

This Day in History... November 22, 1963

President Kennedy Killed

On November 22, 1963, President Kennedy was assassinated while campaigning in Dallas, Texas.

John Kennedy brought an air of optimism to the White House and the country. He seemed to be made for the age of television, and the media and public were interested in his presidency and young family. His first year in office was difficult and some of his decisions accented his lack of political experience.

The failed Bay of Pigs invasion and dealings with Soviet leader Khrushchev gave critics an opportunity to judge his presidency as a failure while it was in its early stages. Kennedy later showed strength and restraint during the Cuban Missile Crisis, which could have led to nuclear war. Instead, the President forced the Soviet Union to remove their missiles from Cuba. This

determination was displayed again during successful negotiations of a partial nuclear test ban treaty.

By the fall of 1963, Kennedy was planning his re-election campaign and knew Texas votes would be crucial in order to win a second term. In November 1963, he began a tour of five cities to gain support and try to bring feuding Democrats together. On the morning of the 22nd, he and Mrs. Kennedy arrived in Dallas and began a 10-mile trip in a convertible Lincoln Continental. Along the way, rifle shots hit the President. He was pronounced dead within minutes.

The nation immediately began to mourn and news stations provided continuous coverage. Lee Harvey Oswald was arrested for the crime, but was never brought to trial. He was shot and killed while being transferred by police.

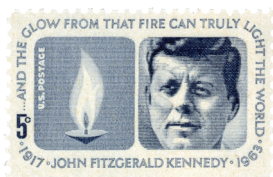
After Kennedy's death, plans were made to bury him in Massachusetts near his parents and infant son (who had died in August, just days after birth). Instead, it was decided the President's grave would be at Arlington National Cemetery. On Sunday, November 24, First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy requested an eternal flame be added to the grave site. The Army Corps of Engineers worked through the night to construct a temporary flame. The next day, Mrs. Kennedy lit the flame using a candle, then Kennedy brothers Robert and Edward symbolically lit it after her. The grave was just temporary, and it would be years before a permanent site was in place.

Work began immediately on a permanent grave that would be a fitting memorial for the popular President, without detracting from the overall atmosphere of the cemetery. The design was made public almost a year after Kennedy's death. It included a simple grave with a headstone set flat in the ground. Taken from a quarry on Cape Cod where the President spent his summers, fieldstones surrounded his grave.

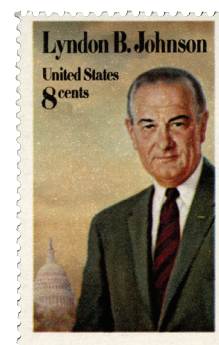
After more than two years of work, the site was finally completed in March 1967. The memorial was dedicated on the 15th in a ceremony presided over by Cardinal Cushing of Boston. More than 50,000 people visited Kennedy's burial site in the first few years. It continues to be one of the most popular tourist attractions in Washington, D.C., and has brought many visitors to Arlington.



For many Americans, John F. Kennedy's administration gave hope for a better future.



Stamp pictures Kennedy and the eternal flame at Arlington.



Johnson was sworn in as President immediately following Kennedy's death. He later passed the 1964 Civil Rights Act in Kennedy's honor.

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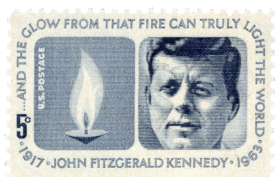
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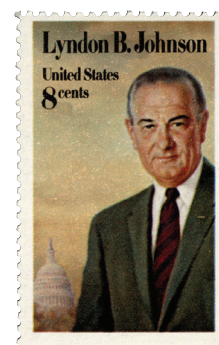
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