



POSTAL NEWS

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Astronaut Alan Shepard Immortalized on Forever Stamp Two Stamps Recognize 50th Anniversary of First Manned Spaceflight

To obtain high-resolution images of the stamps for media use only, email mark.r.saunders@usps.gov

KENNEDY SPACE CENTER, FL — The Postal Service dedicated two stamps today commemorating two historic events — one that occurred a half century ago, and the second that's making history now.

The 50th anniversary of America's first manned spaceflight and an unmanned spacecraft currently charting planet Mercury were commemorated today on two 44-cent First-Class Forever stamps. The dedication ceremony took place next to a seven-story replica of the rocket Alan Shepard piloted to become America's first man in space. A second stamp celebrates the MESSENGER Mission spacecraft that is currently orbiting and charting planet Mercury.

"These two historic missions — Shepard's Mercury flight that took place 50 years ago tomorrow, and MESSENGER's current orbiting of Mercury — frame a remarkable 50-year span in which America has advanced space exploration through more than 1,500 manned and unmanned flights," said Stephen Masse, U.S. Postal Service vice president, finance and planning, in dedicating the stamps. "The Postal Service is proud to commemorate these achievements on stamps."

Joining Masse in the dedication was Laura Shepard Churchley, Shepard's daughter; Scott Carpenter, Mercury astronaut; Charles Bolden, NASA administrator and former Space Shuttle commander; Robert Cabana, former Space Shuttle commander and current director, Kennedy Space Center; and, Jim Adams, NASA deputy director, Planetary Science.

"These stamps, which will go out by the millions across this country, are a testament to the thousands of NASA men and women who shared dreams of human spaceflight and enlarging our knowledge of the universe," said NASA Administrator Charles Bolden.

Project Mercury

As the world watched on television, Shepard blasted off from Cape Canaveral, FL, on May 5, 1961. The flight reached a maximum speed of 5,100 mph, roughly eight times the speed of sound, and a zenith of 116 miles above the Earth. With parachutes deploying, the space capsule safely splashed down in the Atlantic some 300 miles from the launch site. The *New York Times* declared that Shepard's 15-minute flight "roused the country to one of its highest peaks of exultation since the end of World War II."

Emboldened by this achievement, President John F. Kennedy declared in a historic speech on May 25, 1961, that America “should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the Earth.”

The Mercury project set the country on a path that would lead to the stunning Apollo 11 moon landing eight years later on July 20, 1969, a crowning technological achievement of the 20th century.

MESSENGER

On March 17, 2011, MESSENGER became the first spacecraft to enter into orbit around Mercury. MESSENGER (MErcury Surface, Space ENvironment, GEochemistry, and Ranging) is a scientific mission to investigate Mercury, which some scientists say is “the least-studied terrestrial planet” in our solar system.

Launched from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, FL, on Aug. 3, 2004, the spacecraft made six “flybys” of planets, including one of Earth, two of Venus, and three of Mercury. The flybys were done to collect data, to conserve fuel through gravity assists, and to make adjustments critical to achieving the precise trajectory for successfully inserting the spacecraft into orbit around Mercury.

Entering orbit in March 2011 represented a major milestone in space exploration. The data obtained by MESSENGER before and during the year-long orbit will be analyzed for many years to come. Scientists think the data may explain how the planet took shape and also offer clues about the origin of the solar system.

Creating the Stamps

Donato Giancola of Brooklyn, NY, illustrated the stamps under the direction of Phil Jordan of Falls Church, VA, who based the artwork on NASA photographs and images. The phrase “Mercury Project,” depicted on the stamp image was approved by NASA officials who indicate the term is used interchangeably with “Project Mercury” as noted in the text on the back of the stamp sheet. The MESSENGER Mission stamp depicts the MESSENGER spacecraft orbiting Mercury.

The Project Mercury and MESSENGER Mission Stamps are being issued as Forever stamps. Forever stamps are always equal in value to the current First-Class Mail one-ounce rate.

Ordering First-Day-of-Issue Postmarks

Customers have 60 days to obtain the first-day-of-issue postmark by mail. They may purchase new stamps at local Post Offices, at The Postal Store website at www.usps.com/shop, or by calling 800-STAMP-24. They should affix the stamps to envelopes of their choice, address the envelopes to themselves or others, and place them in larger envelopes addressed to:

Mercury Project/MESSENGER Mission Stamp
1538 Harrison St.
Titusville, FL 32780

After applying the first-day-of-issue postmark, the Postal Service will return the envelopes through the mail. There is no charge for the postmark. All orders must be postmarked by July 3, 2011.

How to Order First-Day Covers

The Postal Service also offers first-day covers for new stamp issues and Postal Service stationery items postmarked with the official first-day-of-issue cancellation. Each item has an individual catalog number and is offered in the quarterly *USA Philatelic Catalog*. Customers may request a free catalog by calling 800-STAMP-24 or writing to:

Information Fulfillment
Dept. 6270
U.S. Postal Service
PO Box 219014
Kansas City, MO 64121-9014

Ordering the stamps and related products

In addition to the stamps, there are five philatelic products available for this *stamp* issue. Also, customers

can order all stamps and products online at www.usps.com/shop, by calling 1-800 STAMP-24, or by using the mail-in order form in the *USA Philatelic Catalog*. Customers can subscribe to the catalog at www.beyondtheparf.com, www.usps.com/shop, or by calling 1-800 STAMP-24.

- 468063, First-Day Covers (Set of 2), \$1.76.
- 468068, Digital Color Postmark First Day Covers (Set of 2), \$3.20.
- 468084, Uncut Press Sheet, \$105.60.
- 468091, Ceremony Program, \$6.95.
- 468099, Sheet of 20 stamps w/Digital Color Postmark First-Day Covers (Set of 2), \$12.95.

The Postal Service receives no tax dollars for operating expenses, and relies on the sale of postage, products and services to fund its operations.

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