

## AFRICAN AMERICANS BORN IN PENNSYLVANIA ON U.S. STAMPS

by JAMES JOPPY JR.

For more than a century, United States Postal Service stamps have honored people who have left their mark on American history. Among those recognized are African Americans born in Pennsylvania whose contributions and achievements have helped shape America and the world. Here is a list of African Americans born in Pennsylvania who have been depicted on a United States postage stamp.



**HENRY O. TANNER (1859–1937).** Born in Pittsburgh, Tanner was considered to be the most distinguished African American artist of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first to gain international recognition for his paintings of landscapes and biblical themes. He moved to France to escape racial prejudice and spent most of his professional life in Paris. In 1995, the White House Historical Association acquired a Tanner painting titled *Sand Dunes*, which was the first painting by an African American obtained for the White House Collection. Stamp issued September 10, 1973.

**ETHEL WATERS (1896-1977).** Born in Chester, Waters was a jazz, blues and gospel singer, dancer, and actress who frequently performed on the stage and in films. She was the first African American to star in her own television show in 1939 and the second African American ever nominated for an Academy Award in 1949 for the film "Pinky." Stamp issued September 1, 1994.



**BILLIE HOLIDAY (1916-1959).** Born in Philadelphia, Holiday is considered to be one of the most influential jazz singers of the 1930's and 1940's. She is known for the unique sound of her voice which carried a powerful emotional intensity when singing songs dealing with heartbreak, despair, and loneliness. Despite experiencing racism and discrimination, she managed to have a successful career. One of her most famous songs "Strange Fruit" was based on an account of a lynching in the South. Stamp issued September 17, 1994.

**ERROLL GARNER (1921-1977).** Born in Pittsburgh, Garner began playing piano when he was 3 years old and composed more than 200 works without ever learning to read music. He is considered a major jazz innovator, especially for his approach to melody, harmony, and rhythm. Garner is renowned for playing with a spirit and joy that was infectious to his audiences. Stamp issued September 16, 1995.



**CLARA WARD (1924-1973).** Born in Philadelphia, Ward was the creative force behind the Ward Singers, often acknowledged as America's greatest gospel group. She was an accomplished composer, pianist, singer, and arranger. The group achieved artistic and commercial success during the 1940s and 1950s and helped transform the gospel genre by using creative arrangements and colorful costumes. Stamp issued July 15, 1998.

**MARIAN ANDERSON (1897-1993).** Born in Philadelphia, Anderson was an opera singer who faced many challenges. She is remembered for her performance at the Lincoln Memorial on Easter Sunday in 1939, after she was refused a performance at Washington's Constitution Hall by the Daughters of the American Revolution because she was Black. Her performance was attended by 75,000 and broadcast on national radio. In addition to her singing career, Anderson also became a U.S. delegate to the United Nations, and in 1963 was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Stamp issued January 27, 2005.



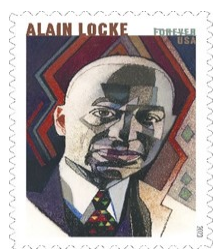
**ROY CAMPANELLA (1921-1993)** Born in Philadelphia, Campanella's mother was African American, and father an Italian immigrant. Because he was racially classified as Black, he was forced to play in the Negro Leagues until 1947. He was the first African American catcher to play Major League Baseball and was selected as the National League's Most Valuable Player in 1951, 1953 and 1955. Campanella hit 40 home runs, a single season record for a catcher in 1953. This record would stand until 1996. Stamp issued July 15, 2006.

**ALFRED ANDERSON (1907-1996).** Born in Bryn Mawr, Anderson obtained his pilot's license in 1932 and was the only African American in the country qualified to serve as a flight instructor and to fly commercially. In 1940, Anderson was hired by the Tuskegee Institute as Chief Flight Instructor to develop its pilot training program. Anderson played a crucial role during World War II in training the nation's first Black military pilots, the Tuskegee Airmen. Anderson was inducted in the National Aviation Hall of Fame in 2013. Stamp issued March 13, 2014.



**WILT CHAMBERLAIN (1936-1999).** Born in Philadelphia, Chamberlain played in the National Basketball Association (NBA) for 14 seasons and is regarded as one of the greatest players. He won Rookie of the Year, two NBA championships, four regular season Most Valuable Player (MVP) awards, one Finals MVP, and was selected for thirteen All-Star games. He won seven scoring, nine field goal percentage, and eleven rebounding titles. He is the only center to lead the league in total assists. Stamp issued December 5, 2014.

**ALAIN LOCKE (1885–1954).** Born in Philadelphia, Locke was philosopher, writer, and educator who graduated with honors from Harvard University in 1907 and became the first African American to be selected as a Rhodes Scholar. After receiving a PhD in philosophy at Harvard in 1918, he formed one of the first philosophy departments at a historically Black college, Howard University. Locke is best known as the creator of the philosophical concept *New Negro* which would initiate the Harlem Renaissance (1925–1939), a period of significant contributions of African American artists, writers, poets, and musicians. Stamp issued May 21, 2020.



**AUGUST WILSON (1945-2005).** Born in Pittsburgh, Wilson was an American playwright who is best known for a series of 10 plays called *The Century Cycle* which chronicle the experiences and heritage of the African American community in the 20th century. He was the first African American to have two plays running on Broadway at the same time. Wilson was also one of only seven American playwrights to win two Pulitzer Prizes for "Fences" and "The Piano Lesson." Stamp issued January 28, 2021.