

The “Green Card” Goes Green, Again!

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) recently redesigned the Permanent Resident Card—known as the “green card”—to incorporate several major new security features. Finally, the “green card” becomes green again. The history of the green card shows that it hasn’t always been green.

The first alien registration card issued under the Alien Registration Act of 1940 was actually white. This card was known as the Alien Registration Receipt Card or Form AR-3. The AR-3 did not confirm a person’s illegal or legal status in the United States. All non–U.S. citizens could simply register at a post office and receive Form AR-3 through the mail. After World War II, immigrants had to register upon arrival at a port of entry and permanent residents received an I-151, a small green card, upon arrival. AR-3s became no longer available. The newly created card with no expiration date entitled immigrants to present themselves as lawful permanent residents and live and work indefinitely in the United States.

By 1951, the term “green card” referred not only to the document itself, but also to the official legal status. To curb document fraud, INS issued 19 different designs of the I-151 between its introduction in the 1940s and its complete revision in 1977. That’s when INS introduced a machine-readable, counterfeit proof Resident Alien Card (Form I-551). This card was white with a blue logo. Over the years, the colors have varied and even include pink. But in 1998, the card became almost white with a small green stripe on the back.

In 2010, the card is green again. This new card now stores biometrics with laser-engraved fingerprints and allows for Radio Frequency Identification.

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Source: The History of the Green Card-