

COLLECTING FIRST-DAY COVERS

PERSONAL HISTORY - WHY I AM WHERE I AM

JESSE COVEY

STARTED SAVING STAMPS WHILE IN GRADE SCHOOL

READ AD IN NEWSPAPER FOR STAMPS ON APPROVAL

LATER (IN HIGH SCHOOL) SAW AD FOR FIRST DAY COVER

SENT 3c AND GOT FIRST COVER, DEC 1947

THEN JAN 1948, ETC

BOUGHT 3-RING BINDER WITH 30 PAGES

CONTINUED (ALMOST COMPLETE) TO ABOUT 80's

ALL RECEIVED THROUGH MAIL, EVEN DURING TIME IN MILITARY

SOME MISSING ISSUES OBTAINED FROM FRED SAWYER

STARTED ACCUMULATING SOME FDC BEFORE 1947

SPECIAL BOOKS, BACK TO 1926

BEFORE 1937 THERE WAS NO "FIRST DAY OF ISSUE" IN THE CANCEL

MOST DEALERS HAD LITTLE INTEREST IN FDC AND DID NOT HAVE THE TIME OR AMBITION TO STUDY DATES AND WENT BY CATALOG VALUES THAT SOMEONE ELSE HAD REPORTED. THAT IS WHAT I DID

FDOI = FIRST DAY OF ISSUE

DFD = DESIGNATED FIRST DAY OF ISSUE (LESS THAN 10% OF ISSUES BETWEEN 1847 AND 1921)

FDS = FIRST DAY OF SALE (FDC?)

EDC = EARLIEST DOCUMENTED COVER (EKU = EARLIEST KNOWN USE)

UO = UNOFFICIAL (CITIES)

FIRST STAMP EVER MADE WAS ISSUED BY GREAT BRITAIN ON MAY 6, 1840. THE FAMOUS PENNY BLACK. SEVERAL FIRST DAY COVERS ARE KNOWN TO EXIST.

HOWEVER, WHEN THE US ISSUED THEIR FIRST STAMPS, SCOTT #1 AND #2, THE PUBLIC IN GENERAL DID NOT KNOW ABOUT IT AHEAD OF TIME AND I AM NOT SURE IF ANY FIRST DAY COVERS WERE KEPT. ^{HANDS OFF}

JULY 1, 1851 – SCOTT #10. ^{OWN FILES} FIRST US 3c STAMP. SCARCE, ORANGE-BROWN SHADE, AND NO FDC'S KNOWN. IT WAS SOON FOLLOWED BY THE MORE COMMON #11, A LIGHTER ORANGE COLOR.

ALSO, SCOTT #17, A 12c WASHINGTON WAS ISSUED THAT SAME DAY. IT IS REPORTED THAT SOLID EVIDENCE SHOWS THAT THE STAMP WAS SOLD ON OR BEFORE THAT DAY, BUT NO FDC WAS REPORTED. THE EDC IS AUGUST 4, 1851

OCT 1, 1883 – SCOTT #210, A COMMON 2c BROWN, ISSUED WITH THE COLUMBUS SERIES. MILLIONS OF LETTERS MAILED THAT DAY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF REDUCED RATE. HOWEVER, MOST WERE NOT SAVED AND COVERS BRING A GOOD PRICE.

JAN 1, 1893 – COLUMBIANS. JAN 1 WAS A SUNDAY, HOWEVER SOME POST OFFICES WERE OPEN AND SOLD THE STAMPS. SO, WHILE JAN 2 IS GENERALLY REGARDED AS THE FIRST DAY OF SALE, THEY DO EXIST CANCELLED JAN 1 AND ARE CONSIDERED NO LESS DESIRABLE.

APRIL 30, 1904 – SCOTT #323-327. A SET OF STAMPS ISSUED FOR THE LOUISIANA PURCHASE EXHIBITION IN ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

APRIL 26, 1907 – SCOTT #328-330. JAMESTOWN EXPOSITION STAMPS. 1c, 2c, 5c. NO 1c OR 2c FDC KNOWN TO EXIST, BUT THE 5c HAS BEEN REPORTED. THOUSANDS OF 1c AND 2c MUST HAVE BEEN SOLD. LOOK FEB 12, 1909 – SCOTT #367-369. LINCOLN CENTENARY STAMPS. MUCH PUBLICITY ABOUT IT AHEAD OF TIME. FDC's KNOWN FROM A DOZEN OR MORE CITIES, BUT FEW HAVE SURVIVED.

JAN 1, 1913 – SCOTT #397-400. PAN-PACIFIC EXPOSITION. BUREAU OF ENGRAVING AND PRINTING DID NOT SHIP THESE STAMPS TILL JAN 14, 1913, SO PROBABLE FIRST DAY OF SALE (EDU) ABOUT JAN 17.

SPECIAL USE STAMPS: SPECIAL DELIVERY, PARCEL POST, POSTAGE DUE, ETC.

DEC 16, 1918 – SCOTT #C1, 6c, FIRST AIRMAIL STAMP, RELATIVELY RARE. ONE PERSON REPORTED A COVER CANCELLED DEC 10, BUT IT WAS PROVED LATER THAT THE 6 DID NOT PRINT COMPLETELY AND ONLY LOOKED LIKE A 0.

THE \$5 "AMERICA" STAMP OF MARCH 20, 1923 IS A MAJOR RARITY ON FDC. EVEN THE \$5 COOLIDGE OF NOV 17, 1938 HAD ONLY 15,615 FDC AND THE \$5 ALEXANDER HAMILTON OF MARCH 19, 1956 HAD 34,272 FIRST DAY COVERS

OVERALL, THE MODERN FIRST DAY COVER ERA BEGAN IN THE TWENTIES. THEY WERE NO LONGER CONSIDERED MERE SOUVENIRS.

A FIRST DAY COVER IS USUALLY DESCRIBED AS: AN ENVELOPE BEARING A POSTAL EMISSION THAT IS CANCELLED ON THE INITIAL DAY IT IS AVAILABLE FOR SALE OR USE. THE CANCELLATION NOTES THE CITY AND THE DATE WHERE THE STAMP IS ISSUED.

ACCORDING TO POSTAL SERVICE RULES, STAMPS MUST BE AFFIXED A QUARTER OF AN INCH FROM THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE ENVELOPE AND A QUARTER OF AN INCH FROM THE TOP OF THE ENVELOPE. A FIRST DAY COVER MUST HAVE AT LEAST ONE OF THE NEWLY ISSUED STAMPS AND MUST HAVE SUFFICIENT POSTAGE TO MEET THE FIRST-CLASS REQUIREMENTS.

IN 1922 THE POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT INITIATED ITS POLICY OF ANNOUNCING FIRST-DAY CITIES AND DATES. THE FIRST STAMP ISSUED AFTER THIS WAS THE 10c SPECIAL DELIVERY (SCOTT #12) RELEASED JULY 12, 1922. LITTLE ADVANCED NOTICE AND ONLY ABOUT 200 COVERS WERE CANCELLED. MOSTLY BY EDWARD C. WORDEN. #2

OCT 4, 1922 – SCOTT #563 – 11c HAYES. FIRST-DAY CITIES: WASHINGTON, DC AND FREMONT, OHIO. FIRST TIME A CITY OTHER THAN WASHINGTON WAS DESIGNATED TO SELL A STAMP ON FIRST DAY. ALSO HAD A FIRST DAY CEREMONY AND A MIMEOGRAPHED PROGRAM. MICHAEL EIDNESS TRAVELED TO FREEDMONT WITH 4 SHEETS OF STAMPS. SOLD 1st SHEET TO SCOTT R. HAYES, SON OF LATE PRESIDENT HAYES. #3

THE FOLLOWING YEAR THE FIRST COMMERCIALY PREPARED CACHET FOR A US FIRST-DAY COVER WAS MADE BY GEORGE LINN. HE PRINTED A SIMPLE FIVE-LINE TEXT CACHET IN BLACK ON A MOURNING COVER FOR THE HARDING MEMORIAL ISSUE (SCOTT # 610) RELEASED ON SEPTEMBER 1, 1923. #4

MAY 26, 1928 – SCOTT # 645, WASHINGTON-AT-VALLEY FORGE. ONE OF THE FIRST DEALERS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF PROMOTING FDC's WAS RELIANT STAMP CO. (NASSAU ST. NYC). HE MADE A MAILING OF THIS COVER TO HIS CUSTOMERS. #5

PRE-CACHETS: COVER CARDS, CIVIL WAR, ADVERTISING COVERS, EVENT COVERS

MAY 4, 1936 – SCOTT # 777 – RHODE ISLAND TERCENTENARY. A GROUP OF SERVICERS AND COLLECTORS WERE THERE WITH A VERY AMBITIOUS IDEA. WHY NOT "FIRST-DAY-COVER" EVERY POST OFFICE IN THE STATE? THE EFFORT WAS MADE AND UO BUFFS STILL MARVEL AT THE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF SUCH AN UNDERTAKING. #6

JULY 13, 1937 – SCOTT #795, NORTHWEST ORDINANCE ISSUE. THE OFFICIAL LEGEND "FIRST DAY OF ISSUE" WAS FIRST USED. FIRST DAY CITIES WERE MARIETTA, OHIO, AND NEW YORK CITY. #7

THE FIRST CANCEL HAD SEVEN KILLER BARS WITH THE FDOI SLOGAN INSERTED IN THE MIDDLE BAR. THE FORMAT WAS USED FOR JUST THIS ONE ISSUE. IT WAS CHANGED TO A FIVE-BAR FORMAT FOR THE VIRGINIA DARE COMMEMORATIVE RELEASED AUGUST 18, 1937.

THREE YEARS LATER THE FDOI SLOGAN MADE ITS DEBUT AS A HAND CANCEL. THE EARLY HAND CANCELS ARE EASILY IDENTIFIED BECAUSE OF THE LARGE CIRCULAR DATE STAMP AND THE LONG KILLER BARS. SOMETIME AFTER 1947, A SHORTER VERSION OF THE HAND CANCEL WAS PUT INTO USE. #8

Jan. 1, 1913	Pan-Pacific Exposition issue	397-400
Oct. 1, 1882	First Special Delivery	E1
Dec. 1, 1911	10c registration stamp	F1
Jan. 1, 1913 (4 th class)	1c-21 parcel post	Q1-12
July 1, 1913 (1 st class)		
Oct. 1, 1883	5c red stamped envelope	U227-30
July 1, 1879	1c-2c postage dues	11-A
July 1, 1873	Official stamps	01-93

Designated First Days 1847-1921

Scott No.	Description	Designated First Days
1,2 5, 5b, 7, 10, 17	First General Issue 5c and 10c	July 1, 1847
205	5c brown Garfield	April 10, 1882
210	2c Washington (red brown)	Oct. 1, 1883
219, 219D, 221-4, 226-9	Regular issue of 1890	Feb. 22, 1890
230-5, 237-45	Columbians (except 8c)	January 1, 1893
294-9	1c-10c Pan American Exposition	May 1, 1901
323-7	1c-10c Louisiana Purchase Expo.	April 30, 1904
328-30	1c-5c Jamestown Exposition	April 26, 1907
367-9	Lincoln Memorial issue	Feb. 12, 1909
372, 373	Hudson-Fulton Exposition	Sept. 25, 1909
397-400	Pan-Pacific Exposition issue	Jan. 1, 1913
E1	First Special Delivery	Oct. 1, 1885
F1	10c registration stamp	Dec. 1, 1911
Q1-12	1c-\$1 parcel post	Jan. 1, 1913 (4 th class) July 1, 1913 (1 st class)
U227-30	2c red stamped envelope	Oct. 1, 1883
J1-4	1c-5c postage dues	July 1, 1879
O1-93	Official stamps	July 1, 1873

CLEARING THE CONFUSION ?

FOR POSTAL SERVICE ISSUES FROM 1870 THROUGH 1920, DATES EXIST, BUT THEIR ORIGINS ARE MOST QUESTIONABLE. MANY OF THESE DATES COME FROM POST OFFICE RECORDS THAT ARE OFTEN NOT COMPLETE NOR ACCURATE.

TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE CONFUSION THAT HAS BEEN BRED, CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUOTE FROM A 1917 LETTER FROM THE THIRD ASSISTANT POSTMASTER GENERAL REPORTING THE "DATES OF ISSUE" FOR STAMPS FROM 1900 to 1917:

"EFFORT HAS BEEN MADE TO GIVE DATES OF ISSUE ON EACH CASE, BUT IT IS POSSIBLE THAT IN A FEW INSTANCES THE DATE OF SALE IS GIVEN. THE DATE OF SALE IS USUALLY ONE OR TWO DAYS LATER THAN THE DAY OF ISSUE." THE DATES OF SALE THUS NOTED ARE LARGELY THOSE CONTAINED IN OUR CURRENT CATALOGS.

SEVERAL ADDITIONAL ASPECTS COMPLICATE THIS SUBJECT EVEN FURTHER. FIRST, THERE ARE INSTANCES IN WHICH CONTEMPORARY REPORTS INDICATE THAT STAMPS WERE AVAILABLE AND SOLD BEFORE THE DATES LISTED IN CATALOGS

A SECOND PROBLEM IS THAT EVEN THOUGH A PARTICULAR STAMP WAS DISTRIBUTED TO SOME POST OFFICES ON A PARTICULAR DATE, THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT IT WAS SOLD ON THAT DATE. A TYPICAL STAMP ANNOUNCEMENT FOR THE PERIOD 1870 TO 1921 STATED: "POSTMASTERS ARE REQUIRED TO EXHAUST ALL OF THE PRESENT STYLE ON HAND BEFORE SUPPLYING THE PUBLIC WITH THE NEW." SO EVEN THOUGH A STAMP WAS DISTRIBUTED TO A POST OFFICE, THERE

WAS A GOOD CHANCE THAT IT WOULD NOT BE SOLD WHEN FIRST RECEIVED.

A THIRD COMPLICATING FACTOR IS THAT A NUMBER OF BOGUS "FIRST-DAY COVERS" EXIST FOR ISSUES DURING THIS PERIOD. AN EXPLANATION IS THAT FOR MANY YEARS, FDC'S WERE ONLY OF A MODERATE VALUE. THUS MANY FORGERIES ELUDED CLOSE SCRUTINY AND ACQUIRED SOME UNJUSTIFIED RESPECTABILITY WITH AGE.

From Edward J. Siskin - AFDCS

FDC OR HPO+RPO

POST OFFICE CANCELLED ALL INCOMING MAIL W/FDI

SOME LATER FDC CAME IN PLASTIC SLEEVES

LATE 1960 - NO ADDRESSES

1923 LAW PERMITTED PUBLICATION OF STAMP PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS