

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Women Given Recognition

A new stamp recently issued by the United States Post Office department, depicts the alert faces of four young women, each attired in the uniform of one of the women's services, WAC, WAVES, Air Corps, and Marines.

Besides bringing further recognition to all American women who have served their country in uniform, those four faces on the stamp dedicated to Women in the Armed Forces raise the total of women so honored to nearly a score.

Myrtle C. Johnson, writing in *Independent Woman*, the national publication of the National Federation of the Business and Professional Women's Clubs, writes that some of the other women who have been so honored would have found it difficult to believe, during their lifetimes, that they would ever come to receive this sign of public approval.

Among the women whose portraits so serenely grace the upper right-hand corner of thousands of envelopes are a number who in their own day got from the public more insults than compliments, and who earned their recognition from the United States Post Office Department by working for unpopular causes in the face of ridicule, opposition, and scorn, declares our modern *Business and Professional Woman*.

Under the most favorable of circumstances none could have expected to find herself portrayed on a postage stamp within her lifetime, because it is the official policy of the Post Office Department not to issue stamps bearing the likeness of a living person. In fact, according to record, the features of the four young women who served as models for the stamp honoring Women in the Armed Forces were altered enough to make them unrecognizable, even to their best friends.

It was Queen Isabella of Spain who received the first recognition of a United States stamp, writes Miss Johnson. Although it was more than 400 years before the American people decided publicly to thank her for having had the courage to lend the weight of her name, and her treasury, to financing the heroic voyage of Christopher Columbus. The time lapse was made up for by the issuance in 1893, of a \$4 stamp which she shared jointly with the great explorer.

The photograph of Martha Washington was, not surprisingly, the first woman's picture to occupy a full stamp. Gilbert Stuart's lovely portrait of the First Lady was selected to adorn an eight cent stamp issued in 1902, the centennial anniversary of her death. Twenty-one years later Martha Washington was again chosen for postal service, this time for a four cent stamp. In 1938, the only woman to receive the honor three times, a one and one-half cent stamp was issued bearing her likeness.

For this third stamp honoring the wife of the first President of the United States, a photograph of the bust done of her by Mrs. L. MacDonald Sleeth was used to pay homage to the first First Lady of the Land. Finally, the serene profile of Martha Dandridge Custis Washington was reproduced on one-half of a double postal card – the first President of the United States appearing on the half meant for the business message, his worthy spouse on the half meant for the business reply.

(To be continued)