

# One carrier's interest in postal history reveals neighborhood's shared past



One of Kalani Han's exhibits on the history of the Ravenswood neighborhood

**K**alani Han, a Chicago, IL Branch 11 letter carrier, has always had an interest in history, particularly architectural history. So, when he had the opportunity to explore the history of the Ravenswood neighborhood post office that he worked at, he dived in.

"The project was pretty much just kind of born out of curiosity," Han said. He researched the topic for about a year, then created two exhibits at his post office after his post office manager accepted his proposal.

"It was a massive undertaking," he said.

Han used information from the Chicago Public Library's Northside Neighborhood History Collection and the post office's own digitized historical records. His research involved looking through digitized newspapers, finding antiques in his post office, scouring the internet for artifacts, and even interviewing a longtime letter carrier.

For hours, he combed through pages and pages of eBay listings in search of physical relics of the past. His search yielded a lantern used at one of the first Ravenswood post office locations, postmarked letters from the late 1800s through the 1950s, stamps, tools, a 1970s clock, registered mail from the 1930s and old photographs.

As important as the physical items are, to further educate and explain the items' significance, Han created infographics.

He found out that while the current post office had only been there since the 1970s, a post office had existed in Ravenswood for more than 150 years. In the spring of 1869, the Ravenswood settlement was so small that a resident began all the sorting and distributing of the mail from his living room. Soon after, the first physical post office was

established in a small corner of the neighborhood's train station. Trains were a big part of the mail system at that time, so the location made it easy to send and receive mail from across the country.

The post office was ahead of its time. While USPS did not appoint a female postmaster general until 2015, Ravenswood elected its first female postmaster in 1887. Due to the station's popularity and the neighborhood's quick growth, the post office expanded and moved across the street to a two-story wooden building around the same time.

The Ravenswood neighborhood was originally part of the Township of Lake View and didn't become part of Chicago until 1889, the same year in which NALC was organized. Due to restructuring, the post office became referred to as "Station X," losing its identity as the Ravenswood neighborhood post office.

In one infographic, Han wrote, "It marked more than a bureaucratic change—it marked the end of local identity. For residents, it symbolized a broader reality—their suburb was no longer distinct, but part of a standardized system where individuality gave way to the needs of a growing metropolis."

Only 10 years later, the name "Ravenswood Station" was restored, and in 1901 postal operations in the neighborhood moved to the Ravenswood Exchange Bank building, "marking a new chapter in the neighborhood's postal history—one rooted again in place, not just protocol," Han wrote. The new location reflected Ravenswood's status as a place where business and mail went hand in hand. This time the railroad came to the post office, when a new

stop opened only steps away.

A new Ravenswood post office was built in 1910. It had skylights, tiled floors and dedicated areas for letter carriers. It was called by its postmaster at the time “the most modern post office in America.”

Despite its praise, 11 years later, in 1921, when the borders of the Chicago neighborhood were redrawn, the post office relocated to a new building. The area that had been the Ravenswood neighborhood was divided and absorbed into three of the newly drawn neighborhoods, causing it to be “quietly erased,” as Han wrote in one infographic. The station was relocated again in 1948, as well as in the 1970s to its current location.

“I realized it’s more than just a story about the post office,” Han said. “It’s really about community and resilience, identity.”

Even though the neighborhood has changed throughout the years, Han says the post office “helped build the community and preserve its identity.”

Han used his knowledge and research to create a second display, which celebrated the Ravenswood post office’s ZIP Code Day on June 6, 2025—the date that matches up to its ZIP Code, 60625. The post office held an event that 250 members of the community attended, featuring a temporary exhibit that Han put together.

“By the end of the day, customers were wishing each other happy ZIP Code Day,” he told USPS Link. “That moment of connection, of shared civic joy—that’s what the whole project was about.”

Though the Ravenswood local postal history exhibit will be a permanent fixture in the post office, the ZIP Code Day exhibit will be periodically



switched out to share information about other ZIP Codes in the area.

Han has enjoyed learning about the post office and said that he hopes it “inspires other people to get curious about the world around them.”

“[History] can be boring, but if you find an interesting piece and communicate it in a digestible and interesting way, it can be pretty powerful,” Han said. **PR**

**Above: Kalani Han**

**Below: A display that was part of the ZIP Code Day exhibit**

