



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## U.S. Postal Service Pays Homage to Heroes of the Underground Railroad With New Forever Stamps

CHURCH CREEK, MD — The U.S. Postal Service today celebrated the ingenuity, bravery, and resilience of 10 courageous men and women who helped guide enslaved people to freedom via the Underground Railroad, a network of secret routes and safehouses in use before the Civil War.

A dedication ceremony for the stamps was held today at the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Visitor Center in Church Creek.

“For many enslaved African Americans, the Underground Railroad was their only hope to escape the brutality of slavery,” said Ronald A. Stroman, a member of the USPS Board of Governors. “The Underground Railroad demonstrated the power of collective action and solidarity in achieving social change, even when the odds seemed insurmountable. The United States Postal Service is privileged to celebrate the ingenuity and resilience of the enslaved people and those who bravely assisted them in the face of adversity with the dedication of these new stamps.”

Joining Stroman for the ceremony were master of ceremonies Angela Crenshaw, director of the Maryland Park Service; Joshua Kurtz, Maryland secretary of natural resources; Deanna Mitchell, superintendent of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park; Millicent Sparks, actor, writer and performer; Kate Clifford Larson, historian, author and consultant; Daniel Hunter, author and activist; and Antonio Alcalá, art director for USPS who designed the stamps.

Also at the ceremony were descendants of some of the people honored on the stamps: Ernestine “Tina” Wyatt and Douglas Mitchell, descendants of Harriet Tubman; Bob Seeley, descendant of Thomas Garrett; author and historian, Valerie Still, descendant of William Still; and Tarence Bailey Sr, descendant of Frederick Douglass and the founder and president of the Bailey-Groče Family Foundation and Operation Frederick Douglass on the Hill.

“I am honored to participate in this dedication that celebrates Harriet Tubman and other operatives of the Underground Railroad,” said Sparks. Their secret network aiding in the escapes of enslaved people aggravated the institution of slavery so badly that a war was fought over it. And ironically, it was the United States Colored Troops and Harriet Tubman who helped the Union Army win that war, abolishing slavery! All of these individuals are the reason we wake up free every morning.”

Also, participating in the stamp dedication ceremony were the Washington Division Postal Police Honor Guard; and musicians Daniel Dean and Jennell Morrison; and the Washington Rebels Jubilee Voices.

The pane of 20 stamps depicts 10 key figures of the Underground Railroad — freedom seekers and those who aided others’ escapes. The top third of each stamp features a sepia-toned portrait. Below it are several lines of text with the words: BLACK/WHITE, COOPERATION, TRUST/DANGER, FLIGHT/FAITH, COURAGE/RISK, DEFIANCE/HOPE, and UNDERGROUND RAILROAD/USA.

Alcalá designed the stamps using existing photographs.

On the pane’s verso is a map showing the general routes freedom seekers followed, along with text from the National Park Service that describes the Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.

The Underground Railroad Forever stamps come in panes of 20. Forever stamps will always be equal in value to the current First-Class Mail 1-ounce price.

News about the stamps is being shared with the hashtag **#UndergroundRailroadStamps**. A video will be posted two hours after the ceremony providing more information and insights in telling the story of this stamp on the Postal Service’s Facebook and Twitter pages at [facebook.com/USPS](https://facebook.com/USPS) and [twitter.com/usps](https://twitter.com/usps).

## **Background**

From the time slavery was introduced to the Colonies until it was abolished in 1865, enslaved people made ceaseless efforts to escape its reach. The flight to freedom — whether by foot, horseback, carriage, wagon or boat — was difficult and exceedingly dangerous.

In name only, the Underground Railroad started as a loosely organized secret network of courageous and imaginative freedom seekers, and the brave operatives who assisted them. It was powered not by coal but by human courage.

As railroads grew in the 1830s and 1840s, the secret network adopted their terminology. “Stationmasters” and “conductors” assisted “passengers” traveling from one “station” to another on the Underground Railroad. Over time, the network coalesced into a well-organized system as it responded to the increasing numbers of freedom seekers and a corresponding rise in attempts to thwart escapes.

Most remained anonymous, but some left their mark on history, including the 10 men and women honored on these Forever stamps: Harriet Tubman, Thomas Garrett, William Still, Harriet Jacobs, Jermain Loguen, Catherine Coffin, Lewis Hayden, Frederick Douglass, William Lambert, and Laura Haviland.

In 1863, President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, liberating all enslaved people. In 1865, following the end of the Civil War, the 13th Amendment was ratified, abolishing slavery throughout the country.

## **Postal Products**

Customers may purchase stamps and other philatelic products through the [Postal Store](https://usps.com/shopstamps) at [usps.com/shopstamps](https://usps.com/shopstamps), by calling 844-737-7826, by mail through [USA Philatelic](https://usa.philatelic.com) or at Post Office

locations nationwide. For officially licensed stamp products, shop the [USPS Officially Licensed Collection on Amazon](#).

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**Please Note:** The United States Postal Service is an independent federal establishment, mandated to be self-financing and to serve every American community through the affordable, reliable and secure delivery of mail and packages to 167 million addresses six and often seven days a week. Overseen by a bipartisan Board of Governors, the Postal Service is implementing a 10-year transformation plan, [Delivering for America](#), to modernize the postal network, restore long-term financial sustainability, dramatically improve service across all mail and shipping categories, and maintain the organization as one of America's most valued and trusted brands.

The Postal Service generally 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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