page 2 & Frame 1, Page 3] are shown—the missing piece is the 1936 bicolor small die proof. The last reported bicolor proof was sold at the Oct. 18, 1972 Robert A. Siegel auction #419. This auction occurred 6 years before the exhibitor started collecting the AMSD series. Since 1972, no other examples have appeared upon the philatelic market for acquisition. Also, this exhibit introduces the first known UPU Portuguese Colonies Specimens and the unlisted Experimental Die proof with the Great Seal engraving that was employed for the blue vignette on the 1936 bicolor issue.

Although a multitude of production anomalies (EFO's) are shown for the AMSD issues, the only major printing error was a 1936 16c bicolor pane of 50 stamps that was imperforate vertically. From this error sheet, which was broken up in 1949 by the H.E. Harris Company, a horizontal pair and center line block of 4 [Frame 6, Page 6] are featured in the exhibit.

One of the most challenging tasks in this specialty was acquiring AMSD perfins. The 1977 BIA's (now USSS) publication, "The Airmail Special Delivery Stamps of the United States", recorded only 12 different perfin patterns for the 1936 bicolor issue. None were listed for the 1934 issue. It took the exhibitor 25 years to acquire just 4 different 1934 AMSD perfins for this exhibit in 2003. However, during a four month period in 2008, "3" more incredible copies appeared. Now the exhibit hosts a magnificent display of 7 different patterns on the 1934 AMSD issue [Frame 2, Page 5]. During the same 32 years, a total of 28 different perfins were obtained on the 1936 bicolor issue and 20 of these patterns are shown in the exhibit.

The AMSD issues were primarily intended for domestic mail so most foreign destination usages with these stamps and additional franking are scarce—some are extremely rare. During the AMSD stamps' period of usage, the special delivery fee was 20c for the few UPU treaty countries that handled this service. The special delivery fee was 20c to Canada but it was reduced to 10c on April 15, 1939. In the early 1930's, the foreign air mail rate varied from country to country so many overseas AMSD letters contained complex franking. Some letters were either underpaid or overpaid while others improperly used the 10c special delivery fee for postage. The postal regulation (Act of Aug. 4, 1886—4 Stat 17) clarified that the special delivery fee was not valid for postage or any other postal services. This restriction was misunderstood by the general public and seldom enforced by the Post Office for domestic and international mail. Even the Philatelic Agency violated this Post Office policy [Frame 2, Page 1] by using the special delivery fee for the registry service to Canada.

This exhibit concludes with some rare wartime postal history usages of the 16c AMSD issues. During WWII, U.S. Armed Forces personnel were granted free franking privileges on first class mail. However, some servicemen franked their letters with the 16c AMSD stamp that they brought with them into the war zone. APOs did not carry this 16c issue in their stamp stock so all overseas military AMSD franked mail are scarce. On March 26, 1944, just 17 months before the end of WWII, new postal rates were introduced and the 16c dual-purpose issues lost its status as a single franking domestic stamp.

The 1934 16c Air Mail Special Delivery issue was designed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was personally involved in the creation of 200 different U.S. stamps from 1933-1945.



Personal Study and Research

On the 1936 bicolor issue, several significant research projects were conducted by the exhibitor. One notable project [Frame 5, Pages 5-6] involved a five year study from 1990-1995 that uncovered the 5 missing Type 1 experimental red plates with 2 additional subtypes. In 1977, only 3 different experimental types were known and documented in the BIA's publication of "The Airmail Special Delivery Issues of the United States". The exhibitor's personal research extended the Type 1 experimental plates from the previous 3 recorded types to 10 different varieties for the eight red plate numbers.

Another research project [Frame 5, Page 10] involved the bicolor Type 4 "dots and dashes" selva markings that are located in the extreme bottom corners of the eight red plates. There are no known studies on these red markings. For 32 years, the exhibitor has been seeking panes of 50 stamps with these elusive imprints, however, only partial images in the 90-95% range have been discovered by the exhibitor. Eight corner singles showing the "dots and dashes" markings were utilized for this exhibit since it was impractical to display the eight different full sheets in the exhibitor's main collection.

Difficulty of Acquisition

Significant pieces worth noting are identified below and highlighted with a "blue" asterisk symbol throughout the exhibit.

Exhibit Item	Description and Philatelic Significance	Frame	Page
1934 Issue — Large Black Color Trial Proof: The best of two known copies—other one has a trimmed down matte.		1	2
1934 Issue — Small Die Proof: Dark blue on wove paper stock—one of two known copies—PF Certificate 72333.		1	3
1934 Issue — UPU Portuguese Colonies Specimen: Auction discovery copy in Aug. 2000—PF Certificate 0364716.		1	3
1934 Issue — BEP Gumming Production Error: Gum applied to both sides of the stamp—PF Certificate F197029.		1	11
1934 Issue — Experimental Machine Gum Breaker: Exhibitor's discovery—previously unknown to Gum Specialists.		1	12
1934 Issue — P.O. Violation of Special Delivery Fee: Philatelic Agency improperly using the SD fee for registration.		2	1
1934 Issue — Philadelphia, Pa. Precancel: Only legitimate precancel usage—formerly in the Carl Betts collection.		2	4
1934 Issue — Dallas to Chicago Interrupted Flight: Only reported crash cover franked with the 1934 AMSD issue.		2	10
1934 Issue — Quarantine Cover: Rare auxiliary marking—New York City Port Facility, "Landing Dept., Quarantine".		2	11
1934 Issue — New York City Pneumatic Tube Mail: Rare auxiliary marking—The Hotel New Yorker/Tube Station #2.		2	12
1934 Issue — Hindenburg Flight: Rare and proper AMSD franking to Germany with the 1933 50c Zeppelin issue.		3	8
1934 Issue — First American Rocket Flight: Postcard franked with four red rocket stamps—one of five in existence.		3	9
1934 Issue — First American Rocket Flight: Cover franked with four green rocket stamps—one of five in existence.		3	9
1934 Issue — To Korea via Japanese Air Mail: Airline service provided by Japan Air Transport Company [NKYKK].		3	14
1934 Issue — To Manchoukuo via Chinese Air Mail: Airline service by CNAC in China and MKKK in Manchoukuo.		3	15
1934 Issue — To Java via Netherlands Air Mail: Airline service by KLM—largest recorded multiple foreign franking.		3	16
1935 Issue — Private "Perforated 14" Farley Issue Cover: One of two known copies—both discovered by exhibitor.		4	6
1935 Issue — American Postal Machines Company Flag Cancellation: Only reported commercial flag cancel usage.		4	10
1935 Issue — Postcard Franking: Rocket flight postcard—one of five with block of 4. Only reported postcard usage.		4	12
1936 Issue — Great Seal Experimental Die Proof: Unlisted proof showing the 1936 AMSD Great Seal vignette die.		5	1
1936 Issue — UPU Portuguese Colonies Specimen: Auction discovery copy in Aug. 2000—PF Certificate 0364717.		5	2
1936 Issue — Full Blue Chrome "C": Only known Type 2 full "C" from 12 reported copies—also a full Type 4 exists.		5	9
1936 Issue — Experimental Machine Gum Breaker: Exhibitor's discovery—previously unknown to Gum Specialists.		6	5
1936 Issue — Imperforate Vertically Error: The center line block with a left margin pair from the error sheet of 50.		6	6
1936 Issue — FDC with Largest Known Multiple Plate Block: Rare usage with plate strip of 10—one of two known.		7	1
1936 Issue — Philadelphia, Pa. Precancel: Only legitimate precancel usage—formerly in the Carl Betts collection.		7	8
1936 Issue — Worlds Fair Sta. Postmark: Exhibitor's discovery—only known copy in Bomar's 2007 Exposition book.		7	16
1936 Issue — LA to Salt Lake City Interrupted Flight: Only reported crash cover franked with the 1936 AMSD issue.		8	1
1936 Issue — Two Ocean Flight via Zeppelin/Clipper: Incoming 16c AMSD from Germany to the Philippine Islands.		9	9
1936 Issue — Around-the-World Hindenburg Cover: Zeppelin to Germany, onward to China & redirected to the U.S.		9	9
1936 Issue — To Java via Netherlands Air Mail: Ship transit to the Netherlands and airline service by KLM to Java.		9	16
World War II — Dec. 8, 1941 First Day Cover: Historical WWII date—the "Declaration of War" from Washington, D.C.		10	1
World War II — Operation "Plum" Cover: Secret military reinforcement of the Philippines just 17 days prior to WWII.		10	2
World War II — Arcadia Conference: 1st British-American conference with Churchill—established the United Nations.		10	3
World War II — Trident Conference: 3rd British-American conference with Churchill—authorized D-Day in May 1944.		10	3
World War II — Official War Ballot Cover: Only reported 16c AMSD usage shown in Russ Carter's "War Ballots" book.		10	7
World War II — Not Charged to Allocation: Rare postal auxiliary marking denying a parcel shipment to a serviceman.		10	8
World War II — U.S. Army Blue Envelope: One of three reported 16c AMSD usages—all discovered by the exhibitor.		10	10
World War II — Prisoner of War Cover: Rare WWII delivery to POW in Manchukuo by M.V. Gripsholm and Teia Maru.		10	16

Philatelic References

1. The Airmail Special Delivery Stamps of the United States — Bureau Issues Association, Inc. — Ralph L. Sloat.
2. U.S. International Postal Rates, 1872-1996 — Cama Publishing Co. — Anthony Wawrukiewicz and Henry Beecher.
3. U.S. Numbered Military Post Offices 1941-1994 — The Military Postal History Society — Cosentini and Gruenzer.
4. U.S. Official Postal Guides and Supplements — July 1934 to July 1949 — U.S. Government Printing Office.