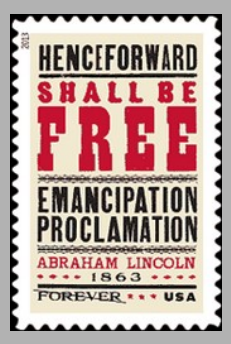
EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION (1863) AND THE CIVIL WAR (1861-1865)

AFRICAN AMERICAN RELATED U.S. POSTAGE STAMPS

JAMES JOPPY JR.

The Emancipation Proclamation was signed by President Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863, announcing, “that all persons held as slaves” within the rebellious areas, “are, and henceforward shall be free.” However, the proclamation did not end slavery and only applied to slaves held in Confederate states. A provision of the proclamation authorized enlisting Black men into the Union Army and Navy thereby shifting the war’s focus in time from not only preserving the Union to ending slavery. Black soldiers and sailors fought for the Union and many died fighting for their freedom. The U.S. Postal Service issued the following stamps which have a connection to African Americans, the Emancipation Proclamation and the Civil War.

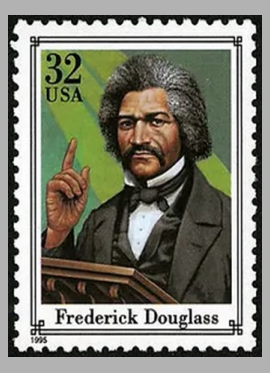
EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION: The first U.S. postage stamp designed by an African American artist (George Olden) features a broken chain to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. The proclamation was issued as the Civil War entered its third year and was considered a move by President Lincoln to weaken the Confederate war effort by freeing slaves. (8/16/1963 - Scott # 1233)



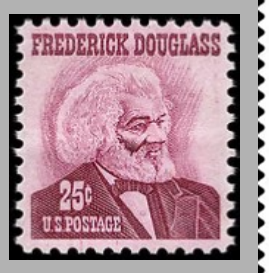
EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION: A second stamp was issued to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation and was the first in a series of three Civil Rights stamps issued in 2013 which includes a stamp featuring Rosa Parks and the March on Washington. (1/1/2013 - Scott # 4721)

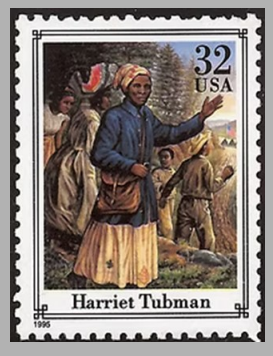
13th AMENDMENT (1865): The stamp was issued to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution which was passed at the end of the Civil War and officially abolished slavery in the U.S. The stamp depicts President Lincoln presenting the Emancipation Proclamation to a newly freed slave with broken shackles, as he prepares to stand and embrace his freedom. President Lincoln realized that the Emancipation Proclamation would need to have a constitutional amendment for the abolishment of slavery. (10/20/1940 - Scott # 902)

SOJOURNER TRUTH (1797 ~ 1883): Truth, an abolitionist and spokesperson for women's rights was born into slavery in Ulster County, New York, before escaping in 1826 and taking the name Sojourner Truth. She supported the Civil War cause by helping to recruit Black men to join the Union Army. Her abolitionist activities gained the attention of President Lincoln who invited her to a meeting at the White House in1864. At this meeting, she reportedly advocated for the rights of Blacks. (2/4/1986 - Scott # 2203)



Frederick Douglass (1818 ~ 1895): Douglass was a former slave who escaped to freedom and became an abolitionist, author, and orator who campaigned for the rights of Blacks and women. During the Civil War Douglass became an advisor to President Lincoln and strongly recommended that free Blacks and former slaves be enlisted in the Northern Army to fight against slavery. He helped recruit Blacks for the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment. This was the first Black military unit started by the Union during the Civil War. Three stamps have been issued to honor Douglass: *Prominent Americans Series* 25 cents (2/14/1967 - Scott # 1290), *Civil War* anniversary 32 cents (6/29/1995 - Scott # 2975h), *Underground Railroad*, Forever stamp (3/9/2024 - Scott # 5841)





HARRIET TUBMAN (1820? ~ 1913): Born a slave on a plantation in Maryland, Tubman fled to Philadelphia, PA, when she heard rumors she would be sold. Tubman is known as the most famous conductor of the Underground Railroad and returned repeatedly to the South to lead other slaves to freedom. During the Civil War, she served as a spy and scout for Union Army forces. Three stamps have been issued to honor Tubman: *Black Heritage Series* 13 cents - first African American woman featured on U.S. stamp (2/1/1978 - Scott # 1744), *Civil War* anniversary 32 cents (6/29/1995 Scott # 2975k), *Underground Railroad,* Forever stamp (3/9/2024 - Scott # 5834)

STEPHEN VINCENT BENET (1898 ~ 1943): The stamp was issued to honor author/poet Benet, author of *John Brown’s Body* which is a narrative poem on the Civil War. The poem includes a section on abolitionist John Brown. The stamp has the 54th Massachusetts Regiment Memorial in the background. The 54th Regiment fought in several battles and their bravery and sacrifices helped challenge racial stereotypes and public opinion regarding Blacks serving in the military. During the Civil War, 26 Blacks received the Medal of Honor, including Sergeant William Carney, the first Black awarded the Medal of Honor for his heroics in the 54th Regiment’s assault on Fort Wagner, South Carolina. (7/22/1998 - Scott # 3221)

THE PETERSBURG CAMPAIGN ~ JUNE 15 - JULY 4, 1865: The stamp depicts the 22nd United States Colored Troops engaged in the assault of Petersburg, Virginia during the Petersburg Campaign of the Civil War. Two brigades of Black soldiers are in the forefront of the assault to capture the city, an important rail center and supply base for the Confederate capital of Richmond. (7/30/2014 - Scott # 4910)