

## Synopsis of Exhibit

AMERICOVER 2005  
Tysons Corner, VA  
July 29-31, 2005



### Exhibit Plan

- Production
- Domestic Use
- Foreign Use
- First Cachets
- Cachets
- Fakes & Forgeries
- Unofficial Cities
- Second Day Use
- "Sold Out"

**Note that every cover in this exhibit is from the 1st or 2nd day of issue.**

### Selected Highlights

- Earliest & 2nd Earliest Documented Uses— Feb 23 & 24, 1929
- First & Second Largest First Day Multiples
- Double Transfers on FDCs
- FDCs from Unofficial Cities as Far Away as Kansas and Minnesota

# First Days of the 1929 George Rogers Clark Commemorative

## *An Eight-Frame Study of one of America's Most Popular Commemoratives Through First Day Uses*

### Introduction

Issued at Vincennes, Indiana on February 25<sup>th</sup>, 1929, the 2¢ commemorative honoring George Rogers Clark is one of America's favorite stamps yet few are aware of the event it depicts. Based upon a 1923 painting by Frederick C. Yohn, the stamp shows the 1779 surrender of Fort Sackville by British Lt. Gov. Henry Hamilton to Col. George Rogers Clark. This allowed the then Northwest Territories to become a part of the U.S. At the time, it was the largest U.S. commemorative ever issued, and therefore the most expensive to produce.

### Purpose of the Exhibit

The goal of this exhibit is twofold. First is to examine the production and use of the stamp through first day uses. Second is to show the cachets that were prepared in this exciting pioneer age of cachet makers.

### What is Presented?

The centerpiece of the exhibit is a First Day

Cover with an entire pane of fifty. While this item was a philatelic creation of Chicago stamp dealer Max Golding, *it did receive backstamps in Chicago the next day, proving that it did travel through the normal mail stream.*

Starting the exhibit are FDCs that illustrate some of the methods used in the production of the stamp. In addition to standard production methods, double transfers are shown on first day covers. A full unused sheet from which they came is shown to use as a verification aid. Scott and Griffith state that there are three double (or damaged) transfers. R14, R29, R44 on frame plate #19721. Many hundreds of FDCs were examined to find these double transfers. As twelve different frame plates were used to print the Clark issue, these double transfers occur only once in twelve-hundred stamps.

Pre-Dates are represented with the earliest documented use (EDU) from Vincennes on Feb. 23<sup>rd</sup> — two

days before the official release. A second pre-date from Feb. 24<sup>th</sup> with an RPO cancel on the Cincinnati—St. Louis line is also included.

Domestic rates and usages are illustrated with FDCs representing First Class, Registered, Air Mail, and Special Delivery services.

While not technically an example of the Congressional Free Franking privilege, a FDC prepared on the official stationery of New Jersey Congressman and noted stamp collector Ernest Ackerman is shown. The facsimile of the Congressman's signature is readily apparent, but as this was not official business, the Clark stamp was required to pay the postage.

Railway Post Offices (RPO) and ancillary markings are also a part of this chapter.

Continuing the exhibit are examples of foreign use with FDCs sent to Switzerland, Germany and Canada. Scarce FDCs sent to Austria via the Ile de France and the Philippines (with a fake Rothblum cachet) round out the Foreign Use chapter.

Many cachet makers prepared their first covers with this issue, and a representative sample is shown. **Scarce variations of the 1st Ioor produced cachets are another highlight of the exhibit.**

*(Continued on page 2)*

## *Why Only FDCs?*

Traditional First Day Cover exhibits of a single stamp are required to show that the exhibitor understands both the production and use of the stamp. While most exhibitors choose to demonstrate their knowledge of production through the use of unused stamps and show standard pe-

riod usages, this exhibitor has undertaken the additional challenge to make this a true first day cover exhibit by not using any cover that was not post-marked on the first or second day. It is the hope of the Exhibitor that this increased difficulty produces a more interesting exhibit.

(Continued from page 1)

**F**ake cachets on Clark FDCs unfortunately exist and this Exhibitor has discovered many while preparing this exhibit. The reason for including them here is twofold; first, they are interesting and are appropriate when considering the complete history of Clark FDCs; and secondly to make other collectors aware of their existence.

**U**nofficial cities are also well represented, mostly from Indiana and Illinois, although examples from as far

away as Kansas and Minnesota are here. See "Why So Many Ploch FDCs?" below.

**T**his issue was the first commemorative not to be available for sale at the Philatelic Agency in Washington on its first day. Some cachet makers produced special 2<sup>nd</sup>-day cachets for this and are included in this exhibit. The issue was unique in that Charlottesville, Virginia was selected as an additional 2<sup>nd</sup> day city. Rumors in the philatelic press speculated the Charlottesville was also to be a first day city causing the Postmaster in

Charlottesville to be inundated with first day requests that he could not accommodate until the second day — and even then only a small fraction of these orders could be filled before they ran out of stamps. Because of this, cacheted covers from Charlottesville are considered to be scarce..

### What's Not Here & Why?

**I**tems that one may expect to see in this exhibit are not here — proofs and essays. While both small and large die-proofs have been given listings in catalogs, this exhibitor has not located one for exhibition.

**P**ictures of essays of the Clark issue have been published in philatelic literature. However the originals exist only in the archives of the B.E.P. and are unavailable. The original painting was commissioned by the Youth's Companion magazine and hangs in an Indiana museum, making the cover of the October 11,

1923 issue the closest thing to an essay available to the philatelic community and as such is an important part of this exhibit.

**S**cott and Griffith both list a variety with a missing Red "TOP" inscription. This is not a true plate error, but was a one-time error that occurred on a single paper pass due to improper plate inking.

### Why So Many Terrible Machine Cancels?

**D**ue to the volume of mail processed at Vincennes that first day, a problem with the automated cancellation device became more apparent as the day wore on. The exhibit shows an example of a cover processed at 8 o'clock in the morning that displayed a faint black line running horizontally across the envelope. Another cover processed twelve hours later at 8 o'clock in the evening shows a very dark line across the face of the envelope. **Almost all covers processed by the automated cancellation machine show some degree of this line.**



Earliest documented use of the Clark commemorative (Feb 23rd, 1929)

## Why So Many Ploch FDCs?

Carl Ploch, an Indianapolis banker, Floyd Shockley who worked with Ploch, and Joe Zix a Post Office Department employee were instrumental in creating most of the unofficial first day covers of the Clark issue. The three gentlemen were driven from Indianapolis to Vincennes on Sunday Feb. 24<sup>th</sup>, the day before the Clark release and persuaded the Vincennes Postmaster to sell them the Clark stamps in the early evening, and then spent six hours preparing their covers at a local house. All the covers were either addressed to Ploch, Shockley or George Rogers

Clark at Shockley's post office box in Indianapolis.

Zix had a working knowledge of the train schedules and prepared letters to Postmasters with covers asking that they be posted upon receipt. Zix only sent these letters to post offices that he knew would be reached on the 25<sup>th</sup>. They were at the Vincennes Rail Depot at 1AM on the 25<sup>th</sup> to deposit these packages on outgoing trains. Almost all covers were addressed to Ploch.

On the evening of the 25<sup>th</sup>, Shockley and Ploch took a train home from Vincennes to Indianapolis. At each stop,

Ploch jumped off the train and deposited packages of covers into two mailboxes on each platform. The first was for mail to be postmarked locally and the other to be cancelled on the RPO.

Zix also had the same plan and took a different train north to Terre Haute and then east to Indianapolis. Unfortunately both trains were non-stop and he was unable to produce many unofficials.

It is because of the work of these three men that there are so many "Ploch" unofficial first day covers of the Clark issue.

### Selected Bibliography

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