

Special Handling Scott No. QE4a EDU Double Header

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Barely three months had passed since I found the first Special Handling dry-print stamp on cover, when I made another startling discovery. En route to the Sarasota National Stamp Exposition in February, I had prearranged to spend some time with Special Handling and Parcel Post-Postage Due enthusiast and ASDA member dealer, Robert D. Feldman of Brooksville, Florida.

We had agreed to photocopy some of his pieces for an expanded monograph on the subject. While examining the accumulation of covers for select items, one of the 25¢ event covers “popped out” because of its noticeably lighter yellow-green cast than all the deep green stamps we had been poring over. “Did you realize you had a QE4a on cover?” I asked. Bob admitted that these covers had been out of view in safe deposit for much longer than my recent musings on whether such a use existed and when one might be found. APS agreed with my observation and on 3/30/2011 issued Certificate 195678 for “United States, Scott No. QE4a, used on cover 1/30/1934, EDU as of certificate date, Little America, Antarctica, genuine in all respects.”



Figure 1. Discovery example for the first documented QE4a yellow-green special handling stamp on cover.

The cancels and auxiliary markings (Figure 2) confirm the cover’s inclusion in the second expedition of Admiral Robert E. Byrd to Antarctica, and it may be suggested that Special Handling was added to render preferential treatment for this piece relative to the other 240,000 pieces serviced at Little America. One good summary for the philatelic contributions made to benefit the Byrd expeditions at Little America may be found at <http://www.usps.com/postalhistory/pdf/LittleAmerica.pdf>.



Figure 2. Postmarks and Auxiliary Markings enlarged from cover in Figure 1.

Given the fortuitous discovery of the above cover, I proceeded to examine the safe deposit holding of stamps, mint and used, looking for varieties, unusual precancels, or ... any other surprises. “Voila!” A Scott No. QE4a used single with a clear circular date stamp, socked-on-the-nose MAY 1928, revealed itself, and it now resides with APS Certificate 195676, dated 3/31/2011, “... EDU for off cover as of certificate date, genuine, crease.”



Figure 3. Special Handling Scott QE4a with May, 1928 contemporary cancel – EDU for the stamp.

Arguably more significant than the cover in Figure 1, the stamp in Figure 3 has a clear May 1928 Parcel Post date cancel which is “in period” – the 25¢ rate was in effect from April 15, 1925 through June 30, 1928. Further, the yellow-green second printing, QE4a, was at press for only one week in January, 1928. This stamp is uncommon, used, since all the 25¢ stamps were withdrawn in August, 1928, shortly after new, lower rates took effect one month earlier.

One of the relatively unknown quirks associated with the Special Handling issue is the redemption of the 25¢ stamps when the new 10¢, 15¢ and 20¢ stamps were issued. Accordingly, the Little America philatelic cover can be viewed not only as paying for a class of service for which Special Handling was not authorized – First Class, but also being prepared out of proper period. How many more of these covers were prepared? The event had great philatelic following due to President Franklin Roosevelt’s hand in the design of the Byrd Expedition stamps – Scott Nos. 735, 753 and 768. Perhaps QE4a will show up on another Little America cover with an even earlier date.

The above examples demonstrate that new discoveries can still be made in “mundane” modern stamp issues. The search continues for Special Handling discoveries. Buoyed with the above finds, I am optimistic that a 10¢ dry-print, Scott No. QE1a will be found on cover, and that a 20¢ used dry-print stamp with contemporary cancel actually exists – on or off cover. Keep looking!