

## This Day in History... October 31, 1975

### Start of the Americana Series

On October 31, 1975, the USPS issued the first stamp in the Americana Series.

In 1971, the USPS hired a private firm to develop a concept for a new series of definitive stamps to replace the Prominent Americans Series. The resulting set, the Americana Series, would include over 20 different designs printed in sheet, coil, and booklet format.

The Prominent Americans stamps didn't have a set design style, so many of the stamps had different looks and layouts. Conversely, the Americana stamps followed a very uniform plan that outlined the designs of individual stamps as well as the blocks of four. In all, there were five different blocks, each with a different theme, but similar design style – the subject in the center, and the title curving around two of the edges. When all four stamps were placed together, the titles created a frame around the stamps. The five themes were Roots of Democracy, Rights and Freedoms of the American People, Symbols of America, Pioneer America, and America's Light.

Another interesting aspect of these stamps was that they didn't picture any presidents, historical figures, or real people, though two did picture allegorical women (Justice and Liberty). This was unusual, as most previous definitive issues included at least one president or historical figure.

The Americana stamps were also issued at the same time as the Bicentennial Series, though they weren't a part of it. But many of the stamps pictured objects and buildings from that era. It's also interesting to note that these stamps were the first definitives since the series of 1922-31 to not include fractional values. Instead, they were the first to use decimal values. These appeared on coil stamps for bulk mailers.

The first stamp in the series, #1595, pictured the Liberty Bell and was issued on October 31, 1975, in Cleveland, Ohio. Many of the stamps in the series were issued in New York City that November as part of the American Stamp Dealers Association stamp show. And several more were issued the following March at the INTERPEX show in New York.

There are several varieties of many of the stamps in the series, with the most common varieties involving gum – either shiny or dull gum. There was also a paper variety, some stamps issued without tagging, some with color missing, imperforate errors, misperforated freaks, bullseye perforations, and more. The most notable error of the series is the CIA Invert.

Though these stamps had an interesting design concept and patriotic theme, they weren't very popular with the public and went on to be the shortest-lived definitive series of the 20th century. They would be replaced by the Great Americans Series, which began in 1980.



*Stamp issued on this day in 1975.*



*The first US definitive stamp printed on colored paper*



*The legendary CIA Invert stamp*

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