



AMERICAN COMMEMORATIVES

The U.S. Postal Service's Legends of American Music series has recognized Broadway Musicals, Jazz Musicians, Big Band Leaders, Rock and Roll, Rhythm and Blues, Country and Western, Opera Singers, Classical Composers and Conductors, and Folk Singers. Now, Gospel Singers are taking center stage.

Gary Kelley of Cedar Falls, Iowa, created these lovely portraits of four women gospel singers: Clara Ward, Mahalia Jackson, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, and Roberta Martin. From the early 1930s to the 1970s, these four women helped build the foundation of modern gospel music.



Gospel Singers



Kelley based his image of Clara Ward on an album cover. This gospel great led the most successful female gospel group of the 1950s. Performer Marion Williams, who sang with the Ward Singers, was quite influenced by Ward, as were Little Richard and Aretha Franklin.

During her lifetime, the rich alto voice of Mahalia Jackson was known throughout the world. In 1959, she sang for President Dwight D. Eisenhower on his birthday. In 1961, she performed at the inauguration of President John F. Kennedy. "When you sing gospel you have a feeling there is a cure for what's wrong," Jackson explained.

Sister Rosetta Tharpe, an accomplished guitar player, was the first gospel singer to record with a major record label. She performed gospel music in secular venues—nightclubs, concert theaters, and so on. For this choice, she received criticism from some members of her gospel audience.

Kelley based his image of Roberta Martin on a photograph from her family. This gospel singer was extremely productive. She composed over 70 songs, founded the Roberta Martin Singers, and started her own publishing house for gospel music.

These stamps were issued on July 15, 1998, in New Orleans, Louisiana.





1997

Issue Date: July 15, 1998

First Day City: New Orleans, Louisiana

Designer: Howard Paine, Delaplaine, Virginia

Illustrator: Gary Kelley, Cedar Falls, Iowa

Art Director: Howard Paine

Typographer: Tom Mann, Vancouver, Washington

Modeler: Donald H. Woo

Printer: Sennett Security Products

Manufacturing Process: Gravure

Colors: Magenta, yellow, cyan, black, PMS 302 (Line Blue), PMS 186 (Line Red)

Image Area: 1.42 x 1.10 inches or 36.07 x 27.94 millimeters

Format: Water-activated Pane of 20 (four designs)

Plate Numbers: "S" followed by six (6) single digits

Marginal Markings: © USPS 1997, Position Diagram, Plate Numbers, Price

Gospel Singers

As African Americans migrated from the South in the early 20th century, they carried their religious traditions with them. Out of these religious songs, from standard spirituals to Baptist lining hymns, grew modern gospel music. Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Clara Ward, Roberta Martin, and Mahalia Jackson—four great gospel performers—created deeply rhythmic and intense music that lifted their audiences to higher emotional and spiritual levels.

Sister Rosetta Tharpe upset many traditionalists by being the first performer to take religious music into concert halls and nightclubs. Tharpe became quite famous during her lifetime. A performer with both style and substance, Clara Ward continued Tharpe's mission and performed in nightclubs. Ward influenced many singers who were to follow her, including Little Richard and Aretha Franklin.

Roberta Martin broke new ground as well, establishing her own gospel music publishing house. She composed over 70 songs and founded *The Roberta Martin Singers*. Gifted with a magnificent voice and fervent faith, Mahalia Jackson began making records in 1934 and toured the United States and Europe. Eight of her records sold over a million copies.

Now, these four gospel greats are appearing in a new venue: the Legends of American Music stamp series.





FIRST DAY OF ISSUE



The origins of gospel music can be found in slave songs and Black spirituals which were an important source of strength and inspiration in rural Black America. By the twentieth century, gospel music moved into the cities and became more emotional and religious in nature. The song leaders tended to be the ministers, singers or preachers who had strong, authoritative voices.

ROBERTA MARTIN (1907-1969) renamed her group the Roberta Martin Singers in 1935 and four years later, she formed her own company to publish her music. Besides her versatile contralto voice, she was an accomplished pianist, composer, group leader and music publisher. During the thirty-six year career of her group, she earned a remarkable six gold records for selling a million copies of a song or an album.

MAHALIA JACKSON (1911-1972) is considered the "queen" of gospel singing and has been credited with turning gospel music into an art form. In 1950, she earned a gold record for her recording "Move On Up a Little Higher" and was the first gospel singer to do so. She was inspired by the blues recordings of Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey and became an ambassador by touring Europe and introducing gospel music to a worldwide audience.

SISTER ROSETTA THARPE (1915-1973) was the daughter of a spiritual singer. After establishing a reputation as a singer-evangelist in Chicago, she moved to New York and became known for her electrifying performances at the Holy Roller Church in Harlem. She was a brilliant guitarist who recorded many popular vocal duets including "Up Above My Head" with Marie Knight in 1947.

CLARA WARD (1924-1973) was accompanying the Ward Trio on the piano at the age of ten. On a path to becoming one of the first commercially successful gospel singers, she composed, arranged, sang and led the famous Ward Singers to prominence during the golden age of gospel music, 1945-1960.

The United States Postal Service honors Roberta Martin, Mahalia Jackson, Sister Rosetta Tharpe and Clara Ward with the issuance of the Gospel Singers commemorative stamps. This latest edition of the Legends of American Music stamp series, designed by Gary Kelley of Cedar Falls, Iowa, makes its debut at the Louisiana Superdome, New Orleans, Louisiana, on July 15, 1998.

GOSPEL SINGERS



GOSPEL SINGERS COMMEMORATIVE STAMPS

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Legends of American Music



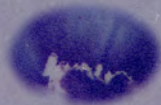
GOSPEL SINGERS



FIRST DAY OF ISSUE
SUPERDOME, NEW ORLEANS, LA
JULY 15, 1998



Legends of American Music



GOSPEL SINGERS

COMMEMORATIVE STAMPS

FIRST DAY OF ISSUE CEREMONY • FULL GOSPEL BAPTIST CHURCH FELLOWSHIP CONFERENCE '98
LOUISIANA SUPERDOME, NEW ORLEANS • JULY 15, 1998

PRELUDE

Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship
Mass Choir

OPENING REMARKS

Philip E. Holland
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INVOCATION

Bishop Carlos Malone
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WELCOME

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Bishop Paul S. Morton
International Presiding Bishop
Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship

REMARKS AND INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

Kirk Franklin
Gospel Recording Artist

MUSICAL TRIBUTES TO THE STAMP HONOREES

SISTER ROSETTA THARPE:
Vickie Winans
Host of Nationally Syndicated Gospel Show,
"Singsation"
Selection: *Throw Out the Lifeline*

ROBERTA MARTIN:
The Barrett Sisters
Gospel Artists
Selection: *I'll Fly Away*

CLARA WARD:
Dr. Bobby Jones
Host of BET's "Bobby Jones Gospel Hour"
Selection: *Packin' Up*

MAHALIA JACKSON:
Joshua Nelson
Gospel Performer
Selection: *Move On Up A Little Higher*

REMARKS AND INTRODUCTION OF THE DEDICATING OFFICIAL

William J. Henderson
Postmaster General, CEO
United States Postal Service

DEDICATION OF THE GOSPEL SINGERS STAMPS

Honorable LeGree Daniels
Board of Governors
United States Postal Service

HONORED GUESTS

ASSOCIATE OF SISTER ROSETTA THARPE
David Gough
President, Gospel Music Hall of Fame

FAMILY OF ROBERTA MARTIN
Leonard Austin
Sandra Austin
Tara Austin

FAMILY OF MAHALIA JACKSON
Pearl Jackson
John A. Jackson, Jr.
Bertha Reine
Doris A. Westrey
John Jackson, III
Emanuel Duskin
Warren Smith
Rose Champagne

FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF CLARA WARD
Willia Ward
Rita Bell
Charolette Simms
Wilhelmina Washington
Toni Rose

CLOSING REMARKS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Kirk Franklin

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