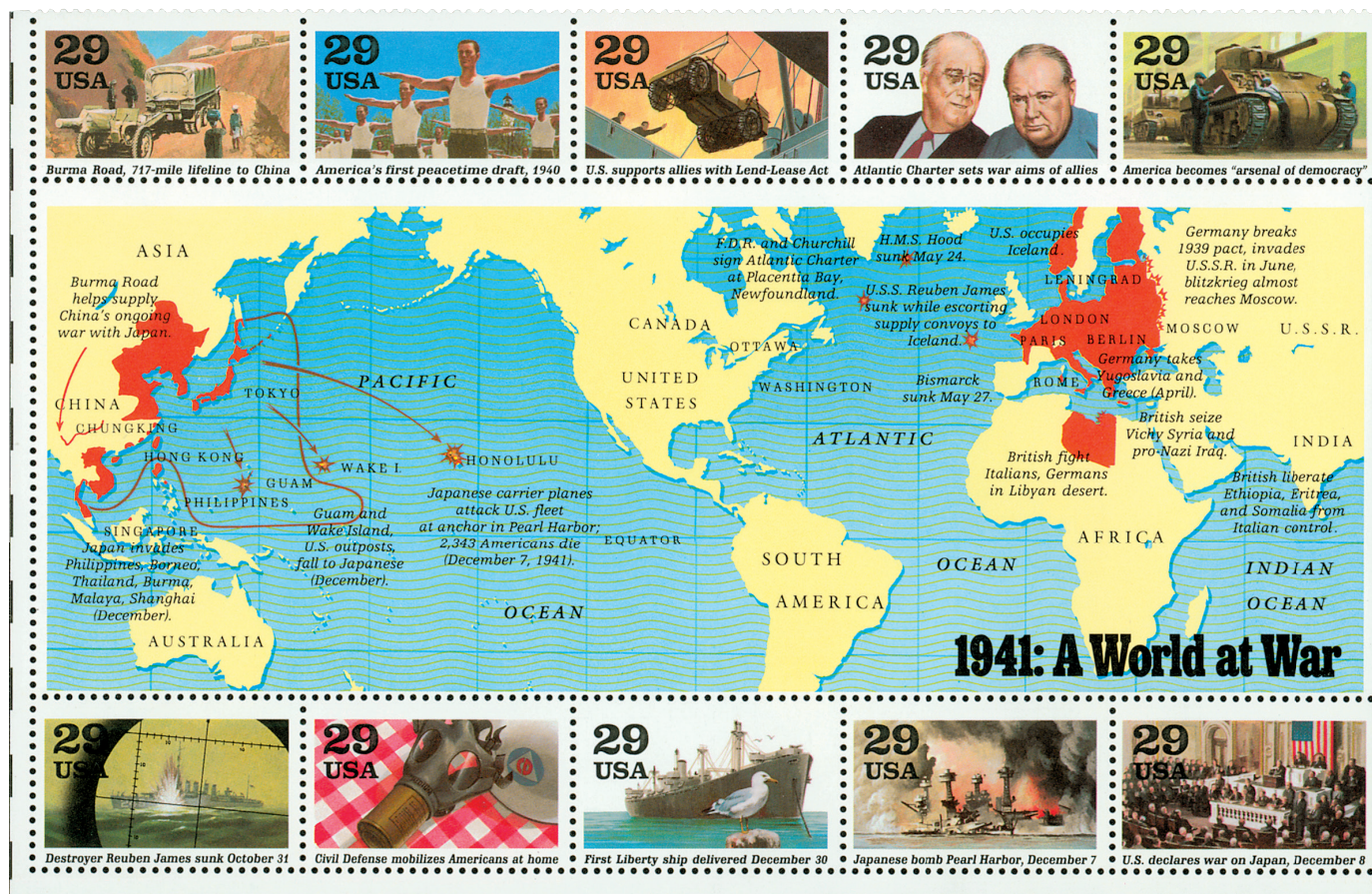


This Day in History... September 3, 1991

World War II 50th Anniversary Stamps



The 1941: A World at War sheet issued on this day in 1991

On September 3, 1991, the USPS issued the first of five souvenir sheets (later classified as commemorative sheets) honoring the 50th anniversary of America's entrance into World War II.

By the mid-1980s, Americans were already writing in to the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee (CSAC) suggesting stamps honoring the upcoming anniversary of World War II. The challenge would be creating enough stamps to appropriately honor the war, while not adding an extra 100 stamps to each year's schedule.

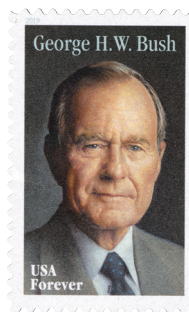
To aid in this process, CSAC created a three-member World War II subcommittee to figure out how to select subjects for the stamps. The committee then worked with Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine historians to develop a list of appropriate topics. By April 1986 they had a list they believed would "properly recognize and honor all facets of national endeavor that contributed to victory." They also selected the themes for each year and recommended that the center of each sheet feature a world map surrounded by 10 stamps

This Day in History... September 3, 1991 continued

honoring significant events.

At various times, the group considered issuing a variety of stamps such as singles, se-tenant blocks of four, and souvenir sheets. They also considered beginning the series in 1989, which would have marked the 50th anniversary of the start of the war in Europe.

British-born artist and World War II veteran William H. Bond of Virginia was selected to create the art for the stamps. He'd never designed stamps before, and this set of 50 would be quite a challenge. The stamps had to be immediately recognizable for each event, and their designs and color schemes had to vary enough that they didn't look similar, but also appear balanced across the sheet. It was also extremely important that the illustrations be accurate as millions of people who had participated in the war would be looking at them with a very critical eye.



WWII veteran president Bush helped unveil the first sheet.

President George H.W. Bush, a World War II veteran himself, helped unveil the stamp designs at the White House in December 1990. The first sheet in the series was issued on September 3, 1991, at the American Legion's national convention in Phoenix, Arizona. At this ceremony, the USPS also offered a 44-page book, *A World at War: 1941*, which outlined the events of the year and had spaces for the stamps. The stamps were then made available at every post office in the country, whereas some previous souvenir sheets were only sold at the 8,000 largest post offices with the smaller ones having the option to order them.

The series continued in 1992, with a second sheet titled, "1942: Into the Battle," which was issued on August 17 in Indianapolis, Indiana, at the national convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. These stamps included some improvements on the previous design, namely the inclusion of the year on each stamp. The sheets also included a note "Red areas controlled by the enemy" and a marginal inscription detailing the purpose of the stamps.

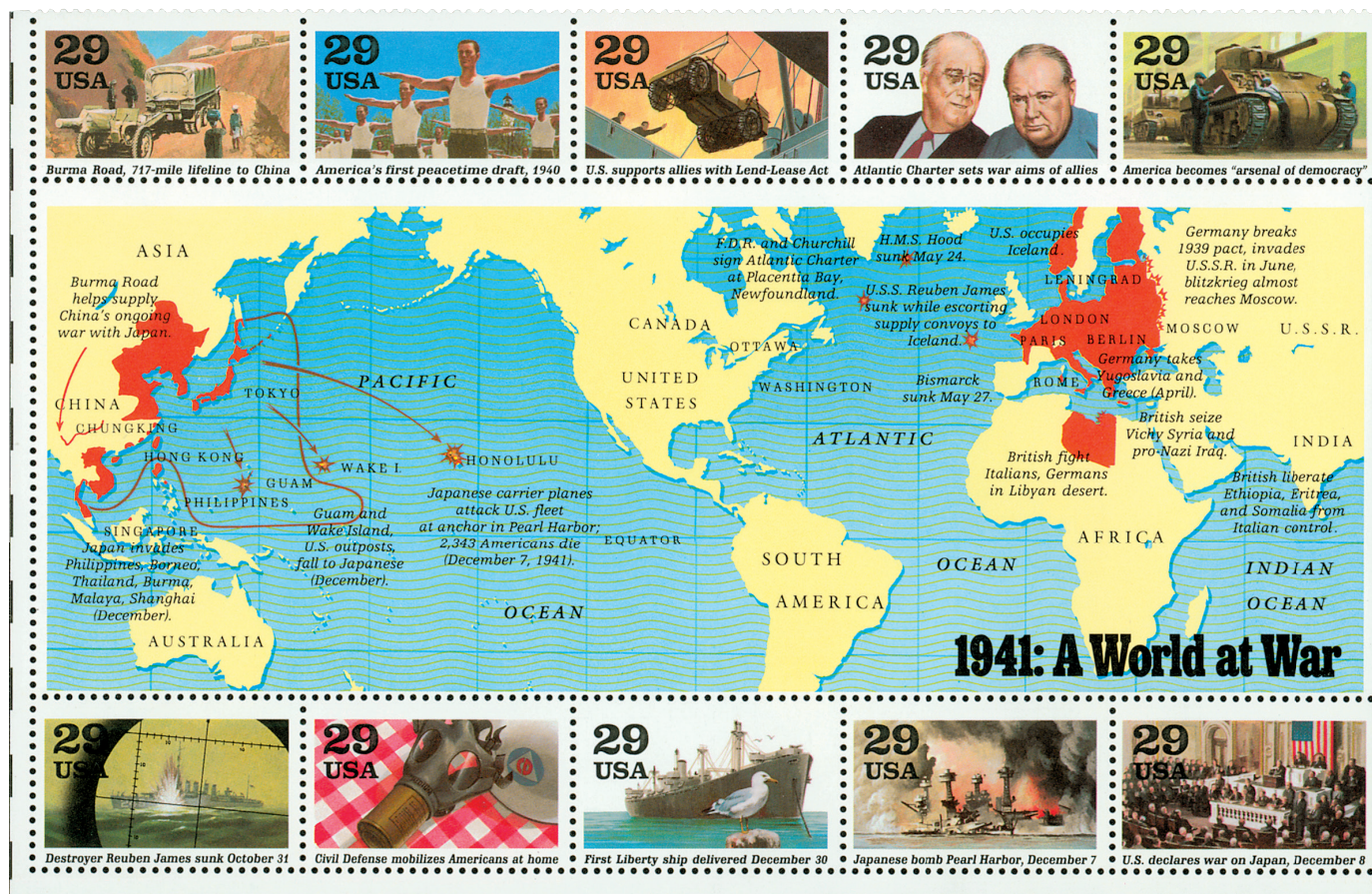
The third sheet, titled "1943: Turning the Tide," was issued on Memorial Day, May 31, 1993, in Washington, DC. These stamps were issued a little earlier in the year than the previous two sheets, so that people could use the stamps on the specific anniversaries of some of the events pictured.

The fourth sheet in the series, titled "1944: Road to Victory," was issued on June 6, 1994, the 50th anniversary of the D-Day invasion. There were two first-day ceremonies – one was on land near the town of Sainte-Mère-Église in Normandy, and the other was aboard the guided missile carrier *Normandy*, which was anchored in the English Channel. There were also first day ceremonies at the National Postal Museum in Washington, DC, as well as 13 cities across the country.

The fifth and final sheet in the series, titled "1945: Victory at Last," was issued on September 2, 1995, in Honolulu, Hawaii, on the 50th anniversary of Japan's surrender that ended the war.

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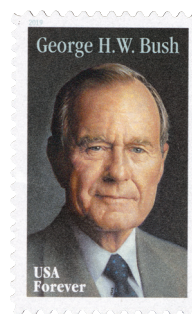
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