

Carriers and the mail make news online

Mail-centered stories frequently appear on social media and online news sites. The following are a few that have come to NALC's attention recently. If you find a story you'd like us to consider featuring, send it to postalrecord@nalc.org.

A croissant, coffee, a pen and paper for here, s'il vous plaît

With more than a thousand cafes in the city, Paris is certainly known for its cafes. Some say a trip to Paris is not complete without participating in the ritual of enjoying a cup of coffee and a pastry.

But at one Paris cafe, *Bistro des Lettres*, customers receive more than caffeine, nutrients and a memory from their time there. As customers are enjoying their meals they are given a pen, paper and envelope. Then, a year after the letter is drafted, cafe workers mail the envelope to the specified address.

According to its website, *Bistro des Lettres* offers its customers "...the opportunity to immortalize their thoughts, dreams and emotions through a letter ...like a sweet reminder of this moment. ...During your meal, we invite you to write a personal letter—a reflection, a wish or simply a souvenir of the moment shared."

The cafe serves seasonal French dishes that combine traditional and contemporary elements of cuisine. It is owned by Larome Group, an international restaurant conglomerate, which seems to have an interest in the written word, as showcased by another of their restaurants, *Bistro des Poemes*, a restaurant that celebrates poetry with poems as decoration and dishes inspired by poems. The group is planning to open another restaurant, *Bistro des Livres* (Bistro of Books) soon.



Small town's residents want their post office back

It has been about two years since the small town of Bolinas, CA, lost its post office. Because of the town's peculiar setup, with uniquely shaped streets and sharp turns, only a small portion of its residents are eligible to get mail delivery to their doors. So, residents relied on going to the post office to pick up their mail.

But concerns over asbestos in the floor quickly led to the closing of the post office. Since then, most town residents have had to drive 40 minutes round-trip to pick up their mail in Olema. The Olema post office often floods, meaning Bolinas residents have to retrieve their mail at another post office. Residents have complained about their mail often being lost. With 60 percent of residents depending on the post office to receive their medication, according to a 2023 poll, the change in where they can get their mail—and whether they can get their mail—is worrisome.

Above: A customer takes a moment to write a letter at *Bistro des Lettres*.

Below: The residents of Bolinas raise awareness about the loss of their post office.



Online news (continued)

Although residents find the trek inconvenient, the feelings of loss weren't just about mail. The post office was a social gathering place for neighbors checking their boxes and a break from solitude in a small town known for artists, hippies and surfers wanting a retreat into nature. Each month, one artist's creations were featured next to the counter of the post office. Without the need to go to the post office, residents don't go downtown as often, meaning some businesses near the post office are not doing as well as they had been doing prior to the closure.

USPS has offered to expand street delivery, but some are worried that this would mean a reduced chance of their beloved post office's return. Some residents speculate that the post office will never reopen. Kristina Uppal, a Bay Area-based spokesperson for the USPS, told the *San Francisco Chronicle* in December, "We are currently in lease negotiations for a permanent solution and hope to have the matter resolved soon."

One resident's yard bears a sign that says, "Days without a Bolinas Post Office," and each day the resident changes the sign. One resident launched an online petition to get a Bolinas post office, which nearly all town residents signed. Residents got their congressional representative to lobby for their post office by talking to Postmaster General Louis DeJoy. Community members marched in local parades dressed as letter carriers and performed USPS-themed songs at community rallies. Although there are no official plans for a new post office yet, residents are hopeful that it will one day return.

300 letters from WWII soldier to his wife uncovered

The love story of Louis "Speedy" Weber and his wife, Frances, involved a lot of letters. Weber was consistent. He enlisted in the Army on June 9, 1942, and was shipped off the very same day. Weber wrote his first letter when he was at an Italian restaurant near his home in the Bronx precinct of New York City, telling her that he was being shipped off to Fort Dix, NJ.

The next day he sent her a letter from Fort Dix telling her he wanted her to write to him every day and she nearly did. From Fort Dix, Weber went to numerous places around the world, but the letters never stopped. Nor did his replies. Letters came from South Carolina, North Africa, Sicily, France, Belgium and Germany. Weber wrote more than 300 letters to Frances, and she saved them all.

In 2022 someone sent all of Weber's letters to the United Service Organizations (USO), a charitable organization that supports active-duty service members and military families. The USO is now in the process of sorting and digitizing the letters.

Although none of his letters detailed his military service, they provide a look at the intimate thoughts of a soldier fighting the Axis powers across North Africa and Europe during World War II.

He wrote about his personal life in the Army, how much he missed Frances and how much he couldn't wait to come home. He also sent her packages including salami, a voice recording on a primitive voice recorder, photos and French money.

"Just as sure as night must follow day I'll keep missing you until I can come home and hold you in my arms once again," he wrote in a letter, ac-



Louis "Speedy" Weber's letters to his wife from World War II

Some of the Forever stamps to be released in 2025



according to *The Washington Post*. “You are always in my heart.”

Although little is known about the couple’s lives, a census record indicated that they were living in the Bronx in 1950 with Frances’ mother and had no children. At the time, Frances was working at the post office and Weber was a watchmaker. Years later they moved to Sunrise, FL, where they both died—Weber in 1997 and Frances in 2005.

New Forever stamps for 2025

On Dec.19, USPS announced the release dates for its new stamps.

Included is Betty White, an American actress and comedian whose career spanned seven decades. In 1953 she became the first woman to produce and star in a sitcom. She is best known for her part in the 1980s sitcom, “The Golden Girls.” The stamp will be released on March 27 in Los Angeles, and will feature a smiling Betty White with a purple background and wearing a purple polka-dotted top.

Another set will celebrate powwows, a type of Native American gathering that celebrates culture through song, dance and food. There are four stamps that are brightly colored and depict Native Americans performing their traditional craft, according to USPS.

Freshwater fishing is a hobby that attracts more than 55 million anglers, and the Postal Service has created a stamp to showcase the diverse lures used by them across the country.

So far, the Postal Service has announced the release dates for 11 more stamps due to come out from January to March. They include stamps honoring and depicting the Lunar Year, Allen Toussaint, love, spiral galaxies, American vistas and the Appalachian trail.

The Black women who moved the mail in WWII becomes film

In December, Netflix released “The Six Triple Eight,” a film about the Women’s Army Corps’ all-Black battalion, the 6888th. When World War II soldiers and families began to lose hope after not hearing anything from their families for years, the 855-person battalion worked to deliver more than 17 million letters from 1945 to 1946, which had been backlogged for three years.

The movie depicts their success along with their struggles—both from higher-ups expecting the battalion to fail, and the racial prejudices of the time. Despite the white and Black military women training side by side, the Black women were treated worse, such as being asked to give up their seats in theaters to white people.

The film was directed by Tyler Perry and stars Kerry Washington, Ebony Obsidian, Milauna Jackson, Kylie Jefferson, Shanice Shantay, Sarah Jeffery and Oprah Winfrey in an ensemble cast.

It was based on a magazine article published in 2019, titled “Fighting a Two-Front War,” by Kevin M. Hymel. The article discussed the many contributions of the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion in World War II. **PR**



The poster for Netflix’s “The Six Triple Eight”

