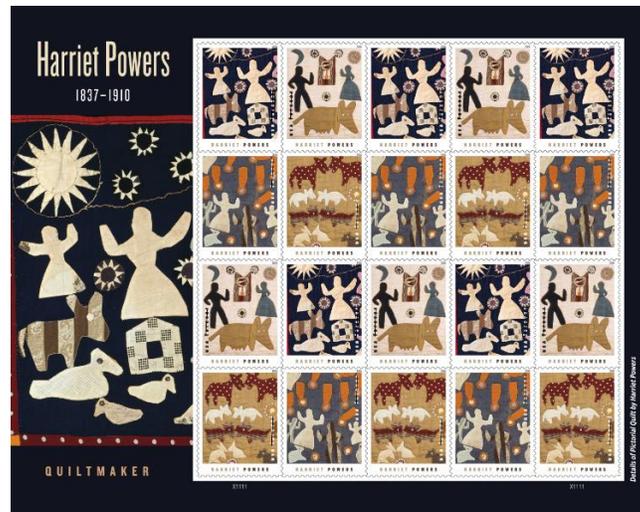


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New Stamps Feature Quilt Masterpieces From Harriet Powers *USPS honors the enduring legacy of a former slave and 19th-century storyteller*

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Postal Service today celebrated pioneering quiltmaker Harriet Powers (1837-1910) at a ceremony in the nation’s capital to dedicate four new commemorative stamps.

Powers, who was born into slavery, became a leading figure in American folk art and storytelling. She used traditional techniques to record complex oral histories and religious themes.

“Harriet Powers took the traditional craft of quilting and elevated it into a profound medium for history and narrative,” said Lisa Bobb-Semple, USPS director of stamp services, and dedicating official. “We are proud to recognize her extraordinary skill and the enduring legacy of her vision.”

Joining Bobb-Semple for the ceremony were Karla Kirby, USPS health services executive manager and master of ceremonies; Karsonya Wise Whitehead, president of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, president; CeLillianne Green, poet; Kyra Hicks, quilter and author; and Powers’ descendant, Alyse Minter.

Born into slavery in 1837 near Athens, GA, Powers emerged after emancipation as an artistic voice in American textile art. While she is believed to have completed at least five quilts in her lifetime, she is best known for her two surviving “story quilts.” These works used pieced, appliquéd, and embroidered panels to depict scenes from local lore or the Bible.

“This is what is extraordinary about Harriet Powers’ quilts,” said Derry Noyes, an art director for USPS. “I never would have thought of these works of fabric art as canvases for telling stories until seeing the quilts.

I chose details that would hold up well at stamp size while still communicating the stories Powers was trying to tell.”

The stamp pane features different designs, each showcasing a specific panel from Powers’ 1898 “Pictorial Quilt.” To create visual variety, the panels are arranged in a shifting order across the pane of 20 giving the impression of a continuous, unfolding narrative.

Powers’ work gained public recognition in 1886 when she exhibited her “Bible Quilt” at the Northeast Georgia Fair. Though she initially refused to sell the piece, she later sold it to an art teacher, Jennie Smith. That quilt was eventually donated to the Smithsonian National Museum of American History in 1968 — appropriately arriving at the museum by U.S. Mail.

The “Pictorial Quilt,” which inspired the new stamps, was originally commissioned by the wives of Atlanta University faculty members as a gift for the vice president of the university board, Charles Cuthbert Hall. Completed in 1898, the quilt remained in the Hall family for more than six decades before being recognized as a national treasure.

Noyes designed the stamps and pane using existing photographs of the “Pictorial Quilt.”

The Harriet Powers stamps are issued in panes of 20. As Forever stamps, they 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 **#HarrietPowersStamps**.

Postal products

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