

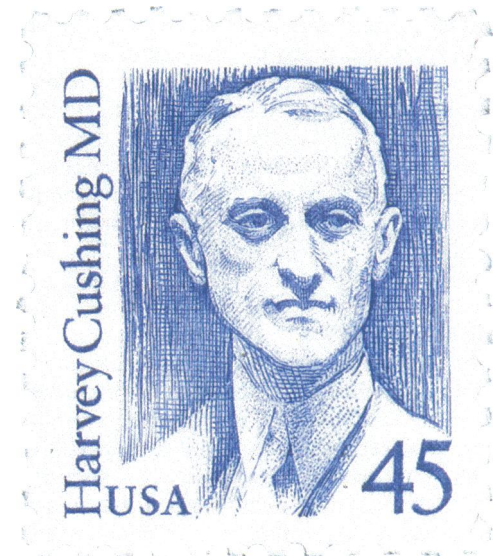
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STAMPS IN CARDIOLOGY

Harvey Williams Cushing (1869-1939)

This 45 cent stamp was issued by the USA on 17 June 1988 as a further addition to the Great Americans series. On the stamp's official first day cover for the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (founded as the Harvey Cushing Society in 1931) it is stated that the stamp was issued "for the work that he did and for his many contributions to the medical profession, and to American society".

Harvey Williams Cushing was a great neurosurgeon, famous especially for his surgery of the pituitary gland and for his description of the syndrome caused by a basophil adenoma of the gland. Cushing's syndrome causes serious heart disease, chiefly through hypertension and coronary atheroma as well as the effects of an excess of cortisol, aldosterone, and androgens. Congestive heart failure occurs in 25% and its poor response to treatment has led to the syndrome being called a killer disease. In 1908 Cushing carried out pioneer work in experimental cardiac surgery (*Journal of Medical Research* 1908;17:471-85). He was the first to produce valve lesions (in dogs) systematically rather than by blind instrumentation. Using a valvulotome introduced into the apex of the ventricle he produced mitral and tricuspid regurgitation by cutting the leaflets, and he also created stenosis of the valves by tying a ligature around the



valve ring. He had several operative recoveries—not an easy task at that time. He also studied valve lesions occurring naturally in dogs and attempted to operate on one animal with mitral disease. His work was directed towards "a future surgery of the cardiac valves".

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