

City of Saint Paul Celebrates African Americans – Naming

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In Cooperation with the City of Saint Paul and Saint Paul Public Schools

The City of Saint Paul, Saint Paul Parks and Recreation, Saint Paul Public Works, and Saint Paul Public Schools are proud of their overall history and have celebrated that by naming some of their parks, facilities, schools, and honorary streets after individuals that have had a significant impact on Saint Paul history.

CITY PARKS AND FACILITIES

Roy Wilkins Park

900 N. Marion St.

- <https://naacp.org/find-resources/history-explained/civil-rights-leaders/roy-wilkins>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roy_Wilkins

Carty Park

705 Iglehart Ave. / est. 1979

- Father Denzil A. Carty
- <https://www.mnopedia.org/person/carty-rev-den-zil-1904-1975>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Denzil_Angus_Carty

Frank Boyd Park

335 Selby Ave. / May, 1976

- <https://www.mnopedia.org/person/boyd-frank-1881-1962>
- <https://www.minnpost.com/mnopedia/2021/03/st-pauls-boyd-park-commemorates-a-black-labor-leader/>

Hallie Q Brown Community Center

270 N. Kent St.

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hallie_Quinn_Brown
- <https://www.mnopedia.org/structure/hallie-q-brown-community-center>

Martin Luther King Community (Recreation Center)

271 N. Mackubin St.

- <https://www.hallieqbrown.org/site/index.php/mlk-center-administration/>
- <https://www.stpaul.gov/facilities/martin-luther-king-recreation-center>

Ernie “Duke” Green Tennis Courts

271 N. Mackubin St.

WELCOME TO

ERNIE “DUKE” GREENE TENNIS COURTS

Ernest A. Greene was born on December 15, 1918 in Cape May, New Jersey. He met his future wife Edith, to whom he would be married for 58 years, while attending Hampton University in Hampton, VA. He served in the Army and was a SSGT in WWII. He moved to St. Paul in 1946, earned a B.S. degree at the University of Minnesota, and began his career as an Assistant Scientist in the U of M's Physiology Department.

Ernie “Duke” Greene was dedicated to the development, promotion, and playing of tennis in the Saint Paul area since 1966. He started tennis lessons for youth in 1972 at the Martin Luther King Recreation Center and in 1973 founded the Martin Luther King Tennis Buffs Inc., an organization dedicated to giving youth and adults from the inner city the opportunity to learn and play the game of tennis.

Duke's career included numerous recognitions and awards from Northwest Professional Tennis Association: Player of the Year in 1982, Coach of the Year in 1987 and Pro of the Year in 1992. In 1994 he received the United States Professional Tennis Registry Humanitarian Award. Ernie's playing career included being ranked #1 in the NPTA Men's 55 and Over age group from 1975-76 and #1 in the Men's 60 and Over division in 1979-80. He captured four National Public Parks Championships, nine NPTA Sectional Singles Championships, five American Tennis Association Men's Singles titles, and two Doubles titles in his age group. He was inducted into the NPTA Tennis Hall of Fame in 1997, the first African American to receive this honor.

Among Ernie's many commitments to his community in St. Paul was serving as the President of the Hallie Q Brown Community Center, Inc. Board of Directors. He also was one of the driving forces of the St. Paul Urban Tennis organization and their mission in our community.

“Mr. Greene is a legend in tennis not only in the Twin Cities, but also across the United States. Ernie's accomplishments far transcend the tennis court. He has used tennis to help many young people and adults in every phase of life.” (Tony Stingley, USTA National Manager) “In all his activities Ernie was recognized as a man of complete integrity and compassion for others.” (Sam Shepard, former doubles partner.)

This sign was paid for by the Martin Luther King Tennis Buffs, Inc.

Jimmy Lee Recreation Center

270 N. Lexington Parkway

JIMMY LEE

AFRICAN AMERICAN, RONDO RESIDENT

Jim “Jimmy” Lee was one of the most respected baseball, basketball, and football officials in the state of Minnesota. He was also the first African American ever hired to work Big Ten baseball games, which he did at the University of Minnesota. As a referee for high school basketball, Jimmy would work as many as 20 or 32 district tournaments and 6 of the 8 regional tournaments every year. He was also frequently called upon to umpire when Negro League baseball teams came through town during their barnstorming trips around the state and the Twin Cities.

A native of Mississippi, Jimmy Lee first moved to St. Paul in the 1920s. He attended Mechanic Arts High School and was a member of the St. Peter Claver Catholic Church. After graduating from Mechanic Arts, Jimmy took his first job as a Boys Worker at the Hallie Q Brown Community Center. He later worked for many years at the 1st National Bank in downtown St. Paul. He was the chief elevator starter for the busiest elevator complex in the city. His reputation as a cordial, respectful, and humorous worker brought him many good contacts and helped him become influential in the community. People would say, “If Jimmy Lee greeted you by name, you had arrived.”

Jimmy was also an excellent athlete. He played for several of the Twin Cities’ top all-black baseball teams in the 1920s and ‘30s, including the Uptown Sanitary Shop, the St. Paul Monarchs, and the Twin City Colored Giants. He was a very good golfer as well, and the Minneapolis Spokesman newspaper hired him to write a column of golf tips, called “Golf Divots.” From there, Jimmy went on to write a regular sports column for the Spokesman, “The Sport Light,” during the 1930s and ‘40s.

Jimmy Lee has been honored by numerous organizations for his achievements as a sports official, including induction into the following halls of fame: the Minnesota Football Coaches Association Hall of Fame in 1972, the Minnesota Softball Hall of Fame in 1982, and the Minnesota State High School League Hall of Fame in 2013.

Jimmy's accomplishments and the reputation and respect he earned are even more impressive when considering the fact that, when he officiated games, he usually was the only African American person in the stadium or gym.

A groundbreaker, a leader, and a friend to many, Jimmy Lee was an outstanding person and a great ambassador for the Rondo community and for St. Paul.

In 1974, the Rondo community and the City of St. Paul honored his contributions and his memory by naming this facility the Jimmy Lee Recreation Center.

Stacy Robinson Football/Soccer Field

270 N. Lexington Parkway

- <https://www.minnpost.com/two-cities/2013/06/st-paul-renames-sports-fields-honor-late-nfl-star-stacy-robinson/>

Toni Stone Baseball Field

1221 Marshall Ave.

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toni_Stone
- <https://www.mnopedia.org/person/stone-marceniale-toni-1921-1996>

Wigington Pavilion

75 Water St.

- <https://www.mnopedia.org/person/wigington-clarence-1883-1967>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clarence_W._Wigington

Roy Wilkins Auditorium

175 W. Kellogg Blvd.

- <https://www.rivercentre.org/roy-wilkins-auditorium>
- See Roy Wilkins Park





SCHOOL DISTRICT FACILITIES

James Griffin Stadium

274 N. Lexington Parkway

- <https://www.mnopedia.org/multimedia/st-paul-police-deputy-james-s-griffin>
- <https://rchs.com/publishing/catalog/ramsey-county-history-winter-2002-a-memoir-jimmy-griffin-st-pauls-first-black-deputy-police-chief-remembers-his-first-years-on-the-force/>

Benjamin E. Mays IB World School

560 Rondo Ave.

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_Mays
- <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/mays-benjamin-elijah>

Gordon Parks High School

1212 University Ave.

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gordon_Parks
- https://www.minnpost.com/mnopedia/2020/08/pioneering-black-photographer-and-filmmaker-gordon-parks-bought-his-first-camera-in-minnesota/?gad_source=1&qclid=CjwKCAjwxY-3BhAuE-iwAu7Y6s4XczZG3j981FqsTuuLFMXInTJLCPO-tFK5dmH38Rqgk93YsOoCjRoC4bQQA-vD_BwE

Barack & Michelle Obama Elementary School

707 Holly Ave.



RENAMED STREETS

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd

(formerly Central Ave. in front of State Capitol – from University Ave. to Robert St.)

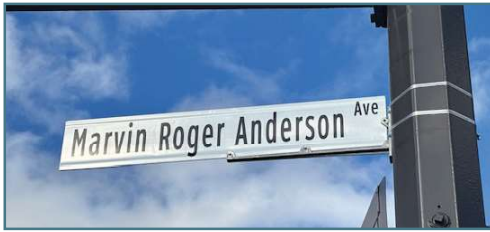
- <https://mn.gov/governor/newsroom/proclamations/?id=1055-606548>

Rondo Avenue

- St. Paul has officially restored the original name of a 2-mile stretch of Concordia Avenue to "Rondo Avenue." Much of the historic Rondo neighborhood, once the epicenter of the Twin Cities' Black community, was systematically destroyed between 1956 and 1968 to make way for Interstate 94. May 6, 2024
- (Concordia Avenue from Griggs Street to Mackubin Street and St Anthony Avenue from Western Avenue to Rice Street (May 6, 2024)



HONORARY AVENUES AND STREETS



Marvin Roger Anderson Avenue

Rondo Avenue, Lexington Pkwy – Dale St.

- <https://mn.gov/law-library/about-us/marvinanderson.jsp>



Rev. Dr. James W. Battle Avenue

Central Avenue W, between Dale Street and Western Avenue

- <https://saintpaulhistorical.com/items/show/232>



Rev. Walter L. Battle Street

Marshall Ave. at Grotto St.

- <https://www.northcentral.edu/blog/walter-battles-unexpected-journey-to-north-central/>



Rev. & Mrs. Steve Daniels Jr. Drive

Lawson Avenue between Kent Street and Mackubin Street

- <https://www.shilohmbc.net/>



Mr. & Mrs. Tiger Jack Street

Dale Street at Central Avenue W

- <https://archive.mpr.org/stories/2001/04/04/st-paul-honor-tiger-jack>



Katie Mc Watt Avenue

Dayton Avenue, between Victoria Street S and Lexington Pkwy

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katie_McWatt

HONORARY AVENUES AND STREETS



Rev. Dr. Earl F. Miller Drive

Burns Avenue, between White Bear Avenue and Upper Afton Road

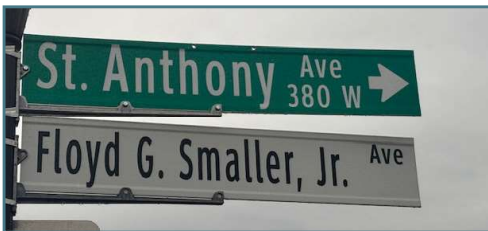
- <https://pbcmn25.wixsite.com/pastorsretirement>



Debbie Montgomery Avenue

Marshall Avenue, Lexington Pkwy to Dale St.

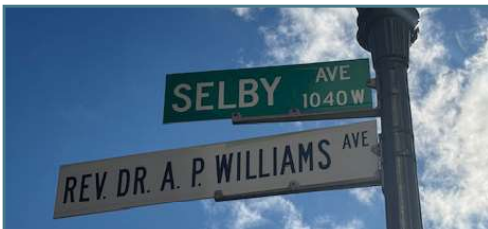
- <https://news.stthomas.edu/publication-article/st-pauls-finest/>



Floyd G. Smaller Jr. Avenue

St. Anthony Avenue, between Victoria Street S and Western Avenue

- <https://www.startribune.com/floyd-smaller-st-paul-central-coach-grief-hall-of-fame/600167991>



Dr. A. P. Williams Avenue

Selby Avenue at Oxford Street

- <https://riverofwatersoflife.com/history/>