

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**The Postal Service Celebrates Black History Month
Issuing a Forever Stamp Honoring Richard Allen,
Founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church**
Marks the 39th Stamp in the Black Heritage Series

A high-resolution image of the stamp is available for media use only by emailing roy.a.betts@usps.gov.

PHILADELPHIA — The U.S. Postal Service today kicked off the national observance of Black History Month with the dedication of a Forever stamp honoring preacher, activist and civic leader Richard Allen for his inspirational life and profound contribution to American history. The ceremony was held at Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, founded by Allen.

The stamp is the 39th in the Postal Service's Black Heritage stamp series, which began in 1978 with a stamp honoring abolitionist Harriet Tubman. It coincides with the 200th anniversary of Allen's founding of the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church, considered one of the most important institutions in African American life, and Allen's election and consecration as A.M.E.'s first bishop.

Other African Americans honored in the Black Heritage stamp series include Martin Luther King, Jr., Benjamin Banneker, Dr. Carter G. Woodson, Mary McLeod Bethune, Langston Hughes, Thurgood Marshall, Paul Robeson, Marian Anderson, Hattie McDaniel, Ella Fitzgerald, John H. Johnson, Barbara Jordan and Shirley Chisholm.

"Richard Allen was a man of boundless stature, courage and determination. The Postal Service

is pleased to dedicate this special commemorative Forever stamp in his honor,” said Postal Service Vice President, Area Operations — Eastern Area, Joshua D. Colin, who dedicated the stamp.

“Frederick Douglass and later Martin Luther King Jr., both said that they were influenced by how Bishop Allen seemed to channel a higher power to work through him to shepherd blacks through some of this country’s darkest days. I hope this stamp will inspire every American to learn more about this uplifting man,” Colin said.

Scheduled to join Colin to dedicate the stamp were Philadelphia Mayor James F. Kenney; Vernon Jordan, senior managing director, Lazard; Bishop John R. Bryant, senior bishop of the A.M.E. Church; Bishop Gregory M. Ingram, presiding prelate of the First Episcopal District of the A.M.E. Church; Bishop Richard T. Jackson, ecumenical officer and endorsing agent, A.M.E. Church; Bishop Jeffrey N. Leath, presiding prelate of the 13th Episcopal District, A.M.E. Church; Bishop Carolyn Tyler Guidry, retired bishop, A.M.E. Church; Dr. Teresa Frye Brown, historiographer and executive director, Department of Research and Scholarship, A.M.E. Church; Dr. Mark K. Tyler, senior pastor, Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church; Jacquelyn Dupont-Walker, director, A.M.E. Social Action Commission; and J’Nai Bridges, mezzo soprano.

Customers may purchase the Richard Allen Forever stamp at usps.com/stamps, at the [Postal Store usps.com/shop](https://usps.com/shop), by calling 800-STAMP24 (800-782-6724) and at Post Offices nationwide. A variety of stamps and collectibles also is available at ebay.com/stamps.

The stamp art is a portrait of Allen, a detail from an 1876 print titled “Bishops of the A.M.E. Church” from the collection of the Library Company of Philadelphia.

Allen’s Life and Legacy

When Richard Allen (1760–1831) lamented the bitterness of slavery, he spoke from experience — but this remarkably resolute and industrious man purchased his own freedom in his twenties and became one of the most important African American leaders of his era.

After making a name for himself as a traveling minister throughout the Mid-Atlantic, Allen was asked to preach to his fellow African Americans at a Methodist church in Philadelphia. He quickly rose to prominence as a civic leader, co-founding an organization to help African American neighbors in need, rallying black Philadelphians to serve as aid workers during a yellow fever epidemic in 1793 and preparing the black community to defend the city during the War of 1812.

Eager to establish an independent African American church, Allen purchased an old blacksmith’s shop and moved it to land he owned at Sixth and Lombard Streets. Bethel Church was dedicated in 1794 and soon attracted hundreds of members, but Allen spent years in conflict with white church leaders who sought to assert their control. At one point, they tried to sell the building out from under him, but as a successful businessman, Allen was able to buy it back at auction. After a campaign that included sit-ins by African Americans and a judgment by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, the congregation secured its independence. In 1816, Allen summoned other black Methodist leaders to Philadelphia, where together they founded the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church, electing and consecrating Allen as its first bishop.

Today, Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church stands on the site where Allen converted that old blacksmith’s shop more than two centuries ago. The denomination he founded now boasts more than 2.5 million members. His life — a legacy of determination, uplift, charity and faith — remains an inspiration to all Americans.

Ordering First-Day-of-Issue Postmarks

Customers have 60 days to obtain first-day-of-issue postmarks by mail. They may purchase new stamps at local Post Offices, at the Postal Store usps.com/shop or by calling 800-STAMP-24. They should affix the stamps to envelopes of their choice, address the envelopes to themselves or others and place them in envelopes addressed to:

Richard Allen Stamp
USPS Retail Manager

3190 South 70th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19153-9751

After applying the first-day-of-issue postmark, the Postal Service will return the envelopes through the mail. There is no charge for postmarks up to a quantity of 50. For more than 50, customers are charged 5 cents each. All orders must be postmarked by April 2, 2016.

Ordering First-Day Covers

The Postal Service also offers first-day covers for new stamps and stationery items postmarked with the official first-day-of-issue cancellation. Each item has an individual catalog number and is offered in the quarterly *USA Philatelic* catalog, online at usps.com/shop or by calling 800-782-6724. Customers may request a free catalog by calling 800-782-6724 or writing to:

U.S. Postal Service
Catalog Request
PO Box 219014
Kansas City, MO 64121-9014

Philatelic Products

There are five philatelic products for this stamp issue:



473506, [Press Sheet with Die-Cut](#), \$58.80 (print quantity 200).



473510, [Digital Color Postmark](#) Keepsake, \$11.95.



473516, [First-Day Cover](#), \$0.93.



473521, [Digital Color Postmark](#), \$1.64.



473530, [Ceremony Program](#), \$6.95.

Many of this year's other stamps may be viewed on Facebook at facebook.com/USPSStamps or via Twitter [@USPSstamps](https://twitter.com/USPSstamps).

The Postal Service receives no tax dollars for operating expenses and relies on the sale of postage, products and services to fund its operations.

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