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Rodney Lawrence Hurst, Sr. Papers

9-1-1995

American Commemoratives Stamp Series: Louis Armstrong

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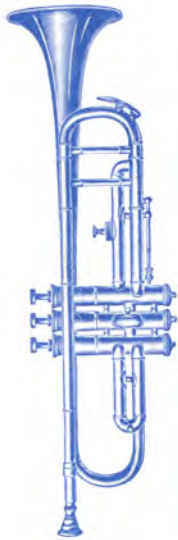
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AMERICAN COMMEMORATIVES



LOUIS ARMSTRONG

A trumpet-playing legend in his own lifetime, Armstrong was one of the predominant figures who brought jazz into the mainstream of American society through his phenomenal talent and jovial goodwill.

Born Louis Armstrong and nicknamed "Satchelmouth" (Satchmo) for the way his cheeks puffed out when he blew his trumpet, he grew up in New Orleans. His first formal training to play an instrument was with cornetist Bunk Johnson. As a child he spent a year at the New Orleans Waifs' Home where he was encouraged to pursue his music, and learned to play the bugle and cornet. It was not until later that he took trumpet lessons from Joe "King" Oliver. Then in 1921, while playing an engagement on a Mississippi River Boat, a fellow musician taught him to read music.

Armstrong's popularity and skill expanded rapidly in the early 1920s, as he led his own recording band, the Hot Five. Some claim that these were his greatest years, when Satchmo elevated his talent to what critics called "a celestial art." In 1930, he began choosing his material from pop songs instead of blues



or original instrumental numbers. This pioneering paved the way for the swing-band era that emerged in the mid 1930s.

Although some have criticized Armstrong for straying from pure jazz, his clarity of tone, outstanding technique, rhythmic freedom, and genius for improvisation made him the central figure for American jazz in the first half of the twentieth century. He invented "scat" singing when he dropped his sheet music during a recording session. With his gravelly voice, Armstrong sang nonsense words until someone replaced the score.

The giant of jazz influenced many later generations of musicians, including Coleman Hawkins, Cootie Williams, Joe Thomas, and Buck Clayton. He also appeared in several films and on Broadway.

Although his biggest commercial successes were recordings of popular tunes, such as *Mack the Knife* and *Hello, Dolly!*, Louis Armstrong made his mark on America and the world with his trumpet and jazz melodies.

This stamp, designed by Dean Mitchell, was issued on September 1, 1995, in New Orleans, Louisiana.





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Issue Date: September 1, 1995

First Day City: New Orleans, Louisiana

Designer: Dean Mitchell,
Overland Park, Kansas

Typographer: Tom Mann, Mann & Mann Graphics,
Warrenton, Virginia

Modeler: Joe Sheeran,
Ashton-Potter (USA), Ltd.

Manufacturing Process: Offset

Colors: Offset: Process cyan, magenta,
yellow, and black

Image Area: 1.44 inches x 1.11 inches or
36.6 x 28.0 millimeters

Plate Numbers: "P" followed by four single digits

Stamps Per Pane: 20

Marginal Markings: © USPS 1994, plate position
diagram, price, promotional copy

Louis Armstrong

Louis Armstrong's trumpet tunes and jovial disposition earned him respect and favor around the world. From the streets of New Orleans to the clubs of Chicago, "Satchmo" took the sound and rhythm of jazz to their zenith. As his popularity soared in the 1920s, his skills expanded, and "scat" singing—using nonsense words instead of the lyrics—made his rough voice almost as well-known as the sound of his horn.

As a boy, Armstrong learned to play the cornet and bugle at a waifs' home in New Orleans. At 17, he started playing in "Kid" Ory's band. Four years later, he joined his mentor Joseph "King" Oliver's group in Chicago. He also played with Fletcher Henderson's big dance band and recorded with the Hot Five and Hot Seven. Some of his best-known hits include "Struttin' with Some Barbecue," "Potato Head Blues," and "Back o' Town Blues."

This stamp was issued both as a single and as part of the Jazz Musicians issue, which features ten jazz greats and is the ninth installment in the Legends of American Music series. The single stamp has white type for the denomination and "USA," with Armstrong's name in black. The colors are reversed on Armstrong's image on the Jazz Musicians pane.



The American Music Stamp Festival

