

Special Delivery Service in Canada: Forms and Labels – 1933-1993

Synopsis

Purpose: This exhibit presents a number of forms and labels used in the operation of the Canadian Special Delivery service. These forms allowed the service items to be more visible and increased the efficiency and speed of delivery.

Treatment: Forms that were used in a way that exposed them to the mailing public are presented in order of reference number. (SD 1, SD 4, 5, 7, 8). The others not shown (SD 2, 3, 6, 9-11) were mainly used for internal purposes by the Post Office.

The key to identifying them is provided by **the production number** found at the bottom of the form. It usually features a number (e.g. **SD 4**), a quantity printed (**300 000**) and a date (**22-4-36**). Each SD form is introduced and its multiple uses illustrated along with any special characteristic of the Special Delivery item.

This exhibit does not offer a complete inventory of every printed form or label. It would probably be impossible to put together but this exhibit most likely shows the most comprehensive listing known.

SD 1 labels were offered in 4 different types.

Yearly editions of Type 1, between 1940 and 1965, are either missing or unknown to exist at this time.

Yearly editions of Type 2, from 1967 to 1970, are also either missing or do not exist.

Type 3 and Type 4 labels presented are the only known ones to exist.

All the SD 4 facing slips that I have found are listed here.

SD 1 Type 1 labels		SD 1 Type 2	SD 4 Facing Slips	
5-6-39	30-8-49	33-86-071(3-66)	22-2-33	13-6-41
31-10-39	22-11-50	33-86-071(9-71)	27-2-35	14-2-42
10-7-41	12-9-55	variety -71	22-4-36	17-9-56
29-9-42	12-6-60		21-4-37	20-10-60
8-4-43		SD 1 Type 3	6-4-38	...072(12-69)
20-10-43		...071(7-73)	31-3-39	
8-6-44			21-12-39	
16-7-45		SD 1 Type 4		
2-4-46		...071(12-74)		

All SD 8 stickers produced by the Post Office, including varieties, are also shown in this exhibit.

In conclusion, a few miscellaneous forms are shown to demonstrate how Special Delivery service was important in the Canadian mail system; how Special Lettermail service briefly complemented the Special Delivery service and finally, when both were taken over by Xpresspost.

Importance: The material in this exhibit supports the claim by the Post Office that the most efficient means of delivering mail was with their Special Delivery service, a legitimate post office service for over 80 years. It also offers a look at an interesting facet of postal operations.

Knowledge: Special Delivery stamps and postal history have been well displayed in the last thirty years. However the study of these forms and labels has not attracted the same interest. They are part of the post office's "modus operandi" and an important element of the transmission of mails across Canada and the U.S. where a major portion of our Special Delivery mail was also delivered.

After 18 years of research and study of available literature, I have found only a few examples of SD 4, SD 5, SD 6 and SD 7 forms. However because of the later use and prevalence of SD 1 and SD 8 labels on letters and because of the increased numbers printed, I was able to document those more efficiently. These latter ones have been catalogued in Lafrenière's book (see reference list) and I was a contributor to that list.

Rarity: Although some of these forms were introduced early in the operation of Special Delivery service, the challenge has been to find any during the first 25-year period of their use. From the available literature and experience of longtime collectors, few if any of these forms have survived.

In the case of SD 4, these were meant to be kept only for 1-2 months (as originally printed on the forms). No documented copies have been recorded until the 1930's and since, only a few have been seen in handbooks. Many possible factors are involved. As A. Steinhart in "Notes on SD Service" from the 1915 Postal Guide noted: "many Postmasters are not using the SD wrapper (SD 4)..." This note reinforces the fact that a) not many were used in the first place and b) few if any were kept. Many forms were sent to U.S. destinations. Their accounting system did not involve similar forms, so the majority would have been lost in their offices.

For the SD 5, the initial printings in 1923 involved 10,000 copies only. Until the late 1930's, these have remained almost impossible to find. When airmail service across the continent became more efficient, and with the introduction of Special Delivery service for parcels in 1939, the use of SD service dramatically increased and so did availability of material.

This explains why the earliest material presented in this exhibit is from 1933. In effect, the first SD 1, SD 4 and SD 5 forms shown are part of very scarce material in this collecting area.

Items of note: (bordered in red)

Initials **PR** represent areas of **Personal Research**

Frame 1 ~ SD 1 Label variety

Frame 2 – SD 4 Facing Slip

Frame 2 ~ SD 5 Customer Acknowledgment Form

Frame 3 – SD 8 Sticker Earliest on Cover

Frame 3 ~ SD 8 on Shipley Tag

Frame 4 ~ SD 8 Accent Error (**Exprés**)

References:

Canada Special Delivery, G.H. Davis, Unitrade Press, 1991

Canadian Special Delivery Exhibits, K. A. Wald, BNAPS, 2003

Field Guide to the Cinderella Stamps of Canada, 2nd Ed., R.G. Lafrenière, Bird Bear Press, Updated listings, June 2018.

<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/postal-heritage-philately/post-office-publications/>, Canada Official Postal Guide & Supplements 1913 – 1937