

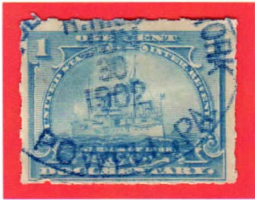
A Fiscal History of the U.S. Documentary Taxes, 1898 – 1902

The exhibit demonstrates the application of the Spanish American War era documentary taxes on contemporary documents. As nearly all legal and financial transactions were taxed, the exhibit provides an historic snapshot of the nation's commerce during a critical era when the United States was emerging as a true nation-state with world-power status. Significant industrial growth and westward expansion are evidenced by many of the documents.

Background



July 1, 1898 First Day



June 30, 1902 Last Day

Issued by the Department of Internal Revenue, the stamps were used to pay the documentary taxes imposed by the War Revenue Law of 1898 to help underwrite the cost of the Spanish American War. Battleship, Commerce, and Portrait issues, as well as the official government Provisionals and the Liberty imprinted revenues are included.

As illustrated by these two stamps, the war tax was in effect for just four years; from July 1, 1898, the same day as the infamous battle of San Juan Hill, through June 30, 1902, although many of the taxes were abolished a year earlier by the War Revenue Reduction Act of 1901. Research regarding the 1901 Act led to the discovery of several 1901 rate changes, examples of which are included in the exhibit.

Exhibiting this material is challenging as the documents range from small porter checks for railroad parlor cars to poster-size insurance policies and corporate bonds. Some documents feature ornate designs on rag bond paper, while other documents appear on crumbling, sulfur-laden paper, adding to the challenge.

Treatment

To better illustrate their scope and the impact they had on the nation's commerce, the taxes have been organized into six categories. After brief introductory material, the exhibit is divided into six sections with the applicable tax rates outlined at the beginning of each section. A two-page epilogue concludes the exhibit.

- Section 1 Insurance.....Frames 1 & 2**
- Section 2 Banking.....Frames 3 & 4**
- Section 3 Investments.....Frames 5 & 6**
- Section 4 Transportation.....Frames 6 & 7**
- Section 5 Real Estate.....Frame 8**
- Section 6 Legal Certificates...Frames 9 & 10**

While the main focus is illustration of the various tax rates, as this was a national tax, special effort has been made to include documents from all of the then-current 45 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, and all six of the then-current U.S. territories. The documents selected frequently show unusual usages, colorful frankings, and uncommon transactions to which multiple taxes have been applied. Of special interest are those documents that also were taxed by other countries or by individual states or territories.

Exhibit highlights include a pre-first day of use, nine first day usages, plus one for the 1901 revised tax rate on conveyances, and documents from both of the last days of taxation, June 30, 1901 and June 30, 1902. Several un-stamped documents illustrating transactions specifically exempted by the revenue law are included. Usage census data, when known, is provided.

located in an appropriate corner
denotes a significant document.

Items **New To Philately** are so identified in **blue**.
APS or PF indicate a certificate is present.