

# *Church Founder Richard Allen Honored*

The issue date for the Richard Allen Black Heritage Forever stamp is February 2 at the Bethel Methodist Church in Philadelphia, Pa. The format is a pressure-sensitive adhesive (PSA) pane of 20 stamps.

At <http://ame-church.com/>, the website of the Church, we find this biographical information on Reverend Allen:

“Richard Allen was born a slave in Philadelphia, Pa. on February 14, 1760, and was one of the first African Americans to be emancipated during the Revolutionary era. In 1789, he was ordained the first African American deacon of the Methodist church. Racial inequality forced Richard Allen and other Black Methodists to leave St. George’s Methodist Church (the first and oldest Methodist Church in the United States) to organize the Free African Society whose main goal was to provide aid to newly freed Blacks so they could gather strength and develop leaders in the community. In July of 1794, Allen formed Bethel Methodist Church.

“In 1816, Rev. Richard Allen and the members of the newly formed Bethel Church won legal recognition as an independent church. In the same year Allen and representatives from four other black Methodist congregations (in Baltimore; Wilmington, Delaware; Salem, New Jersey; and Attleboro, Pennsylvania) met at the Bethel Church to organize a new denomination— the African Methodist Episcopal Church— where he was consecrated



as the first Bishop.

During his mid-life, Bishop Richard Allen is known for being one of the first African American humanitarians to respond to the Yellow Fever Epidemic by helping the sick in 1793, founding a day school for African American children in 1795, and founding the ‘Society of Free People of Colour for Promoting the Instruction and School Education of Children of African Descent’ in 1804.

Referring to the new stamp, we learn from the Church website: “Over 40,000 people of good will petitioned the United States Postal Service to create a stamp honoring Bishop Richard Allen, a true American whose life and legacy has impacted millions throughout the world. As one of American’s strongest early advocates for racial equality, Bishop Richard Allen’s extraordinary life shows a man deeply devoted to his religion, his community, and his desire to expand the rights of African Americans...”

The stamp art is a portrait of Allen, a detail from an 1876 print titled “Bishops of the A.M.E. Church.” Featuring Allen in the center surrounded by ten other bishops and six historical vignettes, the full print is from the collection of the Library Company of Philadelphia.

The Richard Allen issue is the 39th in the Postal Service’s Black Heritage series that began in 1978 with the Harriett Tubman issue. The release of the stamps ties in with many other Black History Month activities in February.