

The “D” Rate-Change Stamps of 1985

SYNOPSIS For COLOPEX 2018

PURPOSE & SCOPE: This is a Traditional 1-frame exhibit showing the production and use of the “D” non-denominated (22¢) stamps issued in 1985 for the rate change from 20¢ (for First Class mail up to one ounce), that went into effect on February 17, 1985. Shown are the three formats of the “D” stamp: Sheet, booklet and coil. The postal stationery issued for the rate-change are not within the scope of this exhibit.

Given that the “D” stamps, like all other non-denominated rate-change stamps, were issued as a stop-gap measure until regular denominated stamps could be printed and issued, the “D” stamps are well suited to a single-frame exhibit. The 22¢ “Flag over Capitol” stamps were issued March 29, 1985 - less than two months after the “D” stamps.

TREATMENT: Each of the three formats of the stamp will be shown separately, with each section following the traditional format. Unfortunately, there are no known essays, proofs or other pre-production items in collectors’ hands. For each section, the plate/cylinder data will be followed by plate blocks and other items showing plate marginal markings and plate varieties, if available. Errors, freaks and varieties are then shown to illustrate the production process, and what could go wrong. The exhibit concludes with examples of use, showing domestic uses followed by illegal foreign uses. (All uses of the “D” stamps to foreign addresses were illegal; the UPU did not allow non-denominated stamps until 1995.)

Key and important items are highlighted with a double-line green border.

IMPORTANCE: The United States Postal Service introduced non-denominated stamps as a stop-gap measure to address the problem of producing enough stamps to satisfy consumer demand when rates changed. Shortly after the United States Post Office Department was converted into a self-supporting, semi-official, government organization in 1971, the process for approving rate changes dramatically changed. The time between the approval of a rate change and the effective date became unpredictable, making it difficult for the new USPS to produce enough stamps for any new rate.

Following the two rapid rate changes in 1975 due to high rates of inflation, the USPS devised the solution of printing large quantities of non-denominated stamps, which would be assigned a value when the new rate was determined. The first non-denominated rate-change stamp was designated by the letter “A”. With each subsequent non-denominated rate-change stamp to be assigned a letter in sequence, the USPS was assured of providing enough stamps for 26 rate changes, a simple, but elegant solution.

The “D” stamps were announced January 18, 1985 when the new rates were approved, and issued on February 1 for rates that became effective February 17, thus showing the effectiveness and importance of the non-denominated rate-change stamp series.

KNOWLEDGE, STUDY & RESEARCH: Aside from the basic production information provided in the 1985 Linn’s *U.S. Stamp Yearbook*, I have gleaned information from searching the *Postal Bulletin*, USPS press releases, articles in *Linn’s Stamp News*, the “BIA Plate Number Checklist Plates 20000-41303”, the ARAGO website of the Smithsonian National Postal Museum, the U.S. rate books by Tony Wawrukiewicz and other articles and sources. See the section on References.

Collecting these stamps since 1994, I have studied the marginal markings of the sheet stamp, mapping the sequence of the markings, and identifying the distinct 184 margin strips of 20 that can be collected.

RARITY & CONDITION: Given that this is a “modern” issue, I have striven to go “above and beyond” in collecting material for the collection/exhibit. For example, instead of showing a mere pair

of the imperforate sheet stamp, **an entire imperforate pane**, believed to be the last surviving whole pane, is shown. Also shown is one of the five reported (Datz) vertical pairs imperforate horizontally.

For the coil stamps imperforate plate number strips of 6 (PL No. 1) and 5 (PL No. 2) are shown. Datz lists 1000+ for quantity for imperforate coils. BEP records show that 46% were from plate 1, while 54% were from plate 2. Given that plate numbers were printed every 38th stamp, there would be approximately 12-13 imperforate plate strips with plate number 1, and 14-15 such strips with plate number 2. Also shown is a strip showing transition from normal perforations to imperforate stamps, a spliced imperforate strip, a plate number 1 strip with tagging omitted, and other scarce EFOs.

For the booklet stamps a complete booklet with both panes imperforate horizontally is shown.

All listed major errors of these stamps are included in this exhibit, as well as a variety of significant freaks and oddities.

While counterfeits are known, none are in collector hands. Postal Inspectors in Detroit, Michigan and Lubbock, Texas confiscated all stamps before they were sold to the public.

Added in 2017: examples of the scarce Ft. Lauderdale provisional booklets, created for that post office's Self-Service Postal Center, have been added to the exhibit.

Covers shown are contemporary uses. A number of covers are either over-paid or under-paid demonstrating the confusion that the non-denominated stamps caused among the public, as well as postal personnel. The covers shown are representative of the intended use, as well as how they were used, and mis-used, by the public.

Included are two covers rejected for use of the "D" stamps on international mail, as well as letters to foreign destinations accepted into the mail and delivered. Domestic uses include uses from U.S. military and diplomatic locations from around the globe.

As expected of a modern issue, all items are of the best condition possible.

REFERENCES:

Linn's U.S. Stamp Yearbook 1985 edited by George Amick, published by Amos Press Inc. in 1986 (ISBN 0748-996X). The "D" stamps are covered on pages 101 through 107.

"Non-Denominated "A" - "G" Definitive Stamps on International Mail" by Anthony S. Wawrukiewicz; published in *The United States Specialist*, September 2011 edition (Volume 82, Number 9), pp. 411-429. Information on the "D" stamp is covered on pages 419-421. Note that I do not agree with Tony's conclusion that the "D" stamp was "legal" following the publication of Postal Bulletin 21508, which merely provided for the tolerance of non-denominated "D" stamps on international mail, as long as such mail was fully pre-paid.

Scott Catalogue of Errors on U.S. Postage Stamps (16th edition) by Stephen R. Datz; published 2014 by Scott Publishing Co, Sidney, OH. See page 61. Definitions of rarity factors, and other information about how to interpret the listings can be found in the Introduction, pp. v through xii.

"Seattle Provisional Vended Booklets" by Roger Brody in *The United States Specialist*, Volume 84, No. 7 (July 2013, whole number 1001) contains a brief discussion of the Ft. Lauderdale Provisional booklets of the "D" stamps on pages 323-324.

More Stamp Counterfeiting - The Perfect Crime by H.K. Petschel, HKP Publications, 2014 includes a description of the "D" counterfeits on pages 165-167.