

Short History of the First Day Cover (FDC)

For covers with stamps issued before 1851, the “first day of issue” is the EKU (Earliest known use). This is the designation for the earliest identified postmark on a stamp for which a first day of issue was not designated.

Prior to 1922, the Post Office Department didn't usually designate specific dates for the issue of new stamps. Only a few had a set first day of issue, and most of those were commemoratives. There were some first day covers as early as 1851, but they were not specifically prepared like the First Day Covers we know today.

On July 12, 1922, the U.S. Post Office Department issued its first stamp with an announced first day of issue. Stamp dealer and publisher George Linn created the first first-day cover when he developed a simple text cachet for the Harding Memorial stamp issue of 1926 (#610).

The Post Office used the FDOI machine cancel for the first time on July 13, 1937 for the Northwest Territory Ordinance commemorative (Scott #837) issue.

Summary:

- Prior to 1922, FDOI was not generally known; EKU is used for FDOI
- In 1922 the USPS began designating the FDOI
- In 1937 the USPS began using the FDOI cancellation