

This Day in History... March 29, 1985

First Commemorative-Sized Definitive Booklet Stamp

On March 29, 1985, the USPS issued its first definitive booklet stamp in the larger commemorative size. It was created for use in vending machines and to test the popularity of the format.

A couple earlier airmail stamps had come close. The 1928 10¢ Lindbergh was wider than this stamp, but not as tall and the 1941 6¢ Twin-Motored Transport Plane was the same height but not as wide.



Sheet Stamp

Previously, the USPS had experimented with smaller booklet stamps to save paper. But they received complaints of the stamps being too small and hard to remove from the booklets. Some customers had mentioned liking the convenience of a booklet with easier to handle commemorative-sized stamps. The USPS was intrigued by the idea and set it into motion for the 1986 Flag Over Capitol booklet panes.

The stamp carries the same general design as the two standard-sized definitives issued the same day. The stamps were issued in the centennial year of the first flag day, in the town where the first Flag Day was held, Waubeka, Wisconsin.

All three stamps feature artwork by Frank J. Waslick of a US flag waving over the US Capitol building. The larger size of the booklet stamp allowed Waslick to add to the original artwork that appeared on the smaller definitive-sized stamps. The size of the flag and the capitol remained the same, but the wings of the capitol were extended, and a flagpole and some Washington scenery were added. The larger stamp also includes a quote from Lincoln's Gettysburg address: "Of the people, by the people, for the people."



Coil Stamp

The booklet pane was also the first to carry five stamps with no labels. The booklet panes were sold in two ways – as a pane of five stamps and as two panes of five stamps each. The reason for this was that older vending machines could only accept payments up to \$1.25, while newer machines could accept more. The BEP also began printing plate numbers on each pane, which allowed them to make one or two pane booklets from the same stock.

When the stamp design was unveiled in Waubeka, Wisconsin, local citizens were less than pleased with the design, citing its lack of reference to Flag Day, its inventor, or their town. However, many collectors deemed it one of the most handsome definitives issued by the USPS in several years.

USPS representatives said that would be looking "with a great deal of interest to customer reactions to the new booklet format." Though the fact they were only sold in vending machines limited the sales possibilities. The 1987 and 1988 Special Occasions booklet panes included some stamps in the commemorative size. And the experimental 1990 self-adhesive plastic flag stamp was commemorative-sized. In 1986, the USPS issued its first commemorative booklet honoring stamp collecting. Commemorative booklets proved popular and have been issued ever since. Most definitive booklets since this time have been created in standard definitive dimensions.



The USPS distributed more than double their original order of these stamps, due to their popularity and demand.



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