

# Synopsis of Exhibit

ROPEX 2015  
Rochester, NY  
May 15-17, 2015

## SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS

- Earliest & 2<sup>nd</sup> Earliest Documented Uses
- 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Largest First Day Multiples
- P.O.D. Negatives & Prints of Rejected Designs
- Large and Small Die Proofs
- Unique Southgate Large Die Proof
- FDCs Signed by Calvin Coolidge & PMG Harry S. New
- Unique FDR Hybrid Posthumous Large Die Proof
- Unique Knapp Add-On
- Full pane of 50 FDC
- First Registered and Special Delivery Covers Sent on the First Day
- First Cover Mailed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Day with letter to the PMG
- First Documented Perfin Use

Every cover in this exhibit was posted by the Second Day of Issue—Feb. 26<sup>th</sup>, 1929.

## EXHIBIT PLAN

1. Production
2. Domestic Use
3. Foreign Destinations
4. First Cachets
5. Cachets
6. Fakes & Forgeries
7. Unofficial Cities
8. Second Day Use
9. "Sold Out"

# First Days of the 1929 George Rogers Clark Commemorative

## A STUDY OF A POPULAR COMMEMORATIVE THROUGH FIRST DAY USE

### 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

### PURPOSE OF THE EXHIBIT

The goals of the exhibit are to first 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.

After years of searching, the Exhibitor has been able to add large (3 known), small (2 known) and 2 special die proofs to the exhibit.

The first of the two special proofs was prepared for Hugh Southgate, a prominent collector from Washington, D.C. in the 1920's and 30's. Southgate had a close

relationship with the P.O.D.— to the point where die proofs of all commemoratives and airmail issues were prepared as a gift to him in 1934. This unique "Southgate" proof is part of the exhibit.

The second special die proof is the unique Posthumous Hybrid large die proof. Created for President Franklin



EARLIEST DOCUMENTED USE OF THE CLARK COMMEMORATIVE (FEB 23, 1929)

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 issued it was the largest U.S. commemorative ever — and the most expensive to produce.

### WHAT IS PRESENTED ?

Originally not thought to exist outside of the B.E.P. archives, P.O.D. photos of essays of the approved and rejected designs obtained from the files of a long-time member of the Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee are now a part of the exhibit.

Roosevelt in 1933, it consists of a die proof trimmed to size and mounted on a die-sunk card.

While occasionally an exhibit will display a piece of the original protective wrapper in which the stamps were shipped to Post

*(Continued on page 2)*

### Why Only First Day Covers ?

Traditionally single stamp First Day Cover exhibits are expected to show that the exhibitor understands both production and use of the stamp in addition to first day use. While most exhibitors choose to demonstrate knowledge of production through the use of unused stamps and show standard period 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 postmarked after the second day. The Exhibitor hopes that this increased difficulty produces a more interesting and entertaining exhibit. ■

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Offices, rarely is one seen was purchased before the stamps officially went on sale. The example in the exhibit was from the personal album of Carl Ploch, who along with Floyd Shockley and help from a local post office employee, purchased the stamps the night before they went on sale.

An eye-catching highlight of the exhibit is a First Day Cover with an entire pane of fifty. 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.

FDCs that illustrate the production methods of the stamp continue the exhibit. 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 verification. 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 by the Exhibitor to find these double transfers. As twelve different frame plates were used to print the Clark issue these double transfers occur only once in

approximately twelve-hundred stamps.

Pre-Dates are represented with the earliest documented use (EDU) of the Clark issue 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.

An unusual, and seldom seen part of a first day cover exhibit, are the first Registered and Special Delivery uses on the first day. Carl Ploch (see sidebar) worked with Ernst W. Determann to produce these two covers and have them signed and “certified” by the Vincennes Postmaster before Determann mailed them to Ploch — enclosing the receipt from the



UNIQUE “SOUTHGATE” DIE PROOF

Registered letter in the first Special Delivery cover.

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

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

Continuing the exhibit in the *Foreign Destinations* chapter are examples of FDCs sent to Egypt, Switzerland, Germany and



UNIQUE FIRST CACHET BY HOWARD COOPER. TWO OF THE THREE COOPER ONE-OF-A-KIND DESIGNS ARE IN THE EXHIBIT.

## 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 with the help of local post office employee Earl McClure, 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>. The three men 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.

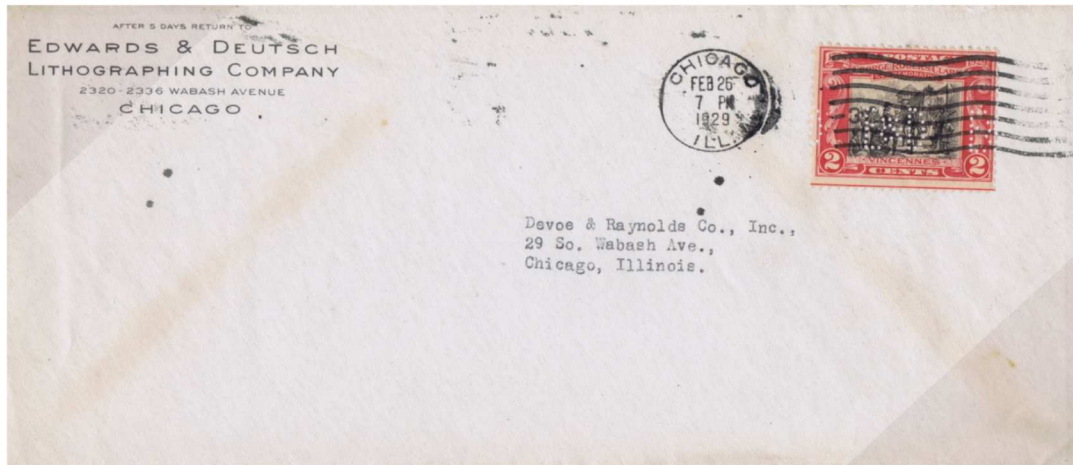
Zix also had the same plan and took a different train north to Terre Haute and then east to Indianapolis. Unfortunately both trains were non-stop and he was unable to produce many unofficials. Because of the work of these men these “Ploch” unofficial first day covers of the Clark issue exist. ■



### Why the First Days of the GRC Commemorative are Important to Philately

There are several reasons why the first days of the George Rogers Clark commemorative are important to philately. Perhaps the most prominent is that this was the first U.S. commemorative that was not available in Washington, D.C. on the first day and was available only in Vincennes, Indiana. This helped in setting a precedent for releasing stamps in cities around the country rather than just at the Philatelic Agency. Also unique to the Clark Commemorative is that on the second day it was only available in two places; the Philatelic Agency in Washington, D.C. and the post office in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Arguably as important is the introduction of new cachetmakers to the first day cover world as first day cover transitioned out of the pioneer period. Twenty cachetmakers are credited with having the Clark commemorative as their first cachet. Several of these cachetmakers, such as Harry Ioor and Walter Crosby went on to have long, successful and influential careers in cachetmaking. ■



SECOND DAY USE FROM CHICAGO IS THE EARLIEST DOCUMENTED USE OF A CLARK COMMEMORATIVE PERFORATED INSIGNIA (PERFIN).

Canada. Scarce FDCs sent to Austria (via the Ile de France) and the Philippines (with a fake Rothblum cachet) round out the Foreign Destination chapter.

Many cachet makers prepared their first covers with this issue. **Two unique 1<sup>st</sup> Cooper cachets and scarce copies of the 1<sup>st</sup> Ross, Walden Press, and Ioor cachets are another highlight of the exhibit.** While Emeigh's cachets did not vary, he did use envelopes that differed in size and composition — four of these are included in the Exhibit. Several of these first cachet covers are the actual covers illustrated in the standard FDC catalogs.

Fake cachets on Clark FDCs exist and the Exhibitor has discovered many while preparing this exhibit. Reasons for including them are twofold; first, they are interesting and are appropriate when considering the complete history of Clark FDCs; second is to make other collectors aware of their existence.

Unofficial 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?")

This commemorative was the first stamp not available for sale at the Philatelic Agency on its first day since the Agency opened in 1921. Some cachet makers produced special 2<sup>nd</sup>-day cachets for this and are included in the 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 that 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.

### WHAT'S NOT HERE & WHY ?

Both Scott's and Griffith list a variety with a missing Red "TOP" inscription. This is not

(Continued on page 4)

### SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Mellone's Planty Photo Encyclopedia of Cacheted FDCs, Vol II 1928-1929*; 1994.
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- Monty, Richard, et al; *Mellone's FDC Photo Encyclopedia of First Cachets*, 2006 Professional Reference Edition Stewartsville, NJ; FDC Publishing Co. 2006.
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- French, Loran C.; *Encyclopedia of Plate Varieties on U.S. Bureau-Printed Postage Stamps*; by Bureau Issues Association, Inc. 1977.

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a true plate error, but was a one-time error occurring due to improper plate inking.

### WHY ARE THERE SO MANY TERRIBLE MACHINE CANCELS ?

Due 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. A cover processed twelve hours later shows how the line darkened over time. Almost all covers processed by the automated cancellation machine show this line to some degree.

Witnesses have said that this line was caused by a piece of a cleaning rag caught in the machine, and as the volume of covers being mailed was so high, there was no time to take the machine apart to fix it. ■



UNIQUE LARGE POSTHUMOUS HYBRID DIE PROOF CREATED FOR PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT. (EX-FDR, EX-BIZÉ)

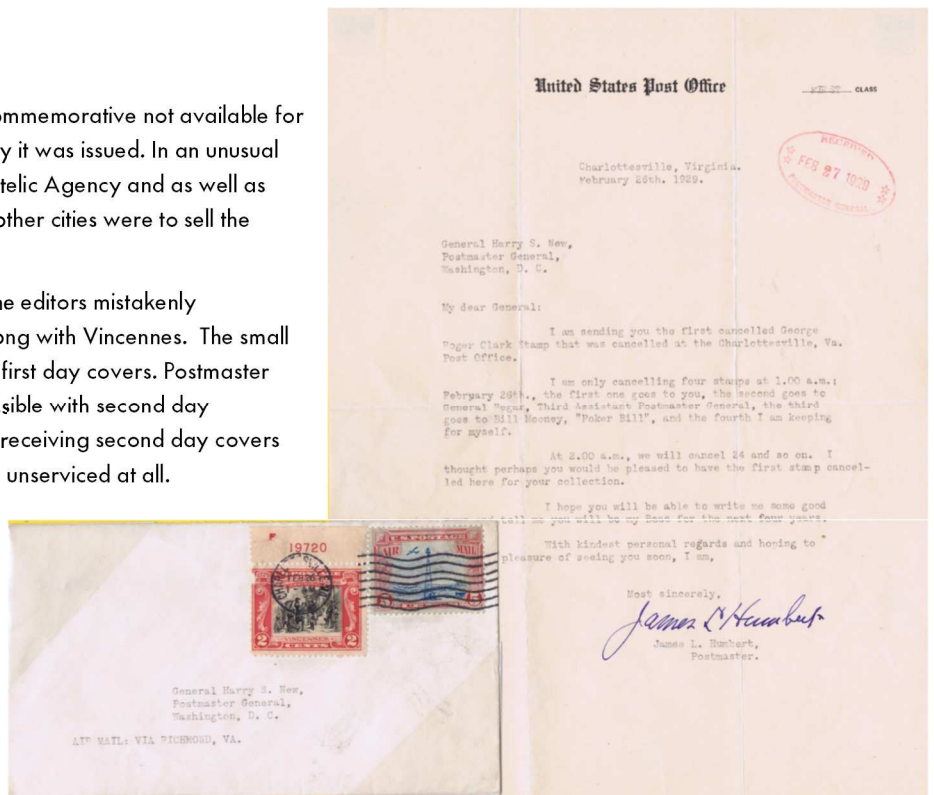
### A Second First Day...

The George Rogers Clark Commemorative was the first commemorative not available for sale at the Philatelic Agency in Washington, D.C. on the day it was issued. In an unusual move, the Clark stamp was placed on sale only at the Philatelic Agency and as well as Charlottesville, Virginia on the second day (Feb. 26<sup>th</sup>). No other cities were to sell the stamp until the third day.

In the February 23<sup>rd</sup> issue of the *Weekly Philatelic Gossip* the editors mistakenly announced that Charlottesville was to be a first day city along with Vincennes. The small Charlottesville Post Office was inundated with requests for first day covers. Postmaster James L. Humbert fulfilled as many of these requests as possible with second day postmarks. Of course, some collectors weren't happy with receiving second day covers and many were disappointed to have their covers returned unserved at all.

Only 15,000 stamps were available in Charlottesville and were placed on sale just after midnight. Only 4 covers are known with a 1AM postmark, 24 at 2AM, 100 at 3AM, 500 at 4AM and the balance at 5AM. It is presumed that the stock was exhausted before 5AM as no covers are known with a later postmark.

The first cover serviced at 1AM on February 26<sup>th</sup>, along with an explanatory letter, from the Charlottesville Postmaster to Postmaster General Harry S. New is included in the exhibit. ■



THE FIRST COVER MAILED ON THE SECOND-DAY WITH EXPLANATORY LETTER FROM THE CHARLOTTESVILLE POSTMASTER TO THE POSTMASTER GENERAL.

