

## History of the North Carolina Awards <sup>[1]</sup>

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## History of the North Carolina Awards

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**See also:** [North Carolina Awards](#) <sup>[2]</sup>; [Black and African American North Carolina Award Winners](#) <sup>[3]</sup>; [North Carolina Awards ceremony programs](#) <sup>[4]</sup> (NC Digital Collections)



View the North Carolina Awards ceremony programs in the NC Digital Collections.

<sup>[5]</sup>On June 22, 1961, the [General Assembly](#) <sup>[6]</sup> established the [North Carolina Awards](#) <sup>[2]</sup>, the highest civilian honor the State of North Carolina can bestow. According to the legislation, called General Statute 140A-2:

*[t]hese recognitions shall be known as the North Carolina Awards for Literature, Science, the Fine Arts and Public Service, and shall be conferred upon citizens of North Carolina for the most notable attainments in these respective fields during the current year, terminating four months before the date of award, though such distinctions can be exceptionally conferred, with the approval of the Governor and the Council of State, for eminence achieved during years prior to the award. [1961 Session Laws, pages 1572-1573](#) <sup>[7]</sup>.*

The first medals were awarded in 1964 to five recipients. Up to six awards may be presented each year.

Since its inception, more than 250 notable men and women have been honored by the state of North Carolina. Recipients include [William Friday](#) <sup>[8]</sup>, [Romare Bearden](#) <sup>[9]</sup>, [James Taylor](#) <sup>[10]</sup>, [Gertrude Eilion](#) <sup>[11]</sup>, [John Hope Franklin](#) <sup>[12]</sup>, [David Brinkley](#) <sup>[13]</sup>, [Maya Angelou](#) <sup>[14]</sup>, [Billy Graham](#) <sup>[15]</sup>, [Branford Marsalis](#) <sup>[16]</sup>, [Loretta Lynch](#) <sup>[17]</sup>, and [Philip Freelon](#) <sup>[18]</sup>.



The gold medal given to each recipient of the North Carolina Award was designed by Paul Manship and has the state seal on the front.

Nominations may be submitted by anyone, with final decisions made by the NC Awards Committee, comprised of five gubernatorial appointees. Recipients are typically honored during a ceremony that takes place each fall. The [North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources](#) <sup>[19]</sup> administers the award program.

View the ceremony programs by year in the [NC Digital Collections](#) <sup>[5]</sup>.

## About the Medals

The North Carolina Award medals were designed by the sculptor [Paul Manship](#) <sup>[20]</sup>, one of his last commissions before his death in 1966 at the age of 81. Each medal is 2 ¾ inches in diameter. It is intended to be worn on a red, white, and blue ribbon around the neck. The first medals were made of fourteen karat gold, although the mineral content has changed over the years to 10 karat gold (1974-1979) and gold-plated silver (1980-today).

## Alphabetical List of Medal Winners

Abbott, Anthony A. Literature, 2015  
Adcock, Betty. Literature, 1996  
Ammons, A.R. Literature, 1986  
Aneja, Viney. Science, 2007  
[Angelou, Maya](#) <sup>[14]</sup>. Literature, 1987  
Anlyan, William. Science, 2002  
Applewhite, James. Literature, 1995  
Atala, Anthony. Science, 2015  
Baker, Etta. Fine Arts, 2003  
Barber, William J, II, Rev. Dr. Public Service, 2019  
Baric, Ralph S. Science, 2020  
Barrax, Gerald. Literature, 2009  
Bath, Joanne. Fine Arts, 1996  
Bathanti, Joseph. Literature, 2016  
Bauer, Margaret Donovan. Literature, 2017  
Bayes, Ronald. Literature, 1989  
[Bearden, Romare](#) <sup>[9]</sup>. Fine Arts, 1976  
Bennett, Betsy M. Public Service, 2014  
Betts, Doris. Literature, 1975  
Bevington, Helen Smith. Literature, 1973  
Biggers, John. Fine Arts, 1995  
Birnbaum, Linda S. Science, 2016  
Blackmer, Sidney. Fine Arts, 1972  
Blakeslee, Sarah. Fine Arts, 1994  
Bowers, Henry. Public Service, 2000  
Boyles, Harlan E. Public Service, 2000  
Bringle, Cynthia. Fine Arts, 2002  
Brinkhous, Kenneth. Science, 1969  
Brinkley, David. Public Service, 1988  
Britt, W. Earl. Public Service, 2019  
Brodie, H. Keith. Science, 1990  
Brookhart, Maurice. Science, 2008  
Brown, Robert J. Public Service, 2016  
Brown, William. Fine Arts, 1991  
Broyhill, James T. Public Service, 2015  
Bruck, Robert. Science, 1997  
Bryan, Joseph. Public Service, 1986  
Bryan, Jr., Joseph M. Public Service, 2005  
[Burke, Selma](#) <sup>[21]</sup>. Fine Arts, 1982  
Byer, Kathryn Stripling. Literature, 2001  
Caldwell, John. Public Service, 1987  
Carroll, F. Ivy. Science, 2010  
Cashion, Jerry C. Public Service, 2007  
Chambers, Julius L. Public Service, 2002  
Chappell, Fred. Literature, 1980  
Chase, Nancy. Public Service, 1982  
Coates, Albert. Public Service, 1967  
Cochrane, William. Public Service, 1992  
Cockerham, C. Clark. Science, 1976  
[Golden, Harry](#) <sup>[25]</sup>. Literature, 1979  
Goodmon, James. Public Service, 2000  
Goodnight, Ann. Public Service, 2008  
Gordy, Walter. Science, 1979  
Gottschalk, Carl. Science, 1967  
[Graham, Billy](#) <sup>[26]</sup>. Public Service, 1967  
[Graham, Frank Porter](#) <sup>[27]</sup>. Public Service 1965  
Gray, Robert. Fine Arts, 1998  
Green, Jaki Shelton. Literature, 2003  
[Green, Paul](#) <sup>[28]</sup>. Literature, 1965  
[Griffith, Andy](#) <sup>[29]</sup>. Fine Arts, 1984  
Gurganus, Allan. Literature, 1999  
Guthrie, Frank. Science, 1983  
Hamner Jr., Charles E. Public Service, 2011  
Handler, Philip. Science, 1970  
Hanes, Frank Borden. Public Service, 2003  
Hanes Jr., J. Gordon. Public Service, 1985  
Hanes Jr., R. Philip. Fine Arts, 1982  
Hardy, Martha Nell. Fine Arts, 2002  
Hart, John. M. H., Jr. Literature, 2013  
Harrelson, Walter J. Literature, 2004  
Harris, Bernice Kelly. Literature, 1966  
Hearn Jr., Thomas. Public Service, 2006  
Herring, William Dallas. Public Service, 1972  
Hill, George Watts. Public Service, 1984  
Hill, Robert. Science, 1984  
Hitchings, George. Science, 1980  
Hodges, Luther. Public Service, 1966  
Holshouser Jr., James. Public Service, 2006  
Holt, David. Fine Arts, 2021  
Horton, Frank. Fine Arts, 1999  
[Hotelling, Harold](#) <sup>[30]</sup>. Science, 1972  
Howell, Claude. Fine Arts, 1985  
Humber, Robert Lee. Public Service, 1968  
Hunt, Betty Debnam. Public Service, 2005  
[Hunt Jr., James Baxter](#) <sup>[31]</sup>. Public Service, 2003  
Hutchison III, Clyde. Science, 1995  
Ingram, Robert A. Public Service, 2014  
Jackson, Herb. Fine Arts, 1999  
James, A. Everette Jr. Fine Arts, 2015  
Janty, R.K.M. Science, 2017  
Jenrette, Richard. Public Service, 1994  
Johnson, Gerald. Literature, 1965  
Johnson, Hunter. Fine Arts, 1965  
Jones, H. G. Public Service, 2002  
Jones, Mary Ellen. Science, 1991  
Jordan III, Robert. Public Service, 2001  
Kamphoefner, Henry. Fine Arts, 1978  
Kellenberger, May G.L. Public Service, 1969  
Kenan, Frank. Public Service, 1990  
Nicholson, Freda. Public Service, 1994  
Niven, Penelope. Literature, 2004  
Noland, Kenneth. Fine Arts, 1995  
Odell Jr., A.G. Fine Arts, 1966  
[Owen, Guy](#) <sup>[32]</sup>. Literature, 1971  
Pagano, Joseph. Science, 1996  
Park, Roy. Public Service, 1989  
Parker, Michael. Literature, 2006  
Parker Jr., Roy. Public Service, 2006  
Parr, Robert. Science, 1999  
Patterson, Jane Smith. Public Service, 2017  
Patton, Frances Gray. Literature, 1970  
Pearson, Henry. Fine Arts, 1970  
Peiser, Mark. Fine Arts, 2009  
Pierce, Ovid. Literature, 1969  
[Pittman, Hobson](#) <sup>[33]</sup>. Fine Arts, 1968  
[Poe, Clarence](#) <sup>[34]</sup>. Public Service, 1964  
[Powell, William](#) <sup>[35]</sup>. Literature, 2000  
Preyer, Emily Harris. Public Service, 1998  
Preyer, L. Richardson. Public Service, 1998  
Price, Reynolds. Literature, 1977  
Proctor, Deborah S. Public Service, 2019  
Ragan, Sam. Fine Arts, 1979  
Rash, Ron. Literature, 2011  
Rice, Oscar. Science, 1966  
Rivera, Jr., Alexander. Fine Arts, 2008  
Roberts, Gene. Public Service, 2018  
Rodbell, Martin. Science, 1998  
Rooke, Leon. Literature, 1990  
Roper, William L. Public Service, 2018  
Rose, Charlie. Public Service, 2007  
Rounds, Glen. Literature, 1981  
Royster, Vermont. Literature, 1968  
Rubin Jr., Louis. Literature, 1992  
Russell, Charles. Literature, 1968  
Sabiston Jr., David. Science, 1978  
Saltzman, Marvin. Fine Arts, 1998  
Sancar, Aziz. Science, 2016  
Sanders, Charles. Science, 2006  
Sanders, John. Public Service, 1996  
Sanford, Terry. Public Service, 1970  
Scherr, Mary Ann. Fine Arts, 2003  
Schmidt-Nielsen, Knut. Science, 1999  
Schopler, Eric. Public Service, 1993  
Scott, Ralph. Public Service, 1981  
Scott, Robert. Public Service, 1996  
Semans, James & Mary. Fine Arts, 1971  
Shapiro, Alan. Literature, 2014  
Shelton, Henry. Public Service, 1999  
Simpson, Bland. Fine Arts, 2005

Cohen, Myron S. Science, 2013  
Coleman, Carolyn Q. Public Service, 2018  
Collins, Francis S. Science, 2020  
Colvard, Dean. Public Service, 1990  
Cooke, S. Tucker. Fine Arts, 2000  
Corbett, Kizzmekia S. Science, 2020  
Couch, John. Science, 1964  
Cowling, Ellis. Science, 1973  
Cox, Joe. Fine Arts, 1993  
Cram, John E. Fine Arts, 2013  
Cuatrecasas, Pedro. Science, 1988  
Dalton, Mary & Harry. Fine Arts, 1983  
Daniels, Jonathan. Literature, 1967  
Daniels, Julia Jones. Public Service, 1999  
Daniels Jr., Frank. Public Service, 1999  
David Jr., Edward. Science, 1972  
Davidson, Jan. Fine Arts, 2007  
Davis, Archie. Public Service, 1979  
Davis, Burke. Literature, 1973  
Davis, Charles (Chuck). Fine Arts, 1992  
deButts, John. Public Service, 1979  
Delhom, M. Mellanay. Fine Arts, 1997  
Denny Jr, Floyd. Science, 1982  
DeSimone, Joseph M. Science, 2009  
Dole, Elizabeth. Public Service, 1991  
Dykeman, Wilma. Literature, 1985  
Eaton, Charles. Literature, 1988  
Ebendorf, Robert W. Fine Arts, 2010  
Edgell, Marshall. Science, 1994  
Edgerton, Clyde. Literature, 1997  
Ehle, John. Literature, 1972  
Ehle, Rosemary Harris. Fine Arts, 2007  
Eliel, Ernest. Science, 1986  
Elion, Gertrude. Science, 1989  
Ervin, Samuel J. Public Service, 1973  
Etchells, John. Science, 1975  
Ethridge, Willie Snow. Literature, 1982  
Fields, William. Fine Arts, 1974  
Finlator, W.W. Public Service, 2001  
Fitz-Simons, Foster. Fine Arts, 1976  
Fletcher, Inglis [22]. Literature, 1964  
Fletcher, William. Science, 2000  
Flood, Dudley E. Public Service, 2021  
Franklin, John Hope. Literature, 1993  
Frazier, Charles [23]. Literature, 2008  
Freedman, Gerald. Fine Arts, 2008  
Freelon, Philip G. Fine Arts, 2017  
Friday, William. Public Service, 1975  
Fridovich, Irwin. Science, 1985  
Frye, Henry. Public Service, 2007  
Gardner, James C. Public Service, 2016  
Garvey Jr., Robert. Public Service, 1978  
Gatewood, Maud. Fine Arts, 1984  
Gerard, Philip. Literature, 2019  
Gibbons, Kaye [24]. Literature, 1998  
Gilmore, Voit. Public Service, 2004  
Kenan, Randall. Literature, 2005  
Kenan III, Thomas. Public Service, 1997  
Kirk, Phillip J., Jr. Public Service, 2013  
Koontz, Elizabeth Duncan. Public Service, 1977  
Kreps, Juanita. Public Service, 1976  
Kuralt, Charles. Public Service, 1987  
Lambeth, Thomas Willis. Public Service, 2005  
Lancaster, H. Martin. Public Service, 2011  
Lee, Howard N. Public Service, 2015  
Lee, William. Public Service, 1988  
Lefkowitz, Robert. Science, 1987  
Leonard, R. Michael. Public Service, 2010  
Leslie, Bill. Fine Arts, 2018  
Leuchtenburg, William. Literature, 2007  
Lindgren, Robert. Fine Arts, 1980  
Linney, Romulus. Literature, 2002  
Littleton, Harvey. Fine Arts, 1987  
London, Edith. Fine Arts, 1988  
Long, William Ivey. Fine Arts, 2004  
Lucas, John Harding. Public Service, 2013  
Lynch, Loretta E [17]. Public Service, 2017  
Mackay, Trudy F. C. Science, 2011  
Madey, John. Science, 1992  
Maron, Margaret. Literature, 2008  
Marsalis, Branford. Fine Arts, 2011  
Martin, James. Public Service, 2008  
Matheson, Elizabeth. Fine Arts, 2004  
Mayo, John. Science, 1995  
McBride, Patricia. Fine Arts, 2015  
McCain, Betty Ray. Public Service, 2009  
McCall, Adeline. Fine Arts, 1981  
McColl Jr, Hugh L. Public Service, 2009  
McCorkle, Jill. Literature, 1999  
McFee, Michael A. Literature, 2018  
McGlohon, Loonis. Fine Arts, 1989  
McKay, Martha. Public Service, 1996  
Meredith, Jesse. Public Service, 1991  
Merritt, Hiram Houston. Science, 1967  
Meymandi, Assad. Fine Arts, 2016  
Miller, Heather. Literature, 1983  
Millhouse, Barbara B. Fine Arts, 2018  
Mitchell Jr., Burley. Public Service, 2007  
Mitchell, Joseph. Literature, 1984  
Mitchiner, Reginald. Science, 1977  
Modrich, Paul L. Science, 2016  
Moore, Dan. Public Service, 1980  
Moore, Jeanelle. Public Service, 1980  
Moore, Lenard D. Literature, 2014  
Morehead, John. Public Service, 1964  
Morgan, Robert. Literature, 1991  
Morton, Hugh. Public Service, 1983  
Murray, Royce W. Science, 2001  
Narayan, Jagdish (Jay). Science, 2014  
Ness, Kenneth. Fine Arts, 1973  
Newman, Margaret S. "Tog." Public Service, 2010  
Simpson, Vollis. Fine Arts, 2011  
Sloane, Joseph. Fine Arts, 1977  
Smith, Arthur. Fine Arts, 2001  
Smith, Dean. Public Service, 2008  
Smith, Lee. Literature, 1984  
Smithies, Oliver. Science, 1993  
Spaulding, Elna. Public Service, 1997  
Spaulding, Maria F. Public Service, 2021  
Speight, Francis [36]. Fine Arts, 1964  
Spencer, Elizabeth. Literature, 1994  
Stafford, Darrel. Science, 2007  
Stanback, Fred & Alice. Public Service, 2008  
Stanford Jr., Charles. Fine Arts, 1969  
Stannett, Vivian. Science, 1981  
Stem Jr., Thad. Literature, 1974  
Stephens, Stanley. Science, 1968  
Stephenson, Shelby. Literature, 2001  
Sultan, Donald. Fine Arts, 2010  
Swalin, Benjamin F. Fine Arts, 1967  
Swalin, Maxine. Public Service, 1989  
Talley, André Leon. Literature, 2021  
Talley Jr., Banks. Public Service, 1995  
Taylor, Billy. Fine Arts, 1993  
Taylor, James [10]. Fine Arts, 1998  
Thornton, William. Science, 2003  
Thorp, Bo. Fine Arts, 2009  
Thurman, Maxwell. Public Service, 1992  
Timberlake, Bob [37]. Fine Arts, 1990  
Tynes, Harriet. Public Service, 1978  
Tyson, Timothy B. Literature, 2021  
Walker, LeRoy T. Public Service, 2004  
Walser, Richard [38]. Literature, 1976  
Wani, Mansukh. Science, 2005  
Ward, Robert. Fine Arts, 1975  
Watson, Doc [39]. Fine Arts, 1986  
Waynick, Capus [40]. Public Service, 1971  
Weatherford, Carole Boston. Literature, 2010  
Webb, James E. [41] Public Service, 1971  
Wellman, Manly Wade [42]. Literature, 1978  
Wheeler, Lawrence J. Fine Arts, 2019  
Wicker, Tom. Literature, 1981  
Wilfer, Catherine M., MD. Science, 2019  
Wilkerson, Annie Louise. Science, 2004  
Williams, Jonathan. Fine Arts, 1977  
Williams, William T. Fine Arts, 2006  
Wilson, Blake S. Science, 2021  
Wilson, Edwin Graves. Public Service, 2002  
Wilson, Emily Herring. Literature, 2006  
Winston, Ellen Black [43]. Public Service, 1974  
Wolf, Frederick. Science, 1965  
Wolfram, Walt. Public Service, 2013  
Wood III, Ira David. Fine Arts, 2014  
Woodward, James H. Public Service, 2017  
Wyngaarden, James. Science, 1974

Biographical essays are available for each North Carolina Award recipient in the ceremony program for that year. Ceremony programs are accessible [here in the NC Digital Collections](#).<sup>[4]</sup>

A list of Black and African American recipients of the North Carolina Award can be found [here on NCpedia](#) <sup>[3]</sup>.

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### Authors:

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[Rudersdorf, Amy](#) <sup>[50]</sup>

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