

This Day in History... July 1, 1957

Teachers of America Issue

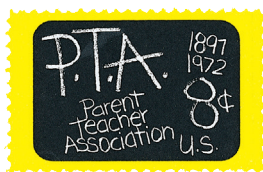
On July 1, 1957, the Teachers of America stamp was issued to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the founding of the National Education Association. Released in Philadelphia, where the organization began, the stamp honored a century of teachers working to build and improve American education.

In the years before the Civil War, public education in the United States was still developing. Many children were taught in private academies, church schools, or small local schools with uneven standards.

By the 1850s, however, public schools were growing rapidly. More communities were accepting the idea that education should be available to all children, not just those whose families could pay for it.

Teachers were organizing, too. By the mid-1850s, teachers' associations existed in 15 of the nation's 31 states. These groups helped educators share ideas, discuss school problems, and push for better training. But there was no national organization to bring them together.

Thomas W. Valentine, a New York educator, helped change that. Valentine was principal of a large public school in Brooklyn and president of the New York Teachers Association. In 1857, he issued a formal invitation known as "The Call." It asked teachers from across the country to meet and create a national body. Valentine urged "practical teachers in the North, the South, the East, and the West" to unite in "one great educational brotherhood." The NEA still identifies Valentine's invitation as the beginning of the effort that led to its founding.



Like the NEA, the PTA grew from the belief that schools worked best when organized citizens supported teachers and students.

On August 26, 1857, 43 educators gathered in Philadelphia and formed the National Teachers Association, the organization later renamed the National Education Association. The new organization hoped to raise the status of teaching, improve schools, and give educators a stronger voice. Two women attended the meeting and were allowed to sign the constitution as honorary members. But women were not admitted as full members until 1866, even though many teachers in American classrooms were women.

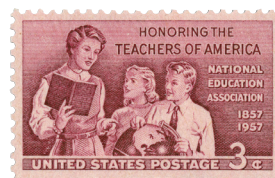
The organization changed its name to the National Education Association in 1870. Over time, it broadened its work. It supported better teacher preparation, higher professional standards, stronger public schools, and wider access to education. It also became a place where educators could discuss issues affecting schools in different regions of the country.

A century after the Philadelphia meeting, the US Post Office honored the anniversary with a 3¢ commemorative stamp. The stamp was first placed on sale in Philadelphia on July 1, 1957, during the NEA's centennial convention.

The design was created by C. R. Chickering, a longtime Bureau of Engraving and Printing artist. C. A. Brooks engraved it. The stamp shows a female teacher holding a book while two children study a globe. The image reflected a traditional classroom scene, but it also suggested the wider reach of education. The inscription reads "Honoring the Teachers of America," with "National Education Association 1857 1957" at the right.

The Bureau of Engraving and Printing produced the stamp by rotary press. It was printed in rose lake, a reddish shade, and perforated 11 by 10½. More than 102 million were issued.

The stamp marked the growth of public education from scattered local efforts into a national concern. It also recalled the educators who met in Philadelphia in 1857, believing teachers could do more together than they could alone.



Stamp honoring the 100th anniversary of the National Education Association.



This stamp broadened the same idea behind the NEA's founding by honoring public education itself as a national institution worth protecting and improving.

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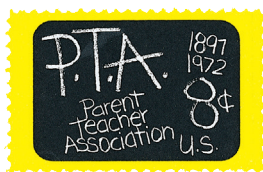
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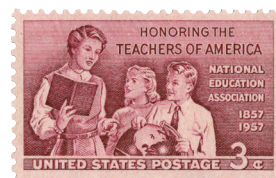
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