

**Women's H of D CO, who was WWII WAC,
honored at S. Carolina Vets Center event**



Mattie Elton Garrett Tucker, who served during WWII in the all black 6888 WAC battalion and later as a CO in the NYC Women's House of Detention, was remembered and honored at the Laurens, S.C., Veterans Center, by civic leaders on Nov.5, 2022, a date marking the 102nd anniversary of her birth.

Ms. Garrett, who retired from NYC DOC in the late 1970s, was also the aunt of retired Correction Captain Tony Grayson (deceased) and his brother, Correction Officer Dwight Grayson; Aunt-in-law of Deputy Warden Rebecca Grayson (deceased) and a distant cousin of retired Assistant Deputy Warden Jacqueline Pitts, currently a member of the NYC Board of Correction.



The famed 6888 battalion, the only black WAC unit deployed overseas in WWII, cleared a massive military mail jam-up in Europe and kept mail flowing.

The website of the *“Women of the 6888th”* lists the names of the WAC unit’s original members as inscribed on their monument, in the Buffalo Soldier Military Park at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

including “Garrett, Mattie E. T3,” (the latter reference being her rank).

The same entry (name and rank) is among those 6888ers listed as photographed Dec. 27, 1944 getting ready to board a bus at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, for Fort Oglethorpe, Ga., to receive “special training for overseas assignment.”

The information accompanying the photo in a Boston Public Library collection does not indicate what name goes with which person in the photo.



Attorney and Certified Genealogist LaBrenda Garrett-Nelson (niece of Mattie Garrett), in her exhaustive genealogy on the Garrett, Neely, and

Sullivan Families, (many with historical linkages to Laurens, S.C.) cites a printed program for a Sept. 3, 1998 funeral service in St. Albans, NY, for Mattie E. Tucker, whom the genealogist identifies as a daughter of Mattie3 (nee Neely) Garrett.



Hand-written note on photo states "From Mattie W. A. A. C. Nov. 1942." The initials refer to the original service name "Women's Army Auxiliary Corps," established in the summer of 1942. "Auxiliary" was dropped from the name in the summer of 1943 and the WACs officially acquired Army ranks, benefits and privileges.

The genealogy entry reads, in part:

“Mattie Elton Tucker (b. Nov. 5, 1920 in Laurens, S.C.; d. August 29, 19980; eldest child of Albert Elton Garrett and the former Mattie Neely. On March 15, 1947, she married Edward Jordan Tucker, the father of her four children: Sharyn, twins Evangeline and Madeleine, and Edward Jr.

“After graduating high school in S. C., she enlisted in the U. S. Army and served during WWII as a Technical Sergeant in the only Black WAC battalion to serve overseas. She continued her education at Long Island University in Brooklyn and became a NY Correction Officer in 1955, working until her retirement in 1976. She moved in 1955 to

Queens, NY where she joined the Presbyterian Church of St. Albans and remained a devout member more than 40 years.”

Her daughter, Evangeline Price, wrote this on Facebook Nov. 6 at 3:25 PM:

“I would like to say thank you with all of my heart who were able to join us on Saturday, November 5th to celebrate the induction of our mother,

Tech Sergeant MATTIE ELTON GARRETT, into the ‘Hall of Heroes’ in Laurens’s S.C. It was also a special day because it was her 102nd birthday. You could feel her spirit surrounding us.

“I want to give a special thank-you to cousin Buster John Dakers for encouraging me to honor her and tell her story that will go down in history.

“The 6888 Central Postal Directory Battalion, nicknamed the ‘*Six Triple Eight*,’ was an all black battalion of the Women’s Army Corps. It was the only all-black, all female battalion sent overseas from 1945 -1946 during WWII. Seventy-three years later, they started receiving their just recognition. I encourage all who read this post to read and learn the legacy of these phenomenal women.”

A Laurens, S.C. clipping informs, in part: “Mattie Garret Tucker, formerly of Laurens, died Saturday, Aug. 29, 1998, in New York.” [Was] “member of Bethel Hall Baptist Missionary Church in the Laurens region [and a] U.S. Army veteran of WWII . . . Burial Thursday in Calverton, NY.”

The Army’s official website includes among its on-line brochures “*The Women’s Army Corps: A Commemoration Of World War II Service*” by Judith A. Bellafaire. The lengthy essay noted:

“In February 1945 a battalion of black WACs received its long awaited overseas assignment. Organized as the 6888th Central Postal Battalion and commanded by Maj. (later Lt. Col.) Charity Adams, these 800 women were stationed in Birmingham, England, for three months, moved



www.womenofthe6888th.org/

The Women of the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion website is an excellent source for more information and photos.



to Rouen, France, and finally settled in Paris. The battalion was responsible for the redirection of mail to all US personnel in the European Theater of Operations (including Army, Navy, Marine Corps, civilians, and Red Cross workers), a total of over seven million people.

“When mail could not be delivered to the address on the face of the envelope, it was sent to the Postal Directory to be redirected. The 6888th kept an updated information card on each person in the theater. Some personnel at the front moved frequently, often requiring several information updates per month. The WACs worked three eight-hour shifts seven days a week to clear out the tremendous backlog of Christmas mail.

“Each shift averaged 65,000 pieces of mail. Although the women's workload was heavy, their spirits were high because they realized how important their work was in keeping up morale at the front.

“In general, WACs in the European theater, like those in the North African and Mediterranean theaters, held a limited range of job assignments: 35 percent worked as stenographers and typists, 26 percent were clerks, and 22 percent were in communications work. Only 8 percent were assigned jobs considered unusual for women”

Webmaster Note: Thanks, Jacqueline Pitts, for all your help with this story.

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