



# The Westfield Philatelist

Newsletter of the Westfield Stamp Club  
 American Philatelic Society Chapter #540  
 American Topical Association Chapter #113  
 Volume 14 Number 3 January/February 2021

## UPCOMING MEETINGS (VIRTUAL)

January 27, 2021 – “Show & Tell”



February 25, 2021 – “The Postal History of New Haven”

By Lawrence Haber



March 25, 2021 – “The Romance of Railroads”

By Wade Saadi

I will start with cameo covers, then full steam ahead to advertising covers, ending with a speck of Lionel (toy) trains. [Wade Saadi is the former president of the APS, U.S. Philatelic Classics Society and the New York Collectors Club. He is the 2015 Alfred F. Lichtenstein Memorial Award from the Collectors Club of New York. He was the president of the organizing committee for World Stamp Show-NY 2016.]



1998

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Upcoming Meetings .....1
- From the Editor’s Den.....1
- Members in the News.....2
- January/February USPS Stamp Issues .....2
- January/February Philatelic Quiz .....2
- International Year of the Nurse & Midwife & Bicentennial of the Birth of Florence Nightingale ..3
- Louisiana Purchase .....4
- The Horse in Mythology.....5
- Answers to November/December Philatelic Quiz ..6
- United States Innovations .....9
- The Topical Alphabet: D is for Dogs .....10
- The Opioid Overdose Epidemic & A Brief History of Opioids .....12
- Gustav Mahler (1860–1911) .....15
- Harriet Tubman (ca.1820–1913) .....16
- Discover the World: *Niue*.....18

## FROM THE EDITOR’S DEN

As I write this COVID-19 cases and deaths are still overwhelming many hospitals across the United States. But the good news is that the disease appears to be peaking in some parts of the United States. Despite the remarkably short time in which vaccines for this disease have been produced, the logistics of getting the vaccines into the arms of people has been bumpy. Having a hobby like stamp collecting that we can pursue in the safety of our home is certainly a plus and I am very grateful for philately.

As you can see from this newsletter, I have included a number of short articles on a variety of topics. I do enjoy writing about stamps and as I am a worldwide collector, I will never run out of material for articles. But, I would really like to have more material from members. It can be anything related to stamp collecting: a new collecting interest, a favorite stamp/cover or a recent purchase, a recent award you have received or an article you have written. Anything at all having to do with philately. You can send me scans (300 dpi tiff or high-resolution jpgs) of material and the text electronically (plain text, rich text format or Microsoft Word).

One thought that recently crossed my mind comes from Jay Bigalke’s Philatelic Forward column in the January 18 issue of *Linn’s Stamp News*. In that column entitled “Online Auction Selling Tips for eBay, Delcampe and HipStamp”, he presented a number of tips from readers.

I have done very little buying or selling online and only through eBay and the APS StampStore. But I suspect that some of our members are ‘old hands’ at buying and/or selling philatelic material online. Why not share some of your experiences, tips, and procedures with the members of our club. I know I would be very interested, as I am sure many of our members would as well – especially in this time when face-to-face contact with dealers and other stamp collectors is so limited. You can send me something in an email or in a separate article. If you don’t want your name mentioned, I will be glad to publish your submission anonymously.



## The Westfield Philatelist

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Meetings are held at 8:00PM on the fourth Thursday of the month except for November (third Thursday) and July and August (summer recess). The club meets in the Community Room of the Westfield Town Hall located in the center of Westfield at 425 East Broad Street.

Dues are \$8.00 per membership year which runs from September 1 to August 31.

The club newsletter will be published every two months from September to June.

For information visit  
our website

[www.westfieldstampclub.org](http://www.westfieldstampclub.org)

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## MEMBERS IN THE NEWS

**Jack Andre Denys-** "Two Painters and One Composer". *Topical Time* November/December 2020; 72(6):18-19.

**Frederick C. Skvara-** (1) "Canadian Medical Groundbreakers; Australian Medical Innovations; United States Innovations". *Scalpel & Tongs: American Journal of Medical Philately* 2020; 64(4):83-85. (2) "The Opioid Overdose Epidemic and A Brief History of Opioids". *Scalpel & Tongs: American Journal of Medical Philately* 2020; 64(4):88-91.



### January to February USPS Stamp Issues

Jan. 14	<b>Love. One (55¢) forever special stamp.</b>
Jan. 24	<b>Brush Rabbit (<i>Sylvilagus bachmani</i>). Two (20¢) additional-ounce definitive stamps (single design) in pane of 20 and coil of 100.</b>
Jan. 24	<b>Barns. Eight (36¢) postcard-rate definitive stamps (four designs), pane of 20 &amp; coil of 100.</b>
Jan. 24	<b>Castillo de San Marcos. One \$7.95 Priority Mail definitive stamp, American Landmark series.</b>
Jan. 28	<b>August Wilson. One (55¢) forever commemorative stamp, pane of 20, Black Heritage series</b>
Feb. 2	<b>Year of the Ox. One (55¢) forever commemorative stamp, Lunar New Year series.</b>
Feb. 11	<b>Chien-Shiung Wu. One (55¢) forever commemorative stamp.</b>



## JANUARY/FEBRUARY PHILATELIC QUIZ

- Q1. Of the fourteen presidents of the Continental Congress, what seven can be found on philatelic items issued by the United States Postal Service?
- Q2. What United States postage stamp commemorates the Flushing Remonstrance?
- Q3. Do you know of any United States commemorative postage stamps that feature signed designer art?
- Q4. What country issued a series of stamps that came to be known as the "Rice Field Definitives"?
- Q5. What is the only postal authority that issues stamps in three different currencies?



# Bicentennial of the Birth of Florence Nightingale & the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife

By Frederick C. Skvara

Florence Nightingale was born in 1820 in Florence, Italy, and the 200th anniversary of her birth was celebrated in 2020 as part of the World Health Assembly's International Year of the Nurse and Midwife.

Nightingale came to prominence during the Crimean War training nurses and organizing care for wounded soldiers at military hospitals in Scutari, Turkey, a suburb of Constantinople on the shore of the Bosphorus Strait. Known as "The Lady with the Lamp" for making her night rounds, her efforts at cleanliness and sanitation during the Crimean War resulted in the British Army death rate dropping from 42% to less than 2%.

She laid the foundation for professional nursing by establishing the Nightingale Training School for Nurses at St. Thomas Hospital in London in 1860. When the World Health Organization designated 2020 as the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife, they recognized the vital contribution these professions play in global health as they make up 50% of the global health-care workforce.

Several countries have now issued stamps commemorating the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife and Florence Nightingale's birth bicentennial.

On May 4th the island of Cyprus in the eastern Mediterranean Sea issued a single 0.34€ stamp showing a portrait of the young Florence Nightingale. On the left there appears to be a nurse feeding a male patient and in the background a woman that I am assuming is a midwife standing in front of a woman in bed.

Portugal issued a miniature sheet of two stamps on October 29, 2020, to also commemorate this event. The top 0.53€ stamp shows the same portrait of the young Florence Nightingale that is on the stamp from Cyprus. The background scene of a military hospital shows a military officer conversing with a nurse and a number of male patients on benches and in beds.

But the bottom 0.91€ stamp is particularly interesting to me. On the left is a portrait of a much older Florence Nightingale. From the information that I could find it appears to be from a 1910 photograph, the year of her death. In the background are several "polar area diagrams".

Florence's father, William Nightingale, was Cam-

bridge educated and gave his daughters a solid education in the classics and other subjects befitting their status in Victorian England. Although mathematics was not one of those subjects, it was of interest to Florence and she eventually convinced her father, who himself was fond of mathematics, to let her study the subject. Her pursuit of mathematics was influenced by Lambert Adolphe Quetelet (1796–1874), a Belgian statistician and astronomer who applied mathematical methods to vital statistics. Later, in her *Notes on Matters Affecting the Health Efficiency and Hospital Administration of the British Army* (1858), she would make good use of her mathematical education for she used extensive statistical data to create "polar area diagrams"(1) that gave a graphical face to the mortality figures during the Crimean War. Her diagrams are depicted on the bottom stamp from Portugal. In 1858 she became the first woman member of the Royal Statistical Society in London.



L.A. Quetelet.  
Belgium 1974

## Notes

1) The sectors in polar area diagrams have equal angles and differ in how far each sector extends from the



Cyprus 2020



Portugal 2020



# Louisiana Purchase

By Frederick C. Skvara

In the 1763 Peace of Paris, which ended the French and Indian War and Europe's Seven Years' War, France ceded to Spain the province of Louisiana and all territory west of the Mississippi River. But at the dawn of the 19th century, France, under Napoleon I (Napoléon Bonaparte) (1769–1821), wanted to dominate not only the European continent but the New World as well. So when the United States learned that Spain had ceded back to France the province of Louisiana, the United States was concerned that France might try and control commerce on the Mississippi and colonize the American West.

When the black slaves in Haiti, led by François Dominique Toussaint L'Ouverture and Jean-Jaques Dessalines, rebelled against the French, Napoleon was forced to send troops to quell the revolt. The prospect of French troops on the island of Hispaniola did not appeal to the Americans and in March 1803 President Jefferson sent James Monroe to France with instructions for him and the American minister in France, Robert R. Livingston (1746–1813), to offer to buy New Orleans from the French. With the war in Haiti going badly and with his plans for a new war with England, Napoleon was receptive to the American overture and offered to sell not only New Orleans but the entire Louisiana territory for \$15 million. Jefferson agreed and the United States Senate approved the purchase on October 20, 1803.



Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826)  
United States 1954



Napoleon I  
France 1951



James Monroe (1758–1831)  
United States 1954



Coat of Arms of Haiti  
Haiti 1896



Bicentennial of the Louisiana Purchase. Combo FDC. United States 2003/ Scott 3782 & 1953/ Scott 1020

# The Horse in Mythology

By Frederick C. Skvara

## *Epona*

The Celtic goddess of the horse (The Great Mare) was worshipped throughout Gaul and became a Patron of the Roman cavalry units stationed there. Saranyu, the Indian Mare Goddess who may have evolved from Epona, was the Goddess who gave birth to all animals, Mother of all Creatures, Vedic Mare Goddess and Mother of the Centaurs.



Epona on Horseback  
Luxembourg 1973



Centaur  
France 1946

## *Centaur*

Part horse and part man, Centaurs are the offspring of Centauros, son of Ixion and a king on Thessaly, and the mares on Mount Pelion. When Ixion tried to rape the Goddess Hera, wife of Zeus, she tricked him into having intercourse with a cloud in her image. The cloud gave birth to Centauros, father of the Centaurs.



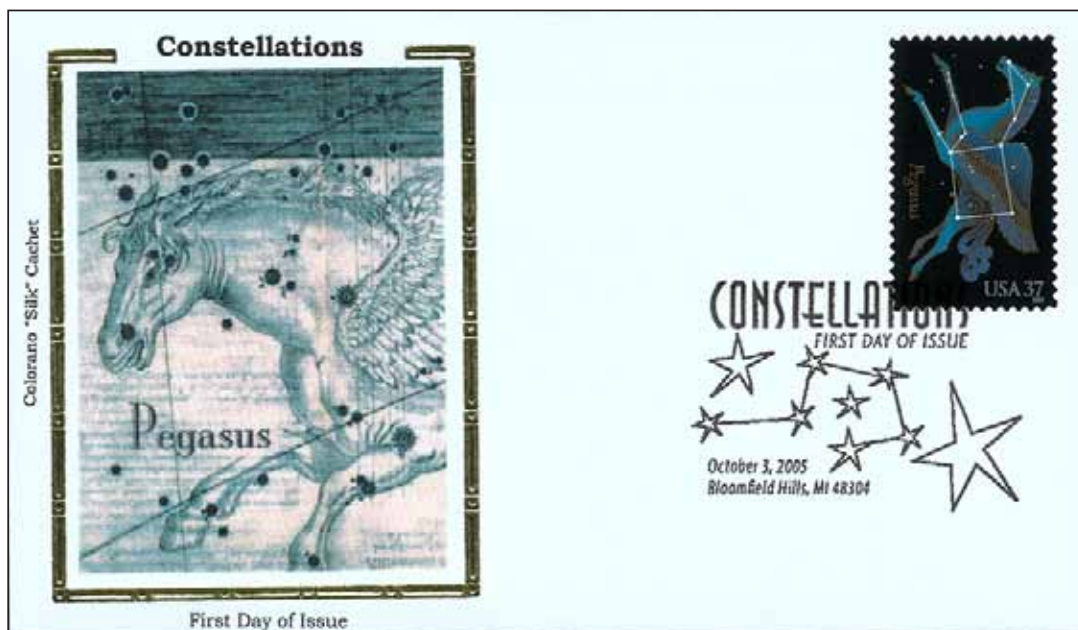
Roman Centurion  
1900th Anniv. Founding of York  
Great Britain 1971

## *Pegasus*

A winged horse, offspring of the god Poseidon and the Gorgon Medusa, that sprang from the blood of Medusa when Perseus cut off her head.



Pegasus  
Italy 1930



The Constellation Pegasus. United States 2005





# ANSWERS TO NOVEMBER/DECEMBER PHILATELIC QUIZ



Q1. What chemical element is named after a country?

Ans. **Copper**

The chemical element copper, chemical symbol Cu and atomic number 29, is a reddish brown metal and the earliest metal to be used by humans, first by itself, and then later alloyed with tin to form bronze. The word copper is derived from the Old English *copor* and *coper* based on the late Latin *cuprum*, which is itself derived from the Latin *cyprium aes* ('Cyprus metal'). *Cyprium* is derived from the Greek word *Kyprios* (a Cypriot). Thus the metal is named after the country Cyprus.

Since before the Bronze Age (ca. 3500–1500 B.C.), and to this day, Cyprus has been an important source of copper ores in the form of chalcopyrites (copper pyrites), that is composed on one molecule of cuprous (copper) sulfide and a molecule of ferric (iron) sulfide. Chalco comes from the Greek *chalkos* which means brass and the name was given to the copper pyrites due to the color of the ore, an iridescent, brassy hue. The term pyrites is also applied to other metallic sulfides besides copper.



Copper pyrites mine.  
Cyprus 1955



Early smelting of copper.  
Cyprus 1994



Copper ingot, map and  
boat signifying the trad-  
ing in copper by Cyprus.  
Cyprus 1994



Q2. What United States stamp designer began his career drawing medical illustrations on the front lines of World War I?

Ans. **Charles Ransom Chickering**

Charles R. Chickering (1891–1970) was born in Eastampton Township in Burlington County, New Jersey and after high school attended the Philadelphia Museum School of Industrial Art. After graduating in 1913 he began a career as a freelance book and magazine illustrator. In 1917 he enlisted in the infantry, but later was reassigned to the Medical Corps and received training in Washington, D.C. at the Army Medical Museum, George Washington University and American University in medical illustration. Sent to the Central Medical Laboratory at Dijon, France, he was put in charge of medical illustration where he produced medical illustrations of body-part wounds from autopsies of soldiers who had died in combat.

He returned to freelance magazine work following World War I, but after Pearl Harbor, he applied to the government for some kind of civilian work and was hired by the Navy Department as an illustrator producing publications and training films.

On February 12, 1947, he began working for the Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP) and during his fifteen years at the BEP designed 77 postage stamps of which 66 were produced unaltered from his original designs. The first stamp for which he is given design credit is the 3¢ 1947 "Doctors" commemorative honoring physicians of America and issued on the centenary of the American Medical Association. The stamp depicts a painting, *The Doctor* (1891), by Sir Luke Fildes (1843–1927) a British painter and illustrator. Chickering created the design in blue, but it was changed to brown.



His first unaltered design was for the 5¢ 1953 stamp (1021) for the “Opening of Japan Centennial” showing Commodore Matthew C. Perry (1794–1858) and his ships anchoring off the entrance to Tokyo Bay. Also in 1953 he produced his second unaltered design for a stamp, the 3¢ commemorative for the “300th anniversary of New York City” showing a Dutch ship in New Amsterdam Harbor.



One of his most famous designs was for the 1962 4¢ “Project Mercury” stamp. As the success of the Project Mercury mission was not assured when the stamps were being produced, Chickering designed the stamp at his home in secret. The finished stamps were sent to post offices around the country in envelopes labeled “Top Secret” and were only released to the public on February 20, 1962, at the exact hour Colonel John Glenn’s flight returned to Earth. The stamps shows Glenn’s capsule, *Friendship 7*, in orbital flight around the Earth.



Chickering’s last credited stamp design was also in 1962 and it was for the 4¢ commemorative for the “Centenary of the Homestead Act”. His design was altered from a multicolored stamp to a dull gray color.



After he left the BEP in 1962, he started creating cachets for first day covers. He died in 1970 of heart disease. [Ref. 1) “Charles R. Chickering” by George W. Brett. *The Bureau Specialist* 1964; 35(7): 252–265. 2) “Charles R. Chickering”: Cachetmaker –Parts 1 & 2” by Mark Lerner. *First Days* 2010; 55(5 & 6):10–20; 47–54.]



**Q3.** What United States Christmas issue reproduces a design by Louis Prang who produced the first American Christmas cards in 1875?

**Ans:** **United States 1975 “Christmas Card by Louis Prang, 1878”**

Louis Prang (1824–1909) was born in Breslau, lower Silesia (now Poland) and learned engraving and printing from his father, a textile manufacturer. He emigrated to the United States in 1850 where he began to make wood engravings for illustrations in books. In 1866 he began producing chromolithographic reproductions of major art works. His company, L. Prang & Co. Rat Publishers in Boston, began producing greeting cards for the European market in 1874. In 1875 he began producing Christmas cards for the American market that were often large and ornate. the image of the United States 1975 Christmas stamp (1580) was from an 1878 Prang Christmas card.



There were two Christmas issues produced by the United States Post Office in 1975, both were nondenominated, and sold for 10¢ each. These were the first nondenominated commemorative stamps produced by the United States Post Office. Production for these stamps was begun when postal rates were uncertain (i.e. the first class one-ounce rate changed to 13¢ on December 31, 1975). The other 1975 Christmas issue depicts *Madonna & Child*, a painting by the 15th century Italian artist, Domenico Ghirlandaio (1448–1494), that is in the National Gallery of Art. [Ref: “Early American Christmas Cards” by Christine Sanders. *Yule Log* 2020; 52(4):12-17.]



**Q4.** There is a pool in Jerusalem where a paralyzed man was healed. What recent United States stamp depicts something named after that pool?

**Ans.** **2019 \$25.50 Priority Mail Express stamp showing Bethesda Fountain**

“Now there is in Jerusalem at the Sheep a pool called in Hebrew Bethesda with five portices. In these lay a large number of ill, blind, lame and crippled. One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew he had been ill for a long time, he said to him, *Do you want to be well?....*Jesus said to him, *Rise, take up your mat and walk.* Immediately the man became well, took up his mat, and walked.”

*John 5:2*

In the United States Bethesda, Maryland, is where the National institutes of Health are located as well as Bethesda Naval Base, the site of Walter Reed Hospital.





# ANSWERS TO NOVEMBER/DECEMBER PHILATELIC QUIZ



In Central Park in New York City at the southeastern edge of Central Park Lake is the Bethesda Fountain. Construction of the fountain began in 1861 and was completed in 1873. A statue of the Angel of the Waters stands in the center of the fountain. The \$25.50 Priority Mail Express self-adhesive stamp in the American Landmarks series was issued on January 27, 2019 in panes of four. The American Landmarks series began in 2008 with the \$4.80 Mount Rushmore Priority Mail and \$16.50 Hoover Dam Express Mail stamps.



Q5. What famous Hollywood movie actress was inducted into the United States National Inventors Hall of Fame? She has been commemorated on a recent foreign stamp.

Ans. **Hedy Lamarr**

Hedy Lamarr made her American film debut in the 1938 film *Algiers* opposite Charles Boyer. She was born in Vienna, Austro-Hungary in 1914 and had acted in several Austrian, German and Czech films in the early 1930s before moving to the United States to work for Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer Studio. Over her acting career of 28 years she acted in 30 films. At the age of 18 she married Friedrich Mandl, an arms merchant and munitions manufacturer who took her to business meetings where she came in contact with scientists and was introduced to the field of applied science.

She fled the marriage and her country in 1937 to London where she met Louis B. Mayer of MGM and traveled with him to the United States and began her American film career. With no formal training in science, she enjoyed science and often spent her spare time on various hobbies and inventions such as an improved traffic stoplight. During World War II Lamarr realized that a single radio-controlled torpedo could severely damage enemy ships, but radio-controlled torpedoes could be thrown off course by jamming the control signal. Remembering the knowledge she gained about torpedoes from her first husband, Friedrich Mandl, she conceived of a device producing frequency-hopping to change the signal sent between the control center on the ship and the torpedo itself as the code for the sequence of frequencies is



Austria 2011

identical between the ship and the torpedo. With George Antheil (1900–1959), an American composer, pianist and inventor, they developed a device using a piano roll to randomly change that signal, controlling the frequency-hopping sequence using a player-piano mechanism allowing the Allies to steer torpedoes and making the torpedoes difficult to locate and secure against interference. They patented the device in 1942.

Although it was not adopted by the United States Navy during World War II, updated versions of their design were installed on Navy ships during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis and today various spread-spectrum techniques, including frequency-hopping, are incorporated in Bluetooth technology and are related to some methods of early Wi-Fi.

In 1997 Hedy Lamarr was the first woman to receive the Invention Convention's BULBIE Gnass Spirit of Achievement Award, known as the "Oscars of Inventing" and in 2014 Lamarr and Antheil were posthumously inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame for their frequency-hopping, spread spectrum technology. Hedy Lamarr died in Florida in 2000 of heart disease at the age of 85 years.



Hedy Lamarr and her invention. Austria 2020





On August 20, 2020, in association with the Virtual Stamp Show, the United States Postal Service issued five non-denominated (55¢) self-adhesive, forever stamps in a pane of 20 highlighting the American spirit of innovation. Each of the five different designs represent an area in which U.S. scientists and engineers have made significant contributions. The rate satisfies the first class, one-ounce mailing rate for letters. Art director Antonio Alcalá designed the stamps, and chose a detail of an existing photograph for each of the innovations with the name of each innovation in the lower left corner of each stamp. Overlying each stamp is the word 'INNOVATION' in large grey interconnected letters. Although only two of the depicted innovations have names that can be directly tied to the medical field, a case can be made that each of the other three innovations also play a role in medicine. The following innovations are celebrated on the stamps:

## Computing

The stamp shows a computer circuit board which is now ubiquitous in numerous machines and devices used in all fields of clinical and laboratory medicine. According to PCMag.com, "the rigid circuit board holds chips and other electronic components, and is made of layers, from two to a dozen or more, that interconnect components via copper pathways."



## Robotics

Shown on the stamp is a photograph of a robotic anklefoot prosthetic device designed and built by the MIT Media Lab's Biomechatronics group. The device was designed and built by Matt Carney PhD '20 and members of the Biomechatronics group, led by Professor Hugh Herr. According to Dr. Carney, "robotic prostheses integrate biomechanics, mechanical, electrical, and software engineering, and no piece is off-the-shelf. To attempt to fit within the confines of the human form, and to match the bandwidth and power density of the human body, we must push the bounds of every discipline: computation, strength of materials, magnetic energy densities, sensors, biological interfaces, and so much more."



## Biomedicine

The stamp shows a scanning electron micrograph of white and red blood cells.



## Solar technology

The stamp shows a photograph of a detail of a solar cell. Solar-powered medical instrumentation is being used to bring medical care to rural areas.



## Genome sequencing

The stamp shows a detail from a DNA chromatogram. Genome sequencing yields genetic information from deoxyribonucleic acid molecules and can show changes in a gene that can relate to a disease.



# D IS FOR DOGS

## Newfoundland

Canadian fishermen have used Newfoundland dogs as shipboard working dogs because with their webbed feet they are born swimmers and specialized in water rescues. Their prowess as rescuers is the stuff of legend: "What the St. Bernard is to the Alps, the Newfoundland is to the icy waters of the North Atlantic". Because of their great strength they also earned their keep by hauling fishnets to shore and hauling carts of the day's catch to market. A Newfoundland named Seaman was part of the 1802 Lewis & Clark expedition acting as a hunter and a guard dog and is depicted on a number of Lewis & Clark monuments. Lord Byron erected a monument at Newstead Abbey for his Newfoundland, Boatswain, and another Newfoundland, Brumus, looked after the eleven children of Senator and Mrs. Robert F. Kennedy.



Newfoundland 1887  
[1st dog stamp]

## St. Bernard & Swiss Bouvier



Monaco 2002

[Bernard of Menthen, an 11th century monk established a hospice at a snowy pass in the Swiss Alps to aid pilgrims journeying to Rome. At 8,000 feet and with large snow drifts, crossing the pass was dangerous. Over the centuries the hospice monks developed the powerful working dog, the St. Bernard.]

## Working Dogs. Great Britain 2008

### Police Dogs



German shepherd 'Max'.  
[Police dogs are used for guarding, tracking, chasing & arresting.]

### Customs Dogs



Springer Spaniel 'Max'  
[It takes about 3 months of intensive training to develop the nose and expertise to uncover anything from drugs and banknotes at airports, in vehicles, etc.]

### Mountain Rescue Dogs



Cross-bred 'Merrick'  
[Search & Rescue dogs pick up a human scent on wind and air currents that has been effective in locating lost or injured persons.]

### Guide Dogs



Labrador 'Warwick'  
[Dogs helping blind people can be traced back to Roman times. The dogs need to be obedient, patient, friendly, intelligent and aware of their surroundings.]

### Assistance Dogs



Retriever 'Rowan'  
[Capable of warning of oncoming seizures, strong sounds and alarms, they have to avoid obstacles, help guide and provide companionship.]

### Sheepdogs



Border collie 'Bob'  
[Good at herding, chasing, guarding and they can be directed by voice and whistle at long distances.]



# D IS FOR DOGS



**Slovakian Cuvac**

Slovakia 2007

**Slovakian Kopov**

[Derived from Arctic wolves, these dogs have been used by Slovak alpine farmers to guard sheep & other livestock, herd them to pasture and as a companion dog to the farmers.]

[Known since antiquity as a hunting dog of scenthound type.]



**Labrador puppy and West Highland terrier.**

Australia 2004

# The Opioid Overdose Epidemic and A Brief History of Opioids

By Frederick C. Skvara

On October 27, 2020, during Red Ribbon Week, drug use prevention awareness program, sponsored by the National Family Partnership, the USPS issued a single nondenominated (55¢) Forever stamp entitled "Drug Free USA". The Partnership was established in 1980 as the National Federation of Parents for Drug Free Youth. The image of a white star surrounded by lines of red, light blue and blue suggesting "unity that is necessary at all levels to effectively address drug abuse". This is the second stamp issued about drug abuse by the United States Post Office.



An 8¢ social awareness commemorative stamp was issued on October 4, 1971, with the inscription "Prevent Drug Abuse". The seated woman with her face buried in her crossed arms conveys despair. It was issued during Drug Prevention Week to point out a growing national problem and focus on drug control efforts. The first-day ceremonies were sponsored by the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs. At a press conference that same year President Richard Nixon identified drug abuse as "public enemy number one in the United States".



How bad is the opioid overdose problem in the United States? According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), from 1999 to 2018 almost 450,000 people died from an overdose involving an opioid, which includes prescription and illicit opioids. Deaths from opioid overdoses are the leading cause of death for Americans younger than 50 years of age. There appears to be three distinct waves over that time period to account for those deaths:

- 1) Increased prescribing of opioids in the 1990s
- 2) Rapid increases in heroin overdose deaths beginning in 2010
- 3) Significant increases in overdose deaths involving synthetic opioids, particularly those involving illicitly manufactured fentanyl

In 2018, the most recent year that I could find statistics, there were 67,367 drug overdose deaths in the United States with 69.2% involving an opioid. Non-opioid drug overdose deaths involve cocaine, methamphetamine and alcohol. There has been a slight decrease in deaths from prescription opioids (hydrocodone, oxycodone, oxymorphone, morphine, codeine, fentanyl) and heroin

as people have switched to the illicitly-manufactured fentanyl and fentanyl analogues, which now account for more and more of the opioid-involved deaths.

So if the coronavirus pandemic wasn't enough, we are still facing an opioid epidemic that is claiming over 125 people a day with more than 2 million Americans having opioid abuse disorders. Part of this tragedy is that the epidemic should not have been a surprise as humans have suffered from addictions to opium derivatives for hundreds of years.

Some definitions:

**Opium:** a reddish-brown heavy-scented addictive drug prepared from the juice of the opium poppy (*Papaver somniferum*)

**Opiate:** relating to, resembling, or containing opium

**Opioid:** an opiumlike compound that binds to one or more of the three opioid receptors of the body

Poppy.  
(*Papaver somniferum*)  
Yugoslavia 1957



## History of Opioids

The use of opium was known since the New Stone Age (8,000–3,000 B.C.) and its extraction from the opium poppy can be dated to around 5000 B.C. Poppy cultivation was first documented by the Sumerian civilization in southern Mesopotamia (ca. 3300 B.C.) (1). Its use in Greece dates back to the era of Minoan Crete (ca. 3000 B.C. – 1000 B.C.) where it



Sumerian cuneiform clay tablet and statue depicting a winged bull with a Human head. Austria 1965

was widely used in cult rituals and for therapeutic purposes throughout the eastern Mediterranean area. Poppy capsules decorated figurines, vases, pins and jewelry as it was considered a healing drug, important for fertility, wealth and immortality. The Minoan poppy goddess wears the seed capsules of the poppy in her diadem indicating that the ancient Cretans understood how to



extract opium from the poppy seed capsule. Demeter, the Great Mother Goddess and the Greek goddess of agriculture, brought the poppy from her Cretan cult to Greece.

Opium was used in ancient Egypt as it is mentioned in the Ebers papyrus (ca. 1550 B.C.) where it is attributed to Thoth for use in religious rituals or entertainment by priests, magicians and warriors. Hippocrates (ca. 460–377 B.C.) noted the opium's narcotic effect and other medicinal uses. His works were compiled in the *Corpus Hypocraticum* and in which opium is mentioned several times suggesting that Hippocrates and his followers used it widely. The use of opium was introduced in India through the conquests of Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.), King of Macedonia, as he spread the Greek language and culture over much of the known world. His armies traveled as far east as Afghanistan and northern India.



Demeter with poppy capsules. Greece 1986

its use can also be found in the *De Materia Medica* of Dioscorides (A.D. 40–90) and in the works of Galen (ca. A.D. 130–201).



Dioscorides. Algeria 1963



Galen Hungary 1989

But even in that time, there were physicians such as Diagoras of Cyprus (4th–3rd century B.C.), and Erasistratus (304–250 B.C.) from the Greek island of Chios. who condemned the wide use of opium due to its side effects. In fact, Diagoras categorized opium as a lethal substance.

In 1527 Paracelsus (1493–1541), a Swiss physician and alchemist created laudanum, an opium-based concoction that has been used in patent medicines for centuries. It is an alcoholic tincture of opium that contains almost all of the opium alkaloids, including morphine and codeine.



Paracelsus. Germany 1949

Friedrich Wilhelm Adam Sertürner (1783–1841), a German pharmacist, isolated the "sleeping agent" from the poppy plant in 1804. He named it morphine after Morpheus, the Greek god of dreams. In 1830 Jean-Pierre Robiquet (1780–1840), a French pharmacist, isolated codeine, a much less powerful drug than morphine, from opium.

In the early 19th century British traders were illegally importing opium from India to China. After the practice of smoking opium became popular, the demand for the drug increased dramatically and when edicts making opium illegal were unsuccessful, Emperor Daoguang (Qing Dynasty) banned all trade of opium in 1839, and ordered the seizure of all opium including that held by foreign governments and trading companies. To protect the British merchants and seek compensation for the destroyed opium held by British traders, the British government sent warships in 1840. In this, the First Opium War which lasted until 1842 and the Second Opium War from 1856 to 1860 between the European allies (Britain, France and Russia) and China, China was defeated. The opium trade was legalized, all China was open to British merchants and opium traffickers, additional treaty ports were established and Hong Kong was ceded to Great Britain in perpetuity.



Ebers Papyrus DDR 1981



Hippocrates. Greece 1947



Alexander the Great. Greece 1959



Hua Tao. China 1970

Hua Tao (A.D. 140–208), a Chinese surgeon documents the use of opium in China as an anesthetic during his surgeries. He was the first person to use anesthesia during surgery in China.

Avicenna (A.D. 980–1037) gives a detailed account of the pharmaceutical use of opium and its side effects in his *Cannon of Medicine*.

So opium's use as an effective painkiller and to induce anesthesia in surgery was quite common in the ancient world. Besides the medical texts mentioned above,



Avicenna Iran 1954

## The Opioid Overdose Epidemic and A Brief History of Opioids *(cont.)*

By Frederick C. Skvara

Medical and recreational use of morphine increased with refinement of the hypodermic needle in 1853. The hypodermic needle was invented in 1844 by Francis Rynd (1801–1861), an Irish physician. But the first hypodermic needle that used a true syringe and hollow needle was invented in 1853 by Alexander Wood (1817–1884), a Scottish physician. At first he used it exclusively to inject morphine and preparations of opium. Unfortunately, his wife died of an injected morphine overdose. At the same time Charles Pravaz (1791–1853), a French orthopedic surgeon, developed a hypodermic needle and syringe using a screw device rather than a plunger. Wood's basic design has remained essentially unchanged and the use of interchangeable parts and plastic since the 1950s has led to the nearly universal use of disposable syringes and needles.

During the American Civil War (1861–1865), the pain of gunshot wounds and other injuries along with diarrhea and cough were often treated with opiates – opium gum, laudanum or morphine injections. American physicians had known for some time that opiates could lead to addiction, but the huge number of people who became addicted during the Civil War-era led to what has been called America's first opioid epidemic. and it is estimated that by the end of the war, as many as 400,000 veterans were addicted. During this period, addicts were known as "opium slaves". Too unmanly to bear pain, or kick the habit by force of will, they risked losing their pensions and since many 19th-century physicians also believed that addiction could lead to insanity, the veterans could wind up in a mental asylum for decades.

In 1874, Charles Romley Wright (1844–1894), an English chemist created heroin, first called dimorphine, but later called heroin, for the German word "heroisch", meaning heroic. In 1898 Bayer synthesized heroin and began commercial production of the drug, marketing it as a nonaddictive substitute for morphine. But it was soon discovered that repeated administration of heroin results in the development of tolerance and the patients soon became heroin-addicts. In the early 20th century morphine addicts "discovered" the euphoria associated with



Opium seed capsules and powder & syringe. Kyrgyzstan 2008



Union & Confederate soldiers at the Battle of Gettysburg in American Civil War. United States 1963

heroin and that this effect was enhanced by intravenous administration. Heroin became a narcotic drug and its abuse began to spread quickly. And while strict regulations on the production and consumption of heroin led to a marked decrease in the 1930s, at the same time there was an increase in the illicit production and trafficking of the drug.

In 1916 University of Frankfurt scientists created oxycodone from thebaine (paramorphine), a minor component of opium. It also was thought at the time to be a less addictive alternative to morphine and heroin. It came to market in the United States in 1939. Methadone, a synthetic opioid was first synthesized in 1937 by German scientists at a German chemical and pharmaceutical company and was used by the Germans in the latter stages of World War II to replace a morphine shortage. It was marketed in the United States in 1947 by the Eli-Lilly company and was first used to treat opioid addiction during the 1950s and became a treatment option for heroin addiction in the 1960s. And although it can be addictive, the dosage is minimal and controlled by medical professionals and it remains a successful treatment for heroin addiction.

Paul Janssen (1926–2003) was a Belgian physician and founder of Janssen Pharmaceutica which is now a subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson. In 1960 he made fentanyl, a synthetic opioid used as a pain medication and, with other medications, for anesthesia as it has a rapid onset and its effects last under two hours. It can be administered by injection, nasal spray or skin patch. It is about 100 times stronger than morphine with some analogues being around 10,000 times stronger. It was the most widely used synthetic opioid in medicine in 2017. Currently, it and its analogues are the most common cause of overdose deaths in the United States with most of those deaths are due to illegally made fentanyl.

There are a number of other opioid painkillers recently introduced: Vycodin, a semi-synthetic opioid (combination of hydrocodone (a codeine derivative) and acetaminophen) in 1984; OxyContin containing oxycodone in 1995 and Percocet also containing oxycodone in 1996. All of these are at high risk for addiction and dependence.

The need to obtain opioids to sustain one's habit is a major cause of crime. More than 1.5 million people are arrested for drug infractions each year, and around half a million people are locked up for drug crimes.

Stemming this epidemic will not be easy. The chemical affinity between the poppy plant and the human brain is strong and as we have seen dates back thousands of years. Opioids don't directly harm the organs of the body and they are very effective painkillers even leading to a



sense of well-being. Heroin and other opioids attach to the endorphin receptors in the brain and gut more strongly and persistently than the body's natural endorphins. The increased sense of euphoria and pain relief is pleasurable and reinforces a desire for it to happen again and a craving for more of the drug i.e. addiction.

The irony is that as chemists tried to improve on opium the result was the creation of morphine and heroin and others to be used as medicines and were initially marketed as non-habit forming but were later found to be actually more addictive.

**Notes**

1) As the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers flow from their origin in the mountains of Asia Minor to the Persian Gulf, they form the ancient region known as Mesopotamia or “land between the rivers”. Here beginning around 5000 B.C. city-states emerged that would eventually

lead to the formation of true civilizations. The first great civilization was that of the Sumerians (ca. 3500 B.C.), who developed cuneiform writing on clay tablets, thousands of which survive to this day. Tablets have been found describing disease symptoms and treatment, methods of diagnosis and lists of drugs and their uses including opium from the poppy plant.

**References**

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- 2) *Medical History Through Postage Stamps* by Akira Furukawa, M.D. Ishiyaku EuroAmerica, Inc. 1994.
- 3) *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. Various. [Published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention]



**Gustav Mahler (1860–1911)**

*By Frederick C. Skvara*

Gustave Mahler was born in Bohemia-Moravia on July 7, 1860. He studied at the Vienna Conservatory and eventually attained the position of artistic director of the Vienna Opera. One of the great symphonists, he spent his summers composing in Austria and the winters conducting in Europe and the United States. He was a legendary conductor who exerted a spell over his singers and players and often achieved great performances. From 1908 to 1911 he conducted both the New York Philharmonic and the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. In February 1911, while in New York, he contracted bacterial endocarditis. Blood samples drawn by Geroge Baehr, an assistant to Dr. Emanuel Libman, an expert on endocarditis, grew *Streptococci*. Mahler died on May 18, 1911 in Vienna at the age of 50.



Austria 1960  
Birth Centenary



The stamp shows Mahler with a musical phrase from his 2nd Symphony in C minor (“Resurrection”). The words accompanying the movement Ich bin von Gott und will wieder zu Gott (I am from God and would return to God!) are from the folkpoem “Urlicht” (Primeval Light). Below the phrase is a vignette from an engraving by Gustave Dore, a French artist and book illustrator of the late 19th century. Israel 1996

## Harriet Tubman (ca. 1820–1913)

By Frederick C. Skvara

The exact year of Harriet Tubman's birth is unknown, but most scholars put it at 1820 or 1821. She was the best-known "conductor" on the Underground Railroad, a network of abolitionists who spirited blacks to freedom. A fugitive slave herself, Tubman made some nineteen return trips to rescue as many as three hundred slaves from bondage. Her courage and shrewdness were widely known and earned her the title "Moses of her people." Throughout her life she suffered from blackouts, the result of being struck on the head with a two-pound weight by an overseer. During the Civil War she served as a nurse, spy and scout for groups of raiders penetrating Confederate lines. She was the first American woman to lead men on a military raid.

In her later years Tubman worked for black education and social betterment, woman suffrage, and other causes.

When she died in 1913, in Auburn, New York, at a home she had established for needy and aged blacks, she was buried with full military honors.

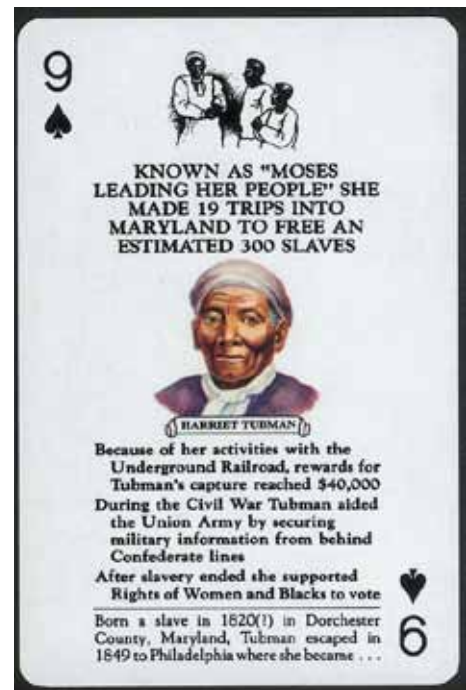
The United States Post Office began the Black Heritage series in 1978 with the stamp shown on the right for Harriet Tubman.



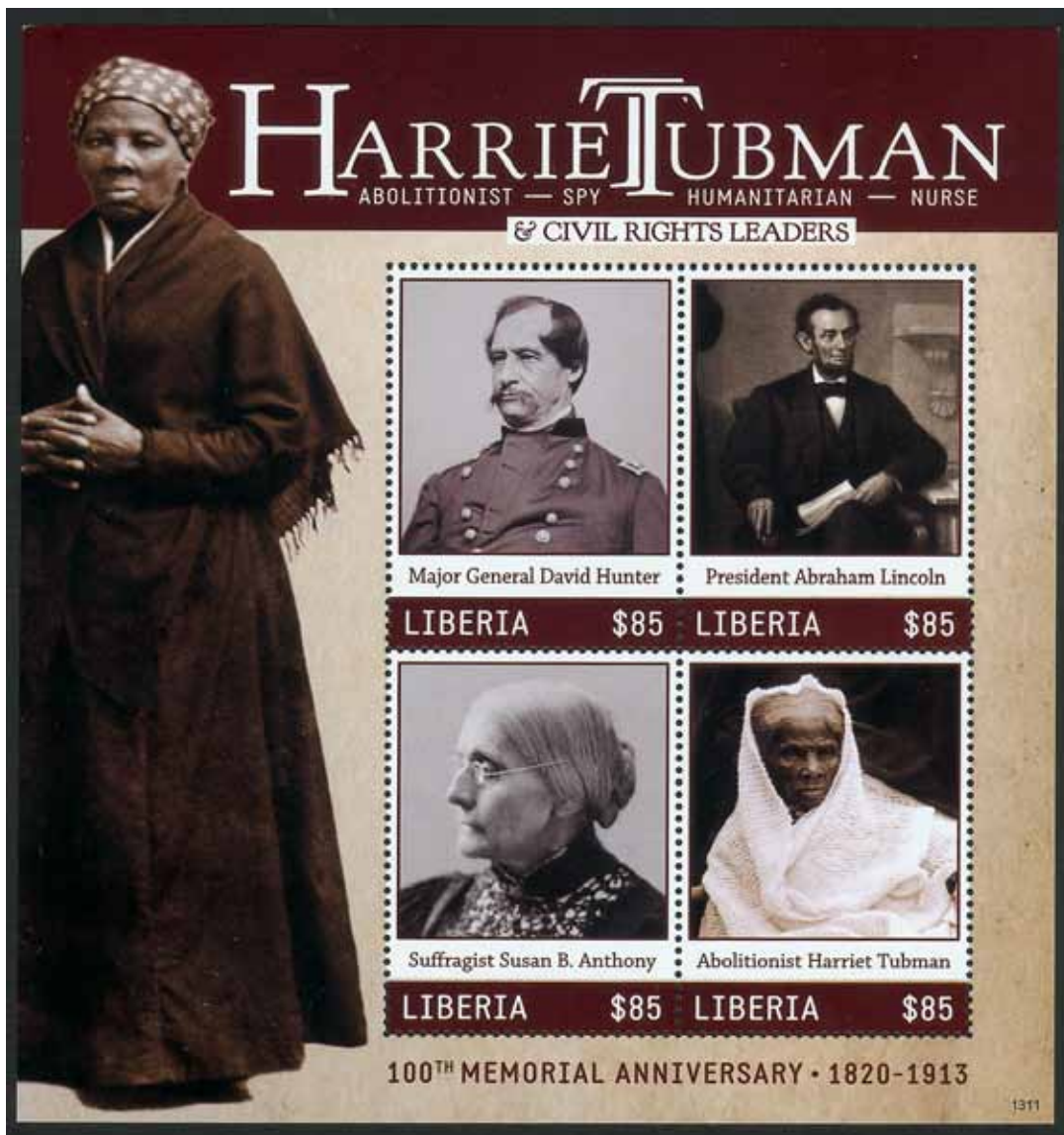
Harriet Tubman and cart carrying slaves. Black Heritage Series 1978



Photograph by H.B. Lindsley. Library of Congress.  
Published by Pomegranate Publications







### 1st row (L→R)

**Major General David Hunter (1802–1875)** - A Union general during the Civil War, he had strong anti-slavery views and in 1862 issued an order, immediately rescinded, freeing the slaves in Georgia, South Carolina and Florida. He formed the first Union Army black regiment, the First South Carolina Volunteers.

**President Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865)** - Encouraged by Frederick Douglass to use black soldiers in the Civil War and issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> row (L→R)

**Susan B. Anthony (1820–1906)** - American civil rights leader, suffragist and feminist who worked with Harriet Tubman for women's suffrage.

**Harriet Tubman (1820 –1913)** - Near the end of her life at the Harriet Tubman Home in Auburn, New York.

## Discover the World: *Niue*

Area – 101 sq.mi. Population – 1620 (2018est.)  
(Self-governing state in free association with New Zealand)



1950 (94)

Niue, the largest coral island in the world, is located in the south central Pacific Ocean and almost completely surrounded by coral reefs. Originally settled by Polynesians from Samoa around 1000 A.D., it was discovered by Europeans when Captain James Cook landed on the island in June 1774. He named it 'Savage Island' as he was badly received by the inhabitants. In 1901 it was annexed by New Zealand and achieved its current status in 1974.

From 1902 until 1920, stamps of New Zealand were overprinted with NIUE.

It began issuing its own stamps on August 23, 1920, with the release of a set of six pictorials and Niue has had its own stamps ever since. Beginning in the

1970s and up to 2018 Niue has issued about 1000 stamps in various formats with designs often bearing little or no connection with the island. I would hazard a guess that postally-used, non-philatelic covers would be rather hard to obtain, given the island's small population. Between 1932 and 1950 it used Cook Islands' designs on its stamps but Niue was incorporated in the design. From 1950 onward all stamps just have Niue as the country name.



Landing of Capt. Cook. 1932 (53)



Tepa Point. 2014



Avaiki Caves. 2014



Talava Arches. 2014



Huvalu Forest. 2014



Togo Chasm. 2014



Coral (*Acropora gemmifera*) 1996

The island was formed on a volcano rising from the bed of the ocean and is capped with limestone (carbonates mostly formed by corals) resulting in steep limestone cliffs along the coast with a central plateau that rises to 262 feet above sea level. There are no surface streams on Niue as the rainfall disappears in numerous cracks and seeps in the limestone and over time form arches, chasms or caves. Aquifers that are formed from rainwater that infiltrates the top layer of soil and percolates through the limestone supply the islanders water requirements. Roughly oval in shape it is 11 miles in diameter. The island receives about 80 inches of rainfall a year allowing the growth of a tropical and subtropical broadleaf forest and about 25% of the island still is covered by virgin rainforest that supports abundant birdlife. Arable land presently covers 75% of the island and almost all families grow their own food

for subsistence and sell the surplus either locally or for export. Crops grown for local consumption include the staple food taro, passionfruit, tapioca, yams, bananas, limes, coconuts and vanilla. Major export crops are coconut meat, passionfruit, limes, taro and vanilla and agriculture along with tourism and fishing are the main economies on the island.



Miti  
(*Aplonis tabuensis*)



Heahea  
(*Lalage maculosa*)



Kulukulu  
(*Ptilinopus porphyraceus*)