

125TH ANNIVERSARY
EDITION

CARRIERS IN A COMMON CAUSE

A HISTORY OF
LETTER CARRIERS
AND THE NALC

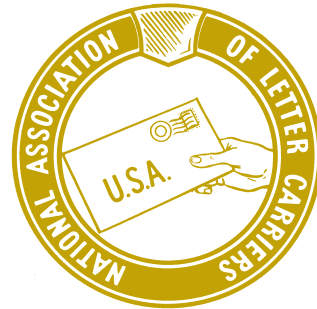


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National Association
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Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Almost 125 years old, the National Association of Letter Carriers has a long and proud history. This is why, as the 18th president of the union, I feel privileged to offer you this revised and updated history of letter carriers and the NALC—*your* union.

Last revised in 2006 and now in its fifth edition, this history breathes life, sharp and vibrant, into the past. It is a story of letter carriers joining together to fight to protect their jobs, their working conditions, their families—and nationwide delivery service, as important today as it was in 1889, and certainly more threatened now than ever before.

The history of the National Association of Letter Carriers is a story of both continuity and change, of battles fought over and over again when new forces—and most recently, new technologies—emerged requiring new responses and new weapons. This is only fitting, for what letter carriers enjoy today—and what the NALC is today—are both gifts from our brothers and sisters who also worked, dreamed and, in the end, fought for in pursuit of a better life for themselves and their families. It is our responsibility to continue the fight and to pass on to future generations not only the union's history, but also the legacy of solidarity and commitment to our brothers and sisters, as well as the union's historic dedication to preserving and strengthening the nation's postal service.

So there is much to tell and much to learn—of people and places, of good times and lean, of struggles and victories. And as you read these pages, remember, this is *your* history—to learn from, to preserve and, most of all, to pass on to the next generation of members of the National Association of Letter Carriers.



In Solidarity,

Fredric V. Rolando
President
National Association of Letter Carriers

July 2014

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TIMELINE OF NALC HISTORY



First letter carriers appointed by Congress

Eight-hour day law for carriers, championed by Congressman "Sunset Cox, enacted

Carriers from large cities and NALC hold consolidation meeting in New York City; first NALC Convention held in Boston, Massachusetts

Mutual Benefit Association established at NALC Convention in Detroit

Lloyd-LaFollette Act rescinds Gag rules, and gives postal and federal workers right to organize

Postmaster General Will B. Hays announces "humanization" policy and officially recognizes postal organizations

NALC Health Benefit Plan began operation

1889: 96 members

1910: 27,000 members

1930: 58,000 members

1950: 103,000 members

1794

1863

1888

1889

1890

1893

1894

1905

1912

1917

1921

1939

1960



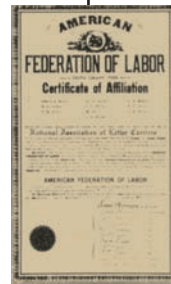
Free city delivery instituted in large cities



NALC founded in Milwaukee

Supreme Court upholds NALC interpretation of Eight Hour Law in two decisions; carriers eventually awarded \$3.5 million in overtime claims

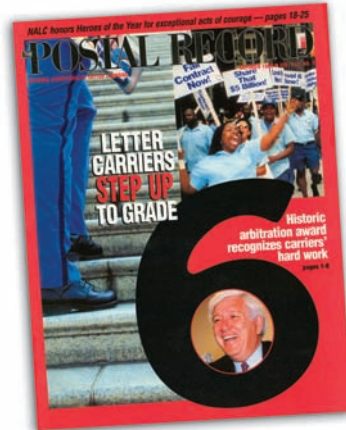
National Ladies Auxiliary founded at NALC Convention in Portland, Oregon



NALC affiliates with American Federation of Labor; women hired as temporary letter carriers as men went to war

Golden Jubilee Convention marks NALC's first 50 years—gold card for 50-year members established





NALCREST retirement community for letter carriers dedicated



Membership gains power to elect national officers directly

Arbitration panel determines terms of a National Agreement for the first time

NALC, USPS and other organizations sign Joint Statement on Violence and Behavior in the Workplace

Arbitrators elevate letter carriers to Grade 6, breaking historic link with postal clerks

Restrictions on subcontracting letter carrier work contained in new National Agreement

1970: 212,000 members

1989: 316,000 members

2014: 289,000 members

1962 1964 1970 1972 1982 1984 1989 1992 1993 1999 2006 2007 2013

Executive Order 10988 issued; NALC wins right to represent city delivery carriers in nationwide representation elections

National wildcat strike; Postal Reorganization Act passed



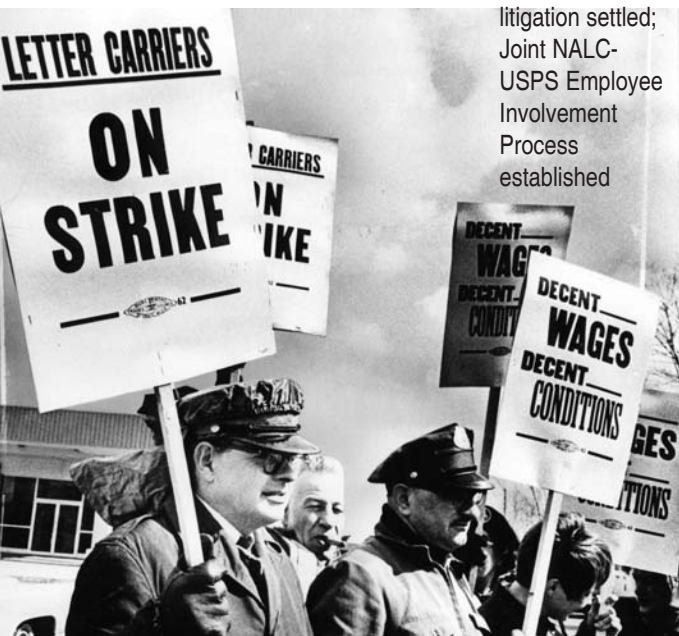
Union celebrates its 100th anniversary in Milwaukee where it was founded

Hatch Act Reform expands political rights for carriers, other postal and federal employees.

Postal Accountability and Enforcement Act signed into law

Arbitration panel resolves 2011-2016 contract, creating city carrier assistant position with a path to a career position

Fair Labor Standards Act litigation settled; Joint NALC-USPS Employee Involvement Process established



INTRODUCTION

Although the first federal workers to organize were the skilled craftsmen working in Navy shipyards and in the U.S. Government Printing Office, postal workers were the first federal employees to join unions in great numbers, with letter carriers the first craft to form its own union—the National Association of Letter Carriers. The struggle to form unions of their choosing followed a different path for letter carriers and others who toiled for the federal government than that taken by workers in American industry.

From the very beginning, letter carriers and the NALC have, out of necessity, faced off against a special employer, the United States government. Because government employees work for the public, many Americans have believed that government workers owe their employer—ultimately the American people—a degree of loyalty and obedience far beyond that owed by other workers. As a result, letter carriers have sometimes been reluctant to antagonize both the public and the government by engaging in what might be viewed as extreme or radical collective action.

Recognizing the public's views, the NALC has constantly had to juggle its members' aspirations against the forces of public opinion and governmental reaction. Prior to 1971, conditions of work had been fixed by law rather than by direct negotiations between the union and the then Post Office Department, and the NALC relied exclusively on finely honed weapons of lobbying and political action to become one of the powerful federal unions. But as a direct result of the illegal but unquestionably necessary and justifiable 1970 strike, collective bargaining has given the union and its members a "second front" in the age-old struggle to improve letter carrier wages, benefits and working conditions.

Whether lobbying Congress, reaching out to the public, or negotiating with postal management, the NALC has always exhibited unity of goals and methods, thus generally avoiding the factional struggles that often divide organizations. In part, this remarkable cohesiveness has been due to the nature of the letter carrier's job: all workers have labored in the same craft and performed the same work. But what also contributed mightily to this unity and solidarity from the very beginning was that letter carriers, unlike other workers of the late 19th century, shared a common employer, the Post Office Department, although delivering the mail in communities scattered across the United States. In contrast, when the NALC was founded, industry was barely national in scope, and since most workers organized locally to fight localized struggles, many national unions were national in name only.

Of course, letter carriers' true employer has always been the American people, which is why they have shouldered their satchels with such pride. One of the NALC's early presidents, James C. Keller, expressed this sentiment at the beginning of the 20th century: "We hold that he [the letter carrier] is not a messenger boy, but that he is an intelligent part and parcel of the social and industrial organization of this land of ours."

Such pride, however, did not change the harsh realities of letter carriers' lives for, like other workers, letter carriers worked long and hard to pay the rent and put food on the table—selling their labor to survive. And like other workers, they organized because of economic necessity and the injustices on the job. Like other labor unions, the NALC is rooted in the workplace. The pages that follow tell the history of letter carriers who worked to live—and of unionists who lived for their common ideals.