

A History of Women on Stamps



The history of postal services began with the delivery of stampless letters. Stampless letters paid by the receiver and private postal systems were gradually phased out after the introduction of adhesive postage stamps, first issued in 1846. The use of stamps became mandatory in 1855.

Queen Isabella of Spain was the first woman featured on a postage stamp in 1893. Since then, the U.S. has issued hundreds of postage stamps honoring the accomplishments and achievements of women in America. The post honored Martha Washington in 1902 with her very own stamp. In 1907, Pocahontas became the first Native American to be featured on a stamp. In 1978, Harriet Tubman was memorialized; and in 2001, Frida Kahlo became the first Hispanic woman to be honored.

Listed below are some of the famous women pictured on the stamps featured in the above photo.

1936 and 1955: Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906) was a leader of women's rights and the women's suffrage movement, and founder of the National Woman Suffrage Association along with Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902).

1948: Clara Barton (1821-1912) was the founder and first president of the American Red Cross. She was key in getting the U.S. to sign the Geneva Convention in 1882.

1963: Amelia Earhart (1897-1937) was the first woman to fly solo, nonstop across the Atlantic Ocean.

1963, 1984 & 1998: Eleanor Roosevelt (1884-1962) was an American diplomat, writer, social reformer, and First Lady to Franklin D. Roosevelt. She was a leading activist for women and the poor.

1968: Lucy Stone (1818-1893) founded the American Woman Suffrage Association in 1869. She is thought to be the first American woman to continue to use her maiden name after marriage.

1971: Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) helped pave the way for modern poets and authors by writing poems about problems in society, as well as her beliefs on love, family, death, and nature.

1980: Frances Perkins (1882-1965) was the first woman to be named to the U.S. Cabinet. She was appointed Secretary of Labor by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933.

1980: Emily Bissell (1861-1948) was a leader in the fight against tuberculosis who also introduced Christmas seals in the U.S.

1980: Helen Keller (1880-1968) was a crusader to improve the treatment of people with disabilities. Anne Sullivan, her dedicated personal teacher for many years, is pictured with Keller.

1982: Dr. Mary Walker (1832-1919) was the first woman to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor. A leader in the women's rights movement, Walker promoted women having the right to choose the types of clothes they wanted to wear, regardless of society's expectations.

1983: Dorothea Dix (1802-1887) was a 19th century crusader for the poor and those with mental disabilities.

1985: Abigail Adams (1744-1818) influenced American politics through her letters to her husband, President John Adams. She was an advocate for women's rights.

1986: Sojourner Truth (1797-1883) was the first black woman to speak publicly against slavery.

1990: Ida B. Wells (1862-1931) worked for equal rights for African Americans. She was a founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1910, and a leader in the women's suffrage movement.

Women throughout history have helped influence the story of humanity. Some have been visible while others worked behind the scenes to make this world a better place. Many have been honored with the public distinction of being placed on our postage stamps throughout the years; those mentioned here are only a fraction of the great women in history.

From the GFWC WHRC Newsletter

Sue Allen, GFWC WHRC Florida Chairman