

This Day in History... May 23, 1788

South Carolina Admitted to the Union

On May 23, 1788, South Carolina ratified the US Constitution, making it America's eighth state.

Before European settlement, more than 30 Native American tribes lived in the area that became South Carolina. The main tribes were the Catawba, Cherokee, and Yamasee. These peoples built semi-permanent log homes, and the majority raised crops.

A Spanish expedition led by Francisco Gordillo explored the Carolina coast in 1521. In 1526, Lucas Vásquez de Ayllón established the first European settlement in what would become the United States. Historians believe the settlement, named San Miguel de Gualdape, was located in the Winyah Bay region of South Carolina. Ayllón brought 500 men, women, and children from Santo Domingo Island to establish the colony.



The Palmetto tree on the South Carolina flag pays homage to the defense of the palmetto-log fort on Sullivan's Island during the Revolutionary War.

The English claimed ownership of all North America during the early 1600s. However, no attempt was made to settle the South Carolina area until 1663. That year, King Charles II granted a charter to eight English noblemen known as the lords proprietors. The lords proprietors sent settlers to America in 1669. In 1670, at Albemarle Point, they established the first successful, permanent white settlement in South Carolina. The colonists soon moved to Oyster Point in 1680, naming their settlement Charles Town. In 1783, the spelling was changed to Charleston.

The young colony faced difficult times. The lords proprietors restricted self-government. Yet they offered little assistance and failed to protect the colony. Without aid, the colonists defended themselves against French and Spanish forces, Yamasee Natives, and even pirates. The legendary British pirate Blackbeard terrorized the Carolina coast from 1716 to 1718.

When the lords proprietors rejected attempts to increase the colony's independence, the settlers rebelled. In 1719, King George I made South Carolina a royal colony. As such, the colonists were granted a great deal of self-government. In 1732, the southern portion of South Carolina became the colony of Georgia.



Stamp honors the 260th anniversary of the Province of Carolina and the 250th anniversary of the city of Charleston.

Many important battles of the War for Independence were fought in South Carolina. Much of the fighting was for control of Charleston. Colonial victories at the battles of Kings Mountain on October 7, 1780, and Cowpens on January 17, 1781, helped turn the war against the British. In 1781, troops under General Nathaniel Greene and the South Carolina militia drove the British out of South Carolina. The British evacuated Charleston in 1782. In total, 137 battles were fought in South Carolina.

South Carolina ratified the Articles of Confederation on July 9, 1778. On May 23, 1788, it became the eighth state of the Union by ratifying the United States Constitution.

Well before the start of the Civil War, the state came into conflict with



Stamp features a background of pinewood and line drawings representing the economic and historic development of the state.



Stamp pictures the state bird and flower, the Carolina Wren and Carolina Jessamine.

This Day in History... May 23, 1788 continued

the federal government. South Carolina depended heavily on foreign trade. Federal tariffs discouraged foreign trade. In 1828, soon after an economic depression struck the US, Congress raised tariffs. This law became known as the "tariff of abominations." Anti-federal sentiment spread throughout the state. Vice President John C. Calhoun, a South Carolinian, wrote the "South Carolina Exposition," which claimed that no state could be bound by a law it deemed unconstitutional. When tariffs were raised again in 1832, the state passed the Ordinance of Nullification. This ordinance declared the tariff acts of 1828 and 1832 void. This action prompted President Andrew Jackson to threaten sending troops to enforce federal law. In 1833, Congress passed a compromise tariff bill, and the Ordinance of Nullification was repealed.



Stamp issued for South Carolina's Bicentennial.

As the anti-slavery movement gained momentum in the North, South Carolina was the first state to threaten secession. This threat was made real after the election of President Abraham Lincoln on November 6, 1860. On December 20, 1860, South Carolina became the first state to secede from the Union. Armed conflict started on April 12, 1861, when Confederate troops bombarded Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor.

The Civil War devastated the state. A Union blockade smothered the economy. William T. Sherman's army destroyed plantations and burned the capital city, Columbia. About one fourth of South Carolina's 63,000 troops died during the war.

With the abolition of slavery, agriculture was not as profitable. Additionally, new farms in the West provided greater competition. As a result, South Carolina turned to industrial development. Around 1880, the textile industry began to flourish. An abundance of hydroelectric power and cheap labor caused many northern businesses to move to South Carolina. A number of farmers welcomed the opportunity to work in factories and mills. After the Great Depression, economic conditions quickly improved. During the mid-1900s, federally funded construction projects and the construction of military bases further improved the economy.



South Carolina Flags of Our Nation stamp pictures a gazebo and marsh near the coast.



This 37¢ stamp was issued just months after the 34¢ above due to a rate increase.

Since the mid-1900s, South Carolina's economy has evolved from being largely agricultural to becoming a hub for manufacturing, tourism, and advanced industry. In the latter half of the 20th century, textile production dominated the state's economy, but as that industry declined, South Carolina attracted new types of manufacturing, including automotive and aerospace. Major companies like BMW and Boeing established large operations in the state, boosting job creation and exports. The tourism industry also grew significantly, with destinations like Myrtle Beach and Charleston drawing millions of visitors each year. In recent decades, the state has focused on expanding its technology, logistics, and renewable energy sectors, continuing to diversify its economy while maintaining a strong manufacturing base.

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Stamp pictures beachgoers at Myrtle Beach and Rainbow Row, a group of multicolored buildings in Charleston.

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