



# The Clerk's Black History Series

## Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County



### “Charity Edna Adams Earley”

(December 5, 1918 – January 13, 2002)

“First African-American Woman Officer in Women's Army Auxiliary Corps”  
“Highest Ranking African-American Woman in Army at end of WWII”



Charity Edna Adams Earley was born December 5, 1918, in Kittrell, North Carolina. Charity was Valedictorian in high school and graduated from Wilberforce University in 1938, with a degree in Mathematics and Physics. She taught high-school mathematics while studying part-time for her Master's degree. She put her degree on hold when she enlisted in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) in July 1942. The newly formed WAAC was an auxiliary unit in the Women's branch of the U.S. Army, created on May 15, 1942, signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. When the WAAC converted to active status on July 1, 1943, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and civil rights leader Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune successfully advocated for the admittance of African-American women as enlisted personnel and officers in the (Women's Army Corps) WAC. Charity Adams became the first African-American woman to be an Officer in the WAC.

During the war, there was a shortage of soldiers able to manage the postal service for the U.S. Army overseas. After several units of white women soldiers were sent to serve in Europe, Mary McLeod Bethune again worked with Eleanor Roosevelt, advocating for the War Department to extend the same opportunity to serve overseas to black women. In November 1944, the War department recruited a battalion of black women - 824 enlisted and 31 officers - to create the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, nicknamed “Six Triple Eight.” The 6888th included a Headquarters and four Companies, each commanded by a captain or first lieutenant. Major Charity Adams (later Lieutenant Colonel) was selected to command the entire Battalion, making her the first African-American woman to do so. On February 3, 1945, the first contingent of her battalion sailed for Britain, arriving in Glasgow, Scotland, on February 14th. The 2nd contingent arrived 50 days later. They traveled by train to their unit in Birmingham, England.

The women of the “Six Triple Eight” were sent to unheated, dimly lit, rat-infested warehouses filled with millions of pieces of unprocessed mail. The mail, intended for members of the U.S. military and Government, sat for over six months, affecting the morale of the troops.



Under Major Adams' command, the 6888th organized three eight-hour shifts, working around the clock, seven days a week. They tracked servicemembers by maintaining seven million information cards including serial numbers to distinguish different individuals with the same name. They dealt with “undeliverable” mail and investigated insufficiently addressed mail to find the intended recipient. They also had the sad duty of returning mail addressed to servicemembers who had died.

The 6888th processed an average of 65,000 pieces of mail per shift and cleared the six-month backlog of mail in three months. Members of the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion were awarded the European

African Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, the Good Conduct Medal and the World War II Victory Medal for their service. By the completion of the war, Lieutenant Colonel Charity Adams was the highest ranking African-American woman in the military. She left the military in 1946 when she was called to serve at the Pentagon and completed her Masters Degree in Psychology from The Ohio State University the same year. She married Stanley A. Early in 1949 and had two children.



Charity Adams Earley devoted most of her post-military life to service, both in education and community, teaching and volunteering. She worked for Veterans Administration in Cleveland, Ohio, and taught education at the HBCU - Georgia State College (Now Savannah State College). Charity Edna Adams Early died at age 83 on January 13, 2002, in Dayton, Ohio. She received numerous honors during her life, including a Woman of the Year from the National Council of Negro Women in 1946. She was listed on the Smithsonian Institution's 110 most important historical Black women, Black



Women Against the Odds, in 1982. She was inducted into the Ohio Women's Hall of Fame in 1979 and the Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame in 1993

On November 30, 2018, Fort Leavenworth dedicated a monument to the women of the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion. Five women from the Battalion were present at the dedication.

