The Fort Sumter Issue of 1961

A Commemorative in Conflict

David M. Frye

Image courtesy National Park Service
The Fort Sumter Issue of 1961

INTRODUCTION

A Commemorative in Conflict
The Fort Sumter Issue of 1961

Air Mail Cover: Massachusetts to New South Wales
### The Fort Sumter Issue of 1961

**Planned First-day Ceremony Delegation**

- Postmaster General 1
- Dignitaries flying with PMG 12
- Sen. Strom Thurmond 1
- Local PO administrators 2
- Military officials
  - Rear admirals 4
  - Brigadier general 1
  - Colonel 1
  - Captain 1
- **TOTAL** 23
The Fort Sumter Issue of 1961

Fort Sumter: Charleston Harbor, Charleston, South Carolina

Author's Collection
Charleston Harbor: *Fort Sumter sits amid main ship channel*
The Fort Sumter Issue of 1961

Photo of Essay: *Period gun, typical uniform, palmetto leaves*
The Fort Sumter Issue of 1961

Fort Sumter Sea Coast Gun: Stamp design emulates period illustration

National Park Service, Fort Sumter National Monument North Carolina

Author’s Collection
The Fort Sumter Issue of 1961

- Fort Sumter Issue
  - Philatelic context among 1961 issues
  - Commemorative release amid conflict
  - Cachet designs interpreted stamp’s commemoration amid conflict
The Fort Sumter Issue of 1961

J. Edward Day:
55th Postmaster General, 1961–1963
“I ... sorely regret that because of inclement weather which forced cancellation of my flight to Charleston I was unable to be present for this historic occasion.”

Image courtesy FindAGrave.com
The Fort Sumter Issue of 1961

1961 COMMEMORATIVE STAMP PROGRAM

A Commemorative in Conflict
The Fort Sumter Issue of 1961

1961 U.S. Commemorative Postal Issues:
Occasions and Spans of Series

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American Credo
Champions of Liberty
Champions of Liberty
Conservation
Famous Americans
Civil War Centennial
Centennial
Centennial
Centennial
Centennial
Centennial/Fine Arts/American Painting
Centennial
Centennial
Centennial

David M. Frye
The Fort Sumter Issue of 1961: A Commemorative in Conflict
Postal History Symposium, Nov. 2012
The Fort Sumter Issue of 1961

Art Craft Cachet: depicts “brotherhood and union”
Sinclair Advertisement, 1960:  
“Fort Sumter, in Charleston harbor, was the first and perhaps the strangest action of the war. Here American fought American, with great honor on both sides. No man was killed, and the Carolina gunners paused between salvos to cheer the heroism of the fort’s defenders.  
“... share the memories of this city.... ...for no matter where you were born, what happened here irrevocably shaped your way of life. Remember it with pride.”
The Fort Sumter Issue of 1961

- Post Office Department’s Announcement
  - Establish Kennedy administration’s mark on departmental operations
  - Elevate Civil War Centennial observance
  - Coordinate release with nation’s observance
  - Acknowledge varying interpretations of war’s legacy
  - Promote American values amid cold war.
The Fort Sumter Issue of 1961

1961’S CONTEXT:
FIGHTING THE COLD WAR
AND
SEEKING CIVIL RIGHTS

A Commemorative in Conflict
The Fort Sumter Issue of 1961

1961: A Brief Chronology—January & February

January
- 03: The United States ends diplomatic relations with Cuba
- 17: President Eisenhower warns country about the “military-industrial complex” in his final State of the Union address
- 20: President Kennedy takes office

February
- 01: U.S. conducts first test of Minuteman I ICBM
- 02: General Day announces Fort Sumter Issue
- 12: Soviet Union launches Venera 1, the first mission to Venus
The Fort Sumter Issue of 1961

1961: A Brief Chronology—March & April

March
- 01: President Kennedy establishes Peace Corps
- 13: President Kennedy proposes Alliance for Progress
- 27: African American demonstrators conduct ride-ins on Charleston streetcars

April
- 12: Commemoration of Civil War Centennial at Fort Sumter / Yuri Gagarin, Soviet cosmonaut, orbits the Earth
- 17: Bay of Pigs invasion launched
- 20: Fidel Castro reveals failure of U.S.-backed invasion of Cuba
The Fort Sumter Issue of 1961

1961: A Brief Chronology—May & June

May

04: Freedom Riders board buses in Washington, D.C. to make interstate trips testing the South’s Jim Crow laws

05: Alan Shepherd, U.S. astronaut, makes sub-orbital trip into space

25: President Kennedy announces goal of landing a man on the moon

June

04: President Kennedy and Soviet Premier Nikita Krushchev meet in Vienna.
The Fort Sumter Issue of 1961

Karl Betts, USCWCC Executive Director: “We’re not emphasizing Emancipation. You see there’s a bigger theme—the beginning of a new America. There was an entire regiment of Negroes about to be formed to serve in the Confederate Army just before the war ended. The story of the devotion and loyalty of Southern Negroes is one of the outstanding things of the Civil War. A lot of fine Negro people loved life as it was in the old South.”

The Fort Sumter Issue of 1961

Francis Marion Hotel: 1961 flash point for Civil War
Centennial Commission controversy over its whites-only service policy
The Fort Sumter Issue of 1961

A second clear and objective fact is that the Civil War abolished slavery, even if it did little or nothing to abolish racism; and in so doing removed the most obvious, if perhaps not the most important, impediment to union. However we may assess the importance of slavery in the tissue of “causes” of the Civil War—in relation to secession, the mounting Southern debt to the North, economic rivalry, Southern fear of encirclement, Northern ambitions, and cultural collisions—slavery looms up mountainously and cannot be talked away.

Though Civil War memory in the early to mid-twentieth century was shaped by academic debates over the meaning and motivation behind the conflict, popular memory of the war in 1960 was still greatly influenced by the prevailing philosophy that the war was a tragedy shared by both North and South, and that the most important memory of the war was the sense of common honor and valor fought for by soldiers on both sides—not emancipation or civil rights.

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FIRST-DAY COVER CACHETS:
DESIGNS REFLECT THEMES

A Commemorative in Conflict
The Fort Sumter Issue of 1961

- A Cachet Designer’s Questions
  - What is the significance of the issue?
  - What is its main message?
  - How do its historical connections fit into a larger narrative?
  - What ought to be the intent of the cachet itself?
  - Who makes up the market for the cover?
  - What cachet elements will speak to people in the market?
The Fort Sumter Issue of 1961

Example Cover: Cachet Elements
## The Fort Sumter Issue of 1961

### Fort Sumter Issue: First-Day Cover Cachet Elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designer</th>
<th>Mellone #</th>
<th>Conflict Name</th>
<th>Event Designation</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Illustration</th>
<th>Colors</th>
<th>Iconography</th>
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<tr>
<td>Art Craft</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Civil War Centennial</td>
<td>Bombardment of Fort Sumter</td>
<td>1861–1961</td>
<td>Harper's Weekly, April 27, 1861 (reversed)</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Hats over olive branches</td>
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<tr>
<td>Artmaster</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Civil War Centennial</td>
<td>Bombardment of Fort Sumter by the Confederates</td>
<td>April 12, 1861</td>
<td>Depiction of the battle from the Confederate perspective</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Crossed flags</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boeger A.B.C.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>The Civil War</td>
<td>Bombardment of Fort Sumter</td>
<td>1861–1865 / April 12, 13, 1861</td>
<td>Interior of Fort after Surrender, April 14, 1861, National Archives Photograph</td>
<td>Red, blue</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dixipex IV</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Civil War Centennial</td>
<td>Fort Sumter / Charleston, South Carolina / Bombardment</td>
<td>1861 • 1961</td>
<td>Fort Sumter with U.S. Flag / Soldier with Sea Coast Gun</td>
<td>Blue, gray, red (hand-colored)</td>
<td>Union and Confederate flags standing side by side</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fleetwood</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Civil War Centennial</td>
<td>Fort Sumter / Charleston, South Carolina</td>
<td>1861 • 1865 / 1961 • 1965</td>
<td>Harper's Weekly, April 27, 1861 (reversed)</td>
<td>Red, blue</td>
<td>Crossed flags, Union hat, cannon, drum, bugle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ritz</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>War Between the States</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>1861 • 1865</td>
<td>Confederate and Union Soldiers</td>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>Crossed bugles, flags on ends of banners</td>
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<td>Valvatone</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Civil War Centennial</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Sea Coast Gun</td>
<td>Red, blue</td>
<td>Confederate flag</td>
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**Fort Sumter Issue**: First-Day Cover Cachet Elements

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David M. Frye
The Fort Sumter Issue of 1961: A Commemorative in Conflict
Postal History Symposium, Nov. 2012
The Fort Sumter Issue of 1961

- Cachet Design Types
  - Bombardment and its Aftermath
- Confederate Parity and Perspective
- War and Emancipation
The Fort Sumter Issue of 1961

Fleetwood Cachet: Bombardment and its Aftermath Type
The Fort Sumter Issue of 1961

Bombardment of Fort Sumter by the Batteries of the Confederates:
Harper’s Weekly, April 27, 1861
The Fort Sumter Issue of 1961

Ritz Cover: Confederate Parity and Perspective
The Fort Sumter Issue of 1961

Unknown Cachet: War and Emancipation Type
The Fort Sumter Issue of 1961

Emancipation Memorial: 1876 sculpture inspired unknown designer of War and Emancipation type cachet

Image courtesy AmericanLiteraryBlog.Blogspot.com
The Fort Sumter Issue of 1961

CONCLUSIONS

A Commemorative in Conflict
Questions for Further Study, Part 1

- Do the proposed cachet types hold up when the remaining cachets are subjected to their categorizations?
- How do the varying interpretations of the Civil War, as reflected in cachets, evolve over the course of the Post Office Department’s 1961–1965 series?
- How might a general methodology for examining the reflections of historical context and interpretations in the designs of cachets shed light on the treatment of other commemorative issues?
The Fort Sumter Issue of 1961

Questions for Further Study, Part 2

1. If one compares the cachets of the Civil War Centennial series of 1961 through 1965 with the cachets used for the Civil War Sesquicentennial series of 2011 through 2015, what similarities and differences arise?

2. How do the distinctions between these two commemorations reflect the changing historical contexts separated by a half century in the life of the United States?
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THE END