

AMERICAN COMMEMORATIVE CANCELLATIONS

**Issue Date**  
January 31, 2008

**First Day City**  
Cleveland, OH

**Artist**  
Kazuhiko Sano  
Mill Valley, CA

**Designer**  
Howard E. Paine  
Delaplane, VA

**Art Director**  
Howard E. Paine

**Typographer**  
Howard E. Paine

**Modeler**  
Avery Dennison,  
Security Printing  
Division (AVR/SPD)

**Manufacturing Process**  
Gravure

**Printer**  
Avery Dennison (AVR)

**Engraver**  
WRE/ColorTech

**Colors**  
Yellow, Magenta, Cyan,  
Black

**Image Area (w x h)**  
0.85 x 1.42 in.  
21.59 x 36.068 mm

**Format**  
Pane of 20 (1 design)

**Plate Numbers**  
"V" followed by four  
single digits

**Marginal Markings**  
© 2007 USPS, price,  
plate position diagram,  
header "BLACK HERITAGE  
31ST IN A SERIES," plate  
numbers, barcodes,  
biographical text,  
USPS logo

**Charles W. Chesnutt**

Pioneering writer Charles W. Chesnutt (1858-1932), who was of mixed racial heritage, broke through the "color line" in American publishing when his short story "The Goophered Grapevine" appeared in the August 1887 issue of *Atlantic Monthly*. A "goopher" is a magic spell. In an essay published in 1901, Chesnutt wrote, "The derivation of the word 'goopher' I do not know, nor whether any other writer than myself has recognized its existence, though it is in frequent use in certain parts of the South."

"The Goophered Grapevine" tells a story within a story: The framing tale, told by a white northern gentleman who moves to a farm in North Carolina, encloses a longer narrative by "Uncle" Julius McAdoo, an ex-slave who entertains his listeners—subtly instructing them at the same time—with tales of voodoo.

"The Goophered Grapevine" and other stories, all using the same "story within a story" device, were collected in *The Conjure Woman*, published in 1899. A faint whiff of authorial ridicule clings to Chesnutt's gentleman farmer, who is stolid, condescending, and perhaps a bit obtuse—but nonetheless correct when, commenting on Julius's tales, he remarks, "Some of these stories are quaintly humorous; others wildly extravagant ... while others ... disclose many a tragic incident of the darker side of slavery."

Indeed, a striking aspect of the stories in *The Conjure Woman* is the way they are poised between comedy and tragedy. Chesnutt was proud to receive a positive review from the eminent writer and critic William Dean Howells, who wrote: "The stories of *The Conjure Woman* have a wild, indigenous poetry.... Character, the most precious thing in fiction, is faithfully portrayed."

Other books by Chesnutt include *The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories of the Color Line* (1899) and the novels *The House Behind the Cedars* (1900), *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901), and *The Colonel's Dream* (1905).



*Black Heritage*  
**CHARLES W. CHESNUTT**

JANUARY 31, 2008 † CLEVELAND, OH 44101

FIRST DAY OF ISSUE

# Charles W. Chesnutt

CHARLES W. CHESNUTT was a pioneering writer who came to maturity in the post-Civil War period known as the Reconstruction era. His work addressed a broad range of African-American experience; Chesnutt was of mixed racial descent, which gave him insight into a variety of viewpoints along America's racial divide. He broke through the "color line" in

publishing when his short story "The Goophered Grapevine" appeared in the August 1887 issue of *Atlantic Monthly*.

Written partly in dialect, "The Goophered Grapevine" tells two stories: The first, narrated by a white northerner who becomes a gentleman farmer in North Carolina, frames a longer narrative by "Uncle" Julius McAdoo, an ex-slave who entertains and subtly instructs his listeners with tales of voodoo. "The Goophered Grapevine" and other stories using the identical framing device were collected in *The Conjure Woman*, published in 1899.

Later in 1899, Chesnutt published a second collection, *The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories of the Color Line*. His first published novel, *The House Behind the Cedars* (1900), detailed the efforts of an accomplished but naive young woman to pass for white.

In *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901), a novel inspired by a race riot that took place in North Carolina in 1898, Chesnutt presents a panoramic survey of race relations in a fictional town.

In *The Colonel's Dream* (1905), the last of his novels to be published during his lifetime, Chesnutt attacked the failures of Reconstruction, which, he argued, threatened to consign many black people to conditions as bad as they had been during the years of slavery. His other writings include essays, poems, a biography of Frederick Douglass, and several unpublished works.

Chesnutt was born on June 20, 1858, in Cleveland, Ohio, where he spent most of his life. He passed the Ohio bar examination in 1887 and became a wealthy man operating a court stenographic service. He was politically active and frequently spoke out against racial discrimination. Chesnutt died at his home in Cleveland on November 15, 1932.

In recent years, Chesnutt's work has attracted growing interest. He is recognized today as a major innovator and singular voice among American writers.



*Chas. W. Chesnutt*

background: Courtesy Special Collections and Archives, Franklin Library, Fisk University; top right and *Intaglio* autograph: Courtesy Fine Arts and Special Collections Department, Cleveland Public Library; bottom right: Courtesy Rare Books and Special Collections, Thomas Cooper Library, The University of South Carolina

Stamps printed by Avery Dennison (AVR) / No. 809 in a series / January 31, 2008 / Printed in U.S.A. / © 2008 United States Postal Service







# Charles W. Chesnutt

COMMEMORATIVE STAMP

**FIRST-DAY-OF-ISSUE CEREMONY**  
CLEVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY  
325 SUPERIOR AVENUE  
CLEVELAND, OH 44114  
THURSDAY, JANUARY 31, 2008  
11 A.M.

**MASTER OF CEREMONIES**

A. Grace Lee Mims  
WCLV-FM Radio, Arts Reporter  
and Host of "The Black Arts"

**HONOR GUARD**

Cleveland Postal Honor Guard



**CHORAL PRESENTATION**

*Star Spangled Banner*  
Lift Every Voice & Sing  
Cleveland Public Library Chorus

**INVOCATION**

Rev. Dr. Robin Hegeman  
Senior Pastor, Bethany Christian Church  
Cleveland, OH

**WELCOME**

Andrew Venable, Jr.  
Director, Cleveland Public Library

**OFFICIAL DEDICATION**

Delores Killete  
Vice President and Consumer  
Advocate  
United States Postal Service

**REMARKS**

Nathan Oliver  
Founder, Charles Waddel Chesnutt  
Literary Society

Elizabeth Baker Keffer  
Publisher, Atlantic Monthly

**VIDEO MESSAGE**

Richard H. Brodhead  
President, Duke University

**THEATRICAL TRIBUTE**

Research by Dr. Regennia Williams  
Adaptation by Adrienne Gosselin  
Directed by James C. Workman  
Geoffrey Thurman as Charles W. Chesnutt  
James C. Workman as John McLaughlin  
Kimberlee Smith as Susie Chesnutt

**CLOSING**

A. Grace Lee Mims

**SPECIAL GUESTS**

Donald Marshall, III  
District Manager, Northern Ohio District

Spencer Hsu  
Postmaster  
Cleveland, OH

Stanley Miller  
Executive Director  
NAACP, Cleveland Branch



# Charles W. Chesnutt

The U.S. Postal Service honors Charles W. Chesnutt, a pioneering writer and social activist whose work addressed a broad range of African-American experience during the post-Civil War period known as the "Reconstruction" era. Chesnutt is the 31st person inducted into the popular Black Heritage stamp series.

Art director Howard Paine wanted a stamp that emphasized Chesnutt's intelligence and dignity. The portrait painted by stamp artist Kazuhiko Sano was based on a 1908 photograph from the collection of Fisk University's Franklin Library.

Chesnutt made an important breakthrough when his short story "The Goophered Grapevine" was published in the August 1887 issue of *Atlantic Monthly*. He was proud to appear in such a prestigious publication, and was one of few African-American writers to have done so at that time.

In novels such as *The Marrow of Tradition* and short stories such as those collected in *The Conjure Woman* he probed the color line in American life.

Chesnutt was born June 20, 1858, in Cleveland, Ohio, to a father who went on to serve in the Union Army during

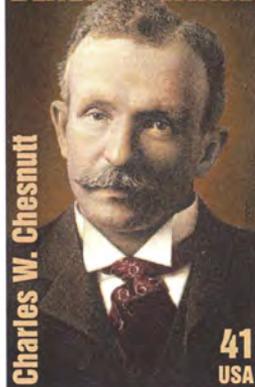
the Civil War. His father subsequently moved his wife and children to Fayetteville, North Carolina, which became the major setting for Chesnutt's fiction. Chesnutt received a fairly solid general education but taught himself shorthand, ancient languages and other subjects. As a young man, he taught school briefly and then served as principal of a school for African Americans in Fayetteville.

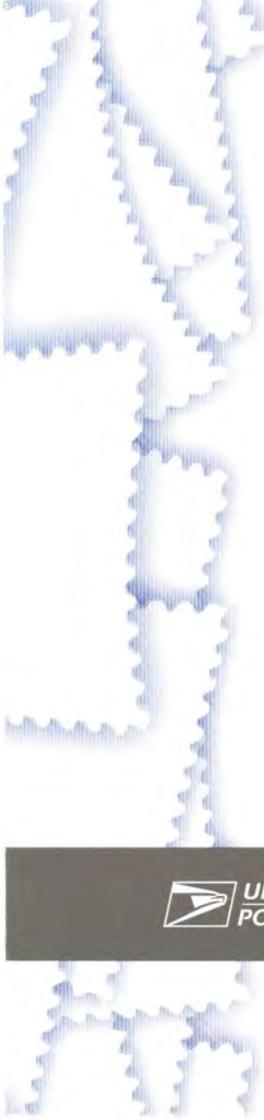
Chesnutt later settled in his birthplace, Cleveland. After becoming established there, he sent for his wife, Susan, whom he had married in 1878, and his children, who had remained in Fayetteville. He got work in a law office and studied law, passing the Ohio bar examination in 1887; he became a wealthy man operating a court stenographic service.

In 1928, Chesnutt received the Spingarn Medal, awarded by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) for "distinguished service" to the aspirations of African Americans. In giving him the award, the NAACP cited Chesnutt's "pioneer work as a literary artist depicting the life and struggles of Americans of Negro descent."

Chesnutt died at his home in Cleveland on November 15, 1932. In recent years, his work has attracted growing interest. Today Chesnutt is recognized as a major innovator and singular voice among turn-of-the-century literary realists who probed the color line in American life.

BLACK HERITAGE





*Black Heritage*

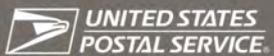
**CHARLES W. CHESNUTT**

JANUARY 31, 2008 ♪ CLEVELAND, OH 44101

**FIRST DAY OF ISSUE**



Rodney Lawrence Hurst Sr. Papers  
Thomas G Carpenter Library  
Special Collections



**first day of issue ceremony**



*Charles W. Chesnutt*  
*Black Heritage Series*

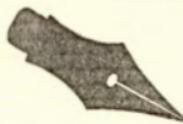


*Black Heritage*

**CHARLES W. CHESNUTT**

JANUARY 31, 2008 ♣ CLEVELAND, OH 44101

FIRST DAY OF ISSUE



Mrs. Muriel Cleaves  
114 Spring Street  
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Rodney Lawrence Hurst Sr. Papers  
Thomas G Carpenter Library  
Special Collections

# Charles W. Chesnutt

## Black Heritage Series

**First Day of Issue:** *January 31, 2008*

**First Day City:** *Cleveland, Ohio,*

*at the Cleveland Public Library*

**Stamp Illustrator:** *Kazuhiko Sano*

*Mill Valley, California*

Charles Waddell Chesnutt is remembered as one of the first African-American writers to explore racial themes in his work. The release of the 41¢ Charles W. Chesnutt stamp commemorates the 150th anniversary of the author's birth. The 31st issue in the Black Heritage series, which began in 1978, the stamp features a painting of Chesnutt based on a 1908 photograph from the special collections of Fisk University's Franklin Library.

Charles W. Chesnutt was born on June 20, 1858 in Cleveland, Ohio, the son of two freed slaves from North

Carolina. His parents were both of mixed race, and Chesnutt's first novel, *The House Behind the Cedars* (1900), centers around two characters who "pass" for white, something Chesnutt himself never did. His collection *The Conjure Woman* (1899) features stories of slaves outwitting their masters. Chesnutt's powerful writing met with critical acclaim but did not sell well during his lifetime. His work has gained popularity in recent decades, thanks to contemporary critics who recognize the way Chesnutt combined skilled writing with a then-controversial political agenda.

Chesnutt was also a lawyer and an early political advocate for the rights of African Americans. He was aligned with activists W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington and wrote a biography of Frederick Douglass. Charles W. Chesnutt died in Cleveland on November 15, 1932.