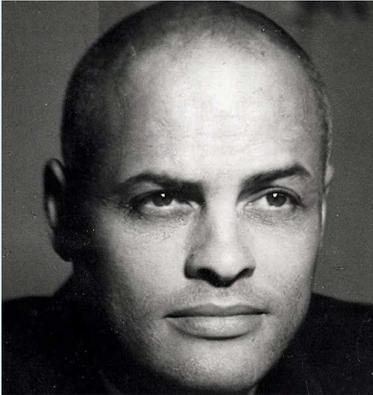


GEORG OLDEN

by Don Neal



In 1963, Georg Olden (1920 – 1975, born George Elliot Olden) was the first African American to design a postage stamp for the United States Postal Service. The 5¢ stamp commemorated the centennial of the declaration of the Emancipation Proclamation. The simple and dramatic design of the stamp, a heavy, black chain, representing the chain of human bondage, is shown with a symbolically severed link on a blue background. Olden attended a White House ceremony where the stamp was introduced by President John F. Kennedy. Printed on the Giori press, the Emancipation Proclamation stamp was first placed on sale on August 16, 1963, opening day of the Century of Negro Progress Exposition in Chicago, Illinois.



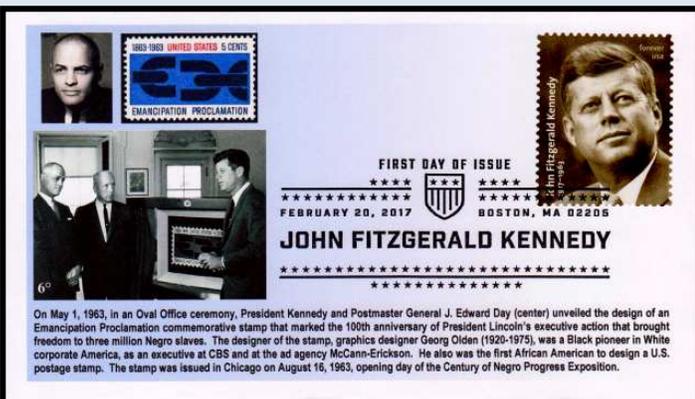
In 1967, following the creation of his postage stamp commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, Georg Olden was given the opportunity to create *another* postage stamp, this time for the U.S. Government-run Voice of America (VOA), which was celebrating the 25th anniversary of its founding.

Although Voice of America may not be well-known today, it was one of the pioneers in free speech through media. The largest and oldest U.S.-funded international broadcaster, VOA produces digital, TV, and radio content in 47 languages which it distributes to affiliate stations around the globe. VOA came into being during World War II, and the first broadcast was in German on February 24, 1942.

The 5¢ VOA stamp sticks to Olden's simplistic style and features colors that represent the red, white, and blue of the American flag. The 0.84" x 1.44" (vertical) stamp was issued in panes of 50 and had an initial printing of 120 million stamps.

The stamp ceremony was held at the VOA headquarters in Washington, D.C., on Tuesday, August 1, 1967. The official program for the ceremony named Georg Olden as the designer of the VOA stamp. It noted that he was the same artist who designed the Emancipation Proclamation commemorative stamp of 1963. He was described in the program as an Executive Vice President of a New York advertising agency. During World War II, Georg Olden, the grandson of a slave and the son of a Baptist preacher, was a graphic designer for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), forerunner of the CIA. From 1945 to 1960, Olden worked with William Golden, art director for CBS, and as such was one of the first African Americans to work in television. A Japanese magazine, *Idea*, once listed him among the top fifteen designers in the United States.

It was an honor for Olden to be selected by the postal service to be the creator of postage stamps, especially as a Black man during the 1960s. Black men during this time weren't typically executives for CBS television, meeting with President John F. Kennedy, or creating stamps for the postal service like Olden. The average Black man in 1960s was facing racial discrimination. This stamp was another of many accolades for Georg Olden to put under his belt and in his extensive graphic design portfolio.



6¢ Cachets by Don Neal cover connects the 2017 JFK stamp and first day postmark to stamp designer George Olden shown on the left in the cachet photo.



Bob Jones photo cachet (with Georg Olden pictured on the right). The late Robert L. (Bob) Jones, editor of *Linn's Stamp News* during the 60s, produced small quantities of pasted photo cachets on covers.