

THE TWO CENT HARDINGS

Exhibit Synopsis (revised 2/8/24)

Colopex 2024, May 31-June 1, 2024

Introduction: The Two Cent Harding, issued less than a month following President Harding's death, was a mourning stamp, printed in black in spite of a Universal Postal Union agreement for all letter rate stamps to be red. In the rush to issue the Harding stamp the POD did not make allowance for the large quantity of letter rate stamps that would be needed, and within ten days the faster rotary presses were added to the flat plate production.

The initial flat plate "Black Harding" was perforated 11. The rotary stamp was perforated 10 and was only produced for less than two months. A third type, the flat plate imperforate, was issued to meet "the great demand from collectors". Finally, a fourth unplanned, unauthorized type of "Black Harding", a rotary perf. 11, was discovered more than a decade later, and there are no first day covers.

The issues of the Series of 1922 (Fourth Bureau) were the first stamps to have the date and city of issue announced by the POD in advance. This allowed first day cover servicers to plan their covers and led to the first commercially produced cachet by George W. Linn of Columbus, Ohio. Mr. Linn personally serviced his first cachets for the Harding Memorial stamp at the Marion post office and then obtained unofficial first day cancellations, without cachets, in multiple towns on his way home to Columbus. William Windhurst procured unofficial cancellations from several cities north of Marion.

The Harding stamp is not part of the Series of 1922. It is a commemorative and was the first commemorative to be issued on both the flat plate and rotary presses.

Material Presented: I have presented this exhibit at local and national shows for the past thirteen years. At StampShow 2017 it received a Large Gold. It received a Large Gold and Reserve Grand at Americover 2017 and a Large Gold and the Grand award at Americover 2019 and Garfield-Perry in 2023. After each show the exhibit has been revised, and in the past seven years it has been expanded from six to eight frames. Every cover in this exhibit is a first day cover except for commercial usage. The **purpose** of the exhibit is to demonstrate the unique first day cover features of the Harding Memorial issue as well as its production and usage. The exhibit contains EFO's, siderographers and plate finishers, precancels, perfins and research on plate numbers available for first day use and times of first day cancellation by issue, location and servicer, but does not contain Rotary perf. 11. Items of significance are an original essay model, a photo essay, an uncut press sheet of the flat plate imperforate issue, three large die proofs, two signed by PMG Harry New, and a previously unreported plate number position on Marion, September 1, 1923 FDCs.

First day postmarks and cancellations of the two flat plate issues and the rotary issue are shown. First day covers of the rotary perf. 11 issue and the Schermack

type III perforations do not exist. Twenty seven unofficial first day cancellations for flat plate perf. 11 and flat plate imperf. are shown. There are no known unofficial cancellations of rotary perf. 10. Only one predate cancellation (August 31, 1923, Washington, DC) of flat plate perf. 11 is known to exist.

Domestic and foreign first day and subsequent usage of "Black Harding", including postal rates, are demonstrated. From 7/18/19 to 6/29/24 mail was carried by airplane on space available basis at first class rate. National air mail routes were not established until the next year.

The scarcest first day covers are the first commercial cachets on three envelope sizes and four mourning border widths by George Linn and mourning covers of the eleven U.S. Departments. Five of the former and eight of the latter are shown.

As mentioned previously, the Series of 1922 and the Harding Memorial Issue ushered in the era of first day covers and cachets. The pioneer servicers of first day covers were in their prime during the period of the Fourth Bureau. Most of them serviced covers for the Two Cent Harding issues, and a number of them are shown in this exhibit.

The Harding Memorial issue was discontinued at the end of February, 1924, but it was the predecessor of eleven more Harding issues over the following eight years.

References:

1. Sabo, D.E. An Illustrated Catalogue..., *First Days*, Vol. 29, (1) pp. 28-38 & Vol. 30, (2) pp. 172-179.
2. Sabo, D.E. The Sc. 610 First..., *First Days, Jul. 1984, Vol. 29 (5) pp.690*
3. Newton, B. The 50th Anniversary..*First Days* Vol. 19 (4) pp.52-58.
4. The United States Commemorative Stamps of the Twentieth Century, Vol. 1, by Max G. Johl
5. Linn's United States Stamps 1922-1926 by Gary Griffith
6. U.S. Domestic Postal Rates, 1872-1993, by Beecher & Wawrukiewicz
7. U.S. International Postal Rates, 1872-1996, by Wawrukiewicz & Beecher
8. The United States Fourth Bureau Issue 1922-1938, by Gary Griffith & Jay Stotts

Exhibit Plan:

1. Preproduction
2. Issued Stamps
 - 2.1 Flat Plate Press, Perf. 11
 - 2.2 Rotary Press, Perf. 10
 - 2.3 Flat Plate Press, Imperf.
 - 2.4 EFO's
 - 2.5 Precancels
3. First Day Covers
 - 3.1 First Cachet
 - 3.2 Mourning Bands
 - 3.3 Hitchings Cachet
 - 3.4 U.S. Departments
4. First Day Cover Servicers
5. Postmarks & Cancellations
 - 5.1 Official First Day
 - 5.2 Unofficial First Day
6. Usage and Postal Rates
 - 6.1 Domestic
 - 6.1.1 First Day
 - 6.1.2 Commercial
 - 6.1.3 Perfins
 - 6.2 Foreign
 - 6.3 Auxiliary Markings
7. Conclusion

