

Historical stamps donated to BH gallery

By LOUISE WREGE - HP Staff Writer

Aug 19, 2018



One of the 100 frames holding museum-quality stamps donated to the African American History & Literature Gallery in Benton Harbor.

Louise Wrege / HP staff



Volunteer Dannetta Moore of Benton Harbor sets up a display recently at the African American History & Literature Gallery in Benton Harbor. The museum-quality stamp collection was donated to the gallery by sisters from Buckeye, Ariz., for only the cost of shipping.

Photos by Louise Wrege / HP staff



One of the 100 frames holding museum-quality stamps donated to the African American History & Literature Gallery in Benton Harbor. Sisters from Buckeye, Ariz., donated the stamps for only the cost of shipping. Twelve frames have been shipped to the gallery so far. The gallery is raising money to bring the rest to Benton Harbor.



The African American History & Literature Gallery in Benton Harbor has for sale bookmarks and post cards highlighting museum-quality stamps donated to the gallery.

BENTON HARBOR — Emanuel and Sharon Brown say their African American History & Literature Gallery in Benton Harbor, which opened in January, continues to be blessed.

They were contacted in June by two sisters from Buckeye, Ariz., who are donating their museum-quality stamps to the gallery. The sisters told the Browns that they saw articles in *The Herald-Palladium* and were led by God to donate the stamps to the gallery.

The first set of framed stamps arrived a few weeks ago and were put out for display Wednesday in the gallery at 725 Broadway. The sisters, Margy Davis and Miriam Nason, owned and operated M & M Philately in San Diego until they retired.

“They said, ‘Here, we’re not going to allow you to find this in the attic somewhere. We’re going to take the legacy of this stamp collection and pass it on,’” Sharon Brown said.

Davis told the Browns that the stamp collection is made up of 100 frames of all sizes, with each frame holding from one to several stamps. The collection is free, but the Browns have to pay to ship them to Benton Harbor.

Sharon Brown said that so far, they have paid enough money to have 12 frames of stamps sent to the gallery. They are looking for donations so they can bring the rest of the stamps to the gallery. Donations can be mailed to the African American History & Literature Gallery, P.O. Box 541, Benton Harbor, MI 49023.

For more information, the Browns can be reached by calling 805-501-3673 or emailing aahlgallery@gmail.com.

Sharon Brown said the California African American Museum in Los Angeles was the last place that exhibited the stamps. She said that when the exhibit was done, museum workers professionally packed the framed stamps into boxes, where they remain with the sisters today except for the ones already shipped to Benton Harbor.

Most of the stamps come from exotic destinations such as Ajman, the Turks and Caicos Islands, Guyana, Jamaica, Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria and Ghana.

The sisters explain in literature sent with the stamps that people can only be featured on U.S. stamps after they have been dead for 10 years, with the exception of presidents. Foreign countries don't have the same rules so famous Americans are often featured on stamps in foreign countries before they are featured in America.

The sisters state that some of the stamps are rare, such as a 1984 stamp of Malcolm X from Iran and a Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stamp from Cuba.

"Our exhibit depicts the history, people and culture as it relates and impacts the African American experience," they stated.

They call their collection the "Stamp of Approval – African-American Heritage on Worldwide Philatelic Material."

Other blessings

Before opening the gallery, the Browns traveled throughout the community for five years as they brought African-American history to life for students and adults in schools and other organizations, mostly by themselves.

Now that they have a stable location, several volunteers have stepped in to help out.

"To see the community come together to say, 'We want this to happen,' has been wonderful," Sharon Brown said.

Volunteer Dannetta Moore said: "They've created a new pulse in the community. It's infectious."

In addition, the Browns said donations from Meijer and Chemical Bank have made possible several weekly activities.

On Wednesdays through the end of August, the gallery holds a class from 10-11:30 a.m. for parents and teens where they can make an African jewelry and keepsake box, book markers and blanket throws. Sharon Brown said this activity will be moved to a different time once school starts if there is enough interest.

From 4:30-6:30 p.m. every Thursday, Fireside Chats are held on "African American History: The Historical Dispersment and Evolution of an Ancient People."

From noon to 2 p.m. on Saturdays, parents with children are invited to celebrate literacy through African American history.

On Saturdays, Fireside Chats are held from 4:30-6:30 p.m. to look at "African American History: The 12 Lost Tribes."

"Gospel Night at the Gallery: Live History of Gospel Music" will be from 6-8 p.m. Aug. 25. Gospel music will be shared by local and visiting artists. Everyone is invited to take part in the rehearsal of this event, which will be 2-4 p.m. on the same day.

An ongoing activity is the Broadway door-to-door African American book distribution.

The Berrien Community Foundation teamed up with Lowes and Chemical Bank to sponsor a three-day Broadway Community Spruce-Up with Lowes, which started Thursday and ends Saturday.

The Browns said they want to give back to the community that has given so much to them. Contact the Browns for more information.

Contact: lwrege@TheHP.com, 932-0361, Twitter: @HPWrege.