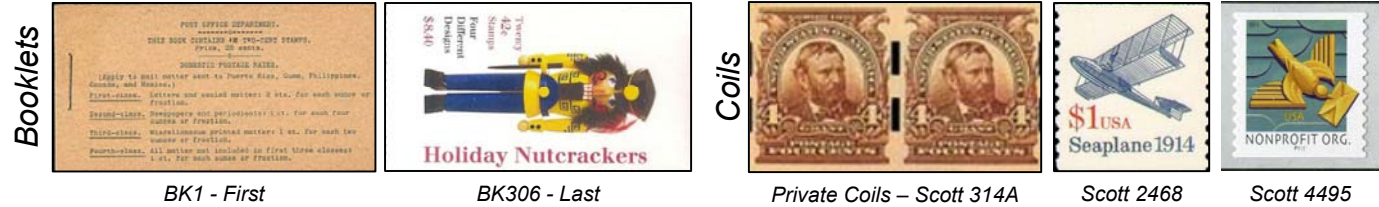


# A Short History of Postage Stamps— Part 2

**Booklets** - Stamp booklets were first issued in 1900. They contained 12, 24, or 48 - 2¢ stamps. Waxed paper was placed between sheets of stamps to keep them from sticking together. The books, which carried a 1¢ premium until 1963, had light cardboard covers printed with information about postage rates. The modern, non-vending machine, Double-sided self-adhesive booklets have become the USPS staple product because of their availability at a wide range of non-postal retail outlets. The non-folding pane vending booklets were phased out in 2008.

**Coils and Vending** - The first coil (roll) stamps were first issued 1908, in response to business requests. Coils were also used in stamp vending equipment. The USPOD hoped to place vending machines in Post Office lobbies to provide round-the-clock service without extra manpower. Machines were also planned for hotels, train stations, newsstands, and stores. Twenty-five different vending machines were tested, with six chosen for tests in the Baltimore, Minneapolis, New York City, Washington, DC, and Indianapolis Post Offices. Both coil stamps and imperforate sheets were produced for vending machines, with the latter receiving a variety of distinctive perforations and separations. Plate-Number Coils (PNCs) are the modern collectable coil variety.

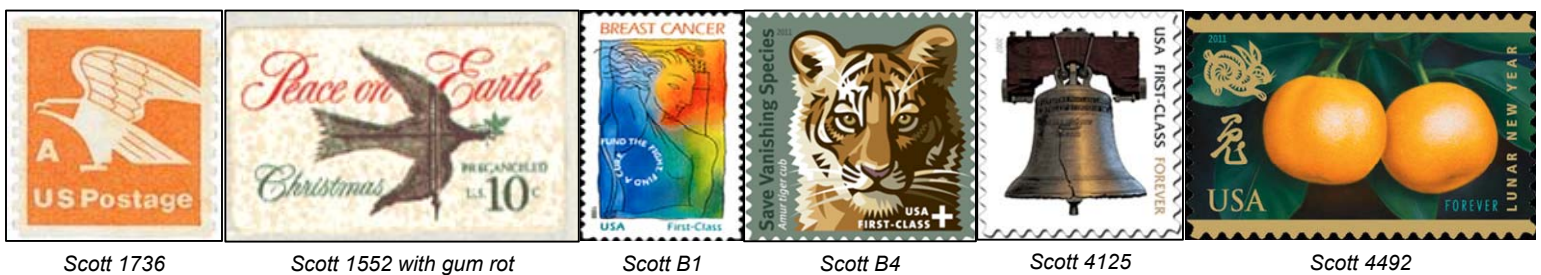


**Non-denominated Stamps** - The first non-denominated stamps (stamps without a printed value) in the United States were two Christmas stamps (Scott 1579-80) issued in 1975. The Postal Service had requested a rate change from 10¢ to 13¢ and was unsure when the Postal Rate Commission would issue a recommended decision in time. When the rate change was delayed, the stamps were sold for 10¢.

A similar situation led the Postal Service to issue non-denominated stamps in 1978. They bore the letter “A” rather than a denomination. The stamps were prepared in case of a shortage of stamps in the uncertain new denomination. The orange eagle “A” stamps were sold for 15¢ for domestic use only. The last non-denominated stamps with letter designation “H” (33¢) was issued in conjunction with postage rate changes through 1998.

**Self-adhesives** - The Postal Service originally developed self-adhesive stamps to make precanceled stamps more secure. Precanceled stamps are canceled across the face before being sold. By the late 1960s, as almost 20% of them were soaked off and reused owing the stamps skipped a processing step that often caught reused stamps.

The first (failed) effort with self-adhesive was a Christmas 1974 issue. It was believed that the tightly bonded self-adhesive would not permit stamps to be soaked off. An additional security feature placed slits in the stamps to foil attempts to peel them off. It failed because the stamps cost 500% more to produce than regular postage stamps and they could still be soaked off and reused. As far as Stamp collectors were concerned – they failed because of the stamps tended to self-destruct and discolor. In 1989, in a second attempt, the USPS experimented with self-adhesive stamps but with emphasis on *customer convenience*. The new self-adhesives had a water-soluble adhesive and were produced on coated paper, so the effects of the adhesive would not be destructive (and they really stuck). They were introduced nationwide in 1992. Self-adhesive stamps now are issued in formats that include booklets, coils, sheets, and souvenir sheets. Collectors can use the non-staining solvent Bestine or Heptane for removing stamps from covers and use talc to solidify the glue after the stamp is removed.



**Semipostals** - Semipostals are stamps on which the price exceeds the cost of postage; the difference is devoted to a particular cause. An act of Congress resulted in the Breast Cancer Research stamp (Scott B1), the first United States semipostal, in 1998, with proceeds above the cost of postage going to breast cancer research. The newest of series is the Save Vanishing Species Semipostal (Scott B4) was issues this September.

**Forever Stamp** - In May 2006, the Postal Service filed a proposal for a Forever stamp, a non-denominated, non-expiring stamp for customers mailing a piece of First-Class Mail®. The stamp – featuring the Liberty Bell and the word “FOREVER” – was offered for sale beginning in 2007. It always represents the value of a current stamp. Since 2011, the USPS has issued “forever” stamps for first-class commemoratives as well as definitive.