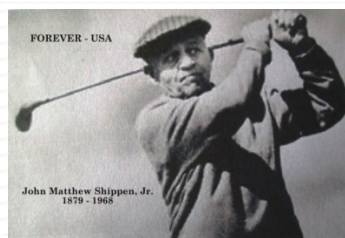


**Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee
c/o Stamp Development
U.S. Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW, Room 3300
Washington, DC 20260-3501**



Dear Sir/Madam:

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support of a United States Postage stamp honoring John Matthew Shippen, Jr., the first American-born golf professional and the first African American golf professional. John Matthew Shippen, Jr. (1879-1968) was born on December 12, 1879 in Washington, DC and moved to New York at the age of 12, as one of his father's early assignments was pastor of a church on the Shinnecock Indian reservation in Southampton, NY. A group of Southampton residents opened Shinnecock Hills in 1894 as a 12-hole golf course, which was expanded to 18 holes. The owner, Scotsman Willie Dunn began to teach some of the local youth how to caddy and play golf. One of his star pupils was John Shippen, who under the watchful eye of Dunn became a fine caddy and an accomplished golfer. He was made an assistant, gave lessons to some of the club members, repaired clubs, helped out the maintenance crew, as well as serving as a starter for tournaments; all this at the age of 16.

At the age of 16, in 1896, his golfing ability was so evident that members encouraged him to enter the second U.S. Open played at Shinnecock along with the English and Scottish golf professionals. Shippen shot a 78 to become the first American and the first African American to lead that tournament. Shippen did not win as he lost strokes in a sand trap on the 13th hole. However, it did not end that day at Shinnecock. He played in the U.S. Open six times, ending in 1913. His best finish was in 1902 where he again finished fifth. He worked as a golf professional at several venues and returned to New Jersey in 1924 to become the golf pro and greens keeper at The Shady Rest Golf and Country Club, the first African American Golf and Country Club located in Scotch Plains, NJ. He remained at Shady Rest until his retirement in 1960. He died in 1968 in a nursing home in Newark, NJ.

The history of African American golfers attempting to compete at the highest level is perhaps the saddest chapter in the game of golf. No African-American played in the US Open again until Ted Rhodes in 1948 under an "invitational" clause. It was not until 1961 that the "Caucasians-only clause" was finally eliminated from the Professional Golf Association's (PGA) bylaws. Shippen maintains the honor of the first America-born golf professional and the first African American golf professional to play in a US Open Tournament in 1896. Shippen never received a PGA card. During the 93rd PGA Annual Meeting in New Orleans, The PGA of America bestowed posthumous membership upon three African American golf pioneers: Ted Rhodes, John Shippen and Bill Spiller - who were denied the opportunity to become PGA members during their professional careers.

A U.S. Postal Stamp to honor John Matthew Shippen, Jr. would be an inspiration to students, educators and the golf community throughout the world. I urge the Stamp Advisory Committee to consider and approve a stamp to honor this great African American golf professional.

Sincerely,

Signature

Date