

This Day in History... June 26, 1959

First U.S. Joint Issue

On June 26, 1959, the US issued its first of many joint issue stamps with another nation.

America's first joint issue stamp was created to honor the completion of the St. Lawrence Seaway. The US and Canada worked together to create the seaway to connect the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean.



The US stamp from the joint issue.

Producing a joint issue was unheard of in both the US and Canada at the time, and it posed a number of logistical issues. For starters, postal officials from both nations had to agree on a design, as the final stamps would be similar in appearance aside from their country designations and denominations. They also had to consider each nation's postal laws and the procedures for producing First Day Covers.

But in the end, the postal officials worked well together and created a stamp that honored the seaway (with a map) and represented both nations with a maple leaf and bald eagle. Each nation then printed its own stamps, which is another interesting part of the story.



The Canada stamp from the joint issue.

The US stamps were printed on the Giori press, which could print up to three colors at the same time. But the Canada stamps were printed from two engraved plates that had to be run through the press separately. Between printings, some of the sheets were rotated, resulting in an inverted center error. The errors were discovered two months after the stamps were issued and eventually became Canada's most famous stamp error.

Both St. Lawrence Seaway stamps were issued on June 26, 1959, the day the seaway was officially dedicated by President Dwight Eisenhower and Queen Elizabeth II.

In the years since, the US has issued more than 40 joint issues with other countries.

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