How Commerce & Industry Shaped the Mails

The U.S. Special Handling Service: “Live Chicks” – And so much more – Require First Class Treatment

Friday, September 16, 2011

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Brandywine Valley Stamp Club
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Alternate Title for Stamp Clubs...

That’s Like What? Four Stamps??

A Typical Album Page...

“1925-1929”

Never Before Studied in Context!
Let’s Start with Something Familiar… Priority Mail

Commerce and Industry have always insisted on expedited shipping for time-sensitive merchandise.

Introduced in 1968, this is how parcels move in today’s mail with speed and efficiency.

Question – What was the forerunner service for Priority Mail?
Air Parcel Post was Introduced in 1948...

For mail matter over 8 oz. APP service provided a low-cost means to expedite parcels; APP was both Zone and Weight based, just like (Surface) Parcel Post.

Air shipment had become customary for perishable products, so APP was actually a revenue-generating implementation for service already provided.

Question – What was the forerunner service for Air Parcel Post?
Special Handling!
The Regs were written in 1925 for:
Live Chicks...

Parcel Post, 1913
No Expediting Available

But, the Post Office had already been shipping “lives” with First Class
... Bees were also specified,

**Challenge:** Is there a 25¢ QE4/4a on a label for any of these three critters?
... and, Baby Alligators!

What other critters might be shipped with Special Handling?
Quick Chronology...

1925 – Service Introduced - 25¢
1928 – 2nd Printing 25¢ (January)
1928 – Rates Reduced: 10, 15, 20¢ (July)
1928 – 25¢ Stamps Recalled (August)
1940 – 2nd Printing 10, 15, 20¢
1955 – Experimental Dry Printing
1959 – Final Recall from Philatelic Sales

    New rates of 1957 exceeded 20¢ denomination

2011 – Service Still Alive and Well!
First Printings – 25¢ Stamps

1925 Deep – Green

1928 Yellow – Green
(Reprinting)

Mint, NH (2011)

$37.50

$ 32.50
First Day of Issue – April 11, 1925

Worden Cover with QE4 PB and 551 Plate Strip
Same First Day of Issue:
A New Special Delivery Stamp

QE4 Single

QE4 Combo with E13
Special Handling was **NOT** Special Delivery

Postal Patrons often used Special Handling Stamps, when Special Delivery was the intended service...

1936 Example - 6¢ Air Mail & 10¢ Special Delivery
Special Handling was for use with Parcel Post

Special Handling was redundant for First Class & Air Mail, since the fee provided First Class service (May 1, 1928)

Such tolerated grievances are termed “Permissible Use”
Special Handling use Spread Quickly

Mailers of Diverse Products Expedited Shipments

Not just for “Live Chicks” anymore!

1943 Mailing of the Congressional Record
Special Handling Provides Clean Clothes!

1926 Laundry Tag

1955 Laundry Tag from Harvard ...

Ordinary Stamps Pay the Special Handling Fee
Special Handling Delivers Film in Time

1942 Movie Film

1955 with Meter

1955 with Meter
Special Handling – A Few Commercial Examples

1926 Industrial Equipment

1948 Hemerocallis Society

1961 Quaker Alloy Casting Co.
Special Handling – Triangular Stamps? (No)

Special Tags? (Yes)

First U.S. Triangle
Proposed in 1928;
Rejected
(Author’s Rendition)

Last Loaded,
First Unloaded Tags
A Big Surprise for Some...
It Still Exists!

Today – Special Handling is “Suggested,” but not “Required”
Some Closing Thoughts...

Special Handling was the Workhorse for Expedited Parcel Service from 1925 to the late 1950s

Partially Displaced by Air Parcel Post in 1948

Largely Displaced by Priority Mail by the 1990s
And Unanswered Questions!

Why didn’t Special Handling receive more publicity?

Why has there been so little research on this subject?

Why does the Service Still Exist?

What is the future of Special Handling?

Is your package Fragile? Liquid? Perishable?

Can Special Handling save the Postal Service?
Surprise!

How

About

15?

(or 18?)

Contrived Exhibit Phrase...

“What an Album Page Should Look Like!”
Proofs

13 Trial Colors

Large Die Proof

Carmine Lake

Deep Green

One Set – Held Privately

Five Sets
Plate Proof from National Postal Museum

- 200 Subject
- Flat Plate
- Unwatermarked
- Perf. 11 Only
What's carmine-lake?

What, good people, is that old standby color from the latter 19th century called carmine-lake? Well, it's in reader Bob Rube's newly-appointed favorite "stamp," a color trial of Scott No. QE4, the 25 cents Special Handling stamp. Bob is just bowled over by the striking quality of this shade and we think it deserves to be nominated in our "favorite stamp" competition. WHAT! good friends, is your favorite U.S. stamp? Email us right now and let us know: Editor@AmericanStampDealer.com.
First Day of Issue – April 11, 1925

QE4 Single

QE4 Combo with E13

2011 CV

$ 225

$ 1,300
Two “Major” Plate Varieties
(Catalog-Listed)

Normal Stamp

“A-T” in STATES

“T-A” in POSTAGE

Mint, NH (2011 CV)

$37.50

$120

$190
Several “Minor” Plate Varieties
(Not Catalog-Listed)

“A-T” Reaching

Broken “T”

“Cloudy” French Summary

UL 1
UL 17
UL 20
UR 17
UR 18
UR 19
UR 20
UL 41
LR 46

STATE
STATE
STATE
STATE
STATE
STATE
STATE
STATE
STATE

POSTAGE

#QE4 — 17103
New Plate Variety! Discovered in 2008

Normal “A-T” Break

New Discovery: “Dot on the T”
1928 Yellow-Green 25¢ Printing

Used Examples are Scarce... "Unknown on Cover!"
(except for a few modern contrived pieces!)
“Unknown on Cover…” ‘til this February!

New EDU for stamp:

May 1928
In conformance to the new rates, effective July 1, 1928, postmasters at all post offices are directed to withdraw from sale all unsold 25-cent special-handling stamps now on hand and hold same for redemption. Postmasters at direct and central-accounting post offices will forward their unsold 25-cent special-handling stamps, together with any unsold 25-cent special-handling stamps redeemed from patrons as herein authorized, to the department as promptly as possible after August 1, accompanied with the usual letter of transmittal. Loose stamps must be attached to sheets of paper containing 50 stamps each.

Postmasters at district post offices having unsold or redeemed 25-cent special-handling stamps on hand will report the quantity to their central-accounting postmaster and hold the stock for instructions.

Since a special-handling stamp of the 25-cent denomination is no longer required, postmasters are authorized, until further notice, to accept at full value unused 25-cent special-handling stamps when presented by the original purchaser, in exchange for other stamp supplies. Postmasters will be expected to take proper action when such applications are received as may be required to prevent unlawful or unauthorized exchanges.

R. S. Regar,
Third Assistant Postmaster General.
New (Lower) Rates Introduced
FDC - June 25, 1928

Uncacheted

Catalog Value (2011)

$ 45

Combo – QE1, QE2 & QE3

$ 350
FDCs with Cachets...

Cacheted

Combo – QE1, QE2 & QE3

Catalog Value  2011

$ 200

$ ???
My Favorite FDCs...
The Hugh M. Southgate Covers*
The New Rates Didn’t Take Effect Until July 1, 1928

And of course, they rate out perfectly!

* Photo scans courtesy of Henry Scheuer
History of Printing...  1  2

... As learned through “socked on the nose” cancels:
1955 Experimental Printing

“Wet” vs. “Dry” Paper

≥1941

1928

1955

≥1941
1955 Experimental Printing

“Wet” vs. “Dry” Paper

WET DRY
1955 Experimental Printing

Rarity only recently recognized...

EDU Above; Six examples known!
1955 Experimental Printing

All used stamps had the same Catalog Value:

(and the nomenclature was backwards)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QE3 PP13 20c yellow green, 1955</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never hinged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P# block of 6</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>First day cover</td>
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<td>First day cover, Nos. QE1a-QE3a</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never hinged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Never hinged</td>
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<td>Wet printing, June 25, 1928</td>
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The Postal Service Act, approved February 28, 1925, provided for a special handling stamp of the 25-cent denomination for use on fourth-class mail matter, which would secure for such mail matter the expeditious handling accorded to mail matter of the first class.
**1955 Experimental Printing**

Catalog numbers changed; used dry-prints not priced.

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### 2008

**SPECIAL HANDLING STAMPS — POSTAL INSURANCE STAMPS**

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**Photos added.**
1955 Experimental Printing

Rare used. Not known on cover!
“WANTED – Dead or Alive!”

Special Handling - Rarest Modern Covers?
“Unknown on Cover...” ‘til last September!

New EDU for cover:
August 1, 1957

Unaddressed
Uncacheted
eBay Story...
The First Proposed Triangle!

Postal Inspector’s Suggestion in 1935... Needed more distinction!
“I’m not the first with the philatelic gene run amok!”

By German Airship L.Z.127.
from Los Angeles to Lakehurst.

Mr. Rudolf Weiss.
c/o A. Klee’s Son.
17 Madison Ave.
New York City.

Special Handling neither authorized nor intended (but “permitted”)
Zeppelin ‘Round the World!

Special Handling neither authorized nor intended (but “permitted”)

Par Avion
By Air Mail

Via Graf Zeppelin
Lakehurst, N.J.

Eddie R. Houser
Duke of U.S.A.
Zeppelin to South America!

Special Handling neither authorized nor intended (but “permitted”)

What in the world was the sender thinking? Was he thinking of me?
See Ya Later, Alligator!

Any Questions?
What U.S. stamp or series holds the record for the longest use in commercial service?? For example, the Prexies ran from 1938 to 1954, a total of 16 years. There may be multiple categories – stamps, stationery, etc – but there should be one clear winner for longevity. Guideline is availability at the post office or philatelic window. Who could tell if a 3 cent Liberty might not still be available at some rural office (and many of us still use 19th century postage on our mail) – these don’t count! My candidate? **Surprise!** – Special Handling 10, 15 & 20 cent stamps: 1928-1959, a total of 31 years!
U.S. Stamp Trivia Question..

Answers (Partial List)...

$2 Harding Prexy – 1938 to 1978 = 40 years!

2¢ Jefferson – October 22, 1954 to July 31, 1983
= 29 years

Special Handling 10, 15 and 20 cent stamps:
1928-1959, a total of 31 years!