

United States Offices in China By Emmanuel GPS



No, the United States didn't have colonies in China last Century, but for three years starting in 1919 United States domestic mail rates were made applicable to mail to or from the postal agency in Shanghai. Overprint values ranged from 2¢ to \$2.

China was an important trading destination at the time of the American revolution. Trade was centered around the port of Canton under the control of the British East India Company. In 1784-85 the American ship *Empress of Asia* made the first-round trip in the China trade. The adventure was highly successful. Interestingly, the first American consul anywhere was appointed to Canton in 1786. Then, an American consul was appointed to Amoy in 1844. Aggressive American traders became important in the China trade with their clipper ships.

Mail remained under British control with mail from the United States passing through the post office in Hong Kong. Mail was both expensive and unreliable. It was not until 1865 that the United States Post Office was authorized to provide mail service to the Orient. A contract was awarded the Pacific Mail Steamship Company on August 28, 1865. The company was to build four steamships to meet Post Office specifications and to be in operation by January 1, 1867. The route was to run from San Francisco to Shanghai via Yokohama, Japan. Postal agents were appointed in both Yokohama and Shanghai.



The stamps were short lived. The U.S. Agency in Shanghai was closed on December 31, 1922 and was declared discontinued after it had completely closed its affairs on January 31, 1924. The stamps were on sale at the Philatelic Agency for a short time after the closure in 1922. They are listed in the Scott Catalogue K1 to K18 in the \$2,000 value range.



Reference: "United States Postal Agency Shanghai, China" by Harvey Bounds, 1947.

EmmanuelGPS@gmail.com, a native Frenchman, is a past Director and life member of <https://www.rotaryonstamps.org/> and the lead person of the Inverness (California) stamp club where he resides. He owns the stamps on this page.