This Day in History… November 8, 1978

Death of Acclaimed Illustrator Norman Rockwell

Norman Rockwell died in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, on November 8, 1978. His career included decades of Boy Scout illustrations, hundreds of *Saturday Evening Post* covers, and the *Four Freedoms* paintings.

Norman Rockwell was born in New York, New York in 1894. His illustrations were first published in *Tell Me Why: Stories About Mother Nature* in 1912. That same year, he was hired as a staff artist for *Boys' Life* magazine, the official publication of the Boy Scouts of America. In this role, he received $50 a month to produce a cover and a set of story illustrations. The following year at just 19 years old, Rockwell was promoted to art editor for the magazine. In addition to creating his own art for the publication, he also supervised the work assigned to other artists.



Rockwell's famous Triple Self-Portrait, *created in 1960.*



Stamp pictures Rockwell's Doctor and Doll *which appeared on the Saturday Evening Post in 1929.*

Soon, other publishers began to hire him to illustrate children's books and magazines. He continued to work for *Boys' Life* until 1916, when he received a coveted position with *The Saturday Evening Post*. During his tenure at the *Post*, Rockwell also did illustrations for the American Red Cross' monthly magazine. He continued to include images of Boy Scouts in his work for both of these publications.

Rockwell's artistic style continued to mature during the 1930s, which led to him being honored by the Art Director's Club for the Best Advertising Poster of 1940. Then, as the world was engulfed in war, he turned his attention to new topics. He created G.I. Willie Gillis, a fictional soldier, and traced his journey through the war. Rockwell also put his own spin on Rosie the Riveter.



In the 1930s, Rockwell was commissioned to paint scenes from the Mark Twain novels Tom Sawyer *and* Huck Finn.



Rockwell worked with the scouts longer than any other organization.

Perhaps Rockwell's most famous illustrations were the *Four Freedoms*, based on President Roosevelt's 1941 address to Congress. Rockwell's moving paintings were sent out on a 16-city tour to raise money for war bonds. Over one million people saw them, raising about $133 million in war-bond sales. The images were then published in *The Saturday Evening Post*, furthering their popularity.

Rockwell continued with *The Post* until 1963, but kept working for other magazines such as *McCall's* and *Look*. He also continued working with the Boy Scouts, creating his last commission for the organization at the age of 82 – a calendar illustration titled, *The Spirit of '76*. Over the course of his career, he produced 471 images for the Scouts that were used in periodicals, guidebooks, calendars, and promotional materials. Working with the Scouts for 64 years, it was the longest professional association of his career.



America's first "tagged" commemorative – 1963 city mail delivery centennial.

In all, Rockwell created over 4,000 works, including more than 300 *Saturday Evening Post* covers. He also illustrated covers for many other magazines including *Family Circle, Life, McCall's, Popular Science*, and *TV Guide*.

Although good training, technique and meticulous research all played a part, much of his popularity is due to the sensitivity and deep affection he brought to his subjects. Author Robin Langley Sommer stated, "His feeling for the beauty and importance of everyday life was of a rare order, and his ability to make others feel it as well was surely not far removed from genius. This gift for perceiving what E.B. White called the glory of everything is Norman Rockwell's most enduring legacy."

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