

This Day in History... August 24, 2000

Start of the Distinguished Americans Series

On August 24, 2000, the USPS issued the first stamp in the Distinguished Americans Series.

As early as 1940, the US Post Office took to issuing sets of stamps honoring Americans from all walks of life that had an enduring impact on our nation. That first series was the Famous Americans. This was followed by the Prominent Americans, which were issued between 1965 and 1978.



The first stamp in the series.

Then in the 1980s and 90, the USPS issued the large Great Americans series. The stamps in this series were all one color and had simple drawings and designs. In 2000 the USPS planned to continue the series with the issue of its General Joseph Stilwell stamp on August 24.



The first stamp in the series with a color portrait.

While the stamp had a simple, one-color design similar to the Great Americans, the USPS and collectors alike felt it was too different and saw it as another series. So the USPS created the Distinguished Americans Series with that as its first stamp.

Illustrator Mark Summers designed the first 12 stamps in the series. He used the scratchboard technique to create the portraits, giving them the look of engraved stamps. With this technique, Summers started with a completely black surface and then scratched away areas to reveal the white portions of the image.



The first full-color stamp in the series.

The first nine stamps all featured black and white portraits. Then the 2008 James A. Michener stamp added color toning. The series changed further in 2011 with the Oveta Culp Hobby stamp that had a larger format and full color image and background.



2022 Katharine Graham stamp

The Wilma Rudolph stamp was the only one in the series to be issued in both booklet and sheet form. The Hattie Caraway and Edna Ferber stamps also have two different perforation sizes.

Over the course of 17 years, the series has honored senators, writers, athletes, scientists, doctors, philanthropists, and aviators. The most recent stamp, issued in 2022, honors Katharine Graham, publisher of the *Washington Post* from 1963 to 1991.

Mystic Stamp Company • Camden, NY 13316

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