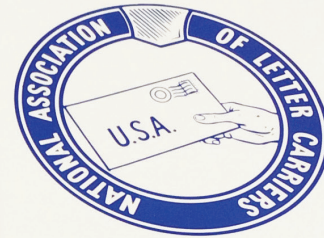


HISTORY
S. D. S. A.
OF
N. A. L. C.



OUR FIRST 100 YEARS

Branch 9 ★ NALC
★ 1890 — 1990 ★
Minneapolis, Minnesota



JEROME J. KEATING
BRANCH 9



Duluth, Minnesota Branch 114 members Kevin Lammi (c) and Arden Stabs (r) sell souvenir admission buttons to fans at the stadium gate before the start of the 1990 John Beargrease Sled Dog Race.

benefits that was received in premiums for years. But, didn't the health plan build a new building? Personally, I couldn't build a new house; it had been built for me for years.

Many of the local members have stated they felt betrayed by the national union. They have talked of leaving membership and keeping their jobs. I assume—often, that means of the working and manual laborers are deserting the union, leaving everyone out local deals with EQWL, UMPs, etc.—deals supposed to improve labor-management relations. The APWU stopped its labor and management become one, we won't need the union. Why pay \$100,000 to your best deal—locally. After all, the management team negotiated better pay increases for the last two contracts than our union team has for the last management problem, a decent, enforceable contract—out a contract that is grieved each year.

We need one thing to improve our labor-management relations, a decent, enforceable contract—out a contract that is grieved each year. Why have a wishy-washy contract that is constantly being challenged and changed because of its non-descriptive terminology? We have Article 41, but we should have a full letter carrier contract—one that makes all its members equal and protects letter carrier functions. We need a singular letter carrier contract!

flinty-eyed boss accountants armed with calculators and an army of clip boards—humanism is not considered a factor. Billions of useless man-hours and countless acre ground cut daily. But who really cares what happened last year or in 1970 or 1980? We have to put the team back together again.

Forty-year letters, but Mike Brooks just dropped out of letters, all the other carriers left to sustain several injuries and woes suffered during his postal career. Injuries suffered from dog bites, slips and falls on ice, aggravated strains on the back and groin, hemorrhoid and hernia operations and a bad leg from service in the Marines, no control. No commendation for which he had accidents and injuries in the line of duty. He was canned.

This humanitarian's specious reasoning: "The Postal Service can no longer be asked to continue to pay the burden of cost of each of your accidents." What if these injuries had occurred in the line of duty in the military service? How's that for loyalty and due respect for the troops? Budget—service—people!

George C. Skinder



PRESERVING OUR PAST

“What’s past is prologue,” wrote William Shakespeare in *The Tempest*. Indeed, everything letter carriers have done before us sets the stage for what we do. That’s why keeping track of our union’s history, especially at the branch level, is important.

“We speak often of the importance of teaching our union’s history to the new generation of letter carriers, so they understand what things were like and how we got to where we are now, and to inspire them,” NALC President Fredric Rolando said. “But we can’t teach our history if we don’t hold onto it. The more we can bring our past into the present, the better.”

Though our jobs are essentially the same nationwide, we’re often more connected to local history at the branch or state level. The carriers who walked the same sidewalks and streets we travel on our routes today faced the same challenges we do, and they built our branches and their traditions. Differences in factors such as weather, geography, culture and economics make NALC as diverse as America itself.

NALC Headquarters in Washington, DC, keeps certain records and items of historical significance, but branches are responsible for collecting and keeping their own histories. In the wake of the 125th anniversary NALC marked last year, some branches also are approaching or have recently reached the same milestone. No matter how old your branch is, it’s always good to look at your history and how you preserve it.

Branches are required by both federal labor law and the *NALC Constitution* to keep certain documents, such as meeting minutes. The oath branch officers take includes a pledge to “guard all property placed in my

charge and, at the expiration of my term of office, turn the material over to my successor.” But what else should a branch keep to preserve memories and pass them to future generations?

Items to consider saving include branch newsletters, photos, documents, letters and postcards, programs and flyers from branch events, and newspaper articles about the branch or its members. Articles about a heroic carrier who saved a life on his or her route are good examples. With modern technology at our fingertips, computer disks containing videos or photos might also go in the box.

But saving objects isn’t enough. To preserve history, saving the context is important, too. With photos, that means saving the date, identity of subjects and event or activity in each photo, preferably by writing on a label and attaching it to the back (writing directly on the back of a photo with a pen can ruin the front). Some objects, such as pins, medals or plaques, also may benefit from dating or labeling. The same goes for electronic records like photos kept on a disk—dates and tags, explaining the photos and who is in them, are invaluable.

Many branches expect branch presidents or other officers to keep their histories as part of the job. For other branches, a member with a personal interest in history or many memories to share may take on the role. Some branches and state associations even have official historians, such as Madison, SD Branch 1308 member Ron Warns, historian for South Dakota’s state association.

South Dakota created the office of historian in 1935, Warns said. The association’s first historian, Max A. Whited, wrote: “Every organization, whether large or small, makes history.”

*Neither Snow, Nor Rain, Nor Heat, Nor Gloom
Of Night Stays These Couriers from the Swift
Completion of Their Appointed Rounds*

PROGRAM

Twelfth Annual Joint Convention of

POSTAL WORKERS

July 25-26-27, 1935

CONVENTION HEADQUARTERS:

Marvin Hughitt Hotel, Huron, S. D.

General Chairman, E. H. Bruemmer, P. M.

Miss Esther Jensen, Pianist, Wagner, S. D.

R. E. Balzer, Director of Postal Band, Huron.

Hans Christensen, Director Huron Municipal Band, Huron, S. D.

Max A. Whited, Postal Chorus Director, Yankton, S. D.

Reception and Registration, Dr. C. E. Stutenroth, Chairman.

Courtesy Cars, Clarence Disney, Chairman.

Sports Day, Carl Thurston, Chairman.

Music and Dance, Raleigh Balzer, Chairman.

Housing Committee, F. G. Forsburg, Chairman.

Decorations, E. B. Hebron, Chairman.

Ways and Means, Emory Smith, Chairman.

Banquet and Entertainment, Marian Blount, Chairman.

Program and Publicity, W. H. Hickenbotham, H. L. Iverson, B. F. Clancy.

General Information:

All delegates and visitors please register on your arrival at the registration desk in the lobby of the Marvin Hughitt Hotel, and secure your badges and banquet tickets.

Country Club, two miles north on Dakota Avenue.

Riverside Park, five blocks east of hotel.

West Park, one block north then west three blocks beyond Fair Grounds.

Campbell Park, one block south of hotel.

College Auditorium, four blocks west, three blocks south.

General Assembly room, Second floor Marvin Hughitt Hotel—Elks Room.

All Sessions will begin promptly on time.

Whited began what has become an unbroken tradition of preserving the past for South Dakota letter carriers.

Warns has played his role for 25 years. Given that he started carrying mail in 1959, Warns is not only keeper of history, he’s part of it. Carrying mail was much different in his day, he said. “It was a hard job, but I enjoyed it. But I don’t know if I’d ever want to go back,” he said. “It’s just too much pressure.” He retired in 1998.

In his early days, before the Great Postal Strike of 1970, gaining pay raises was the primary goal of carriers. Warns recalled the thrill of receiving his W-2 form early in his career and seeing that he had made more than \$5,000 a year for the first time. “I came home and showed my wife,” he said, “and I was on Cloud Nine.”

Warns inherited a wealth of documents and photos, including some writ-

PRESERVING OUR PAST

ten by previous historians specifically for posterity's sake, and he has added his own over the years. To preserve and organize the material, he had most of it copied and bound in book form.

Flipping through the South Dakota book demonstrates how details bring history to life. Copies of convention programs reveal that South Dakota postal employees across crafts held joint conventions in the 1920s and 1930s. Notes taken by a letter carrier at one convention recorded some of the concerns of the day: legislation in Congress to give postal workers the day off on legal holidays and efforts to convince Congress to pay city and "village" carriers the same wages. Labor Day picnics were as popu-

lar then as today; picnic announcements illustrated with hand-drawn cartoons lured carriers and their families to a park with "two ball diamonds, horseshoe courts, bowling greens, big ovens for cooking and lots of shade and tables for the picnic meals."

marks the first time a convention of the letter carriers has been held in this part of S. Dak. Just a few years ago, so to speak, the buffalo and deer roamed these prairies and the American Indian hunted them."

You don't have to be an officially elected historian to collect, research or present the history of your branch or state association. In fact, many historians do it just for the love of it, and their fellow letter carriers appreciate their efforts.

Keeping history is about more than collecting it. Documents, photos and items stuffed in a box and forgotten aren't very useful. Finding ways to bring history back to life for the carriers of today is important, too. Writing a basic history of the branch for publication on the branch website, with photos, is a good way to do that. Some branch newsletters feature occasional articles focusing on a part of their past.

Duluth, MN Branch 114 has carried on a tradition of keeping historical items stored in its office, including its original charter, meeting minutes and many photos. The photos don't stay hidden in the boxes, Branch President Scott Dulas said.

"We have a big display at our annual retiree banquet," Dulas said. "We cycle the photos because there are so many."

Retirees love seeing the old photos. "They get to see people they remember," Dulas said. Even older photos remind attendees, retired or active, of what delivering the mail in Duluth was like long before they began their careers.

The branch even shows off its collection of previous banquet programs going

back 70 years, which include notable speakers and guests from the past.

The photos depict carriers doing their jobs, but they also show community events involving letter carriers, such as the city's annual "Christmas City of the North" parade, which has heralded the arrival of the holiday season for half a century. The branch even has photos of an annual event in Duluth that celebrates letter carrier history—a living link to the postal past.

Every winter since 1980, world-class dogsledders and their canine runners have raced nearly 400 miles in the John Beargrease Sled Dog Marathon. The event commemorates letter carrier John Beargrease, a native American who carried mail by dogsled, as well as by canoe and on horseback, through the rugged, wild Minnesota of the late 19th century. By connecting remote villages to each other and to the outside world, Beargrease played an essential role in the establishment of Duluth and other towns in the region. He stopped carrying the mail in 1899 when the trail he used became a road accessible to horse and carriage; he died of pneumonia in 1910 after rescuing another letter carrier caught in bad weather.

Several Branch 114 carriers commemorate Beargrease's role in their local history by volunteering to help with the race each year.

History isn't just about things that fit in a box. Among the most useful historical resources are the memories of retired or longtime carriers.

For instance, as a project for the NALC Leadership Academy, Nashua, NH Branch 230 member Fred Ordway explored the history of his branch. Instead of digging around in books or newspapers, though, Ordway sim-



One of the photos displayed by Duluth, MN Branch 114



RETIREES FROM '30s AND '40s RECALL THE EARLY DAYS

James C. Crowley retired about 1940 after a career of 33 years with the Post Office. He started as a junior clerk and can remember when he and one other man hand-stamped all the mail going out of the Post Office.

"In those days we worked a schedule from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.," Mr. Crowley said. "Then there times a week we were called down to work overtime. There were no vacations, no sick leave, no overtime pay. At that time there were about 25 clerks and 30 carriers. Today (1984) there are more than 1,000 employees."

One Man Carried Mail
Mr. Crowley recalled that in those

days the transportation of mail from the depot to the Post Office was accomplished by one man, today about 60 men and 90 trucks handle that work.

FIRST VEHICLES
Mechanized vehicles for the Post Office in Minneapolis appeared in July of 1902. The Post Office received the W. W. I. surplus vehicles from the war department. Prior to that a horse delivery company had wagons were equipped with a back seat for the collector. When parcel post delivery was established larger wagons were used.

Trucks were a big improvement over the horse and buggy days. It was on a cold day when a harnessing a horse off, the cab had to go to his home to get the horse and buggy. The cab was only one block white sorting and delivering the mail.

Back in the twenties and thirties we had the Commerce Trucks, they were used on loop collections and parcel post. They were built high with a high running board, no starters, they had to be cranked, no automatic windshield wipers and no heaters. What they did have were very sturdy not for mail. When we hit a chock hole and a shaver, the entire truck bounced up and down.

We called them "Lumber Wagons" and they were made like it.

The cargo space was covered with a heavy wire screen. When it rained or snowed, we would fight to lower the heavy chains on the tail gate rattled like the "Christmas Carol." To get in or out of these trucks were two steps.

Parcel Post routes and heavy collection routes. Loop collections were made between 4:00 and 6:30 P.M. We made half-hour trips with the Model-T trucks for residential collections.

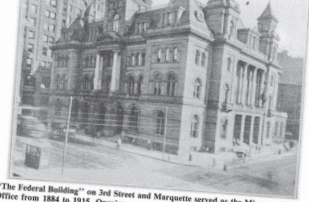
The Model T Fords had the modern wisdom that the Commerce trucks had not, but Model T before he retarded the spark, and many a truck was tipped over when the wheel got into the street car tracks. They were small trucks and I could never figure out how the big men like Joe Don-Harvey North ever got in and out of these almost toy trucks.

In 1931 the P.O. Dept. bought a fleet of 20 Essex motor coaches and put truck wheels on them. They were a great deal better than the Model T's. They had starters, windshield wipers, but no heaters. On snowy streets they jumped like a kangaroo. The Essex trucks life span was short. In '31 the Model A's replaced the Commerce trucks.

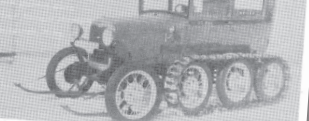
while," Mr. Warrig declared, "but it didn't make much difference because we could work until we were finished!"

Parcels Informal
Christmas made as much trouble then as now, he said. For a week during the route he lived at the Post Office, working from 6 a.m. to midnight and sleeping on a cot in the office.

Wagons were informal, he recalled. The windows were informal, he recalled. The office was



"The Federal Building" on 3rd Street and Marquette served as the Minneapolis Post Office from 1884 to 1915. Opening year receipts were \$78,218.97.



First snowmobile design was successfully used on Rural Routes throughout Minnesota.



Ed Costure in front on his commerce mail truck in 1931 looking west on 30th and Johnson N.E.

ply gathered several retired branch members together, pointed a camera at them and let them talk. The retirees recalled details about daily life on the job that likely wouldn't be found in a book. Retirees are a living historical resource, and documenting their memories and thoughts is a great way to add to the body of historical knowledge.

You can see the results on YouTube at youtube.com/OaWkmiARJe4.

Writing about history and publishing a series of stories in branch newsletters or as special publications to mark special events is another popular way to bring history to life.

NALC celebrated its 125th anniversary last year. Some of the first NALC branches also are celebrating that milestone. Minneapolis Branch 9 was chartered on March 24, 1890, and its newsletter, *Branch Nine News*, is marking the branch's 125th birthday with a series of stories and photos throughout the year.

"You learn your history so you can see where you're going," *Branch Nine News* editor Jeremy Rothstein said. "That's how you know why things are the way they are today. And you appreciate those who came before, and what they did."

Branch Nine News uses a special 125th anniversary logo to "brand" the historical items as they appear in each issue. Readers are learning about the life and accomplishments of Jerome Keating, the former Branch 9 president and national NALC president for whom Branch 9 is named, and about the daily lives of some of the first letter carriers to serve postal patrons in Minneapolis.

Rothstein has borrowed material from the branch's 100th anniversary publication, a booklet that compiled

a great deal of historical information in one place.

But you don't need a special occasion to write about or research branch history. Pick a certain focus or historical era and you will find history all around you that will interest your fellow carriers any time of the year.

Think about historical events that can affect letter carriers. There's the Great Postal Strike of 1970, of course, but there are so many more. Daily life carrying the mail has changed a great deal over the years. Rank-and-file carriers from your branch may have risen to leadership positions in the union or the community.

Mergers of branches are an important part of their history, too. Natural disasters or unusually bad weather are key events for letter carriers, as are heroic carriers who save lives on their routes. Sometimes a local grievance or dispute has ended up setting a national precedent for carriers everywhere.

Letter carrier history also intersects with broader historical events that affect everyone. A natural disaster involves stories of struggle and heroism among letter carriers as they face threats to their lives, rescue others, and bring supplies, money and news to isolated community members, along with a sense of normalcy just by being there every day. Wars sent many carriers overseas, or brought a wave of returned veterans into our ranks, and before women were accepted as permanent carriers, they found temporary jobs delivering the mail during wars.

Carriers faced not only their own labor struggles; they also were active in the campaigns of our brothers and

sisters from other unions and in the overall struggle for labor rights. The civil rights movement, immigration, and economic booms and busts are other historical trends that affected cities across the country, and the letter carriers who served them, in varying ways.

"Chances are, there is a wealth of local letter carrier history waiting to be told in your branch or state—you might even uncover unsung heroes in the past worthy of celebration today," Rolando said. "And some of the history letter carriers will learn about in the future is being made right now. Preserving it is our responsibility." **PR**