



Book Reports

March – April 2013 Volume 10, Issue 2



An Overview of Unofficial First Day Covers

Ralph H. Nafziger

An unofficial first day cover (FDC) is defined as a cover that was cancelled on the designated first day of issue (FDOI) for a specific stamp but at a location different from the designated first day post office. It has a cancel with other than the “first day of issue” slogan. For FDCs before the slogan was initiated in 1937, unofficial FDCs refer to any cover cancelled at a post office other than that using the working cancel of the officially designated post office. Often the new stamp was purchased at the official point of sale and then taken to another post office for cancellation on the first day of issue. Recently, the term “semi-official” FDC has been used. This term refers to a cover that has been cancelled in the same city as that of the designated first day city, but without the official first day cancellation (Figure 1).



Figure 1

“Semi-Official” FDC from North Tarrytown, NY (Sc. 1548), ArtCraft cachet.

Types of Unofficial FDC Cancels

There are two basic types of cancellations that are found on unofficial FDCs. The first is the everyday working cancel that is used at all post offices. These may consist of the familiar machine cancel with a circular date stamp (CDS), showing the post office name, date, and time, with either a wavy line or a slogan killer (Figure 2). It also can be a hand cancel with a four-bar killer (Figure 3), a double-ring plug hand cancel, or a “roller” cancel often used on packages (Figure 1). These cancels can be used on the date indicated in the CDS only. A

second unofficial cancel usually is a hand cancel showing the post office and date usually in a CDS, along with a slogan killer with or without other design elements. These often are used to commemorate stamp shows, event anniversaries, or people, for example (Figure 4). These cancellations usually have grace periods after the cancellation date during which one may submit covers for the cancel.

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Figure 2
Unofficial first day slogan machine cancellation (Sc. 902), NYPO cachet.

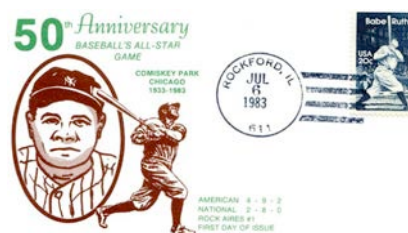


Figure 3
Unofficial first day hand cancel (Sc. 2046), first Rock Aires cachet.

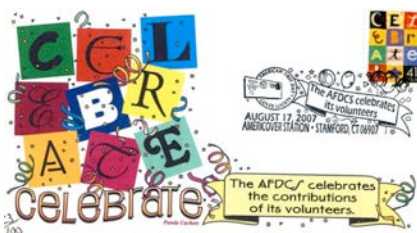


Figure 4
Unofficial first day cancel commemorating the Celebrate stamp (Sc. 4196), Panda cachet for AFDCS.

The 1922-2007 Period

Since July 12, 1922, the U.S. Post Office Department (POD) began to designate a first day date and location at which the new stamp would be issued. The first such stamp was the 10c special delivery issue (Sc. E12). Prior to that date, with few exceptions, new stamps simply were placed on sale, usually without any prior announcement. From 1922 to the present, collectors could submit requests for FDOI cancels by sending in envelopes with or without cachets to the postmaster of the designated first day city. On January 3, 1977 with the issuance of the Washington at Princeton stamp (Sc.1704), the United States Postal Service (USPS) established a 15-day grace period. Thus, collectors could submit first day requests up to 15 days after the designated first day. The grace period was extended to 30 days on November 10, 1981. The 30-day grace period was extended to pictorial cancels on March 15, 1992. Thereafter, collectors could purchase a new stamp at their local post offices after it was issued and submit envelopes to be cancelled with a pictorial postmark with the same date as the designated first day for the issue, thus creating an unofficial FDC (Figure 5). During this period, collectors also could purchase new stamps at the designated first day post office and take or mail the stamps to other post offices for the daily working machine or hand cancels. In this way, unofficial FDCs were also obtained. The new stamp went on sale nation-wide on the next business day.



Figure 5
Unofficial first day pictorial cancel from Arizona (Sc. 2747), Artmaster cachet.

From the 1930s to 1960s, many unofficial FDCs had ship cancels. Often these were favor cancels that were not applied on the FDOI of the new issue. Cachetmakers would have friends on ships with postal facilities who would accomplish this task. During World War II, cacheted covers often were held for cancellation until the end of the war for security purposes.



Figure 6
Unofficial first day cancel on GAMM
cacheted cover (Sc. 1961).

One of the more prolific unofficial FDC servicers was Gerry Adlman, who produced GAMM cachets. Gerry began servicing unofficial FDCs in May, 1976, and continued until her death on March 7, 2005. Over the years, she recruited a network of collectors who helped her obtain unofficial first day cancels throughout the country. I was one of those collectors who serviced unofficial FDCs for Gerry when a stamp was issued in Oregon or Washington state (Figure 6).

Gerry had many tales to tell regarding her unofficial FDC activities. For example, in 1980, she made a long drive to Friendship, MD to service unofficial FDCs for the Letter Writing issue (Sc. 1805-1810) only to find that there were two Friendship, MD post offices, separated by over 100 miles. She had arrived at an unincorporated town with a couple of houses! Fortunately, there was a West Friendship post office in the area where she serviced her unofficial FDCs. In another instance, she arrived at the small Mt. Vernon, VA post office for the George Washington issue of 1982 (Sc. 1952). She had to label her package of covers to be cancelled with the desired cancel and her name, and leave them with the counter clerks. An hour elapsed before Gerry's name was called, signifying that her covers were ready. Much to her dismay, an incorrect cancel had been applied.

On many occasions, she would travel up to 1,100 miles and arrange to obtain the new issue just after midnight at the designated first day city, and spend the remainder of the night licking and sticking stamps to envelopes. Often, she would drive to multiple cities in one day to obtain unofficial first day cancels, and once drove four long round trips in three weeks. Confronting long lines at first day sales windows also was a challenge. Fortunately, she loved to travel and drive. Once she had parked her car in a garage along the route for the July 4, 1976 parade in Philadelphia. In the rain, every garage looked the same and none had her car. She had to call her husband to tell him that she had lost her car (Monty, 1979). She would also fly to distant cities to obtain unofficial FDCs after obtaining new stamps at the first day city. At other times, she would place packages of unserviced covers on planes where a local person would service the covers.

Another prominent servicer of unofficial FDCs was Leonard G. Sautter, a Philadelphia lawyer. Len assembled a team to help coordinate the shipping, receiving, and servicing of unofficial FDCs on a tight schedule. Len often serviced unofficial FDCs with Gerry Adlman and a few other cachetmakers. Most were serviced with Len's cachets (LGS). Many of Len's unofficial FDCs were cancelled at the B. Free Franklin station in Philadelphia (Figure 7). If possible, Len would obtain this cancel on every issue he serviced. He also liked to service unofficial FDCs at Batsto, NJ. A few of his experiences and those of his team have been published (Sautter, et al, 1977). Some of his memorable experiences in servicing unofficial

FDCs include locking himself out of his car and obtaining cancels for the New Jersey stamp of 1987 (Sc. 2338) from all 21 county seats in the state. He died on April 25, 2003.



Figure 7
Unofficial FDC with B. Free Franklin Station cancel (Sc. 1726) with LGS cachet.

2007-Present

On January 1, 2007, the USPS began selling new issues at all post offices in the country on the FDOI. Thus, a collector could purchase the new stamps at any post office on the FDOI and obtain as many unofficial FDCs as possible during the day when post offices were open (Figure 8). In practice, not all post offices ordered and/or received the new issues on the first day. As the years have passed, fewer post offices have been ordering new issues, so servicing unofficial FDCs on the FDOI often is problematic. In April 2007, the grace period for first day cancels was extended to 60 days. This provided the opportunity for more new issues to be serviced with a pictorial cancel depicting the first day date.



Figure 8
Unofficial FDC for a stamp on nationwide sale (Sc. 4711), David Curtis cachet.

An account of the experiences of unofficial FDC servicers in Oregon has been published previously (Nafziger, 2008).

Conclusions

Since the U.S. POD began designating dates and locations for the issuance of new stamps, unofficial FDCs have been created. In the early days with few exceptions, such FDCs were more difficult to obtain. Collectors were required to obtain the stamps at the issuing post office, make detailed preparations, often travel great distances, and have their covers cancelled. With the advent of grace periods for submitting covers for cancellation, event cancels sometimes could be used on the FDOI for a new stamp. When stamps became available nationwide on the FDOI, unofficial FDCs could be obtained more easily, although limited distribution of many new issues has made servicing unofficial FDCs more difficult.

References

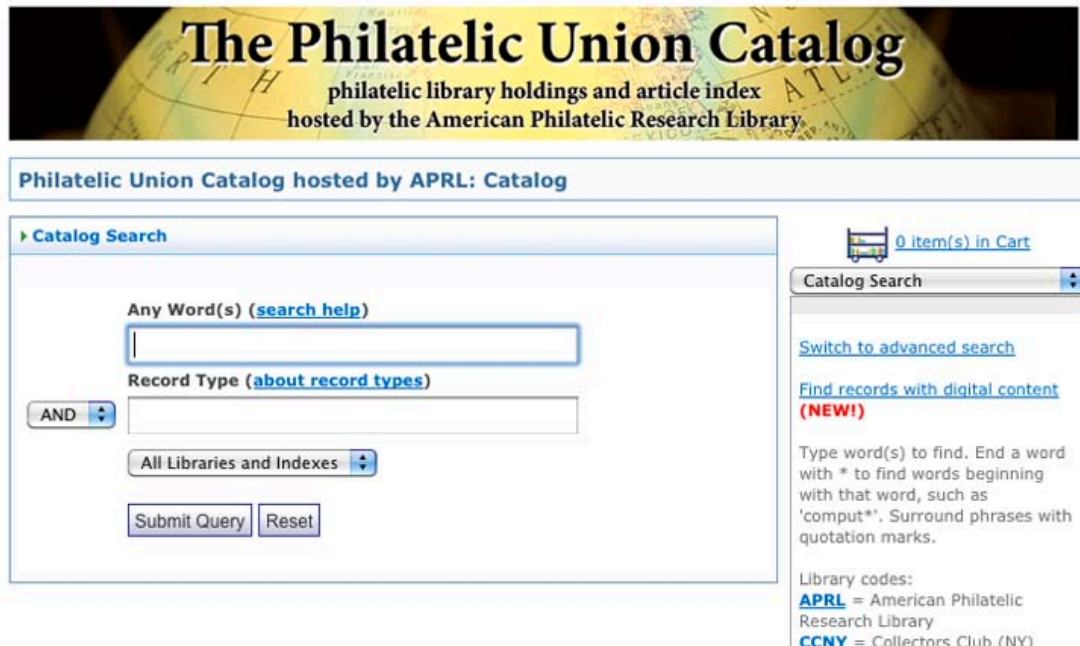
- Monty, Richard A. Gerry Adlman + MM=GAMM Covers, *First Days*, vol. 24, no. 5, Sept./Oct. 1979, pp. 22/28.
- Nafziger, Ralph H. Unofficial First Day Covers in Oregon, *First Days*, vol. 53, no. 6, Sept. 1, 2008, pp. 24-30.
- Sautter, Leonard G., Mary V. Quinn, and Catherine Brancato, edited by Alan Warren. LGS and the Case for the Unofficial First Day Cover, *First Days*, vol. 22, no. 2, March/April, 1977, pp. 67-70.

Toward a more perfect Union Catalog

Several years ago, the American Philatelic Research Library began approaching many of the regional philatelic libraries with the idea of creating a database that combined all their collections. This project has grown into what is now called the Union Catalog, enlisting nearly every noteworthy philatelic library in the U.S. and two foreign holdings. For the past few years, Northwest Philatelic Library has considered adding our database of books and periodicals to the Union Catalog.

The NPL's restriction in joining the venture was the inability to export all of our catalog listings in one chunk. We use LibraryWorld as our online catalog, which allowed us to create "reports" with a limited amount of data, but there appeared to be no way to build a full report with all the information on each book.

Recently, Betsy Gamble with the APRL was able to extract all our records from a massive text export and compile complete listings for the more than 5,200 items in our collection. We are tremendously impressed with this effort, as it will make our library accessible to anyone searching APRL records, through the Union Catalog.



The screenshot shows the 'Philatelic Union Catalog' interface. At the top, a banner reads 'The Philatelic Union Catalog philatelic library holdings and article index hosted by the American Philatelic Research Library'. Below this is a search form titled 'Philatelic Union Catalog hosted by APRL: Catalog'. The search area includes a 'Catalog Search' section with a text input field for 'Any Word(s) (search help)', a 'Record Type (about record types)' dropdown menu, an 'AND' operator dropdown, and a 'All Libraries and Indexes' dropdown. There are 'Submit Query' and 'Reset' buttons. To the right, a sidebar shows '0 item(s) in Cart', a 'Catalog Search' dropdown, and links for 'Switch to advanced search' and 'Find records with digital content (NEW!)'. A search help section explains that words should be followed by an asterisk for wildcards and phrases by quotation marks. A 'Library codes' section lists 'APRL = American Philatelic Research Library' and 'CCNY = Collectors Club (NY)'.

In addition to the APRL, there are currently 10 other libraries of various organizations participating in the Union Catalog:

- Collectors Club (NY)
- Collectors Club of Chicago
- Greene Foundation
- Northwest Philatelic Library
- Postal History Foundation
- Rocky Mountain Philatelic Library

- Royal Philatelic Society London
- Scandinavian Collectors Club
- The Smithsonian Libraries - National Postal Museum
- Western Philatelic Library

A search engine can be found online at

<http://catalog.stamplibrary.org/InmagicGenie/opac.aspx>

Visitors may search by keywords, record types (books, periodicals, etc.) or both. Using the drop-down menu at the bottom of the search block, you can specify which library to search within, such as “NWPL,” or choose “All Libraries and Indexes.”

We are very pleased to finally be a part of this landmark project and will continue to keep our members apprised of ongoing activities.

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Book Review: 1952 Post Office Manual

Greg Alexander

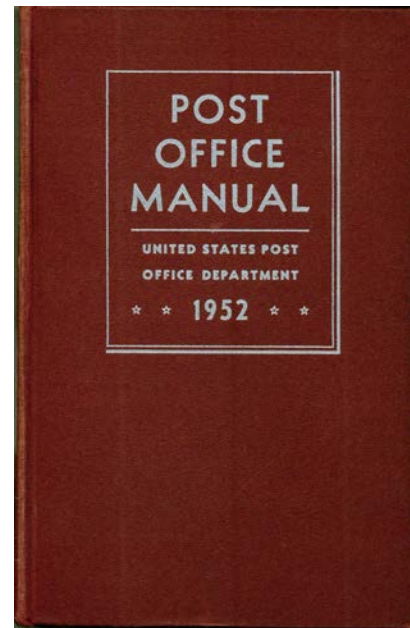
Post Office Manual, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1952.

Who would read something as mundane as a postal manual? No dust jacket, no cover illustration, and practically all text. Big snooze, right?

Not so fast. Unlike the Official Postal Guides (the library stocks these back to 1854), relatively few Post Office Manuals are on the shelves. These manuals were intended to help postmasters and postal employees “run the show,” with guidance on everything you could imagine. In 1952, nearly every mode of mail transportation was in use -- trains, trucks, buses, planes, ships, even bicycle messengers were still employed for special deliveries.

Philatelists will be pleased to note that, according to Section XV, Article 19:

“Postmasters should cooperate as far as practicable with local stamp collectors in the sale of stamps of selected quality for philatelic purposes...”



I was fascinated to discover other regulations that covered:

- Shipment of gold dust from Alaska (Section III, Article 138):

“The rate of postage on gold coin, gold bullion, and gold dust between two points in Alaska, or between any point in Alaska and any point in the United States or its possessions, shall be

2 cents an ounce or fraction thereof, regardless of distance. Such gold...shall be enclosed in sealed packages not exceeding 50 pounds in weight and sent by registered mail.”

- RPO catcher pouches (VIII, 36):

“Catcher pouches shall be hung on the mail crane pouch end down. They should be hung not exceeding 10 minutes before the the time of the arrival of the train. The person hanging the pouch shall watch the pouch until it is caught by the train. If there is a failure to catch the pouch he shall deliver it to the post office and the postmaster shall report immediately the failure...giving the probable cause.”

- Mica on postcards (III, 10):

“Cards bearing particles of glass, metal, mica, sand, tinsel, or similar decorative substances shall not be accepted for mailing, except when enclosed in envelopes tightly sealed...when the objectionable substances will not rub off or injure persons handling the mails.”

- Free matter in the mails (III, 144):

Widows of former Presidents of the U.S. may send all mail free during their lifetime, with a “written autograph signature or facsimile thereof in upper right corner of address side.” During, and up to 9 months after, their terms of office, the Secretary of Agriculture and Members of Congress may send seeds and reports from the Dept. of Agriculture. “The word 'Free' and the signature and title, either written or printed facsimile...shall appear on the address side.”

Many other arcane and intriguing rules can be found among the pages. The manual is a boon to researchers on a host of topics. Next time you want to know the regulations on shipping live baby chicks, ducks or geese stop by the library and browse this reference.

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Still Stumped

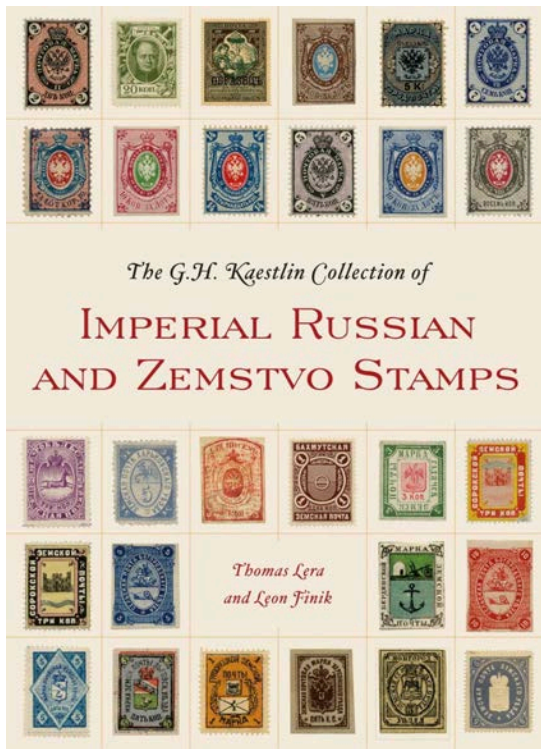
We had no solutions suggested for Research Stumper #15, published in the last issue. One member provided identification for the actual stamps in the photos. However, we were looking for a plausible explanation regarding the intended use for the photos and why multiple copies were saved in a number of manila photo packets and left in the Library’s possession. The mystery project involving these photos remains a mystery.

#

New on our Shelves

The following resources have been added to our collection:

Gupta, Prof. V.K., **Conservation Restoration and Philatelic Chemistry**, Delhi, India, 1997



Herst, Herman, Jr., **Fun and Profit in Stamp Collecting**, 1st Ed., Duel, Sloan and Pearce, New York, 1962 [Sign copy]

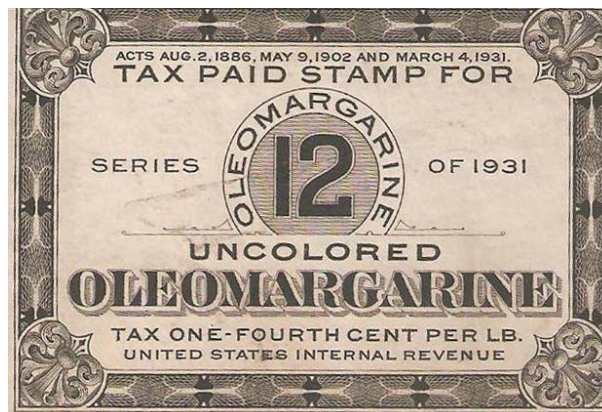
Lera, Thomas, Ed., **The Winton M. Blount Postal History Symposia: Select Papers, 2010-2011**, Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press, Washington, D.C., 2012

Lera, Thomas and Leon Finik, **Imperial Russian and Zemstvo Stamps**, Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press, Washington, D.C., 2012

Litchfield, Carter, **History of Oleomargarine Tax Stamps and Licenses in the United States**, Olearius Editions, Kemblesville, PA., 1988

Minkus, **Minkus Stamp Catalog: Albania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia – 1982-83**

Minkus, **Minkus Stamp Catalog: Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg & Colonies – 1981-82**



Minkus, **Minkus Stamp Catalog: France, Monaco and Andorra – 1981-82**

Minkus, **Minkus Stamp Catalog: Germany – 1981-82**

Minkus, **Minkus Stamp Catalog: Greece and Turkey – 1981-82**

Minkus, **Minkus Stamp Catalog: Italy, San Marino and Vatican City – 1981-82**

Minkus, **Minkus Stamp Catalog: Poland – 1981-82**

Minkus, **Minkus Stamp Catalog: Russia – 1981-82**



Minkus, **Minkus Stamp Catalog: Scandinavia and Baltic Countries – 1981-82**

Minkus, **Minkus Stamp Catalog: Spain, Portugal, Andorra & Colonies – 1982-83**

Shoemaker Dr. Robert E., **Liberian Postal Stationery**, United Postal Stationery Society, Chester, VA, 2012

Schwan, Fred, **World War II United States Savings Bonds and Stamps**, BNR Press, Port Clinton, OH, 2011

Scott Classic Catalog 2013

Unitrade Specialized Catalogue of Canadian Stamps – 2012, Unitrade Press, Toronto, 2012

Yamamoto, Yokiti, **Japanese Postage Stamps**, Board of Tourist Industry, Japanese Government Railways, 1940

Journals on CD:

St. Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha Philatelic Society

Pitcairn Islands Study Group

Pitcairn and Norfolk Islands Society



Library Notes

Orlie Trier, NPL President

Save the Date for our 10th Anniversary Celebration

This summer the Northwest Philatelic Library, as we know it today, will celebrate its 10th anniversary; prior to that it was known as the Harold D. Peterson Library. We thank Harold for his vision and Charles Neyhart who was instrumental to forming the library as a non-profit entity in 2003. The library has grown significantly in the past decade. Our next issue of Book Reports will cover the progress we have made over the years.

In the meantime, save the date of Saturday, July 27. That day we are planning an open house from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. We will have a free barbeque starting at noon, serving hot dogs and hamburgers with all the trimmings. Come and see what else we will serve on the menu. At 12:30 we will have a short program sharing the history of the Northwest Philatelic Library, and our vision for the future.

In Appreciation

To the individuals listed below who have made recent donations of literature and other considerations to NPL, we thank you for your generosity. We want to assure you that we will make good use of these resources for our fellow philatelist and collectors.

Jean Gargan	Bob Delker
Graham Rich	Michael Dixon
Rance Curtis	Greg Alexander
Gloria Neyhart	Jack Hartong
John Blakemore	Margret Hecht
Robert Granville	Charles Herron
James Stultz	Rex Bates

THANK YOU all for your support!

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