



Black Heritage Series



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The Black Heritage Series

At a 1975 planning meeting of the Queens County, New York, Bicentennial Committee, Clarence L. Irving, founder of the Black American Heritage Foundation (BAHF), proposed asking the U.S. Postal Service to include black Americans in the stamp program associated with the upcoming Bicentennial of the United States. The proposal quickly outgrew its original scope, and in 1978, the U.S. Postal Service, as part of its mission "to celebrate the people, events, and cultural milestones that are unique to our great nation," created a totally new stamp series to honor black Americans and the vital role they have played in U.S. history.

The first stamp in the new *Black Heritage Series* featured Harriet Tubman (1820–1913). Born a slave, she helped more than 300 slaves escape to freedom along the fabled "Underground Railroad." Tubman was the first African American woman to appear on a U.S. stamp. Subsequent honorees have included scientists, politicians, educators, authors, actors/singers, and athletes, among many others.

Harriet Tubman

Harriet Tubman (Araminta Green Ross) became a conductor for the Underground Railroad (a group of individuals, both black and white, who helped runaway slaves escape to freedom before and during the Civil War) when she escaped from slavery in 1849. Traveling mostly at night, Tubman "never lost a passenger" in her quest to help many slaves escape to freedom. Later in life, she worked for the Union Army as a cook, nurse, armed scout, and even as a spy. Harriet Tubman became the first African-American woman to be honored on a U.S. postage stamp.

Martin Luther King

When Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat to a white man on a bus in 1955, Martin Luther King Jr. became actively involved in the fight against segregated bussing and played a leading role in the Civil Rights movement.

In 1963, King helped organize **The March on Washington** where he delivered one of his most famous speeches, "I Have a Dream." In 1963 he was honored as *Time* magazine's Man of the Year, and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 for his outstanding desegregation efforts.

Even though King was stoned, beaten, and arrested for his stand on Equal Rights, he remained peaceful, encouraging others to do the same.

Benjamin Banneker

One of America's most accomplished African Americans during the colonial period was Benjamin Banneker. A self-taught mathematician and astronomer, Banneker was a member of the team that surveyed and designed the layout for Washington, DC.

As an astronomer, Banneker was able to predict solar and lunar eclipses, times for the rising and setting of the sun and moon, a tide table for the Chesapeake Bay, and yearly weather forecasts. All of these were included in his almanacs that were published from 1792–1797.

Whitney M. Young

Whitney Moore Young Jr., entered the field of race relations after serving under a white captain in an all-black regiment during World War II. His first social-work position was for the Urban League, followed by seven years of working for The Atlanta Council on Human Relations.

By 1961 Young was again working for Urban League, this time as the executive director of the national organization where he set goals to help blacks in the areas of education, employment, and housing.

In 1969 he was awarded our nation's highest civilian honor, the Medal of Freedom.

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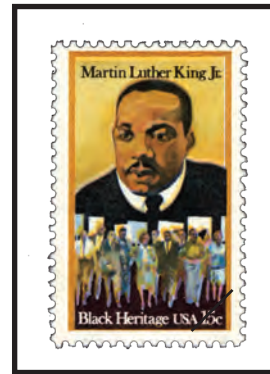
The Black Heritage Series

1978



Harriet Tubman
(1820–1913)
Scott 1744

1979



Martin Luther King
(1929–1968)
Scott 1771

1980



Benjamin Banneker
(1731–1806)
Scott 1804

1981



Whitney M. Young
(1921–1971)
Scott 1875



The Black Heritage Series

Jackie Robinson

After being rejected by the Boston Red Sox because of his color, Jack Roosevelt Robinson began his professional baseball career with the Kansas City Monarchs of the Negro League. After just one year with the Monarchs, he signed a contract with the Brooklyn Dodgers. In 1962 he became the first African American to be inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame.

Following his baseball career, Robinson went on to become an advocate for social and political causes. He served on the board of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and on several political campaigns to help break barriers for all people.

Carter G. Woodson

The “Father of Black History,” Carter G. Woodson realized the importance of the public having the knowledge of the black people’s contributions to humanity. To accomplish this goal, he created the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History as a means of spreading the awareness of black history and culture. In 1926, he started the observance of “Negro History Week,” which has since grown into “Black History Month.”

Sojourner Truth

Sojourner Truth (given name: Isabella Baumfree) was very involved with the evangelical movements of the mid-1800s. She traveled throughout the northern states, preaching and speaking out against slavery. President Abraham Lincoln appointed Sojourner to the National Freedmen’s Relief Association in 1868, where she advised former slaves as they started their new lives as free men and women.

Scott Joplin

Pulitzer Prize winner, Scott Joplin, was blessed with the ability to combine African American rhythms with the music of gospel hymns, spirituals, dance, syncopation, blues, and choruses — a sound now referred to as “ragtime.” During his career he wrote forty-four original ragtime compositions, two operas, and even a ragtime ballet.

Several of Joplin’s compositions were featured in the Academy Award-winning movie *The Sting*. In 1976 Joplin was posthumously awarded the Pulitzer Prize for his contributions to music.

Mary McLeod Bethune

Mary Bethune, founder of the Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute for Girls and the National Council for Negro Women, was determined to further the education of African American women. When she was appointed to the Division of Negro Affairs of the National Youth Administration she became the first African-American woman to become the head of a federal agency.

Bethune was later appointed as a special assistant to the Secretary of War during World War II to help in the selection of candidates for the Women's Army Corps, advisor on minority affairs to President Roosevelt, and as a consultant on interracial affairs to Mrs. Roosevelt.

Jean Baptiste Pointe Du Sable

When Jean Baptiste Pointe Du Sable arrived on the shores of Lake Michigan in 1779, he recognized its future potential, and built the first permanent home on the banks of the Chicago River. In addition to his home, he built a trading post that became a main stopping point for those heading west. He is acknowledged as the founder of the city of Chicago.



The Black Heritage Series

1982



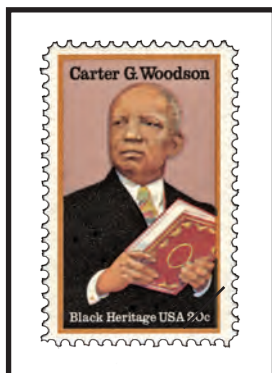
Jackie Robinson
(1919–1972)
Scott 2016

1983



Scott Joplin
(1867–1917)
Scott 2044

1984



Carter G. Woodson
(1875–1950)
Scott 2073

1985



Mary McLeod Bethune
(1875–1955)
Scott 2137

1986



Sojourner Truth
(1797–1883)
Scott 2203

1987



Jean Baptiste Pointe Du Sable
(1745–1818)
Scott 2249



The Black Heritage Series

James W. Johnson

As a lawyer, James Weldon Johnson became the first black man to be admitted to the Florida Bar. As an educator, he established a high school for African-Americans in Jacksonville, Florida. Later in life, Weldon served as a U.S. diplomat to Venezuela and Nicaragua, and then as the secretary of the NAACP. However, he may be best known for his novel, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, which told of the grievances that the black society had against the racial policies of the white society.

A. Philip Randolph

For more than sixty years Asa Philip Randolph lectured on the importance of equal rights and equal opportunity. He organized the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, was actively involved with the establishment of the Fair Employment Practice Committee, and formed the League for Nonviolent Civil Disobedience and the Negro-American Labor Council. Because of his efforts, President Truman issued an executive order against discrimination, allowing blacks to be admitted into the Army and Navy Academies.

Jan E. Matzeliger

When Jan Ernst Matzeliger started working in a shoe factory, hundreds of inventors and thousands of dollars had already been spent trying to make a device that would stitch the leather top to the sole of a shoe (a process called “lasting”). Matzeliger spent all his spare time attempting to invent such a machine. His first successful lasting machine was made with cigar boxes, wood, and wire. After Jan perfected his Lasting Machine he was able to complete up to 600 pairs of shoes each day, compared to the traditional manual rate of only fifty per day.

Ida B. Wells

Ida Bell Wells, a strong believer of civil and women’s rights, spent much of her life publicizing the horrors of black lynching. She was one of the founders of the NAACP and served as the secretary of the National Afro-American Council. Wells was the author of *Lynching and the Excuse for It* and her autobiography, *Crusade for Justice*. Her efforts were central to the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 60s.

W.E.B. Du Bois

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois was a scholar, author, and civil rights leader. His writings include *The Philadelphia Negro*, the first sociological text about a black community; *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States 1638–1870*, which became the first volume in the *Harvard Historical Studies*; and a Marxist interpretation of the post-Civil war era entitled *Black Reconstruction*. He began writing *Africana — The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience*, but died before it was completed.

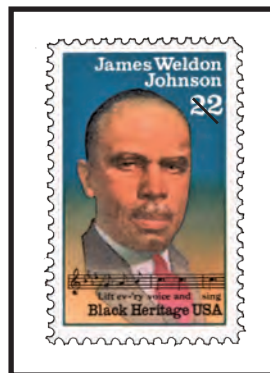
Percy Lavon Julian

Chemist Percy Lavon Julian attended the University of Vienna in Austria where he researched methods for synthesizing hormones and vitamins. Upon returning to the United States, he continued his research and successfully synthesized a chemical used to treat glaucoma. Julian is also noted for the creation of a synthetic version of cortisone, making it much cheaper to treat rheumatoid arthritis.



The Black Heritage Series

1988



James W. Johnson
(1871–1938)
Scott 2371

1990

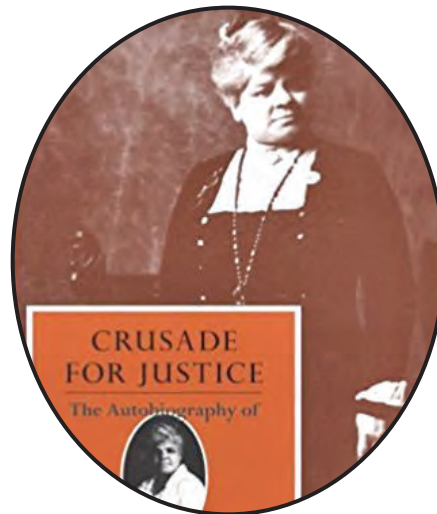


Ida B. Wells
(1862–1931)
Scott 2442

1989



A. Philip Randolph
(1889–1979)
Scott 2402

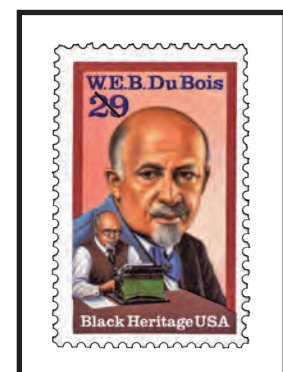


1993



Percy Lavon Julian
(1899–1975)
Scott 2746

1992



W.E.B. Du Bois
(1868–1963)
Scott 2617

1991



Jan E. Matzeliger
(1852–1889)
Scott 2567



The Black Heritage Series

Allison Davis

Dr. William Allison Davis spent most of his career promoting equal education for American children. He developed the Davis-Ellis Intelligence Test to measure mental development — a test that is relatively free of class bias (upper class vs. low income). He served on the White House Task Force on the Gifted, the President's Commission on Civil Rights, the Department of Labor's Commission on Manpower Retraining, and was a member of the Conference to Insure Civil Rights.

Benjamin O. Davis Sr.

Brigadier General Benjamin Oliver Davis Sr. began his military career as a volunteer during the Spanish-American War. He then enlisted in the U.S. Army and quickly moved up through the ranks, becoming the first African-American general in U.S. history. Davis was appointed to the Committee on Negro Troop Policies where he worked on changing the military's policies on segregation. During his army career he received the Bronze Star medal.

Bessie Coleman

Since it was very difficult in the 1920s for any woman to learn how to fly, Bessie Coleman traveled to France where she was the first woman to earn her International Aeronautics license. Coleman became known as “Queen Bess, Daredevil Aviatrix”, performing as a stunt flyer. She became such a celebrity that she received full honors by the African American Eighth Infantry Regiment of the Illinois National Guard at her burial.

Ernest E. Just

Dr. Ernest Just received international acclaim for his experiments studying the fertilization of the marine mammal cell, cell division, hydration and dehydration in living cells, and the effect of ultra violet rays on chromosome numbers. Dr. Just served on the board of the Marine Biological Laboratory in Wood's Hole, Massachusetts, founded the Omega Psi Phi fraternity, and was the recipient of the first Spingarn Medal (awarded annually by the NAACP for outstanding achievement by a black American).

Madam C.J. Walker

Madam C.J. Walker developed a very successful business creating hair-care and cosmetic products, specializing in products for African-American hair. Her door-to-door and mail-order business (white department stores would not sell her products) was so good that by 1910 her company employed more than 3,000 workers. She was the first American woman to become a self-made millionaire. She gave generously to homes for the aged, the NAACP, and the black YMCA.

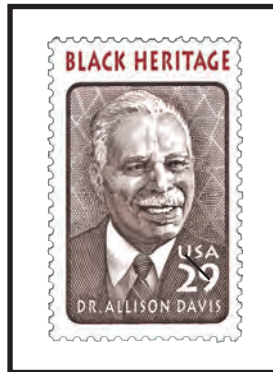
Malcolm X

By the age of twenty Malcolm X (Malcolm Little) was sentenced to prison for armed robbery. Soon after his release, he became a minister of the Nation of Islam (a nationalist religious movement loosely based on traditional Islamic teachings). He later became a follower of the Sunni Muslim sect and founded the Organization of Afro-American Unity. After a trip to Mecca, he changed his name to El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz and came to believe that all the people of the world could live in harmony.



The Black Heritage Series

1994



Allison Davis
(1902–1983)
Scott 2816

1995



Bessie Coleman
(1892–1926)
Scott 2956

1996



Ernest E. Just
(1883–1941)
Scott 3058

1997



Benjamin O. Davis Sr.
(1877–1970)
Scott 3121

1998



Madam C.J. Walker
(1867–1919)
Scott 3181

1999



Malcolm X
(1925–1965)
Scott 3273



The Black Heritage Series

Patricia Harris

Patricia Roberts Harris was a lawyer and educator, as well as serving in many positions as a public administrator. She was a co-chair of the National Women's Committee for Civil Rights, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, and Secretary of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Harris was the first African-American woman to serve as a director of a major U.S. corporation — IBM.

Roy Wilkins

Roy Ottoway Wilkins was nicknamed Mr. Civil Rights because of his relentless work on behalf of racial equality and civil rights. He became a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) while attending college, where he was editor of the *St. Paul Appeal*. After a short stint at *The Kansas City Call*, he became the assistant executive secretary of the NAACP, and later served as the editor of its journal, the *Crisis Magazine*. In 1955 he was appointed as NAACP Executive Director. He served on the boards of many other organizations including the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, Peace with Freedom, the Eleanor Roosevelt Foundation, and the Kennedy Memorial Library Foundation.

Thurgood Marshall

Thurgood Marshall became famous for his views concerning the need for equitable and just treatment of the nation's minorities. As the chief of the NAACP's legal staff, he won the civil rights case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* before the U.S. Supreme Court — a landmark case in which racial segregation in the public schools was declared unconstitutional. Marshall later served on the U.S. Court of Appeals, was the U.S. Solicitor General, and was a liberal member of the Supreme Court.

Langston Hughes

When he was just eighteen years old, Langston Hughes wrote his first, and best-known, poem — “The Negro Speaks of Rivers.” Throughout his lifetime he continued to write poetry, news articles, books, short stories, and plays into which he incorporated poverty, prejudice, radical politics, violence, and social causes. He wrote the Broadway shows *Mulatto* and *Street Scene*, and two successful gospel shows, *Black Nativity* and *Jericho-Jim Crow*.

Paul Robeson

Singer/actor Paul Robeson became world famous with his version of *Ol' Man River* when he played Joe in the musical *Show Boat* and for his title role in *Othello*. He also appeared in a number of films, including *Sanders of the River*, *Show Boat*, and *Song of Freedom*. Robeson was an outspoken activist for racial justice and social progress, and even traveled to Soviet Union pursuing international peace.

Marian Anderson

From an early age, Marian Anderson realized her musical ability, joining her church choir when she was six years old. Following years of not being able to sing in “white artists only” venues, she became the first black singer to appear as a member of New York's Metropolitan Opera Company. Beyond music, Anderson was a goodwill ambassador to Asia and a delegate to the United Nations. She was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Eleanor Roosevelt Human Rights Award, and the NAACP's Spingarn Medal.



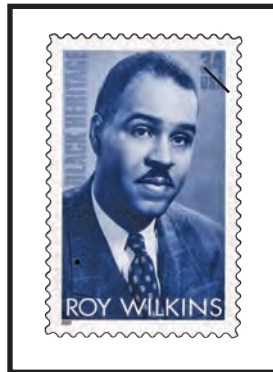
The Black Heritage Series

2000



Patricia Harris
(1924–1985)
Scott 3371

2001



Roy Wilkins
(1901–1981)
Scott 3501

2002



Langston Hughes
(1902–1967)
Scott 3557



Members of the U.S. Supreme Court that on May 17, 1954, ruled unanimously that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional.

2003



Thurgood Marshall
(1908–1993)
Scott 3746

2004



Paul Robeson
(1898–1976)
Scott 3834

2005



Marian Anderson
(1897–1993)
Scott 3896



The Black Heritage Series

Hattie McDaniel

Although Hattie McDaniel often played a house maid and other stereotypical roles, she is known to have worked to battle racism and discrimination. She appeared in more than ninety films. For her role in the film *Gone with the Wind*, McDaniel became the first African American to win an Academy Award.

Anna Julia Cooper

Anna Julia Haywood Cooper was an educator, leader, and voice for middle-class African-American women. She founded several organizations to promote black civil rights causes, including the Colored Women's League. At that time, the YMCAs and YWCAs did not accept African American members; her — to create "colored" branches to provide support for young black migrants. Cooper was the only woman elected to the American Negro Academy which existed from 1897–1924.

Ella Fitzgerald

With her gift for pitch and rhythm, and more than half a century of singing, Ella Fitzgerald became well known as "The First Lady of Song." She won thirteen Grammy Awards, the National Medal of Arts, Kennedy Center Honors, and was inducted into the Lincoln Center Nesuhi Ertegun Jazz Hall of Fame. The Society of Singers created an award for lifetime achievement, making her the first recipient of the "Ella" award.

Oscar Micheaux

Oscar Micheaux was an author, film director, screenwriter, and producer who worked to break stereotypes with his storytelling and characters. He hired all black writers and actors for his films so that he could accurately dramatize his black audience's lives onto the big screen. Micheaux received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and the Oscar Micheaux Award was created by the Producers Guild of America to honor people who overcame difficulties and would then accomplish great things in the film and television industry.

Charles W. Chesnutt

Charles W. Chesnutt, was the first African-American writer to receive major acclaim when in 1887 his short story "The Goophered Grapevine" appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*. He often spoke out against racial discrimination; his writings were well known for their probing into the fight for civil rights — often revealing the contradictions at the heart of attitudes toward race. Chesnutt received the NAACP's Spingarn Award for his "pioneer work as a literary artist depicting the life and struggles of Americans of Negro descent."

Barbara Jordan

Barbara Jordan was the first African-American woman to be elected to Texas legislature. She supported many pieces of legislation extending the federal protection of civil rights. Jordan also became the first woman and first African-American to deliver a keynote address at the Democratic National Convention in 1976. She was named as one of the most influential American women in the twentieth century by the National Women's Hall of Fame. Included in Jordan's many awards and honors is the Presidential Medal of Freedom.



The Black Heritage Series

2006



Hattie McDaniel
(1895–1952)
Scott 3996

2007



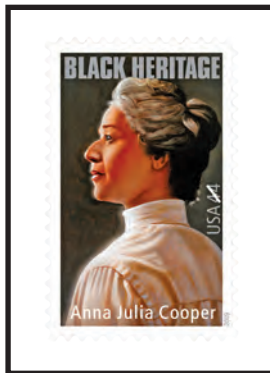
Ella Fitzgerald
(1917–1996)
Scott 4120

2008



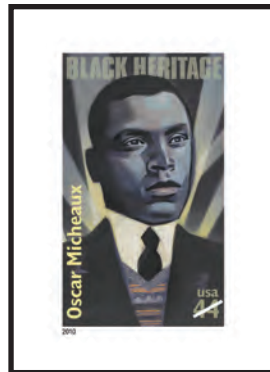
Charles W. Chesnutt
(1858–1932)
Scott 4222

2009



Anna Julia Cooper
(1858–1964)
Scott 4408

2010



Oscar Micheaux
(1884–1951)
Scott 4464

2011



Barbara Jordan
(1936–1996)
Scott 4565



The Black Heritage Series

John H. Johnson

Perhaps the greatest minority entrepreneur in American history was John H. Johnson. His business empire included magazines, radio stations, cosmetics, and more. His published magazines showcased African-American accomplishments: *Negro Digest*, *Jet*, and *Ebony*. He was awarded the Spingarn Medal, was named publisher of the year, and received the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Johnson also served as a Special U.S. Ambassador for Presidents Kennedy and Johnson.

Althea Gibson

This stamp honors Althea Gibson, a pioneering tennis player who became the first black Wimbledon champion. The tall, lean Gibson was fast, had a long reach, and relied on a booming serve and precise volleys. She blazed a trail for future generations of African-American players. The first black tennis player to win one of the four major singles tournaments, Gibson helped integrate her sport at the height of the civil rights movement. She was inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame and continued to work in athletics after her retirement.

Robert Robinson Taylor

Architect and educator Robert Robinson Taylor spent much of his career at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, where he supervised the design and construction of many of the building on campus while also overseeing the school's programs in industrial education and the building trades. He was the first African American to graduate from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and likely was the country's first academically-trained black architect. This stamp features a photograph of Taylor taken circa 1890, when he was a 22-year-old student at MIT.

Dorothy Height

The 40th stamp in the Black Heritage series honors Dorothy Height. Height was an activist who fought for the rights of women, especially women of color. She helped to form the National Women's Political Caucus, and was leader of the National Council of Negro Women when they joined the Council for United Civil Rights Leadership. She shared the stage with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., when he gave his "I Have a Dream" speech; however, because of her gender, she was not permitted to speak.

Shirley Chisholm

"Unbought and Unbossed." That was the slogan of politician Shirley Chisholm who shattered barriers, spoke her mind, stood up for the disadvantaged, and in 1968 became the first black woman ever elected to Congress. She hired only women for her legislative office — half of those were African-American. She was a founding member of the Congressional Black Caucus and the National Women's Political Caucus. Chisholm scored another historic first in 1972 when she declared her candidacy for the Democratic nomination for President.

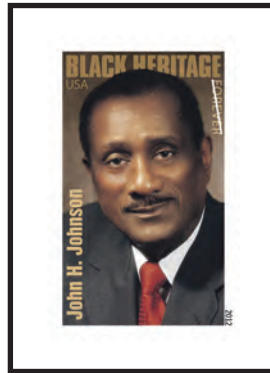
Richard Allen

The Richard Allen issue coincided with the 200th anniversary of the founding of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. After purchasing his freedom from slavery, Allen became a minister. In 1794, he founded the Bethel Church in Philadelphia, PA; however, it was controlled by white church leaders. In 1816, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, declared that the church could be independent of the white leaders and it became the AME Church.



The Black Heritage Series

2012



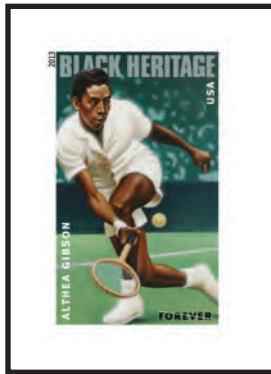
John Johnson
(1918–2005)
Scott 4624

2014



Shirley Chisholm
(1924–2005)
Scott 4856

2013



Althea Gibson
(1927–2003)
Scott 4803



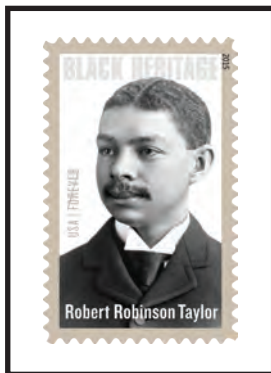
Bethel AME Church, 1829

2016



Richard Allen
(1760–1831)
Scott 5056

2015



Robert Robinson Taylor
(1868–1942)
Scott 4958

2017



Dorothy Height
(1912–2010)
Scott 5171



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