

Canada - US Reciprocal Agreement for Special Delivery Service

This exhibit demonstrates how the Special Delivery service based on informal and formal agreements between Canada and the United States of America evolved over the period between 1898 and 1946.

The U.S. Special Delivery service was established in 1885 and the Canadian service started in 1898. Originally, this service was provided in major cities only. Canada and the United States had an informal arrangement where they made Special Delivery stamps available at trans-border post offices. From 1907 both countries allowed regular postage to pay for the service fee also but Special Delivery stamps could not be used to pay for any other postal service.

After 25 years of informal agreement, a Reciprocal Agreement between the two countries was signed on January 1, 1923 that recognized each other's Special Delivery stamps and also agreed to a uniform 20¢ rate. This rate held until 1939 when it was reduced to 10¢ on March 1 in Canada but not until April 15 in the US. Inevitably, these agreements and changes created some confusion in the minds of both postmasters and correspondents on each side of the border. This exhibit attempts to illustrate this.

Plan

1. INFORMAL AGREEMENT PERIOD 1898-1922
2. RECIPROCAL AGREEMENT PERIOD 1923-1939
3. UNUSUAL SPECIAL DELIVERY SERVICE SITUATIONS
 - A) Canadian covers to the US
 - B) United States covers to CANADA
 - C) Wartime Censorship 1939-1946
 - D) Related Special delivery forms



Synopsis

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The **purpose** of this exhibit is to demonstrate how the Special Delivery service based on informal and formal agreements between Canada and the United States of America evolved over the period between 1898 and 1946.

The U.S. Special Delivery service was established in 1885 and the Canadian service started in 1898. Originally, this service was provided in major cities only. Canada and the United States had an informal arrangement where they made Special Delivery stamps available mostly at trans-border post offices.

Scope: The scope of this exhibit includes special delivery covers dated between 1905 and 1946. It also includes a few forms used by the post office in handling special delivery mail.

Plan: The exhibit presents typical covers showing how the service fee for special delivery between Canada and the U.S. was paid for during the period from 1898 to 1923 that is described as the informal agreement period.

The Reciprocal Agreement period, from 1923 to 1939, presents the change of rate and the inevitable confusion that follows within both countries for correspondents and postmasters. Examples are presented from both issuing countries, Canada to the U.S. and U.S. to Canada. Others illustrate censorship methods used between 1939 and 1946.

Observations: Most of the covers shown were chosen to illustrate specific uses, some typical, some uncommon. Short-paid or overpaid situations were numerous because of the misunderstanding of the nature of the special delivery service.

Many covers illustrate different interpretations of the regulations by the U.S. postmasters around this service fee.

A number of censorship markings from both countries are presented also which may or may not have influenced the delivery service.

Items of note: A few of these covers stand out because of their scarcity:

1926 Nova Scotia to Massachusetts, with a pair of 10¢ SD stamps

1939 New York to Montreal, showing the U.S. rate to Canada from a 6-week rate period.

1936 Postal form 11G, acting as postage due receipt for SD cover, only known copy

References:

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Bob Markovitz, United States Special Delivery