

This Day in History... January 9, 1963

First Definitive U.S. Flag Stamp

On January 9, 1963, the US Post Office issued its first definitive stamp to feature the American flag as its main subject, flying over the White House. This began a long-running tradition of “flag over...” stamps.

This wasn't the first-ever US flag stamp. Flags had appeared as part of the design of several stamps dating back to the 1869 Eagle and Shield Pictorial. The first US flag commemorative was issued in 1957 and pictured the 48-star flag. A few commemoratives pictured the flag after that, including the first 50-star flag stamp in 1960.



Redesigned Flag Over White House stamp of 1968



1977 Flag Over Capitol Stamp



1981 Flag Over "Sea to Shining Sea"



1981 Flag Over Supreme Court



This was the first stamp issued to meet the increased 5¢ domestic letter rate.



1975 Flag Over Independence Hall



1981 Flag Over "Field" Amber Waves of Grain



1981 Flag Over "Purple Mountain Majesties"

Reportedly, the design for the Flag Over White House stamp was inspired by First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy, who wanted to use a stamp on White House mail that showed the White House. This stamp is one of the few US stamps that doesn't note the country that issued it, though the image of the flag makes it clear. Earlier in the year, Postmaster General J. Edward Day had noted that “only precedent” suggested that “U.S.,” or “U.S.A.,” or some other sign of nationality should be included. Only the denomination, which went into effect two days before the stamp was issued, is printed with the flag and White House.

Five years later, the Flag Over White House stamp was redesigned for a new group of definitives. The newer versions are the first multicolored coil US stamp. Stamps were issued in 1968, 1969 and 1970 for the 6¢ rate and in 1971 for the 8¢ rate. Later in the 1970s, the flag was flown over the US Capitol and Independence Hall. The US Capitol stamp was issued in a booklet pane with a Dome of the Capitol stamp and the Independence Hall stamp was issued with different perforation measurements.

In 1981, there America the Beautiful stamps depicted the flag flying over “Amber Waves of Grain,” “Sea to Shining Sea,” and “Purple Mountain Majesties.” That year there were also three Flag Over Supreme Court stamps, available in sheet, coil, and booklet form.

In 1985, three more Flag Over Capitol stamps were produced in sheet, coil, and booklet form. The booklet stamp was the first commemorative sized definitive booklet stamp and considered by some to be the most handsome US

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definitive in years.

In 1988, the Flag Over Yosemite stamp was issued as part of a USPS response to customer comments asking for more “colorful and creative” stamps.” Also, during this time, other definitives would picture the US flag, but they weren’t part of the loosely-styled “Flag Over” Series.

In 1991, the Flag Over Mount Rushmore stamp was issued after the US won the Persian Gulf War and citizens wanted a new flag stamp. There were two versions printed, one by the BEP and one by the American Bank Note Company, which was the first coil not printed by the BEP.



1988 Flag Over Yosemite



1992 Flag Over White House Bicentennial Stamp



1995 Flag Over Field



1999 Flag Over Chalkboard

In 1992, the Flag Over White House was redesigned again, this time to celebrate the building’s 200th anniversary. The stamp pictures the Executive Mansion from an angle not used on US stamps before. The stamp also includes two flags – the large full-color flag, and the small flag that always flies above the White House.

In 1995, the series took on a new look with the Flag Over Porch stamps. These colorful stamps pictured a portion of the flag, close-up over a Victorian-style porch. A total of 13 stamps were produced by four different printers as both self-adhesive and normally-gummed. The Flag Over Porch stamp also marked the first time a self-adhesive stamp was issued with simulated perforation die cuts, so that it appeared to be perforated.

In 1995, a Flag Over Field self-adhesive was created specifically for use in Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs).

In 1999, the seven Flag Over City stamps were printed, though the format was changed slightly. They picture the flag at the bottom to show the height of the city skyscrapers.

Also in 1999, a Flag Over Chalkboard stamp was issued in booklet panes of 18 for use in ATMs.

In 2000, three Flag Over Farm stamps were issued for the rate change without denominations, instead saying “First-Class.” The following year, the designs were updated with the 34¢ denomination. The USPS continues to issue flag stamps nearly every year, and “Flag Over” stamps helped pave the way.



1985 Flag Over Capitol Commemorative-Sized Booklet Stamp



1991 29¢ Flag Over Mount Rushmore



1995 Flag Over Porch



1999 Flag Over City



2000 Flag Over Farm

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