

# Woodrow Wilson's Legacy Explored Through US Postal Stamps



President Woodrow Wilson 32c stamp, 1998

## By Traci Holmer



# World War I



Liberty Stamp 3c violent, 1919. From the Woodrow Wilson Hosue collection.

This is the very first copy World War I Victory stamp and the first stamp in American history to commemorate World War I. The design shows the Goddess of Liberty Victorious standing in front of the flags of the Allies. Isolationists, or Americans who followed President Washington's philosophy in staying out of foreign affairs, scrutinized Wilson for entering World War I. For this reason, the Liberty Stamp was the only World War I stamp issued by the Wilson administration during and after the war. In comparison, Franklin D. Roosevelt issued far more stamps during World War II.





Veterans World War I 22c stamp, 1985.

Between 1919 and 1985, no stamps were released about World War I. The reason that this stamp was released is likely due to the large social movement developing in 1985 which focused on advocacy for veterans. During that year, the Veterans for Peace organization was founded and there were large protests in cities like DC and New York City fighting for veteran rights. So, while this a World War I commemorative, it has more to do with supporting the veterans of the war than celebrating the war itself.



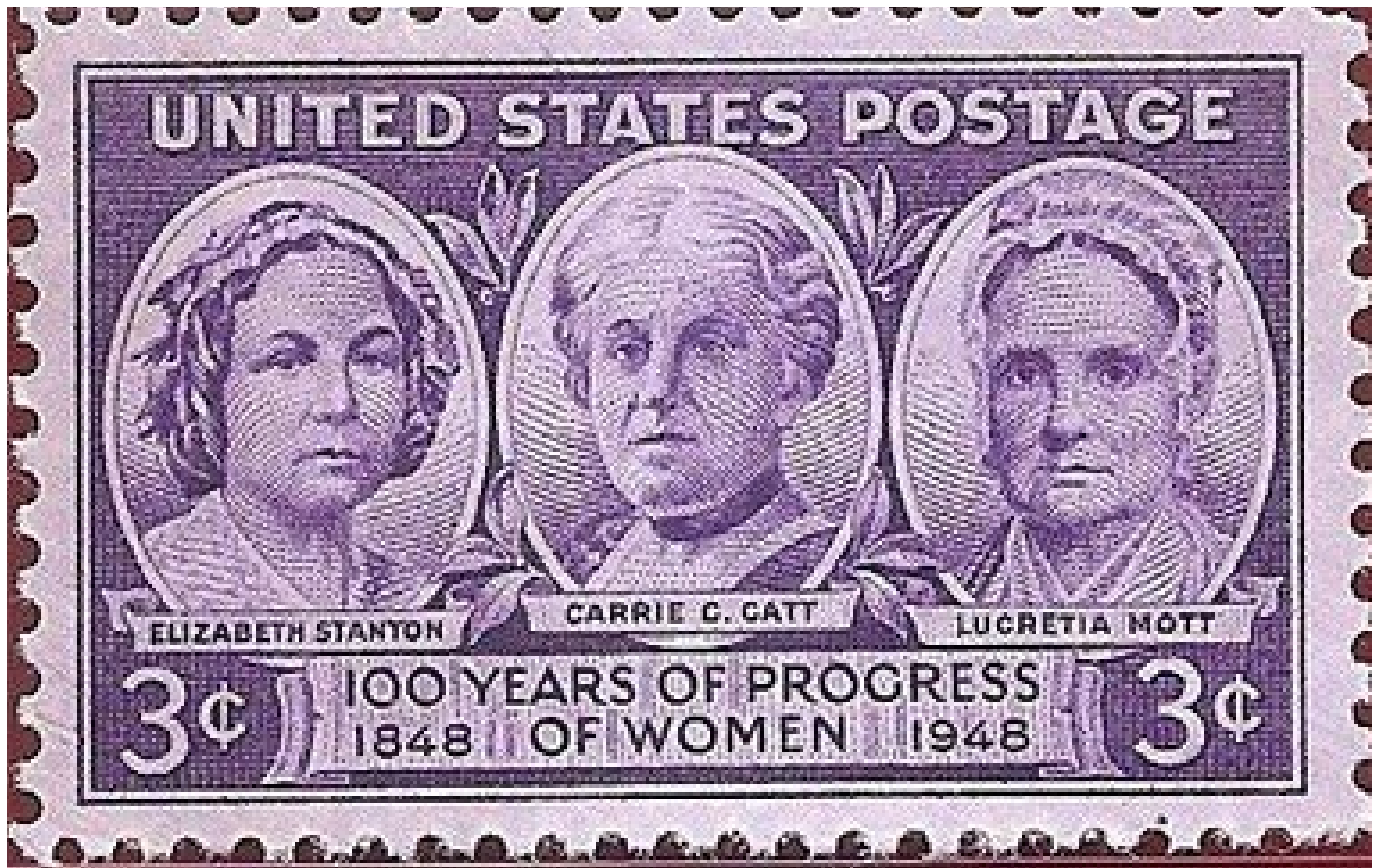


Turning of the Tide World War I Forever 50c stamp, 2018

This Turning of the Tide stamp was issued in 2018 to honor the millions of American soldiers and families who experienced World War I on the frontlines at home and abroad. It shows a patriotic image of a determined young soldier holding an American flag amid chaos. Many historians and American citizens still debate today whether the U.S. entering World War I was necessary. However, it seems the public no longer resents Wilson for entering the war as this is one of the few stamps that actually celebrates American involvement in the war.



# Suffrage



100 years of Program of Women 3c violet stamp, 1948.

This stamp commemorates the first Women's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls, New York in 1848. Many historians consider this the beginning of the suffrage movement. The stamp presents Elizabeth Stanton on the left, who wrote the Declaration of Sentiments and read the 18 grievances at the Seneca Falls Convention. Carrie C. Catt is in the middle and she led the campaign for the 19th Amendment which granted women the right to vote in 1920. The last woman on the right is Lucretia Mott, who helped Stanton organize the Seneca Falls Convention and fought for suffrage throughout her life.



50th anniversary women's suffrage 6c stamp, 1970

This stamp celebrates the 50th anniversary of the 19th amendment. On the left are suffragists protesting for women's rights, and the right is a woman voting on a machine. Despite the advancements in stamp technology seen during this time, there is a lack of color variation, and the design of the suffragists protesting is small and distant. The stamp communicates that in 1970, the suffrage movement was only about voting and not about women's rights as a whole. This makes sense as gender inequality was still rampant in 1970. There was a Women's Strike for Equality in New York City of 50,000 protestors demanding gender equality in the workplace as well as more access to abortions and childcare. There was also an ongoing problem of domestic abuse, which was not fully addressed until the Violence Against Women Act of 1994.





19th Amendment, Women Vote Forever Stamp, 2020.

This stamp celebrates the 100th anniversary of the suffrage movement.

The women are marching carrying flags with purple, white, and gold colors, which are the colors of the suffragist movement. Unlike the other suffrage stamps, this stamp includes women of color, which means that the contributions of women of color in the suffrage movement are at last being recognized. Women of color were often excluded from the early suffrage movement and did not have their right to vote protected until the Voting Rights Act of 1965, 45 years after the 19th amendment had been passed. The militaristic tone and overall strength of this stamp compared to the previous stamp indicate that while there is still inequality today, the U.S. has made tremendous strides to ensure women's rights.



# Wilson



Wilson \$1 stamp, 1938.

This stamp celebrates Wilson winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1919 for drafting the League of Nations. The design of Wilson is printed in black ink, has a side profile, and has a stoic facial expression. It hardly seems like a celebration of Wilson at all, even though he was the first president to win a Nobel Peace Prize. This may be because many Americans, particularly isolationists, opposed the League of Nations. Since the U.S. refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, the U.S. was never a member of the League of Nations, so this is the only U.S. stamp that celebrates the League of Nations.





Liberty Series Wilson 7c red stamp, 1956

This is a stamp of Wilson that was part of a Liberty Series issued to celebrate defenders of freedom throughout U.S. history. Wilson was included in this series for his views on spreading democracy throughout the world. This makes sense because the government at this time was in the middle of the Cold War, so they shared Wilson's vision of a world of only democracies. As a segregationist, Wilson is far from a defender of freedom by today's standards, but this government who still enforced Jim Crow ignored that part of his legacy when they issued him as a part of this series.





President Woodrow Wilson 32c stamp, 1998

This stamp is part of the Celebrate the Century collection which commemorates major events and leaders of the 20th century. The stamp depicts Wilson looking into the sun which symbolizes how he was a progressive since he's looking into the future. The American flags in the background celebrate Wilson's views spreading American democracy. These views are emphasized most in the 1998 stamp since it is the end of the Cold War and the U.S. is the most dominant global power in the world. While the 1938 Wilson stamp indicated that the American public and government disliked Wilson's international vision, by 1998, that vision was celebrated.



# Conservation



Grand Canyon 2c red stamp, 1934.

The National Park Service (NPS) which was founded during Wilson's presidency, established the Grand Canyon as a national park in 1919. This stamp commemorated one of the first 20 national parks recognized at the time. This series was issued because in 1934 FDR was attempting to expand the NPS, and wanted to show the American public the diversity and beauty of these national parks. Today, there are 62 national parks in the United States, so the work of the NPS has left a tremendous impact on the U.S. long after Wilson died





Mount McKinley Alaska 15c stamp, 1917

This is a stamp of Mount McKinley in Alaska which was established as a national park by the NPS in 1917 during Wilson's presidency. The reason that Mount McKinley was established as a national park was that at the time there were many rumors of gold in the Mount McKinley area, so mining companies were attempting to gain rights over the land so that they could extract resources from the mountain.

Wilson was anti-trust, so he established the NPS to prevent large corporations from inflicting further damage to the environment. As more and more national parks were established by the NPS, corporations have been limited by government regulations when it comes to extracting resources, so the NPS is continuing to carry on Wilson's policy of preserving the environment from monopolies.





Glacier Bay National Park & Preserve Forever Stamp, 2016.

This is a stamp of Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve which was established as a national park in 1980 by the NPS. The melting glacier in the stamp sends a very powerful message in that if the government and the public fail to slow down climate change, the beauty and ecological growth we receive from these national parks will not last. Even though the work of the NPS has helped in preserving the environment, ecological systems, including the ones in these parks, are under threat all around the world, which means we must act with urgency.