

May 21, 2020

United States Senate
Committee on Homeland Security
And Governmental Affairs
340 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Chairman Johnson and Ranking Member Peters:

We are writing to express our support for renaming the U.S. Post Office at 2719 South Webster Street in Kokomo, Indiana, to honor the legacy of Opha May Johnson.

Opha was born to William and Ella B. Jacob on May 4, 1878, in Kokomo, Indiana. Not much is well known about her early life, but she is nationally recognized for demonstrating the readiness of patriotic women wanting to serve their country when an acute shortage of trained Marines emerged before the final push of World War I.

Just two years before women obtained the right to vote in the U.S., Opha made military history as America's first woman Marine when she joined the Marine Corps Reserve on August 13, 1918. Of the thousands of women to enlist during WWI, only 305 were enrolled. According to reports, Opha's experience as a 14-year civil servant in the Interstate Commerce Department equipped her with the skills to assist young women who were to be enrolled in the Marine Corps Reserve.

Opha's first assignment was in the office of the Quartermaster General of the Marine Corps under Brigadier General Charles L. McCawley in Arlington, Virginia, where she managed the records of other new women Marine reservists. On September 18, 1918, Johnson was promoted to Sergeant and was a senior enlisted woman in the Marine Corps by the end of WWI. After the war, the Marine Corps began discharging women from active duty, but Opha continued serving as a civil servant in the War Department until she retired in 1943.

Opha's great ambition and perseverance allowed her to breakthrough any prejudice or obstacles in her path to becoming a Marine Corps legend. To ensure her memory lives on, we support dedicating the U.S. Post Office in Kokomo, Indiana, in her honor.

Sincerely,

Todd Young
United States Senator

Mike Braun
United States Senator