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From the Stamp Specialist:

(From The Stamp Specialist Number Four, published in 1940)

In addition to this reprint, this month we also are pleased to announce the availability of a set of pages, "Identifying the Special Deliveries." See page 16 of this article for information. JFD.)



An original design in pen and ink for the proposed "Merry Widow" Special Delivery stamp of 1908 executed by Whitney Warren. This is one of four similar designs submitted. The design in general was acceptable but definite changes were made for the finally accepted design.

40 Years of U.S. Special Delivery Stamps *by C. W. Bates*

C. W. Bates (Warner Bates) has done much research work on the Bank Note Issues (U. S. 1870-82) and the 1890-1902 U. S. Issues. He has applied the same careful study to the Special Delivery stamps of the United States with the result that we have here the most complete treatise on the subject yet published. During recent years Mr. Bates has specialized in Postal Stationery of the world, a neglected field that provides opportunities for unlimited research. Mr. Bates' address is 180 Homestead Avenue, Albany, N. Y.

THE story of United States special delivery adhesives begins with the 10 cent blue stamp (E1) printed for the government by the American Bank Note Company and first used for the purpose specified October 1, 1885. Luff notes the rather obvious fact that these were, in a sense, carriers' stamps.

We quote from the 1885 report of the Third Assistant Post Master General:

"The wide field of usefulness already occupied by the postal service was further broadened in contemplation by the act of March 3, 1885 providing for the immediate delivery, by special messengers of letters addressed to certain of the larger post offices, and bearing, in addition to the regular postage, a special 10-cent stamp to represent the cost of such immediate delivery It was decided to apply the system to every city, town or village having a population of 4,000 or over according to the Federal census. . . .

“Although letters could be specially delivered *only at* 555 prescribed post offices, they could be mailed to such offices by any post office and it therefore became necessary to prepare instructions for all the post offices in the country. . . .”

Such instructions were issued by the department under the heading: “Immediate-Delivery System” dated at Washington, August 11, 1885. They limited the special delivery service to the carrier limit of any free-delivery office which might be designated by the Postmaster General as a special delivery office, or within one mile of other post offices coming within the provisions of the original act (that is, having a population of four thousand or more).

Supplies of the new special delivery stamps were offered to any postmaster making requisition therefor. Their use was limited to the purpose of securing immediate delivery of letters; they could not be accepted for payment of postage or registry fee; nor, at that time, could any other stamps be employed to secure immediate delivery. This last provision was later repealed and ordinary postage stamps may also be used today for this special service.

The special delivery stamp was to be affixed in addition to the lawful postage; letters not properly prepaid according to weight were to be held for postage, even though bearing the special delivery stamp.

Special delivery stamps were required to be cancelled in the usual way. Postmasters at fourth-class post offices were not entitled to commissions on the sale of special delivery stamps in any case. A list of designated special delivery offices was appended to the instructions, which the postmaster was required to display conspicuously for benefit of the public.

In this August 11th document was further information as to the detail to be observed in expediting the delivery of special delivery letters, keeping records, etc. Postmasters were told to employ as many messengers as might be needed at their respective locations and to compensate them to an amount not to exceed 80 per centum of the value of the special delivery stamps used on such letters coming to the office in question. No car fare or incidental expenses were to be allowed; total compensation, at eight cents per letter, was limited in any individual case to \$30 a month. It was permissible to employ substitute letter carriers for such work when they were not otherwise on duty.

The report of the Third Assistant Postmaster General for 1885 stated that this new service had been received with approval by the public, the postmasters and the press.

Stamps were supplied to postmasters by the department beginning August 29th and, before October 1st, supplies were in every office of importance. It will be remembered that the original order designated 555 special delivery offices. The 1885 report states that 140,820 special delivery letters were handled during the month of October of that year and that the average time consumed in delivering letters after their arrival at office of destination was 17 minutes. Receipts from these new stamps sold at all offices during the first month totalled \$20,482.90. As an illustration, we give the records, in this connection, of one post office, that at Albany, N. Y. Here the postmaster employed six messengers during the first month of operation of the new service; a total of 1,008 incoming and local special delivery letters were handled during October, 1885; the messengers

received in all \$80.04 compensation. That month the Albany office sold \$163.90 worth of special delivery stamps and mailed out 617 special delivery letters.

The first stamp, Scott's No. E1 (formerly No. 1890), 10 cents blue, was officially described as follows:

"A line engraving on steel, oblong in form; dimensions 13/16 by one and 7/16 inches; color, dark blue. Design: on the left an arched panel bearing a figure of a mail messenger boy on a run, and surmounted by the words, 'United States'; on the right, an oblong tablet, ornamented with a wreath of oak and laurel surrounding the words: 'Secures Immediate Delivery at a Special Delivery Office.' Across the top of the tablet is the legend: 'Special Postal Delivery,' and at the bottom the words: 'Ten Cents' separated by a small shield bearing the numeral '10'."

A Remarkable First-day Cover.

August 11, 1885 the Postmaster-General wrote the postmasters of all special delivery offices as follows:

"On the 1st of October, 1885, you are directed to establish at your office a system for special delivery of letters. . . . a special stamp of the face valuation of ten cents may be provided and issued, whenever deemed advisable or expedient. . . . which, when attached to a letter, in addition to the lawful postage thereon, the delivery of which is to be at a free-delivery office, or at any city, town or village containing a population of four thousand or over, shall be regarded as entitling such letter to immediate delivery. . . . You will provide, before the first day of October next, as many messenger boys as in your judgment will be necessary . . . and that a proper force must be ready for all mails arriving between 7 a. m. and 12 midnight and for all drop letters requiring special delivery." (The italics are ours).

Note from the above that the postmasters were to issue the stamps "*whenever deemed advisable or expedient.*" October 1, 1885 was the first day of the new service and obviously, in order that letters might enjoy special delivery service *as early as 7 a. m.* on that date, *the stamps had to be sold to the public at least as early as the preceding day.*

It is the opinion of the writer that the Standard catalogue should make it clear that October 1, 1885 was the date on which this new service *could first be performed* and not the date on which stamps were first sold to the public. (1)

The collection of W. L. L. Peltz of Albany contains a unique cover showing E1 used on a two-cent brown envelope, the stamp being tied with the Ilion, N. Y., postmark dated *September 30, 1885*(2)The cover is addressed to O. D. Kirs, 217 Tremont Street, Boston, Mass., and bears Boston receiving marks, "1—October 1, '85—6 a. m." and "7—Oct. 1, '85—7 a. m."

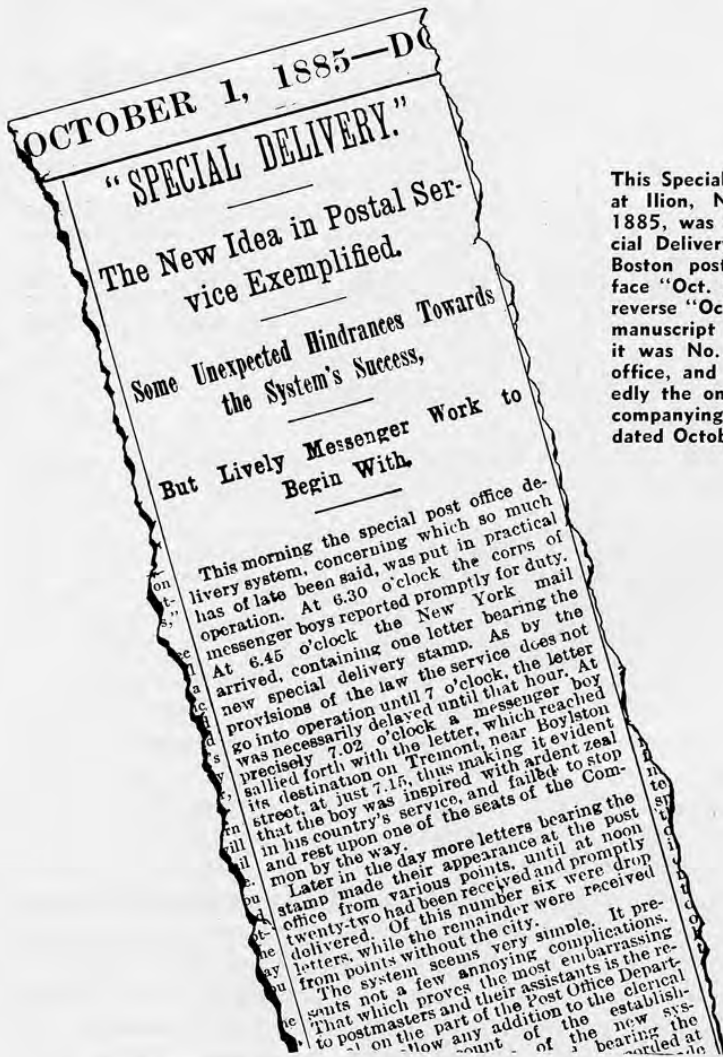
This cover was secured from the collection of Clayton H. Willard of Springfield, Mass. Accompanying the cover is a clipping from a Boston newspaper dated October 1, 1885, from which we quote in part:

"This morning the special post office delivery system, concerning which so much has been said of late, was put into practical operation. At 6:30 o'clock the corps of messenger boys reported promptly for duty. At 6:45 o'clock the New York mail arrived, containing one letter bearing the new special delivery stamp. As by the provisions of the law the service did not go into operation until 7 o'clock, the letter was necessarily delayed until that hour. At precisely 7:02 o'clock a messenger boy sallied forth with the letter, which reached its destination on Tremont, near Boylston street, at just 7:15, thus making it evident that the boy was inspired with ardent zeal in his country's service and failed to stop and rest upon one of the seats of the common by the way.

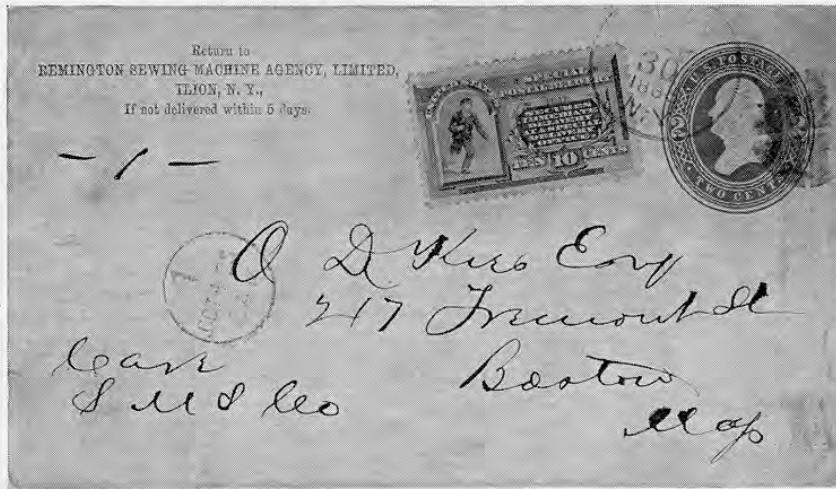
"Later in the day more letters bearing the stamp made their appearance at the post office from various points, until at noon 22 had been received and promptly delivered. Of this number, six were drop letters, while the remainder were received from points without the city. . . ."

(1) The 2012 Scott Specialized states, "Special Delivery service...was put into operation on October 1, 1885." and under E1, "Earliest documented use: Sept. 29, 1885, on a cover delivered Oct. 1. There is also a Sept. 30 cover recorded, received for delivery at 7:00 a.m. Oct. 1" JFD.

(2) This would be the Sept. 30 cover mentioned by Scott, above. See illustration, page 4.



This Special Delivery cover mailed at Ilion, N. Y., September 30, 1885, was the first piece of Special Delivery mail handled by the Boston post office. Stamped on face "Oct. 1, 85, 6 A M" and on reverse "Oct. 1, 85 7 A M." The manuscript "-1-" indicates that it was No. 1 at the Boston post office, and the cover is undoubtedly the one described in the accompanying newspaper article dated October 1, 1885.



Comparing the markings on the Peltz cover with the data in the newspaper clipping, it is clear that this item was the one letter which arrived at the Boston post office prior to 7 a. m., October 1, 1885 and which was delivered to the addressee at 7:15 a. m. The postmaster at Ilion was following instructions from Washington when he sold this special delivery stamp at least as early as September 30th and when he received and forwarded on that date the letter bearing same.

The cover is by no means to be compared with those modern so-called "pre-first-day covers" which bear stamps sold by careless postmasters prior to the authorized dates.

Study of the First Special Delivery Stamp

Among collections of E1 covers, this stamp is most frequently found in combination with the two-cent red-brown adhesive of 1883⁽³⁾ and secondly, in combination with the two-cent brown envelopes of that period. Some of the scarcer combinations include E1 used with the four-cent green Jackson, with pairs of the one-cent 1887 and on the one-cent brown Jefferson postal card. Later use of this stamp with the two-cent green, 1887, is common. Occasional *registered* special delivery covers demonstrate odd and unusual combinations.

Only two plates were used, Nos. 495 and 496. The American Bank Note Company imprint consists of the company's name in the usual shaded block letters with the plate number in italic script.

The color of this first special delivery stamp is given as blue and deep blue, the perforation is 12, paper unwatermarked, the printing, flat press. The stamps are in panes of 100.

Double position dots sometimes appear in the upper margins of top row stamps under the "K" of "Bank" and again under the plate number. In bottom-row imprint strips a position dot occurs in the lower margin of the stamp, just below the design and above the "P" of "Company," and another above the "N" of "Note." Other dot varieties are to be found and there are occasional traces of guide lines.

The Peltz collection, already mentioned, has an India paper plate proof block of twenty with top imprint and plate number. This reveals a faint guide line running horizontally through the upper portion of "Postal Delivery" of each stamp.

A rather faint double transfer, as listed in the Standard catalog, is located in "United States" and "Special" in the upper portion of one stamp, but the location of this variety on the plate is not known to the writer.

Among existing proofs is an unfinished die proof in light green, in which the ornaments right and left of "Special" are missing. This item originally came from the Lord Crawford collection.

Die proofs in the correct color are listed by the Standard catalog and the writer has been shown one that bears at the bottom the inscription: "C-140—American Bank Note Co. N. Y." There are at least twelve die proofs on India, all in different trial colors, and also large and small die proofs in others than the accepted colors.

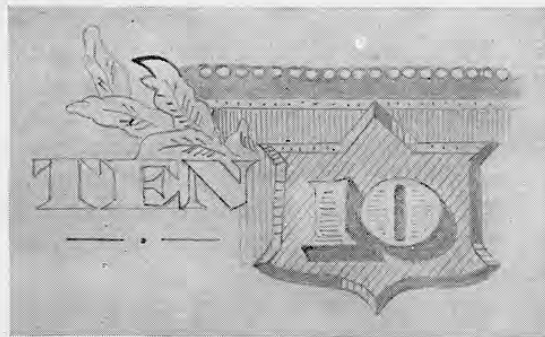
(3) See pages 14 & subsequent pages for new illustrations to supplement this article. JFD.

The Second Issue

So successful was the special delivery service that on August 4, 1886 the original act was amended to extend the operation thereof to all post offices and to all mailable matter, this change being effective October 1, 1886.



**Left:
Original
Design**



**Right:
Changed
Design**

An important difference between the first Special Delivery design of 1885 and that of 1888 and later issues is seen in the group of leaves over "TEN" to the left of the numeral "10." In the original design, the leaf just to the left of "OFFICE" ends in a tiny ball and in the changed design this leaf was pointed. In the Bureau prints the digits are shaded and there is a line under TEN and CENTS.

The Post Office Department changed the original wording of the stamp design to conform with the new regulations, but as large supplies of the first stamps were still in the hands of the postmasters, those with the altered inscription were not actually issued until September 6, 1888. At least until this date the first stamps were available to postmasters for the extension of the service.

The old die was altered and used, the principal difference being that the inscription "Secures Immediate Delivery at a Special Delivery Office" was changed to "Secures Immediate Delivery at any Post Office." Tiny ornaments were added at each side and underneath the words "at any." In the original stamp, the leaf just to the left of the word "office" and above the "en" of "Ten" ends in a tiny ball. In the altered design, this leaf is more regular in form and ends in a point. In E1, the entire inscription of the center tablet was in straight lines but in E2 the two final words "Post Office" form a curved line

and a row of colorless dots has been added underneath. The leaf already referred to is now just to the left of this row of dots.⁽³⁾

Two new plates were made, the first being numbered 552. The stamps that came into use September 6, 1888 came from this plate. Sometime in 1890, probably subsequent to June according to Elliott Perry a second plate, No. 73, came into use.⁽³⁾

The color range of E2 is from the dark blue prevailing throughout the printings of the first stamp to a light, chalky blue. In collections of Special Delivery covers, this light shade does not appear in use until about 1891. Like its predecessor, this stamp was printed on unwatermarked paper and perforated 12.

A large die proof of the new stamp in black is known. The American Bank Note Company imprint was the same as that employed for the plates of E1.

No important plate varieties of this second issue have been noted but there is a slight difference in some of the stamps shown that invites comment. To the right and left of the word "Special" at the top of the design, there are small, three-pronged ornaments resembling Neptune's trident. In both the die and plate proofs and in many of the issued stamps these ornaments are equally distinct on both sides, but in certain other stamps the left ornament is less clearly impressed and occasionally has partly disappeared. There are indications that this peculiarity was due to a wearing away of, or breakage of part of the left ornament on the transfer roll.

The earliest use of E2 on cover, as shown in the Peltz collection, is December 18, 1888, more than three months after the stamp was issued to the public. We note that the first mention in the philatelic press of the new design was in the *Philatelic Record* for December, 1888. The probability is that because of their having on hand substantial stocks of the old stamp, the postmasters throughout the country were in no haste to order or to issue to the public stamps of the new design. This would seem to make 1888 covers bearing E2 of considerable scarcity.

Special Delivery Markings

During the early years of the special delivery service, many post offices stamped or wrote a serial number on each piece of such mail.⁽³⁾In doing so the postmasters followed a custom already established in connection with registered letters, but as the years passed the practice was gradually discarded.

As early as 1885, Worcester, Mass., was using a serial number that was written into the proper place in a two-line rubber stamped inscription "SPECIAL DELIVERY—No." For some years Chicago used a serial numbering device and the number stamped on a cover dated in December, 1886 indicates that this office had dispatched 10,943 special delivery letters to that time. Philadelphia in 1889 had dispatched 60,489 special delivery letters.

In 1888, Boston used a three-line rubber stamp impressed in purple on special delivery letters; it provided spaces for the "Number," "Date," and

“Time.” In 1890 Boston used a similar stamping device enclosed in a double-line rectangle, one and $\frac{5}{8}$ by one and $\frac{1}{8}$ inches in size, to which had been added the city name. This is usually found impressed in magenta in the lower left corner of the face of the cover.

About a year later, Boston adopted a wavy-line rectangle of similar size worded “SPECIAL DELIVERY FEE PAID AT BOSTON, MASS.” with spaces for number, date and hour below.⁽³⁾

“Tried by Special Messenger” in a large, double-line rectangle is an interesting postal marking used at Washington in 1891 and perhaps earlier. Under this inscription are two lines for remarks.

New York City in 1893 used a four-line rubber stamp “Offered at Address” with spaces for the date and hour, plus “Cause of Non-Delivery” followed by a line for remarks. This marking is found both in pink and purple. “Returned by Messenger as Undeliverable” was used by Philadelphia in 1891.

An unusual use of the special delivery stamp E2 is shown on a Department of State penalty envelope mailed from Washington to St. Johnsbury, Vt., in 1892. Although no regular postage was required, it was evidently felt that the special delivery stamp was necessary, even on official mail.

The first three special delivery stamps were contemporaneous with the Grant letter sheet, the first issue of which was in 1886, and the final issue, “Series 7” in 1893. Two examples of the use of E1 on letter sheets are included in the Peltz collection, one being on a sheet used in 1886 and the other with a later printing “Series 3.” The second issue of special delivery stamps is found used on sheets designated “Series 5,” “Series 6” and “Series 7.” The third special delivery adhesive appears on a letter sheet of the sixth series.

Perplexed Postmasters

The original design of the special delivery stamp measured $36\frac{1}{2}$ by 21mm. and the size remained the same for many years. In 1893, the government issued the Columbian Exposition stamps, the designs of which were in the form of a horizontal rectangle of approximately the same dimensions as the special deliveries.

The one-cent Columbian was in a dark blue quite similar in shade to that of special delivery stamps of that period. This similarity in size, shape and color resulted in unanticipated confusion on the part of both postmasters and public.

This condition is evidenced by an 1895 cover seen by the writer, that bears two one-cent Columbians plus a special delivery. The letter apparently was handled as ordinary mail inasmuch as no special delivery markings appear on it.

The reverse of this error on the part of post office employees is demonstrated by an 1918 cover bearing a two-cent Pan American plus a one-cent Columbian stamp that, again judging by the markings, was handled as special delivery.

This confusion over the proper use of the special delivery and the blue one-cent Columbian resulted in a new issue, the ten-cent orange special delivery,

January 24, 1893. The earliest E3 cover seen by the writer is dated February 27, 1893 and the next earliest, April 29th, indicating that there was an interval before the orange stamps got into general circulation. Luff, page 253, says that "the stamp of the new color was reported in use as early as January 28, 1893."

Michael Miller, writing in *Mekeel's*, July 17, 1939, hazards the opinion that the orange special delivery was in the nature of a commemorative issued along with the Columbian series; however, as all but one of the Columbian series were issued January 2, whereas E3 was not released until 22 days later, it seems more probable that the motive behind the later emission was the avoidance of confusion with Columbian denominations of similar color.

Plates 73 and 552 were again used to produce the stamp in the new color. In all, 5,099,500 orange stamps were printed. (3)

Back to the Blue Again

January 5, 1894, the American Bank Note Company resumed the printing of special delivery stamps in blue. As there was no change in color, design, perforation or paper from the 1888 stamps, this later stamp, although actually a reissue, must be classified as E2. The reason for the switch from orange to blue at this date was discontinuance of the Columbian Commemoratives, thereby ending the possibility of confusion.

Although printing of the orange special delivery stamp was discontinued January 5, 1894, the Post Office Department continued to issue the orange stamps to post offices until May 19, 1894, after which date only blue stamps were issued.

All four plates used to this date were in two panes of 50 each, making 100-subject sheets. The sheets of blue stamps were divided and issued in panes of 50 but, according to Elliott Perry, many of the orange stamps were issued in full sheets of 100.

The First Bureau Printing

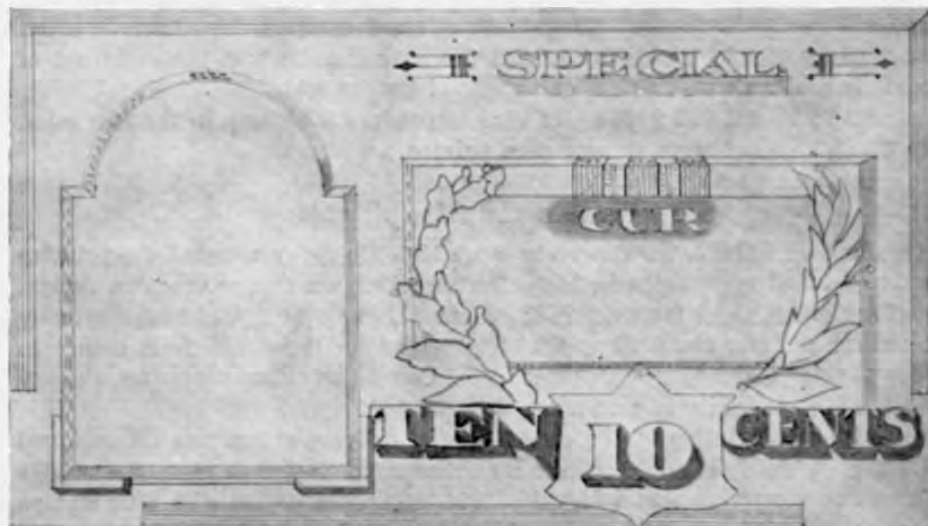
On October 10, 1894, the Bureau of Engraving & Printing produced its first special delivery stamps, the issue on unwatermarked paper now numbered by the Standard catalog, E4 (formerly 1893). The Bureau evidently used the American Bank Note Company die, adding lines about 4½ millimetres long under the "TEN" and "CENTS," a change that served the same purpose as triangles added to the 1890 dies for the 1894 issue of regular postage—i. e., to distinguish the Bureau printings from those of its predecessor. The design of the special delivery has not been ordinarily altered concurrently with a new general issue of United States postage stamps.

Although rarely noted in philatelic literature and catalogs, other important changes were made in the design. What may be called the panel on which the design is fashioned is henceforth bordered with a heavy line. This border line forms the outer edge of the design in the two lower corners, the outer edges of the rectangle elsewhere being defined as before by lighter parallel lines of shading.

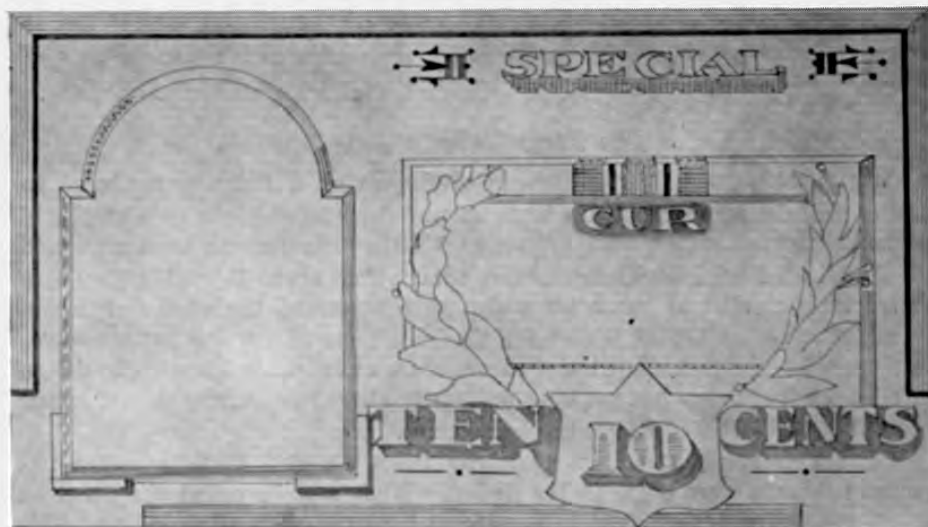
The digits "1" and "0," previously neutral, now are shaded with horizontal lines. The ornaments each side of "SPECIAL," referred to as resembling

Neptune's trident, have been re-engraved and are more elaborate. (These changes are illustrated.)

In the original design, there were five small blocks of unequal width above the center tablet bearing the text "Secures Immediate Delivery at any Post Office." These five blocks are located just over the "CUR" of "SECURES," and in the earlier plates were composed of vertical lines of shading. Now, horizontal



E-1



E-4

These drawings illustrate the various differences between the original design of 1885 and the first Bureau printing of 1894 (E-4). In addition to the alterations in the leaf illustrated elsewhere we find important changes in the five small blocks occurring above "CUR" of "secures." Also the ornaments left and right of "SPECIAL" have undergone a distinct transformation. Other changes are described in the article.

lines of shading have been superimposed over the vertical in the two outside blocks, making what is known to commercial artists as cross-hatching; the two blocks adjacent to these outer ones have each been divided with a heavy, vertical line, the center block remaining as before.

The running messenger performs in a panel at the left of the design. This panel is in the nature of a rectangle with semi-circular top. In the center of the colorless curved outline of this panel at the top there are dots of shading in the American Bank Note Company printings, while in the Bureau design these dots have been eliminated.

This first Bureau issue is on a thick, soft, porous, unwatermarked paper similar to that previously used. The gum employed by the American Bank Note Company varied from white to brownish, while that used by the Bureau from 1894 to date has varied from white to yellowish. As in preceding issues, the stamps are perforated 12. Colors listed in *Scott's Specialized Catalogue* are blue, dark blue, bright blue, and by Mr. Luff, blue, dark blue and marine blue. The only plate used while the unwatermarked paper was in vogue was No. 77.

An Odd Set of Proofs

In connection with this issue, we find a curious group of proofs that originally were made for the H. G. Mandell exhibition book. Mr. Mandell was an expert connected with the American Bank Note Company and by avocation a stamp collector. Among his effects, disposed of after his death, was a wonderful lot of proof stamps including many items that otherwise might be unknown. The three proofs now to be described are said to have been made in 1903 from "duplicate dies" for display books carried by the company's salesmen, and by which these salesmen were able to demonstrate to prospective customers the quality of the concern's work.

Two of the three are in blue and the other in orange. All three show the lines of shading in the numeral "10," a characteristic of the Bureau design, and likewise all have the blocks above the center tablet changed as recently described. However, two of the designs are minus the line under ten-cents that was added in the re-engraving for the 1894 issue.

Two of the items under discussion have the dots of shading in the center of the colorless outline above the running messenger as in the earlier issues, but the other has this shading eliminated. In two of the designs the tridents at the top have been re-engraved, but in the other these are in the original state. Two examples show the heavy outline of the design in the re-engraved state and the third does not.

These inconsistencies are numerous and not easy to describe, but to make it clearer let it be said that each of these three examples exhibits characteristics of both the American Bank Note Company and the Bureau engravings.

The catalog recognizes that the unwatermarked Bureau printings are scarce by pricing unused copies at \$7 and used at \$2 off cover and \$5 on cover, as compared with prices of \$1, six cents and 25 cents respectively for the watermarked.⁽⁴⁾

The Postal Guide for 1898 states that a total of 3,596,500 of the unwatermarked stamps was issued.

⁽⁴⁾ In the 2012 *Specialized* the values are unwatermarked (E4): \$900, \$75, and \$250; for the watermarked (E5): \$210, \$10, and \$25, respectively.

The First Watermarked Issue

The date of issue of the 10-cent special delivery on watermarked paper was August 16, 1895. This is E5. The watermark is the double-line USPS, with letters approximately 17 mm high by 12 mm wide, the watermark being so spaced as to allow one letter for each stamp.

Mr. Luff gives the same list of shades as in the previous issue, blue, dark blue and marine blue, but the *Specialized U. S. Catalogue* now names them blue, dark blue and deep blue. Among covers from 1896 on we find special delivery stamps in a darker blue than in any previous issue, but the student will find little shade variation in any of these early blue special deliveries.

Plates used for the production of E5 were 77, 257, 381, 492, 880, 881, 882, 883, 1257, 1258, 1259 and 1260. Mr. Luff says that plate 682 was made, but being defective was not put into use.

His tabulations give the number of special delivery stamps delivered between June 30, 1895 and June 30, 1900 as 26,852,950. As these stamps were not replaced by the boy-on-bicycle type until December 9, 1902, about a year and a half later than the Luff tabulation above, and as the Luff tables indicate that the Bureau was issuing about 7,000,000 special delivery stamps annually by 1900, it seems that the total issue of the stamp we designate as E5 might have been approximately 40,000,000.

A Rare Imperforate Variety

The imperforate variety listed for the first watermarked stamp is from plate 257. Durant says that only a single sheet of this variety has been seen. The Peltz collection contains a vertically-imperforate pair (mint) with horizontal center line between. This came from the Arthur Hind collection, but it originally was in the collection of Francis C. Foster of Boston. It is said that only 50 copies of this variety exist. The shade is a pronounced dark blue.

Line Through Postal Delivery

The 1895 issue produces an interesting plate variety best described as above. Among numerous examples examined, we find it definitely located in a bottom imprint and plate number strip (Plate 257). The line, which on this example is not pronounced, but nevertheless distinct, crosses through the words "POSTAL DELIVERY" on all three stamps and is also seen in the "N" of "UNITED" to the left, and in the margins between the stamps. (3)

An on-cover example displays this variety more distinctly and in addition shows other divergent scratches, apparently slips of the engraver's tool.

These two examples show the line cutting approximately the center of "POSTAL DELIVERY"; on others, both on and off cover, we find it higher or lower than the exact center of the letters. The writer has been shown a used vertical pair in which the lower stamp exhibits this variety, while the upper one is normal. (The purpose of a used pair at this early date is not clear, foreign and parcel post uses being then unknown).

Two other stamps of this variety show plate division lines in the lower margin of the stamps and these, compared with the strip from a bottom row with imprint below, prove that this variety exists both in an upper and lower pane. It would seem that this is an engraver's guide line variety and questions left for solution are: 1, does this guide line extend entirely across the lower row of plate 257?; 2, on how many rows of this plate does it appear, and in what panes?; 3, does it appear on other plates?

Another interesting variety has a curving line, apparently an accidental mark of an engraver's tool, that begins just above the center of the "P" in "POSTAL" and curves upward through the word, ending near the top of the "L." Duplicate copies have been examined.

To Be Continued

Supplementary Illustrations



An October 1, 1885 FDC with Sc. E1 used in combination with a 2¢ red brown, Sc. 210. (See page 5)
Note the manuscript serial number "5" in upper left. (See p. 7)



A block of eight of Sc. E1 with American Bank Note Company imprint and plate number 496. (See page 5)



A comparison of Sc. E1 (left) and E2 design differences, as described on pages 6 to 7



A block of eight of Sc. E2 with American Bank Note Company imprint and plate number 73. (See page 7)



A cover with a Sc. E5 plate number 381 single, tied by "Waltham Mass. Mar. 26, 1898" duplex cancels on 2¢ entire to Cambridge Mass., with boxed Special Delivery Fee handstamp. (See page 8)



A 10¢ Bicycle Messenger Special Delivery sent May 28, 1909 from Kansas City, Mo. to New York, with "Fee Claimed at Office of First Address" handstamp applied in New York. (See page 8)



A block of eight of Sc. E3 with American Bank Note Company imprint and plate number 73. (See page 9)



A bottom strip of three of Sc. E5 with BEP imprint and plate number 257. Using the pdf magnifier, you may be able to see the line described on page 12. All I can see is traces of blue across the top of some letters. JFD.

Also Available

In addition to this two part article, we have created a set of pages that include excerpts from the *The Speedy* book by Henry M. Goodkind as well as articles from *Mekeel's Weekly* and *STAMPS Magazine*. This seven-page set, includes some of the history, additional photos, color images of all of the stamps, an Identifier, and descriptive spaces into which the 23 Special Delivery stamps may be mounted.

This set of pages, printed on card stock, is available for \$11 including postage & handling. [Click here to order.](#)

American Stamp Pages
Identifying the Special Deliveries

as to prevent their access to other parts of the office...O-

Columbian stamps. The 10-cent orange was not discontinued until May 19, 1894, when the stock on hand was exhausted. On October 10, 1894, Scott #4 was issued on unwatermarked paper. This was followed by the same design, Sc. #5, issued August 16, 1895 on USPS double line watermarked paper. (See page 3.)

In 1902, the "Running Messenger" was replaced by a "Bicycle Messenger". Scott #10, a light blue, was the first example, issued on December 9.

Sec. 643. Postmasters to Require Efficient Service.—Postmasters should...equalize as far as practicable the composition of the messengers. To this end...a messenger employed during the busy hours of one day may be assigned to the duller hours of another day. No...changes should be made in assignments to night duty...No car fare or other incidental expenses can in any case be allowed to any messenger.

Sec. 645. Payment of Messengers.—Messengers should be employed with the understanding that they shall receive the full 8 cents per letter actually delivered, not exceeding \$20 during any one month. But where the business may be reasonably expected, or shall prove, sufficient at any office to warrant it, the postmaster may employ his messengers at a less rate per letter, or by the hour for not exceeding 12 1/2 cents per hour, calculating eight hours' service per day, or by the month, being certain not to exceed the total permissible allowance...

The Stamps

The first Special Delivery stamp, Scott #1, the 10¢ blue "Running Messenger" was issued in 1885. It included the inscription, "Secure Immediate Delivery at Special Delivery Rate of 10 CENTS per letter on the stamp, valid for 10 days."

Record card of the #13, used to produce the "Running Messenger" Special Delivery stamps, Sc. #1-E5.

articles of suitable matter, but it was not used September 6, 1888 until a stamp, Scott #2, the 10¢ blue, was issued with the inscription "Secure Immediate Delivery at any Post Office."

On January 24, 1893 a 10-cent orange, Sc. #3, was issued to avoid confusion with the blue 1-cent and 4-cent

On December 12, 1908 a new design, Scott #7, was issued. The 10¢ green stamp featured the Helmet of Mercury, "Messenger of the Gods," but the innovative design proved to be its downfall, as postmasters complained that the new stamps were enjoying special delivery treatment because of the altered shape, design and color.

After the 1908 stamp was discontinued by order of June 9, 1909, the 1902 "Bicycle Messenger" special delivery design was brought back. Although new plates were used, the 1902 and 1909 stamps are indistinguishable, however, the 1909 printings can be distinguished by plate numbers 5240, 5243, 5244, 5245, with later printings also having an "09" suffix.

Subsequent varieties of the "Bicycle Messenger" differ as to perforation and watermark. (See page 3.)

In 1912, the stamp design was updated from a Bicycle to "Motorcycle Delivery". The first variety of this design, Scott #12 was placed on sale in Washington, D.C. on July 12, 1922.

Artist R. Ottobander Smith used this self photograph as actual model for his Bicycle Special Delivery stamp design.

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