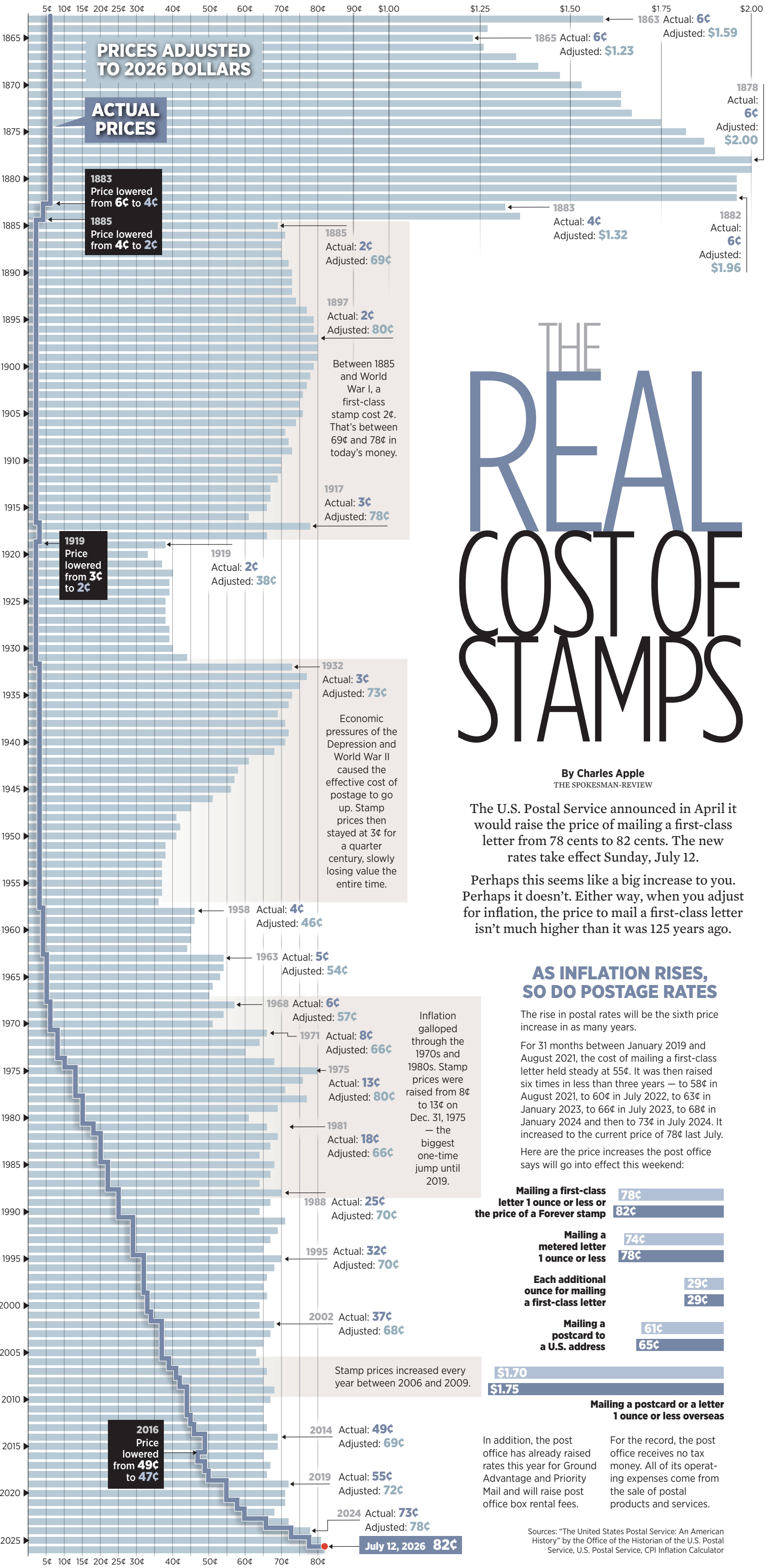


FURTHER REVIEW



THE REAL COST OF STAMPS

By Charles Apple
THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

The U.S. Postal Service announced in April it would raise the price of mailing a first-class letter from 78 cents to 82 cents. The new rates take effect Sunday, July 12.

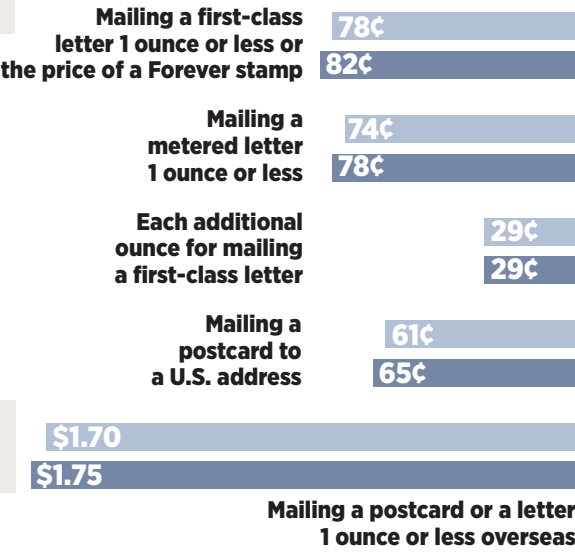
Perhaps this seems like a big increase to you. Perhaps it doesn't. Either way, when you adjust for inflation, the price to mail a first-class letter isn't much higher than it was 125 years ago.

AS INFLATION RISES, SO DO POSTAGE RATES

The rise in postal rates will be the sixth price increase in as many years.

For 31 months between January 2019 and August 2021, the cost of mailing a first-class letter held steady at 55¢. It was then raised six times in less than three years — to 58¢ in August 2021, to 60¢ in July 2022, to 63¢ in January 2023, to 66¢ in July 2023, to 68¢ in January 2024 and then to 73¢ in July 2024. It increased to the current price of 78¢ last July.

Here are the price increases the post office says will go into effect this weekend:



In addition, the post office has already raised rates this year for Ground Advantage and Priority Mail and will raise post office box rental fees.

For the record, the post office receives no tax money. All of its operating expenses come from the sale of postal products and services.

Sources: "The United States Postal Service: An American History" by the Office of the Historian of the U.S. Postal Service, U.S. Postal Service, CPI Inflation Calculator