

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Happy Birthday Mississippi!

*Postal Service Issues New Forever Stamp Celebrating
Mississippi Statehood's 200th Anniversary*

GULFPORT, MS — The U.S. Postal Service today debuted a Forever stamp at a first-day-of-issue ceremony during the South Mississippi bicentennial celebration at Centennial Plaza commemorating the 200th anniversary of Mississippi statehood.

The Mississippi Statehood commemorative Forever stamp is the latest addition to the Postal Service's Statehood series. The stamp features a photograph taken by Lou Bopp in 2009. It shows a close-up of a musician's hands as he plays his guitar. Mississippi is the birthplace of many legendary blues artists who helped create a uniquely American genre of music, including B.B. King, Muddy Waters and Bo Diddley. Also, Mississippi is home to renowned writers William Faulkner, Richard Wright and Tennessee Williams.

"We are thrilled to dedicate the Mississippi Statehood Forever stamp to honor a state that has been very instrumental to American ingenuity and the American spirit," said James P. Cochrane, chief customer and marketing officer and executive vice president, U.S. Postal Service. "This stamp represents the music, the mystery, the heart and soul of Mississippi. It is my hope that the 200th anniversary of Mississippi statehood, combined with this wonderful stamp, can begin a dialogue about what Mississippi has meant to the country and to the world."

Cochrane was joined at the dedication ceremony by Mississippi Gov. Phil Bryant; Gulfport, MS, Mayor Billy Hewes; Fr. Michael O'Connor; and Laura Lee Lewis, Miss Mississippi 2016.

Also speaking at the ceremony were George Schloegel, retired chief executive officer, Hancock-Whitney Bank; Rev. Quintin Smith, Historical Baptist Church of Millington; Walt Grayson, writer and broadcaster, WLBT-TV; Jesmyn Ward, novelist; and Elizabeth Johnson, district manager, Mississippi District, U.S. Postal Service.

In addition, musical tributes were performed by Jimmy "Duck" Holmes and the Pass Road Elementary fifth-grade choir.

"As the Birthplace of America's Music, the state of Mississippi is honored to be recognized by the United States Postal Service with this commemorative stamp on our 200th birthday," said Governor Bryant. "We invite the world to join us as we celebrate our unique music, cuisine and culture all year long."

On Dec. 10, 1817, Mississippi became the 20th state in the union. Known as the Magnolia State, it is named for the river on its western border.

Dozens of state and national parks, heritage areas, and historic landmarks offer visitors endless opportunities to sample the state's charms, among them the Mississippi Blues Trail, where fans can learn about the roots of modern music. Museums and historic homes, opera and ballet, and film, food, music, and book festivals provide entertainment for almost any taste.

Followers of the U.S. Postal Service's Facebook page can view video of the first-day-of-issue ceremony at [facebook.com/USPS](https://www.facebook.com/USPS). The public is asked to share the news on Twitter and Instagram using the hashtags **#MS200** or **#MississippiStamps**.

Customers may purchase the Mississippi Statehood Forever stamp at usps.com/stamps, at the [Postal Store usps.com/shop](https://usps.com/shop), by calling 800-STAMP24 (800-782-6724) and at Post Office locations nationwide. A variety of stamps and collectibles also is available at [ebay.com/stamps](https://www.ebay.com/stamps).

Ordering First-Day-of-Issue Postmarks

Customers have 60 days to obtain first-day-of-issue postmarks by mail. They may purchase new stamps at Post Office locations, at the Postal Store usps.com/shop or by calling 800-782-6724. They should affix the stamps to envelopes of their choice, address the envelopes to themselves or others and place them in envelopes addressed to:

FDOI – Mississippi Statehood Stamp
USPS Stamp Fulfillment Services
8300 NE Underground Drive, Suite 300
Kansas City, MO 64144-9900

After applying the first-day-of-issue postmark, the Postal Service will return the envelopes through the mail. There is no charge for postmarks up to a quantity of 50. For more than 50, customers are charged 5 cents each. All orders must be postmarked by May 31, 2017.

Ordering First-Day Covers

The Postal Service also offers first-day covers for new stamps and 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, online at usps.com/shop or by calling 800-782-6724. Customers may request a free catalog by calling 800-782-6724 or writing to:

U.S. Postal Service
Catalog Request
PO Box 219014
Kansas City, MO 64121-9014

Philatelic Products

There are six philatelic products for this stamp issue:

474806, Press Sheet with Die-cut, \$58.80.

474810, Digital Color Postmark Keepsake, \$11.95.

474816, First-Day Cover, \$9.30.

474821, Digital Color Postmark, \$1.64.

474824, Framed Art, \$39.95.

474830, Ceremony Program, \$6.95.

Many of this year's other stamps may be viewed on Facebook at facebook.com/USPSStamps or via Twitter [@USPSstamps](https://twitter.com/USPSstamps).

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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