

Adam Franklin  
3/8/2021 9.30am  
To: Tumbleweird Editor

Hi, Sara!  
Happy Monday!

I've just made the GoogleDocs edit suggestions for the structural changes on Eugene Vi's piece "THE SIX TRIPLE EIGHT - ALL BLACK WOMEN BATTALION WW II." This is a strong, no-nonsense piece and these edits are intended to bolster what's already there.

With the exception of a phrase in the original opening paragraph and a comment on page 2, this is all just moving things around a little bit to clarify some points and consolidate others. In bringing some ideas together, such as the mentions of the battalion's training, this serves to bring the chronology more in line with itself.

Regarding the comment on page 2, please let me know if this is clear. I understand that new information may not be available to add in at short notice and if that's the case, I have a fix or two in mind with some transitional phrasing that could help the flow and keep the chronology intact.

These are purely suggestions and I will adjust the next rounds of edits based on your responses. I understand that, as per your own processes, you will be resolving the suggested changes in GoogleDocs yourself. I look forward to seeing your update by March 10<sup>th</sup> and moving forward with the fine tuning!

Of course, please let me know if you or Eugene have any questions!

Truly,  
Adam

## THE SIX TRIPLE EIGHT - ALL BLACK WOMEN BATTALION WW II

In February 1945, as Allied forces drove across Europe, ever-changing locations hampered mail delivery to servicemembers. Warehouses in Birmingham, England, were filled with millions of pieces of mail, airplane hangars held undelivered Christmas packages, and a constant stream of incoming mail added to the already massive backlog of letters and packages. Intended for members of the U.S. military, U.S. Government personnel, and Red Cross workers serving in the European Theater. One general predicted that the backlog in Birmingham would take six months to process. With seven million Americans in the European Theater, many shared common names (7,500 were named Robert Smith) and oftentimes the mail was addressed simply to "Junior, U.S. Army" or "Buster, U.S. Army." Servicemembers noticed that they weren't getting mail from home, and Army officials reported that the lack of reliable mail delivery was hurting morale.

**Commented [1]:** Is this alright to remove since "delivery to servicemembers" has already been established?

**Commented [AF2]:** Moved from original 3rd paragraph.

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The Women's Army Corps (WAC) of the U.S. Army was created by a law signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on 1 July 1943. The WAC was converted from the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, which had been created in 1942 but did not have official military status.

~~New WAC recruits underwent four to six weeks of basic training, which included a physical training program, often followed by four to twelve weeks of specialist training.~~

First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and civil rights leader Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune successfully advocated for the admittance of Black women as enlisted personnel and officers in the WAC, although as in the rest of the Army, segregation prevailed.

After several units of white women were sent to serve in the European theater, Black organizations pressed the War Department to extend the opportunity to serve overseas to Black WACs.

In November 1944, the War Department acquiesced. Despite slow recruitment of volunteers, a battalion of 817 (later 824) enlisted personnel and 31 officers, all Black women drawn from the WAC, the Army Service Forces, and the Army Air Forces, was created and eventually designated as the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, nicknamed "Six Triple Eight."

~~The 6888th included a Headquarters Company for administrative and service support and Companies A, B, C, and D, each commanded by a captain or first lieutenant. Major (later Lieutenant Colonel) Charity Edna Adams (who took the surname Early upon her marriage in 1949) was selected to command the battalion.~~

~~New WAC recruits underwent four to six weeks of basic training, which included a physical training program, often followed by four to twelve weeks of specialist training.~~ The battalion was trained for their overseas mission at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia: "They crawled under logs wearing gas masks and jumped over trenches," according to a Washington Post article of 26 February 2009. The women learned to identify enemy aircraft, ships, and weapons; to climb ropes; to board and evacuate ships; and to do long marches with rucksacks. In January 1945, the women traveled by train to Camp Shanks, New York, their embarkation point.

**Commented [3]:** Rearranged and consolidated as a single introductory paragraph. Change ok?

**Commented [4]:** Moved below to help introduce the battalion's training period.

**Commented [5]:** Moved below to help present the 6888th organizational structure more cohesively. Is this ok?

On 3 February 1945, the first contingent of the battalion sailed for Britain. Their ship, the Ile de France, survived close encounters with Nazi U-boats and arrived in Glasgow, Scotland, on the 14th of February, where a German V-1 rocket exploded near the dock, causing the women to run for cover.

They traveled by train to Birmingham, England. Within a few days of their arrival, they held a military parade for Lieutenant General John C. H. Lee, which was watched by a number of curious local citizens. A second contingent arrived in Birmingham from Scotland fifty days later. In Birmingham, the women of "Six Triple Eight" confronted warehouses stacked to the ceiling with letters and packages. These buildings were unheated and dimly lit, the windows blacked out to prevent light showing during nighttime air raids. Rats sought out packages of spoiled cakes and cookies. As it was a cold winter, the women wore long johns and extra layers of clothing under their coats while working in these warehouses.

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The unit members were organized into three separate eight-hour shifts so work continued around the clock, seven days a week. They tracked individual servicemembers by maintaining about seven million information cards including serial numbers to distinguish different individuals with the same name.

While in Rouen, the 6888th experienced a tragedy. On 8 July 1945, PFC Mary J. Barlow and PFC Mary H. Bankston were killed in a jeep accident, and Sergeant Dolores M. Browne died on 13 July from injuries resulting from the accident.

Since the War Department did not provide funds for funerals, the women of the 6888th pooled their resources to honor their deceased members.

First Lieutenant Dorothy Scott found three unit members who had experience with mortuary work to take care of the bodies, and unit members paid for caskets.

Memorial services were organized and held for the deceased, and Major Adams wrote to inform their families in the United States of their fate. Sergeant Browne, PFC Barlow, and PFC Bankston were buried with honors in the Normandy American Cemetery at Colleville-sur-Mer.

After efficiently clearing the mail at Rouen, the 6888th moved to Paris in October 1945. Here, their officers were quartered in the Hôtel États-Unis, and the enlisted women were quartered in the Hôtel Bohy-Lafayette. They enjoyed a higher standard of living than in Rouen or Birmingham, with maid service and chef-cooked meals. However, with the end of World War II,

**Commented [6]:** While not necessarily structural in nature, it should be noted for quick resolution that the battalion's move from Birmingham to Rouen is not mentioned. If a date cannot be provided, a general timing would help to keep the chronology flowing.

**Commented [7]:** Consolidated for cohesion. Does this feel right to you?

the strength of the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion was reduced by nearly 300 personnel, with over 200 more women eligible for discharge in January 1946.

In February 1946, the remainder of the unit returned to the United States and was disbanded at Fort Dix, New Jersey, without further ceremony. There were no parades, no public appreciation, and no official recognition of their accomplishments, although Charity Adams was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel upon her return to the U.S.

Compiled by Eugene Vi

