

NALC's rich history



**Paul
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NALC was founded in August of 1889 in Milwaukee, WI, by 60 letter carriers from across the country. The date was chosen to coincide with the reunion of the Grand Army of the Republic, an organization of Union veterans from the Civil War. The hope was that the reduced train fares resulting from the veterans' reunion would translate into increased attendance at the meeting of the letter carriers.

Since its humble beginnings, NALC has continued to thrive and grow as the sole representative of city letter carriers across all 50 states, Guam, Puerto Rico and the Caribbean. What began

with those 60 founding members has today grown to 285,000 members strong, with NALC boasting a rich and proud history of achievements.

It doesn't require much research into the extraordinary history of NALC to realize its diverse organizational structure. Over the years, NALC has defined itself over and over again by promoting the cause of letter carriers.

In addition to delivering first-class representation on workroom floors across the country, history shows that NALC has been a proven leader in providing invaluable benefits to its members and advancing the prosperity of workers and their families.

From the very beginning, NALC convention delegates began the process of structurally framing the union. The Mutual Benefit Association was established at the 1891 NALC convention in Detroit, MI, and continues to provide life insurance and a hospital confinement plan, as well as annuity products to NALC members and their families.

In 1905, the NALC Auxiliary (then called the National Ladies Auxiliary) was founded by a group of wives during the NALC convention in Portland, OR, for the purpose of assisting in gaining favorable legislation to provide better working conditions for letter carriers. NALC affiliated with the American Federation of Labor in 1917, the same year that women were first hired as temporary letter carriers as men went off to war. The NALC Health Benefit Plan began operations in 1960, and continues to provide quality and affordable health

care to thousands of its members through the present day. And in 1964, Nalcrest, a retirement community for letter carriers located in central Florida, was dedicated.

NALC also has history rooted in civil disobedience in the advancement of the rights and conditions of letter carriers. In 1970, NALC branches around the country took strike votes, resulting in thousands of letter carriers walking off the job. This wildcat strike, prompted by the poverty level wages being paid to letter carriers, culminated in the passage into law of the Postal Reorganization Act, arguably one of the most impactful events in NALC history.

Along with the organizational additions, NALC over its history has championed many improvements affecting letter carriers, from contractual changes and improved workers' rights and benefits to legislative initiatives. Many rights and benefits enjoyed by letter carriers today are the result of grueling negotiations and hard-fought arbitrations and court battles. NALC's numerous monumental advances in letter carrier and workers' rights are etched throughout its history.

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The NALC Information and Research Department serves as the repository of our union's historical archives. NALC's official archives are catalogued in preparation to be housed at the Walter P. Reuther Library at Wayne State University in Detroit. Many other precious documents, publications and memorabilia are on display in the NALC library, as well as other locations at NALC Headquarters. Thanks to the dedicated work of many over the years, the history of NALC is documented so that it can be shared and enjoyed both now and into the future.

For more information on the history of NALC, refer to *Carriers in a Common Cause: A History of Letter Carriers and the NALC*, which can be found on the NALC website or through the NALC Supply Department.