



1T1

As we continue thumbing through the *Back Of the Book*, we come upon a section designated as **Telegraph (T) Stamps**.

Telegraph stamps are service fee stamps that prepay or show payment or exemption from payment for delivery of a telegram. They, like postage stamps, which prepay a delivery of a message through the postal system, were used to prepay a message delivered electromagnetically.

The telegraph was the first modern long-distance communication system for sending coded messages by electrical transmission over a wire. The telegraph was invented by Samuel F.B. Morse, who installed a two-mile working telegraph line on the grounds of what is now New York University in 1837. Morse also devised the most commonly used dot/dash code for telegraphic communications, the Morse code.

In 1843, the first telegraph line open to public use went into operation between Paddington and Slough, England. In 1865, the first successful Atlantic cable linked the United States with Europe (quickly 'fried' three months later).

In most countries, the telegraph system came under the government post office. In the United States and Canada, the telegraph systems were never owned or operated by the government, so all U.S. and Canadian telegraph stamps are private and local stamps.



Telegraph Receiver Device, 1837

The first private telegraph stamps issued were the from the English and Irish Magnetic Telegraph Co., in 1853 with the first American telegraph stamps were issued by the New York City and Suburban Printing Telegraph Co., in 1859/1860.

Sending a prepaid telegram was quite similar to posting a letter. The telegraph stamp was applied to a telegraph form containing the message to be sent and dropped into a telegraph collection box. Couriers emptied the boxes and took the forms to the servicing telegraph office from which the message was sent.

American telegraph stamps are often inscribed "Commutation," "Frank," "Complimentary Frank," "Duplicate" or "Collect." - **Commutation** stamps were sold to the general public for prepayment of telegraph fees. - **Frank and Complimentary Frank** stamps were usually nondenominated and were given to important customers such as railroad, newspaper, and express company officials or telegraph company stockholders to provide one free telegram per stamp. - **Duplicate** stamps were for use in office or messengers' receipt books. - **Collect** stamps were the equivalent of postage due stamps, showing that the telegraph fee had not been paid or paid in full by the sender.

During the Civil War the government got creative and taxed telegrams using a 1¢ red (Scott R4) and 3¢ green (Scott R19) George Washington telegraph tax stamps. They were used to show payment of the tax on telegraph dispatches that was collected (and with other innovative taxes imposed in 1862) to pay for the cost of the Civil War. The law was later amended so that any internal revenue stamp (except proprietary stamps) could be used to pay any documentary tax.

The idea of issuing stamps in booklet form originated with telegraph stamps. The California State Telegraph Co. issued booklets of telegraph stamps in 1870 - 25 years before Luxembourg issued the first postal booklet in 1895. Most US telegraph stamps were issued in booklets (panes of six and nine most common).



5T1 Sheet

In the Scott Catalog, Telegraph stamps are designated by a number (the issuing company, 1-17), 'T', followed by another number designating the issue. Examples include:

- 1Txx - **American Rapid Telegraph Company** (1881-1894)
- 2Txx - **Atlantic Telegraph Company** (1888)
- ...
- 5Txx - **California State Telegraph Company** (1870) – issued the first booklet stamps in the US
- 6Txx - **New York City & Suburban Telegraph Company** (1859) – issued the first telegraph stamps in the US
- ...
- 16Txx - **Western Union Telegraph Company** (1871 - 1946)
- 17Txx - **United States Telegraph-Cable-Radio Carriers** (1947) – who issued the last stamps (3c, 10c and a 50c) in conjunction with the World Telecommunications Conference in Atlantic City NJ.



R19