

# WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

## A Civics In Real Life Series

### FEMALE FIRSTS

### The 688th Central Postal Directory Battalion



"Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds." These words by the Greek historian, Herodotus, are the unofficial motto of the U.S. Postal Service and reflect the sentiment that it gets the job done, no matter what. The same can be said of the [6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion](#), but instead of just weather getting in their way, it was World War II, and they were not deterred in completing their "appointed rounds."

The first, and only, all women of color battalion of the [Women's Army Corps \(WAC\)](#) to serve overseas (Birmingham, England, November, 1944), the 6888th was charged with eliminating a significant backlog (7 million) of undelivered mail and parcels to American soldiers fighting in Europe. Recognizing the importance the delivery of mail had on a soldier's morale in keeping them in touch with their families and friends, the battalion adopted the motto, "[No mail, low morale.](#)"

Given six months to complete the task, the Six Triple Eight, as they were called, eliminated the backlog in three months. Under the command of [Major Charity Adams](#), the 824 enlisted soldiers and 31 officers of the Six Triple Eight worked around the clock, seven days a week, in three eight-hour shifts, each [redirecting 65,000 pieces of mail](#) for delivery to the intended soldiers.

In what might seem like a straightforward task of clearing a backlog of millions of pieces of mail and getting it delivered, it was actually far more difficult. Many of the letters and parcels were addressed using family nicknames, like "Junior" or "Buster." Further complicating the task was that many soldiers shared the same name, like "Robert Smith." So, it was up to the Six Triple Eight to figure out the intended recipient, their military unit, and the location of the unit. To do this, the battalion used special locator cards that included this information as well as the soldier's identifying serial number. Sadly, they were also tasked with returning mail addressed to those service members who had died.

Upon completing their task in Birmingham, the Six Triple Eight were assigned to Rouen, France to clear a two- to three-year backlog of mail there. Again, the battalion completed their task within three months. They were soon transferred back to the United States, with no fanfare, and stationed at Fort Dix, New Jersey. The battalion was disbanded in 1946.

As an all women of color battalion, the Six Triple Eight dealt with the realities of a segregated army. They were soldiers, first and foremost, and conducted themselves accordingly in successfully completing the tasks to which they were assigned. In the years since the end of World War II, the contributions and accomplishments of the Six Triple Eight have been recognized by the United States Government, most recently in 2022 with the [Congressional Gold Medal](#).

### Civics Challenge: Search & Learn

First woman soldier in your state to be honored with a monument, statue, or Congressional Gold Medal:	
Branch of the military they served in:	
Time period of service:	
Reason they were honored:	



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