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# *From the Stamp Specialist:* **40 Years of Special Delivery Stamps Part 2**

by C. W. Bates

(From *The Stamp Specialist* Number Four, published in 1940;  
continued from the August 5, 2011 *Stamp News Online*)

## *Overprintings for U. S. Possessions*

In 1899 the watermarked special delivery stamp was surcharged in red for use in Cuba, Guam and the Philippines. The Cuba surcharge was in three lines, "CUBA 10c dePEso," printed horizontally across the design to the right of the running messenger. The Guam overprint shows the word "GUAM" in large capitals diagonally over the space to the right of the messenger. In the Philippines overprint, "PHILIPPINES" is in narrow capitals struck diagonally across the space to the right of messenger.(1)

Mr. Luff says 126,850 special deliveries were overprinted for use in Guam and the Philippines, but mentions no number for Cuba.

Ferrars H. Tows of New York supplies information that special delivery stamps with Cuba surcharge have been seen on plate No. 492 strips, top and bottom; those with Guam overprinted on bottom plate number strips of plates 880, 881, 882 and 883<sup>(2)</sup> and those for the Philippines on top and bottom strips of 880, 881, 882 and 883. Cuba E1a (the variety without period after Cuba) comes on the first stamp of top plate number and imprint strip from plate 492. The surcharge for Cuba was made up of 50 subjects. Plate 882 for Cuba does not exist. Mr. Tows possesses striking examples in singles and blocks of these varieties.

## *Clock-face Postal Markings*

Reference has already been made to the straight-line and wavy-line rubber stamp markings used by various offices to record date and hour of receipt or sending, or of efforts made at delivery. We now describe a special type of marking (probably a steel die stamping device) used over a period of years at Boston and elsewhere which, for want of a better name, we shall designate as the clock-face.

We first find this clocklike arrangement used in Boston in 1893. It was used as late as 1914, according to covers examined. Although a receiving mark, this was usually applied on the face of the cover and almost always in blue ink, although at least one instance, June 16, 1893, is noted in black.(2)

There are four types of the Boston clock-face, all circular in shape. Types I and II have four rings, the outer ring being 33 or 34 mm. in diameter. Types

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(1) See illustrations, page 29.

(2) See illustrations, page 30.

III and IV have three rings only, but the overall size is the same. The inscription printed around the outer rim of the first two is: "SPECIAL DELIVERY FEE PAID AT BOSTON" and the numerals of the clock face are in Roman characters; the inscription of the last two is: "RECEIVED FOR SPECIAL DELIVERY. Boston, Mass. P. O.," and the hours are designated in Arabic numerals. In the center of each is a movable clock hand to designate the hour of receipt. Type I has "No....." and "P. M." above the design and Type II does not. Type III has "A. M." or "P. M." outside the upper portion of the design and Type IV has "FEE PAID" in addition. There was a sub-variety of this last in 1908 which had "FEE PAID" in larger letters and no outer circle for the design.

North Boston, Postal Station (purple), Springfield, Mass., (blue), and Providence, R. I. (blue), used quite similar types of receiving markings, but these towns more properly applied it on the reverse of cover. Hartford, Conn., used a two-ring circular marking with the hours arranged around the outer rim and a small movable mark inside which, together with the month, day and "AM" or "PM" designation, could be moved around the circle to indicate the hour. Washington, D. C., Memphis, Tenn., and St. Louis, Mo., used similar designs, all applied in purple on reverse of cover, except for Memphis which is found on face of cover.

Other interesting postal markings of this late period include: "Special Delivery Fee Paid at South End, Mass.," (A Boston sub station); "Offered at Address" with line for date and hour and a second line for "Cause of Non Delivery<sup>(2)</sup>" and "Pay No Money to Messenger," the last used at Cleveland, O.

### *Non-Delivery Labels*

At least as early as 1886, we find a label affixed to the reverse of certain New York City covers (in rare instances to the face) which reads as follows:

"(N. Y., 4318. Ed. 8 — 25,000)"

"NOTICE."

—

"A Special Delivery Stamp affixed to any article of mail matter is intended only to secure an immediate delivery—or one offer of immediate delivery. If the article cannot for any cause be delivered when FIRST offered, it then becomes ordinary mail matter and is thereafter treated and delivered accordingly."

Apparently this was an idea of the New York City post office and it was used there for several years. In 1897, Boston employed a smaller label with identical wording and this likewise was in use for some time.

Buffalo and Pittsburgh tried to check up on the messenger boy by use of the following rubber stamp: "This letter was returned by Special Delivery Messenger for reason assigned on back. If not correct, please advise the Postmaster."

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(2) See illustrations, page 30.



John N. Luff states that of the special delivery stamps allocated to postmasters for the quarter ending December 31, 1888, 600 were overprinted "SPECIMEN" in red and sent to the Universal Postal Union. These were of the 1885 type of stamp.

Mr. Luff lists 111,900 specimen stamps as having been taken from deliveries for the quarter ending June 30, 1889 and says that this lot probably consisted of proofs. This second overprinting was on the 1888 stamp. On this and subsequent items of this nature, the word "Specimen" was applied by handstamp in small, black or purple, upper and lower case letters.

In 1898, the government overprinted 125 sets of all stamps in current use with "UNIVERSAL POSTAL CONGRESS," a three-line, red overprint, for presentation to delegates attending the congress in Washington that year.(2)

### *Mercury Takes to Wheels*

After trotting briskly along a flag-stone pavement seventeen years, the perennial youth in a discarded Civil War uniform of generous proportions changed to a more modern garb, mounted a bicycle and pedalled vigorously toward his destination. Apparently ageless, the special delivery messenger on the stamp now seemed even more youthful than in the beginning.

In 1902, the Post Office Department requested the Bureau of Engraving & Printing to prepare a design for a new stamp. R. Ostrander Smith, the Bureau artist, suggested that the messenger be awheel inasmuch as bicycles were much used in the service. His idea was approved. We quote from an article by George B. Sloane in STAMPS:

"The scene was planned and laid in a photographer's studio, and after several sheets of paper were stretched along the wall for a clean-cut background, Mr. Smith mounted a bicycle and the picture was taken. From this photograph, he made a drawing, substituting the likeness of a boy messenger, and clothing him in a uniform and cap."

The original photograph from which Mr. Smith made the design of the messenger on a bicycle, together with a photographic copy of the original drawing, were secured by the late Beverly King.(3)

Mr. Smith formerly had been chief designer for the American Bank Note Company. For the Bureau, he designed the entire set of frames for the Pan American stamps of 1901, as well as the John Adams postal card.

In the design of the 1902 special delivery, the riding messenger is at the left, facing right. Across the top of the design is a tablet containing the words: "UNITED STATES OF AMERICA." This tablet is supported at either side by fluted pillars; the words: "SPECIAL DELIVERY" are carried on a ribbon below, with "SERIES 1902" in the tail of this ribbon at the left. "Secures immediate delivery at any United States Post Office" is displayed in a foliated tablet at right of the messenger and at the bottom of the design; interspersed among foliated ornaments is: "10 TEN CENTS 10."

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(2) See illustration, page 30.

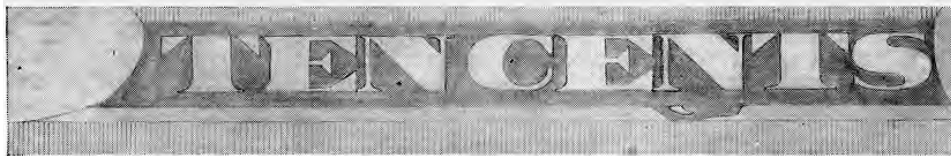
(3) See illustration, page 31.

Ponickau and Ellis engraved the new die and the stamps were first issued December 9, 1902. As usual, the perforation is 12, watermark is of the double line type, flat press printing, 100 subjects to the plate.

This stamp in the pale ultramarine shade is a very rare item as less than two sheets have been located (E6a).

### *A Damaged Transfer*

The Standard catalog lists a sub-variety of E6 described as a damaged transfer under the "N" of "CENTS." Five mint blocks in the Peltz collection



**Shown here is one of the most pronounced examples of the damaged transfer under the "N" of "CENTS" in the 1902 issue.**

illustrate progressive phases of this variety, varying from the slightest suggestion of a downward bulge of the lower edge of the solid block of color at the bottom of the stamp containing the words "TEN CENTS" to a pronounced hemisphere of solid color projecting downward into the white space below these words to touch the shaded outline of the design underneath.

A used single examined has a combination of this variety with a double transfer showing in the vertical lines of the column at the left of the design and in the entablature above. On-cover examples studied include November 29, 1905, three in 1906, two in 1907, two in 1908 and two in 1909.

In a note published in STAMPS, August 12, 1933, George B. Sloane said in part (his conclusions being based on stamps shown him by Parsons Todd of New York) :

"In my first examination of this variety, I was inclined to believe it the result of an actual break in one of the reliefs on the transfer roller, but a break of this kind would necessarily have to show some adjacent part of the design breaking away from the relief. The stamps give no such indication.

"The defect is due, I am convinced, to the transfer roller having picked up a small piece of metal or shaving which lodged in a groove between the raised lines of the design on the relief . . . . It is indicated that the adhesion on the roller successively worked itself free as the transferring proceeded over the plate, since in the final stages the design is about normal and unimpaired, and shows nothing broken away."

### *Other Plate Varieties*

Another variety of the boy-on-bicycle stamp is that in which the top outer line is missing. In the normal stamp, there is a distinct line across the entire top of the design above "UNITED STATES OF AMERICA." All but some 2 mm. of this line is missing in duplicate copies examined. This variety is also known on the 1911 issue with single-line watermark.

One double transfer has been mentioned. There is another and more pronounced variety with a heavy doubling of practically all the vertical lines of



shading on the left side of the entablature at the top, causing it to look like an over-inked example. A third variety has a slight doubling as in the foregoing and also in the words: "SERIES 1902." A fourth gives us traces of doubling in the "10" and foliate ornament at the lower left.

Dark ultramarine shades seem to be the earliest, coming in 1902; lighter ones develop on covers about a year later. Still lighter shades appear on covers dated around 1907-09, but none of them of the sickly shade on somewhat-yellowish paper listed by the Standard catalog as pale ultramarine (E6b).

"Delivery Attempted—All Charges Paid" is a postal marking of this period. Another, dated April 25, 1906, is a pink, two ring circular handstamp with date and the words: "Fee Claimed at Washington, D. C." From Galion, O., comes a marking not previously noted: "Forwarded, fee not claimed."<sup>(4)</sup>

### *The 1909 Re-issue*

Following a brief use of the green "Merry Widow" stamp, to be immediately described, E6 was reissued with the same paper, watermark and perforation, and in practically the same range of shades previously employed with the possible exception of a dark ultramarine just a trace deeper than that previously issued.

To distinguish these later printings from the earlier, the bureau added the figures "09" in the margin at the right of the plate number, this being the only distinction between this and the first 1902 issue. Plates were 5240, 5243, 44 and 45 and these were the final 100-subject special delivery plates.<sup>(3)</sup>

### *Brief Reign of the Merry Widow*

December 12, 1908, the Post Office Department changed from the traditional type of special delivery stamps to a new design, size and color differing radically from anything that had been before.

The prominent architect, Whitney Warren, senior partner of the firm, Warren & Wetmore, made three pen-and-ink drawings similar to the design finally accepted. Mr. Warren was at that time in Paris and he submitted his suggestions to Postmaster General George von L. Myer, who in turn, consulted the Third Assistant Postmaster General and Joseph E. Ralph, director of the Bureau.

The director caused Die No. 425 to be engraved in the Bureau for experimental purposes. The authorities were not pleased and the design was materially changed before being finally accepted.

These sketches and proofs came on the stamp market at the disposition of the effects of the late Joseph E. Ralph, years later, and one of the original drawings (an unaccepted design) is in the Peltz collection, together with photographs of the others. Of one of the three designs, Mr. Warren had woodcuts made in Paris, for submission to Washington, and proofs of these woodcuts, along with a die proof of the accepted design, are in the same collection.

Thus evolved the Merry Widow design, a thoroughly artistic creation showing the winged hat of Mercury, set against an olive branch, above an oblong

(3) See illustration, page 31.

(4) See illustration, page 25.



June 5, 1909 “Pittsburgh, PA, Street R.P.O.” streetcar handstamps tie 2¢ Lincoln (Sc. 367) and “Merry Widow” special delivery (Sc. E7) to New York City, with “fee claimed at office of first / address / (N.Y.P.O. Grand Central Sta.)” marking.

panel in the lower right corner of the stamp that carries the three-line inscription: “U. S. POSTAGE—SPECIAL DELIVERY.” In the upper left corner is a large circle with “10c” in white figures on a dark background.<sup>(5)</sup>

The size of the design is 25 x 21½ mm., color green, perforation 12, watermark double line U. S. P. S., flat press printing, 280 subjects to a sheet, same being cut into four panes size 7 x 10 stamps. There were four plates, 4916, 4917, 4920 and 4921. Shades are green, dark green and yellowish green.

At least seven stamps in the third and fourth rows from the top of the upper right pane of plate 4921 exhibit double transfer varieties, listed as a sub-variety of E7 in the Standard catalog. In the most pronounced example, the doubling is found in the short vertical lines of shading at the top and bottom on the left side of the design, and also in the vertical lines of shading in the outline of the circle containing “10c.” There is just a trace of doubling in some of the olive leaves.

The Merry Widow was printed in a shade of green close to that of the then-current one-cent stamp. Such was the reason why the Department retired this design June 8, 1909, confusion on the part of postal clerks having given rise to complaints and dissatisfaction. The stamp encountered the jokes of press and stage and was dubbed the “Merry Widow” because of its likeness to a then-fashionable style of ladies’ hats. The stamp is rather scarce on cover used during the period of its currency.

### *The Issue of 1911—Single Line Watermark*

Following a period during which the re-issue, already described, was in use, the Bureau brought out the special delivery stamp of the 1902 design on single-line watermarked paper. The new plates were of 200 subjects. During the printing of this issue, the Bureau imprint to the left of the plate num-

(5) See illustrations, page 32.



ber was discarded, plate 5539 being the last with imprint. The earliest plate was 5513 and the latest, 5863, eight being used.<sup>(6)</sup>

This issue has a shade of pale ultramarine approximately as insipid as the pale ultramarine of the 1902 issue, but on white instead of yellowish paper (E8a). There is also a new shade, dark violet (E8b).

### *Issue of 1914—Perf. 10*

In this issue we get the first change in perforation since the beginning of the special delivery service. The catalog does not give the date when this change was made. The catalog number is E9 and the listed shades are ultramarine, pale ultramarine and blue.

The earliest number plate is 5520 and the latest 6049, eight plates having been used.

### *The Unwatermarked Perf. 10 Stamp*

Sometime during 1916, probably September 25, there was a further change to unwatermarked paper giving us Scott's No. E10. This is a scarcer stamp than the preceding and only four plates were used, 5520, 6043, 6046 and 6049. Shades were ultramarine, pale ultramarine and blue.

### *Issue of 1917—Perf. 11*

Of all special delivery stamps of the boy-on-bicycle type, this is the commonest, and we now find a greater variety of shades, as well as the pink back variety, an experimental production under war-time conditions. The catalog is E10 and the stamp was printed on 200 subject plates as usual. Thirty-six plates were put into use, the earliest number being 5520 and the latest, 13,819.

Listed shades of this stamp are ultramarine, pale ultramarine, dark ultramarine, gray violet and blue. The gray violet is a decidedly different shade from any previously produced.

### *Occupation of Vera Cruz*

In 1914, American forces occupied Vera Cruz, Mexico. Under date of April 24, 1914, the Postmaster General advised the Navy Department that an order had been given establishing a United States mail agency at Vera Cruz, and that H. M. Robinson, superintendent of railway mail service, had been instructed by telegraph to New Orleans to proceed to the Mexican Port to take charge, taking with him assistants and supplies.

So advised, the Commander-in-Chief of our fleet in Mexican waters, April 25, 1914, sent Commander J. M. Luby ashore to handle the mails pending arrival of Mr. Robinson. Commander Luby found that all postal supplies had been removed from the Vera Cruz post office but met the situation by cancelling "NO STAMPS" on letters mailed and inscribing them with the amount of postage (double the ordinary rate) to be collected at point of destination. When

<sup>(6)</sup> See illustrations, page 33.



letters were posted bearing United States or Mexican stamps they were marked across the face of the stamps, "CANCELLED." It is said that Mr. Robinson arrived with his assistants and stamp supplies and took charge of the work during the first ten days of May, possibly as early as May 3rd. The occupation concluded November 23, 1914. Special delivery stamps were among those used during this occupation and covers bearing same are of much interest.

### *Later Issues*

July 1, 1913, it became permissible to use the parcel post stamps for ordinary letter postage. Thus we get covers showing parcel post stamps in combination with the green Merry Widow and also with the 10-cent blue special deliveries.

At about the beginning of this period, or perhaps just prior thereto, the Post Office Department ruled that any type of postage stamps might be used to insure special delivery, provided the amount used included both postage and the special service. Thus we find various combinations of ordinary postage with the large parcel post stamps used in place of the special delivery stamps, markings on the covers indicating that special delivery service was rendered.<sup>(7)</sup>

"No Answer to Bell" is unique among special delivery postal markings of these later issues. This has been noted on a cover destined to Philadelphia and forwarded to Orr's Island, Me., making it difficult to determine which office used the marking, although naturally the odds are in favor of the larger town.

Another unusual marking is "Special Delivery Duties *Performed*" in two lines, a magenta marking used by the postmaster at Alameda, Calif. A later cover from the same town shows that the misspelling was corrected.

Other special delivery markings observed are: "Rec'd. Sp. Del'y. Dep't., August 25, 1919, 11 P. M. Columbus, Ohio," in three lines, magenta; "Fee Claimed at Washington, D. C.," in a double-line circle, purple; a rubber stamp with a series of consecutive numbers to indicate days of the month which could be checked off as delivery was performed, used by Zanesville, O., and a new Boston marking, "Special Delivery Fee Paid at Boston, Mass., Number----- Date-----", a purple, five-line rubber stamp.

### *The Motorcycle Messenger Stamp*

By 1922, the traditional messenger had gone modern to the extent of using a motorcycle for his deliveries and we now find him at the door of a Colonial-type residence handing the doctor's wife her expedited letter. His gas-driven cycle is correctly parked against the curb, a prominent feature of the foreground of the stamp design.<sup>(8)</sup>

This new stamp was authorized by the Department April 17th, and issued July 12, 1922. Gone are the ornamental fluted columns at the side of the previous design, as well as the liberal use of foliated ornaments. "UNITED STATES POSTAGE" is contained in a plain top label, with "SPECIAL DELIVERY" in plain box letters in ribbons on either side of the fan-glass oval atop the Colonial doorway. "AT ANY UNITED STATES POST OFFICE" is a three-line inscription in colorless letters

<sup>(7)</sup> See illustration, page 27.

<sup>(8)</sup> See illustration, page 34.



**A Special Delivery cover bearing the postal marking of the Detroit and Algonac Steamboat Rural Free Delivery Service. Special delivery was often of much importance in expediting mail posted at out-of-the-way locations.**

imposed on the wall of the brick house at the right of the stamp and at the bottom, in plain circles at either side and in a plain label between is "10 TEN CENTS 10."

Listed colors are deep ultramarine and gray violet, but others seen are ultramarine, and dark ultramarine or blue. The real violet shade does not develop until the later rotary press printings. The catalog number for this stamp is E 12. It is unwatermarked, perforated 11, flat press printing, 200 subject plates. The earliest plate number is 13916 and the latest, 18,686. Sixty eight plates were used.

Harry C. Bartlet of West Orange, N. J. in STAMPS described a used copy of E 12 showing a marked recutting of the bottom frame line, on a stamp straight edged at the top and thus evidently from the top row of a lower pane. In this variety, there was a distinct doubling of the bottom line under "TEN CENTS."

The writer has seen a first day cover bearing E 12 dated July 12, 1922, from M. L. Eidness, Jr., superintendent of the Division of Stamps, Washington, D. C., and addressed to E. C. Worden, Milburn, N. J. It is accompanied with a confirmatory letter stating that the stamp was of the first sheet printed, "of which one stamp was purchased by the Postmaster General this morning for presentation to President Harding." This is accompanied by a photograph showing Director Hill, Third Assistant Postmaster General Glover and Mr. Eidness inspecting the first sheet printed.

Special delivery markings of the period include: "Remailed After Delivery," used by Cleveland, O.; "Fee Claimed by Office—Schenectady, N. Y.,"; "Fee Paid at Essex Station, Boston, Mass." in two lines with three lines below for number, date and hour.



### *The Fifteen Cent Orange Special Delivery*

The Postal Service Act of February 28, 1925 provided for a fee of 15 cents for special delivery of parcel post packages. This differed from the special handling fee of ten cents authorized at the same time in that the latter merely gave first class mail handling to parcels, whereas the former insured messenger delivery.

April 11, 1925, the department issued additionally a 15-cent special delivery stamp in orange.<sup>(6)</sup> This rate supplemented the continuing 10-cent rate then in use for nearly forty years. Aside from the denomination printed at the bottom, "15 FIFTEEN CENTS 15," the design, shape and size of the stamp remained as in the previous issue. The printing was flat press, perforation 11, 200 subjects to the plate. Eight plates were used, the earliest, 16,833 and the latest, 16,860. Correctly used, first class mail covers may not carry the fifteen-cent special delivery stamp.

### *Foreign Special Delivery*

Here is a subject of which a more detailed study might be made than is practical within the scope of the present article. We present at least an outline of the subject with the thought that other writers may later give the matter the attention it deserves.

Although the United States was the first to issue a special delivery stamp, it is known that special delivery service existed as early as 1875 in Belgium; an example of such a used cover being in the writer's collection of foreign postal stationery. It is a Belgium postal card bearing the Belgium 25c telegraph stamp of 1872-75, hexagonal in shape and green in color, by which special delivery service was rendered. We quote from the *American Journal of Philately*, May, 1899:

"In their time, the 25c telegraph stamps of Belgium were used for special delivery letters. In the majority of cases, on such letters, they were found cancelled with a hexagonal townstamp. When, however, they were cancelled at a sub station or at a smaller office which had only the circular stamp, this was necessarily employed. . . . At present (1899) only postage stamps are used to prepay special delivery fees, 25 centimes for each letter (the single or double postal rate not included.)"

In 1885, the year of issue of the first United States special delivery stamp, the Hawaiian Islands issued a special delivery envelope, made by overprinting the regular 10-cent envelope as follows:

Special Dispatch Letter.  
(For Domestic Mail Only)  
Leka Kuikawa.<sup>(8)</sup>

Thirteen years after the appearance of the first United States special delivery adhesive, Canada, in 1898, established the service and printed a special delivery stamp.<sup>(9)</sup> The following year the United States overprinted its special delivery stamps for Cuba and Guam, and in 1901, for the Philippines. Toward the end of 1899, the Republic of Cuba printed its own special delivery stamp.

Other foreign countries that issued special delivery stamps during the early years of the present century were: Mauritius, 1904, (Express Delivery, 15c and Foreign Express Delivery, 18c), New Zealand, 6d, 1903; China and Spain (Cor-

(6) See illustration, page 33.

(8) See illustration, page 34.

(9) See illustration, page 35.



**A 10-cent Parcel Post stamp used to prepay the Special Delivery fee during the period when parcel post stamps were recognized for all postal purposes.**

responsencia Urgente), 1905; Philippines, its own issue, 1906; San Marino, 1907; Peru (Expres), 1908.

After 1908, few countries with the exception of our own, issued any special delivery stamps until about 1917-18. After that, several additional countries established the service and issued stamps. Bill Bloss, writing in the *American Philatelist* two or three years ago, made a compilation showing 43 countries that had issued such stamps and gave the total number of special delivery stamps of all countries as 178, according to Standard catalog listings.

Naturally, as the special delivery service was developed in this country to a point where it was in high favor and great demand by business houses and the public, the problem of how to secure expedition of correspondence addressed beyond the borders of our own land began to command attention. This was especially so in the case of mail to and from Canada, our close neighbor and friend.

We know that for many years United States special delivery stamps have served to secure special delivery in Canada, Cuba, Mexico and other neighboring countries, while a reciprocal service has been rendered here in validation of special delivery stamps of such countries. However, there are indications that such service abroad, and reciprocal service here, have not prevailed uniformly throughout the years. In proof of this many covers have been noted that indicate that Americans felt it necessary to furnish foreign correspondents with United States special delivery stamps to be used for answers and vice versa. Also, it is known that some Canadian post offices sold United States special delivery stamps.<sup>(9)</sup>

Clyde D. Brill of Tacoma once informed this writer that in 1912 and 1913 he lived in Vancouver, B. C., and that at that time the main Vancouver post office carried United States special delivery stamps on sale for convenience of persons wishing special delivery in the United States (this in spite of the fact that Canada had its own special delivery service and stamp as early as 1898).

<sup>(9)</sup> See illustration, page 35.



This Canadian post office, Mr. Brill said, charged 10 cents for these stamps and cancelled them when used along with the Canadian postage stamps to make the required postal rate. Charles Benson of Troy, N. Y. likewise reports finding U. S. special delivery stamps on sale at the Hamilton, Ont. post office.

Evidently this was a perplexing problem both here and abroad for many years, but eventually the United States government made arrangements with a number of foreign countries whereby reciprocity in the matter of special delivery was established.<sup>(10)</sup>

The *U. S. Official Postal Guide* for 1927 lists 29 countries in certain post offices of which special delivery service was then in force, including Canada, Cuba, Mexico, Newfoundland and Panama. We quote in part:

“With Canada and Newfoundland, the special delivery service applies only to letters or articles prepaid at the letter rate, ordinary or registered. With the other countries listed, the special delivery service applies to letters, post cards, printed matter, commercial papers and samples, except that to Mexico the said special delivery articles may be sent only in the ordinary mails. An article intended for special delivery in any of the countries mentioned above must be prepaid 20 cents in addition to the regular postage, by United States special delivery or other stamps affixed to the cover . . . .”

Through the courtesy of H. L. Lewis, Havana, Cuba, we learn that the Cuban Department of Communications issued an order November 3, 1926, in accordance with the findings of the Stockholm Convention, stating that the United States and Cuba had agreed on a special delivery service between the two countries, and that for Cuban letters to the United States requiring this service, two 10-cent Cuban special delivery stamps were then required to be affixed, making a 20-cent rate, in addition to regular postage.

### *The 20-Cent Black of 1925*

Thus we come to the 20-cent black special delivery stamp of 1925, E 14. Although the inscription still reads: “AT ANY UNITED STATES POST OFFICE,” the stamp was principally used for securing special delivery in foreign countries and obviously this denomination was issued for such purpose.<sup>(10)</sup>

The twenty-cent stamp was issued April 25, 1925, of the same size and shape as other special delivery stamps of the period. It was on unwatermarked paper, flat press printing, perforation 11, 200 subjects to the plate. The Standard catalog lists one color, black, but light gray black and intense black are known. Twenty-two plates were used, the earliest being 17,175 and the latest, 17,214.

The central design of this stamp was of a motor truck standing in front of the Washington, D. C. post office, into which a carrier is loading parcel post packages.

### *Conclusion*

From the day of its origin, October 1, 1885, throughout the forty-year period reviewed, and indeed for the fifty-four years to date, the special delivery fee for domestic first class mail has invariably been ten cents. Although other denominations have in recent years additionally existed, there has continuously been available a special delivery stamp at the constant rate of ten cents. In its history the Department has afforded continuously no other service without deviation in rate for any such length of time.

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<sup>(10)</sup> See illustration, page 36.

# Supplementary Illustrations



Cuba Sc. E1

Guam Sc. E1



1899 10¢ blue Special Delivery (Guam Sc. E1), used with 1¢ and 5¢ (Guam Sc. 1 and 5), tied by purple (first day of use) of “Agana, Guam Isle Of Guam” and “Jun. 14, 1900” straightlines on cover to New York City, also with purple two-line “Government House, Agana, Guam” handstamped corner card, black “27756” number handstamp below stamps (thought to be a registry number although that service was not used). Also with “Mil. Sta. No. 1 Manila”, “N.Y. & Chicago R.P.O. E. B. TR6 Sep 13” transit backstamps and Sep. 15, 1900 New York receiving backstamp.

1901 10¢ Special Delivery (Philippines Sc. E1) used with two Philippine 2¢ (Phil. Sc. 241, tied by “Manila P.I. Jan. 26, 1907” duplex datestamps on locally-addressed cover.



Philippines Sc. E1





Cover from St. Johnsbury, Vt. with Sc. E5 and 2¢ Sc. 279B, cancelled Aug 2, 1908 with "1" in duplex, received in Boston, showing smudged, partial blue clock face handstamp lower right.

Sc. E6 on 2¢ red entire cover from Marion, Ohio, addressed to Delaware, Ohio, then forwarded to Cincinnati. "Fee claimed at office of 1st address." was manuscript changed to "2nd". Reverse shows double line Cincinnati clock face receiver and straight line "Offered at Address... Cause of Non-Delivery" handstamp.



Specimen with "Universal Postal Congress Overprint," Sc. E5SO



Artist R. Ostrander Smith used this self-photograph as the model for his Bicycle Special Delivery stamp design. (Scott design type SD4, shown here in an ultramarine Large Die Proof on India (Sc. E6P1)



Left, E6 early printing, with plate number 1776;

Above, reissue of E6 with plate number 5243 and suffix -09 indicating the later printing.





*“Merry Widow”, Sc. E7, in an upper left pane of 70 from the full sheet of 280, showing the position of the imprint and plate number—in this case #4916*



*10¢ Special Delivery, woodcut essay (Sc. E7-E4).*



Plate blocks of the 1911 Special Delivery, Sc. E8: Above, with imprint and plate number 5514; right, a later printing from plate number 5857 with no imprint

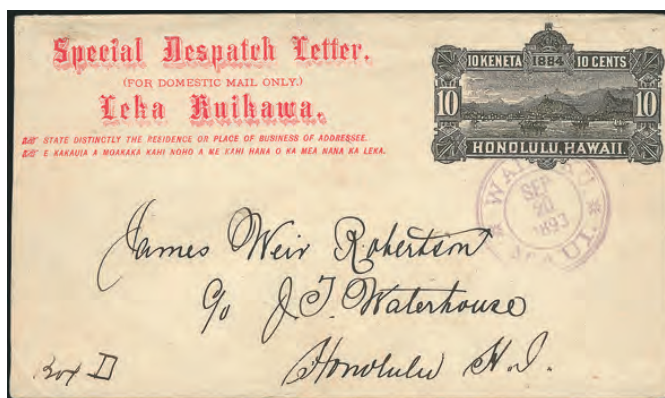


10¢ Special Delivery (Sc. E8) used on 2¢ entire and tied by “Aviation Station, Portland Oregon, Aug. 11, 1912” duplex to local address, also with purple “U.S. Aeroplane Mail Service. This letter was carried by Aviator Walter Edwards from Portland, Oregon to Vancouver, Wash.” handstamp. This is the earliest known usage of a Special Delivery stamp on an airmail cover.





Left, Scott design type SDS6, Sc. E12; above, orange Special Delivery Large Die Proof on India (Sc. E13P1), approved March 7, 1925 and signed by Harry S. New, Postmaster General.



1885 Hawaii 10¢ Special Despatch entire (Hawaii Sc. UE1) cancelled by “Wailuku Maui Sep. 20, 1893” double-circle datestamp and addressed to “James Weir Robertson, c/o J. T. Waterhouse, Honolulu”, also with “Honolulu H.I. Sep. 24, 1893” duplex receiver on back. This card was prepared but never issued for postal purposes, and Waterhouse is reported to have purchased the lot of 2,000 in 1893, so this is regarded to be a philatelic issue and use.



*New York to Montreal, February 20, 1909  
2 cents letter rate to Canada + 10 cent Canadian Special Delivery stamp to pay the fee*



*Scarce mixed franking with U.S. Special Delivery used from Canada to pay fee in the U.S., this cover bears a 10¢ ultramarine Special Delivery (Sc. E6) used with Canada 2¢ Edward VII on Windsor Hotel illustrated advertising cover to Everett, Mass., with faint strike of purple fee-claim handstamp.*





Excerpted from <http://www.bnaps.org/education/eph2.asp>:  
 This Special Delivery 3¢ Royal Visit issue FDC received the rare French royal train postmark in purple. All first day covers show the May 15 date, even though the train did not go into service until May 17. People who submitted covers for servicing were told they would bear a cancel inked in purple, a color long associated with royalty. However, the purple ink took a long time to dry, and smudged easily in the intervening period. As a result the decision to use purple ink was abandoned almost immediately. The purple ink was replaced with black ink.

There was one important exception. Canadian postal rules require that all mail marked Special Delivery be delivered as is. Because of this the very few covers with special delivery stamps (believed to fewer than 100) that had been cancelled in purple, before the decision was made to change to black ink, had to go to their addressees.



A cover from Chicago to England with the U.S. 20¢ Special Delivery, Sc. E14, paying the Special Delivery fee within the U.S. and England.

## American Stamp Pages

### Identifying the Special Deliveries

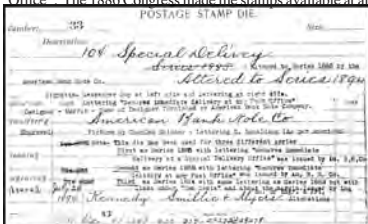
as to prevent their access to other parts of the office....Orderly conduct of the messengers while on their trips should be strictly enforced. The necessity of good behavior in the streets when making deliveries or returning should be enjoined and postmasters should give strict attention to their conduct generally; and no one should be retained who is not diligent, faithful, courteous and well-behaved.

Sec. 643. Postmasters to Require Efficient Service.—Postmasters should...equalize as far as practicable the compensation 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. So, too, 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 \$30 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 (at 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 E1, the 10¢ blue "Running Messenger" was issued in 1885. It included the inscription, "Secures Immediate Delivery at a Special Delivery Office". The 1886 Congress made the stamps available at all



Record card of Die #33, used to produce the "Running Messenger" Special Delivery stamps, Sc. E1-E5

offices, and upon any articles of mailable matter, but it was not until September 6, 1888 that a stamp, Scott E2, the 10¢ blue, was issued with the inscription "Secures Immediate Delivery at any Post Office".

On January 24, 1893 a 10-cent orange, Sc. E3, was issued to avoid confusion with the blue 1-cent and 4-cent

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 E4 was issued on unwatermarked paper. This was followed by the same design, Sc. E5, 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 E6, a 10¢ light blue, was the first example, issued on December 9.



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



On December 12, 1908 a new design, Scott E7, 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 escaping 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 perfs and watermarks. (See page 3.)

In 1912, the stamp design was updated from a Bicycle to "Motorcycle Delivery". The first version of this design, Scott E12 was placed on sale in Washington, D.C., on July 12, 1922.



## Also Available

As announced last month, 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 sturdy card stock, is available for \$11 including postage & handling. [Click here to order.](#)