

The Merry Widow

Development & Uses of the US 1908 Special Delivery Stamp

Purpose & Scope: The purpose of this exhibit is to show the development, rates, markings, unusual uses, and combination frankings involving the “Merry Widow,” the 1908 10¢ Special Delivery stamp. This short-lived stamp was first put on sale in Washington, D.C. on December 14, 1908. It was officially removed from production less than six months later, on June 9, 1909, but remained in circulation for decades. Nearly 20% of covers in the exhibitor’s census are dated more than 18 months after introduction and 5% from after 1920.

Background: Special delivery was a postal service paid for with additional postage for urgent letters and postal packets. Traveling between offices within the regular mail stream meant that a postal packet would be delivered to the addressee immediately once it arrived at the post office responsible for delivering it rather than waiting for the next regularly scheduled delivery to the addressee. The special delivery fee was paid in addition to all the other usual fees normally required for the letter.

Following the official withdrawal from production, post offices were permitted to use existing inventories, but new requests for special delivery stamps were fulfilled with reissued blue stamps of the previous 1902 design. Eight printing plates were authorized, but only four were actually used. Over 3.8 million stamps were produced, but how many were distributed or used is uncertain

It is estimated that fewer than 500 covers survive.

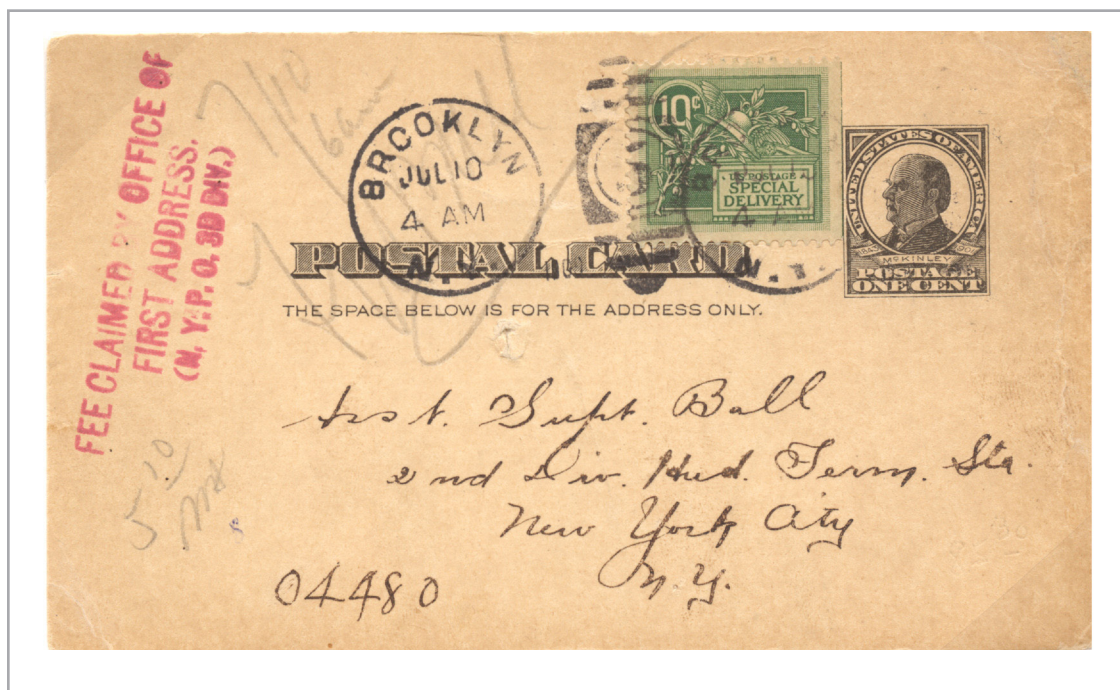
Exhibit Plan:

	page:
Development & Stamp Design	2 to 4
Rates	5 to 9
Auxiliary Markings	10 to 12
Destinations	13 to 15
Late Use	16

Special items have a red border

Scarcity statements are based on a census maintained by the exhibitor.

**Illustrating the essential service proposition:
speedy deliver from the local post office to the recipient.**



10 July 1909 Brooklyn to lower Manhattan (South Ferry)

post marked 4 am and marked received at 6 am, the same day

The sender's message informed his employer that he would be out sick that day.

This cover was probably sent through the Post Office's extensive pneumatic system within New York City.