



HISTORIC SAINT PAUL PRESENTS



TRIVIA NIGHT



Historic Saint Paul

Historic Saint Paul is a nonprofit working to strengthen Saint Paul neighborhoods by preserving and promoting their cultural heritage and character. We have been around more than twenty years.

We work in partnership with private property owners, community organizations, and public agencies to leverage Saint Paul's cultural and historic resources as assets in economic development and community building initiatives.

Black History Month

The celebration of Black History Month began as “Negro History Week,” which was created in 1926 by Carter G. Woodson, a noted African American historian, scholar, educator and publisher. It became a month-long celebration in 1976. The month of February was chosen to coincide with the birthdays of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln.

Source: www.history.com

Round 1

1. This playground location was one block north of Rondo Ave parallel to Kent Street, a brick building included a band room. Eventually, the building would be taken down and replaced by a small wooden shack. In her book, Evelyn Fairbanks mentioned that in the early 1930's, when she was 8 or 9, this location's ice rink was for "white's only, black children were not permitted to use the rink".

What is the name of this site?

- A. Ober Boys Club
- B. Short Hill park
- C. The Hollow
- D. Hallie Q. Brown



2. In 1972, Hallie Q. Brown Center moved to its third and current location, in the Martin Luther King Center at 270 North Kent Street.

How many total locations has the center had?

Bonus: Name this woman, the center's first executive director



_____, first executive director of
Hallie Q. Brown (1929 - 1949)

3. This gentleman in 1930 organized an all-black Local 614 hotel and restaurant employees' union which was chartered by the AFL. He would become involved as a civil rights leader in the Twin Cities, including organizing against the Twin Cities public showings of the re-released film "Birth of a Nation," which glorified the KKK. What was his name?

- A. Anthony Brutus Cassius
- B. Chet Oden
- C. Jim Williams
- D. Frank Boyd

Bonus: Name the high school he graduated from?



4. Oral accounts of the Rondo neighborhood mention that it was not referred to as “Rondo” at the time. Most people simply referred to their cross streets, but a few pockets of the area had nicknames. Which of these was NOT one of them?

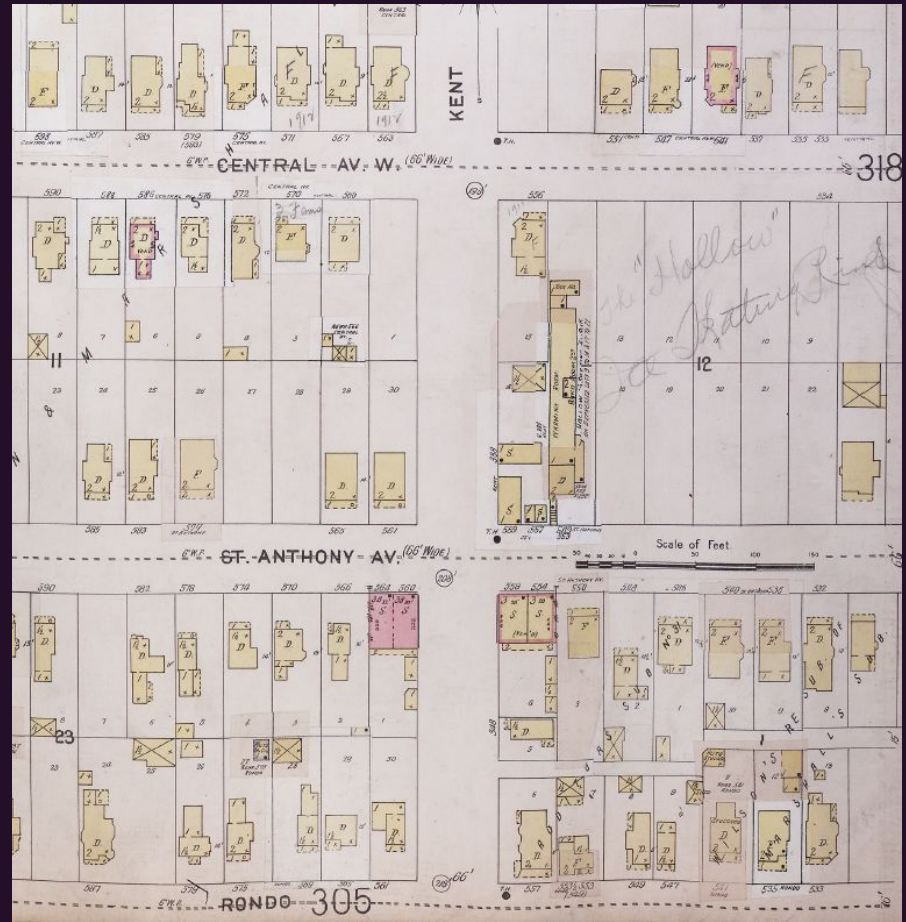
- A. Rondo Heights
- B. Cornmeal Valley
- C. Oatmeal Hill
- D. Deep Rondo



5. A famous/infamous place was located on the SW corner of St. Anthony Ave. and Kent Street, across from White Front Grocery store and the Hollow Playground, one block north of Rondo Avenue.

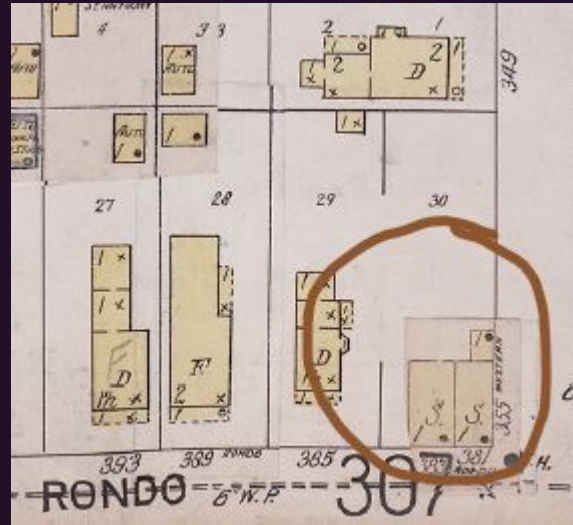
What was the name of this establishment?

- A. The Top Hat Café
- B. The Sterling Club
- C. Jim Williams Bar
- D. The Turtle Club



6. Businesses on Rondo Avenue changed owners and sometimes their services, going from grocery stores, restaurants, barber shops and others. One of those locations was a business/restaurant owned by Frank Boyd between 1940 - 48 on the NW corner of Western and Rondo Avenues. The name of this place is:

- A. Road Buddy's
- B. C & G Rec
- C. Booker T's Café & Tavern
- D. Walker's Pool Hall



7. This woman was one of the best unknown athletes of the Rondo community. Ahead of her time, she played multiple sports, as a teen she played basketball on Hallie Q. Brown women's teams, softball at Oxford playground, speed skating champion at Como Park Lake to name a few. She would become the first female police officer in Saint Paul and after retiring she would be elected to City Council.

Her name is:

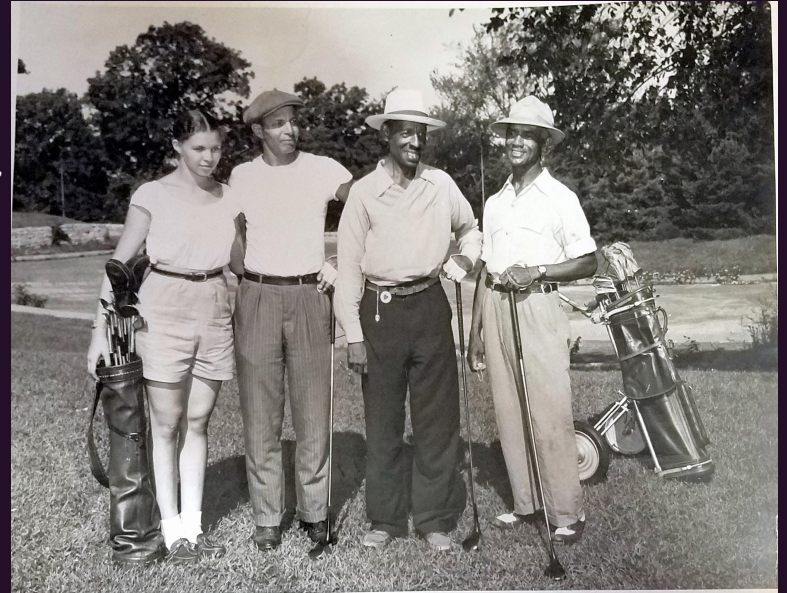
- A. Katie McWatt**
- B. Debbie Gilbreath Montgomery**
- C. Evelyn Fairbanks**
- D. Janabelle Taylor**



8. This woman grew up at Hallie Q. Brown Community Center and later became chairperson of the board. She was the first Black person to graduate from University High School and received a four-year scholarship to Mount Holyoke College and earned a master's in theater and social work, and was ABD in educational administration from the U of Minnesota. She worked in St. Paul Public Schools for 30 years, retired, having served as the assistant principal of five schools. She was an outstanding athlete having excelled in Speed Skating and Golf.

An accomplished singer, and a member of Actors Equity, she appeared in front of audiences all over the country from Massachusetts to Texas, Orchestra Hall, Ordway, and Penumbra Theater.

- A. Katie McWatt
- B. Dr. Mary Kalleen Murray Boyd
- C. Kathryn Coram Gagnon
- D. Linda Griffin Garrett



9. What prominent U.S. photographer, writer, musician, and film director got his start as a photographer at the Frank Murphy store pictured here — where Pazzaluna is now located at Fifth & St. Peter?

(Hint: There is a school on University Ave. named after him.)



1948

10. In the late 19th century, the first employment services for African Americans seeking entry into the local workforce were delivered out of:

- A. Newspaper listings**
- B. Community Centers**
- C. The Elks club**
- D. Barbershops & beauty salons**



Pittsburgh Building, Fifth and Wabash, St. Paul, ca. 1926 (MNHS)

11. What industry boom from 1900-1940 offered African Americans job opportunities in one of Saint Paul's landmark buildings?

- A. Law enforcement**
- B. Teaching**
- C. Railroad Transportation**
- D. Civil service**

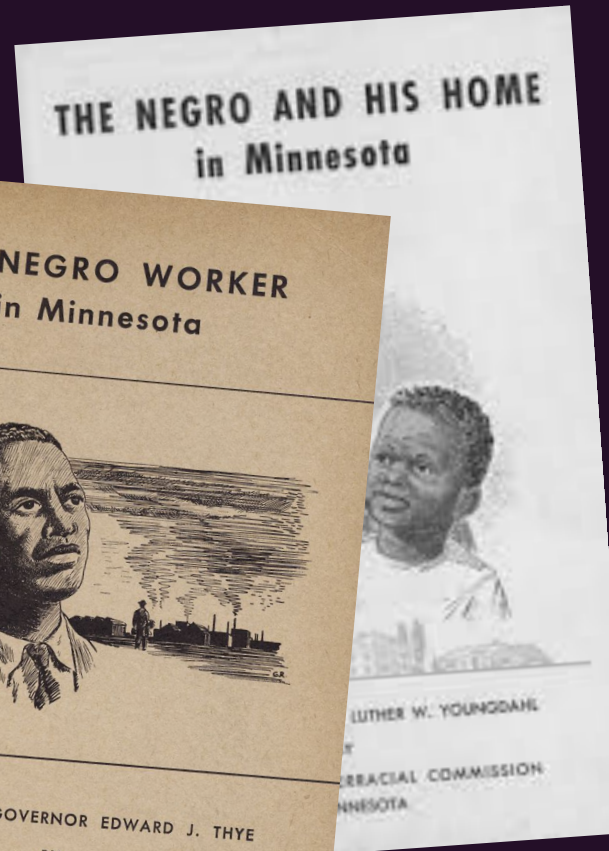
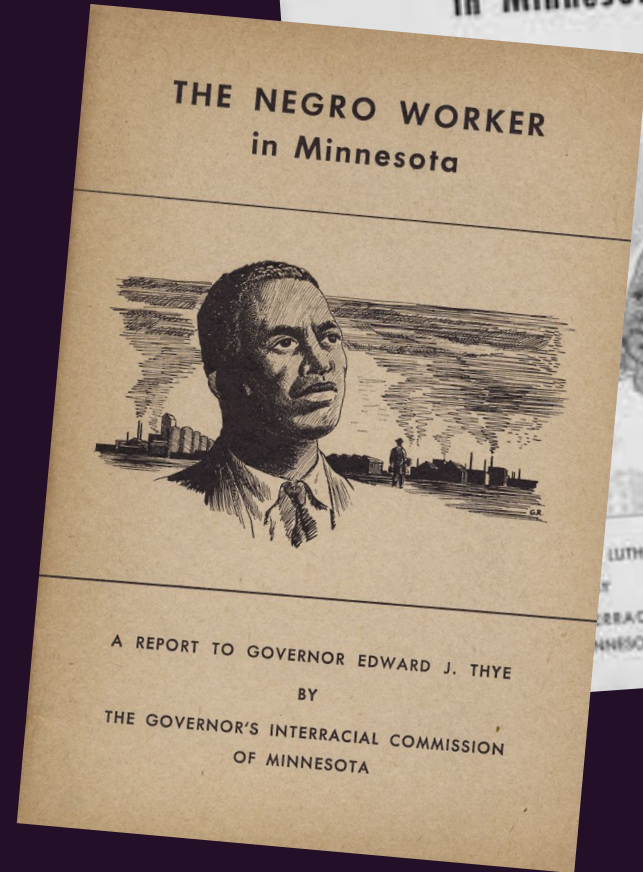
Bonus Question: Who is the labor union leader pictured here?



12. Which of these Saint Paul Urban League executives served on the Governor's Interracial Commission of Minnesota?

- A. Whitney M. Young, Jr.
- B. S. Vincent Owens
- C. Thomas Talley
- D. James T. Wardlaw
- E. Bill Wilson

The Governor's Interracial Commission of Minnesota (1943-1956) established to direct government and public attention to racial injustices that might result in serious social disorder.



Check your answers

Let's see how
you did...

1. **The Hollow (C.** was the name of the park & skating rink (lost now to the construction of I-94). The Rondo Businessmen's Assoc, fought to keep the playground from being segregated and requested the City of St. Paul to improve the location within the City Budget. Once open to everyone, this location became a popular "ice skating place in the winter," and in the summer would be the place that the Elks Drum & Bugle Corp would begin their practices before marching east on St. Anthony Ave.



2. Hallie Q. Brown Community Center has had **three** total locations. In 1929, plans took shape for a new community center to be housed at the former Central Avenue Branch of the Y.W.C.A. and moved to the Masonic Hall at Aurora and Mackubin until it relocated in 1972.

Under the direction of **I. Myrtle Carden**, Hallie Q. Brown developed a variety of social services and programs for families and served an important role of providing opportunities for recreation and entertainment that were closed to blacks at many white establishments. The center's namesake was an educator who pioneered the movement of Black women's clubs in the late 1800's.



I. Myrtle Carden, first executive director of Hallie Q. Brown (1929 - 1949)

3. (A) **Anthony Brutus Cassius**, born into a family of 18 children, Cassius fled racial violence in Oklahoma at age 13 and landed in St. Paul. He graduated from **Mechanic Arts High School** and after 2 years of college at Macalester, he worked as a waiter at the Curtis Hotel where he made only \$17 per month while their white counterparts brought home \$75. Cassius addressed this injustice by throwing himself into the labor movement, organizing a waiters' union. He served as President of the Urban League and was always involved in sports. He would open a restaurant on 38th and 4th , then later opened a bar in downtown Minneapolis and was the first African American in Minnesota to be granted a liquor license.



4. **Answer: A) Rondo Heights was not a nickname for any of the areas of Rondo.**

Rondo's more affluent residents moved into the west side known as "Oatmeal Hill" (west of Dale toward Lexington), giving the impression residents had a higher social standing. This middle class neighborhood consisted of predominantly single-family homes.

"Cornmeal Valley," (also Lower Rondo or Deep Rondo) was a lower middle class residential neighborhood, also predominantly single-family homes. From the 1930's, this part of the community struggled with growing poverty.



5. **C. Jim Williams Bar,** or Jim Williams' Tavern was located on the SW corner of St. Anthony Ave. and Kent St, across the street from White Front Grocery store and the Hollow Playground. It was one of the few “colored,” eating and drinking establishments in the city (St. Paul). It was notable for being the first Black restaurant in Minnesota to have a legal liquor license. During the summer young men and women would park and sit in big cars and socialize near the corner or watch the activities on the sandlot diagonally across from this establishment (Hollow Playground).

This popular place is where all the railroad Red Caps and Pullman Porters would go to cash their checks. Jim Griffin would share that this business was the most successful Black owned business in St. Paul until the mid-sixties.

6. One of the locations was a business/restaurant owned by Frank Boyd between 1940 - 48 on the NW corner of Western and Rondo Avenues was **C. Booker T's Cafe & Tavern.**

"I have a great memory of this place because it was located across the street from Ober Boys baseball field, which I played on every day, the smells coming from this location were great as I knew they were cooking those ribs!"

- Frank White, local author & historian, grew up in the Rondo Neighborhood

This business would change owners and get a new name and he would operate from 1949-60, as buildings and homes were being removed from Rondo Avenue. In many research projects of Rondo, this building/business shows up on a regular basis. It is just one of those locations that changed ownership several times over the years.



Photo c. 1960, courtesy of MNHS

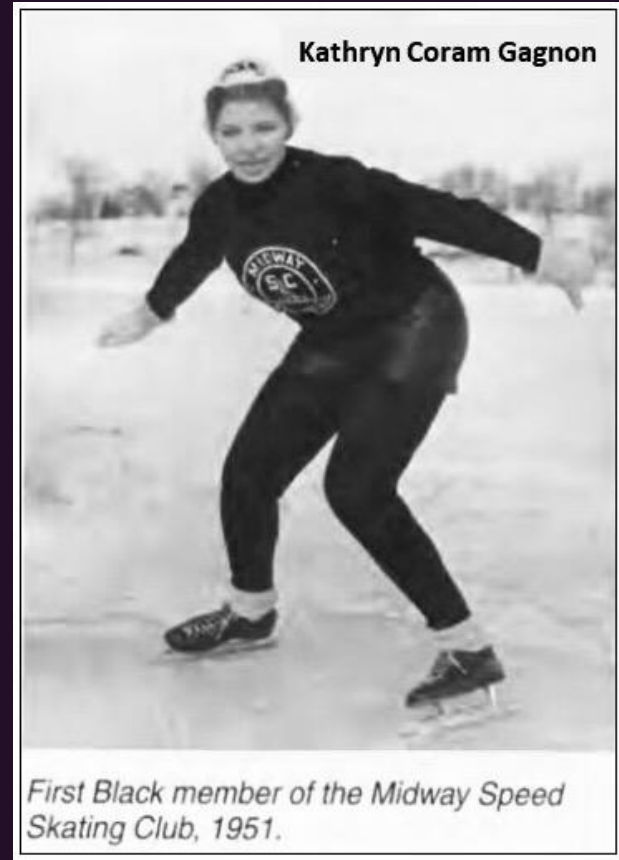
7. (B) Debbie Gilbreath Montgomery would go on to win the St. Paul Championship against a young girl (Katie Class) who would advance to Olympics in 1984 & 1988, but Montgomery would be kept from advancing to the next level because of the color of her skin.

Her legacy would include many things. As a freshman at the University of Minnesota, she traveled with other students to Alabama in 1965 to march 54 miles from Selma to Montgomery in support of voting rights. She would become the first female police officer in Saint Paul and after retiring was elected to the St. Paul City Council in 2004.



The segment of Marshall between Lexington Parkway and Western Ave honors Montgomery

8. Kathryn Coram Gagnon (C) was a lifelong St. Paul resident. Her education continued with leadership training through the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute and the Bush Foundation Educational Leadership Programs. Her career spanned thirty years and included community social work, public school social work and administration. She was extremely active in community leadership roles and was a lifelong, second generation member of St. Philip's Episcopal Church in St. Paul. As an artist, she was an accomplished jazz singer, a published writer, and an actress, best known for her 17-year role in Penumbra Theater's "Black Nativity".



9. **Gordon Parks** was a prominent U.S. photographer, writer, musician, and film director got his start as a photographer at the Frank Murphy store pictured here – where Pazzaluna is now located at Fifth & St. Peter). Gordon Parks High School is named after him.



1948



10. **D. Barbershops and beauty salons** Most important of these was the Hall Brothers Barbershop. S. E. and O.C. Hall serviced white politicians and business leaders. Using these connections, the Hall Brothers posted jobs and personally referred many individuals to prospective employers. Churches began providing a more organized resource for locating jobs and housing through newsletters like St. James A.M.E.'s "The Helper."

The S. Edward Hall House was placed on the National Register of historic places in 1991. Located at 996 Iglehart Ave, it was the home of S. Edward Hall, who was also the founder of the Saint Paul chapter of the NAACP. The house was demolished in June 2011; an error at the State Historic Preservation Office failed to identify the house as a listed property on the National Register before its demolition.



11. What industry boom from 1900-1940 offered African Americans job opportunities in one of Saint Paul's landmark buildings? **C. Railroad Transportation**

Although Black workers were often confined to menial roles, the railroad industry provided educated African Americans with a more respected occupation as Pullman porters. People arriving in Saint Paul 1900 - 1940 generally came by train via the Union Depot. In its heyday, this neoclassical structure served 282 trains and 20,000 passengers daily. The depot is significant both as a point of entry for African Americans and as an opportunity for job-seekers. Black station employees were important ambassadors. They were often the first friendly face for a new arrival, and their networks of information about where to find shelter and a good meal were invaluable.



The Saint Paul Red Caps in front of Union Depot 1952 (MNHS)

11. Bonus Point - Union Organizer pictured: **Frank Boyd**

Frank Boyd was a celebrated organizer in Minnesota for the country's most influential African American labor union, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, from 1926-1951.

In May 1976 the City of Saint Paul named a new park for him, Boyd Park, at 335 Selby Avenue. There is a bust of him there and beneath it a plaque that reads, "A fighter for /His union/His People/His class."



12. (B) S. Vincent Owens was the Executive Secretary of the Saint Paul Urban League from 1940 until his untimely death in 1952. Owens was a dedicated social worker and employment advocate. He created job openings for African American Minnesotans in business, industry, clerical and sales. Owens was also president of the Sterling Club and a charter member of Minnesota's Alumni Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha.

Whitney Young, Jr was appointed as the industrial relations secretary of Saint Paul Urban League in 1949. Thomas Talley served as Saint Paul Urban League after Owens. James T. Wardlaw lead the Minneapolis Urban League in the 1940s.



Wanda & S. Vincent Owens at the Alpha Phi Alpha 30th anniversary dinner at the University of Minnesota

Courtesy of their daughter Vanne Owens Hayes

Questions, comments?
& Intermission

Round 2

13. This recreational organization was one of the cornerstones of our Rondo neighborhood, along with the field across the street, that was bordered by Rondo Ave on the south, Virginia Street on the east, St. Anthony Ave on the north and Western on the west. This center was built in 1941 and was sponsored by the Union Gospel Mission, the address was 375 St. Anthony Ave. In addition to the social and recreational sports, they also provided bible study, summer baseball, football in the fall, basketball & boxing in the winter, arts, crafts year-round.

- A. Ober Boys Club
- B. Hallie Q. Brown
- C. Oxford Playground
- D. The Loft Teen Center



14. This Catholic church was built near the corner of Aurora Ave. and Farrington, founded Dec 21, 1892. Two of the founders were Colonel Samuel Hardy and Frederick L. McGhee. The church would continue in this location until a new church was built next to the school in time for Easter Vigil Service on April 20, 1957.

What is the name of this church?



15. Who was the founder of Pilgrim Baptist Church, the first African American church in Saint Paul?



16. In 1924, The Sterling Club's original clubhouse - at 315 North Dale Street - was completed. Prior to that, the Club frequently held events at which historic Saint Paul church?

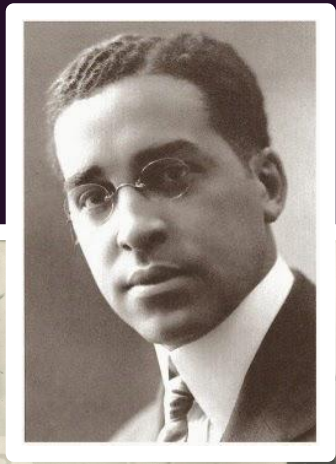
- A. Pilgrim Baptist Church (1866)
- B. Saint James AME Church (1876)
- C. Lutheran Church of the Redeemer (1889)
- D. Saint Peter Claver Catholic Church (1892)
- E. Camphor Memorial United Methodist Church (1919)



Early Sterling Club Members
Courtesy of Sterling Club Archives

17. Municipal Architect and Sterling Club Founder Clarence “Cap” Wigington served as club president when?

- A. In 1921, when he presented designs for the original clubhouse.
- B. In 1926, upon completing the clubhouse.
- C. In 1961, as the last founder elected to the position.
- D. In 1962, when he presented designs for the new clubhouse.

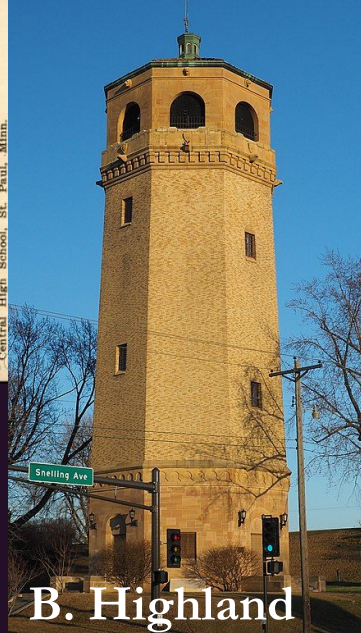


Cap Wigington and founding members.
Courtesy of the Sterling Club Archives.

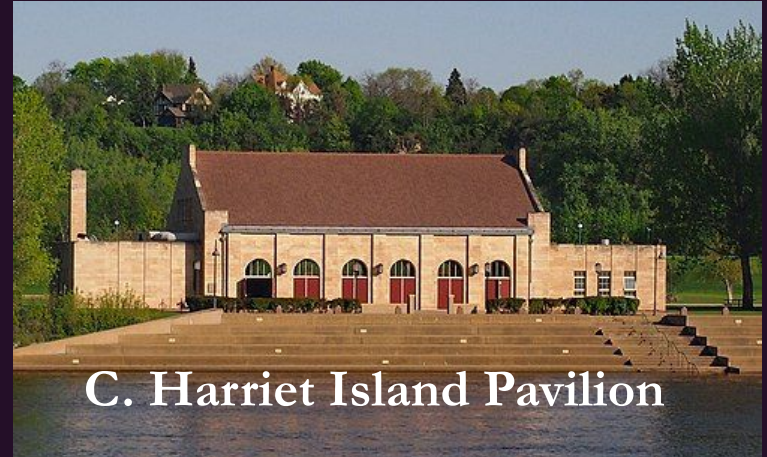
18. Architect Clarence “Cap” Wigington designed many notable buildings in St. Paul. Which of these was NOT his?



A. Central High School



B. Highland
Water Tower



C. Harriet Island Pavilion



D. Holman Field Admin Bldg.
(St. Paul Airport)

19. What is the original name of the suffrage organization started by Nellie Francis and other African American women in St. Paul in 1914?

- A. Alpha Suffrage Club
- B. Everywoman Progressive Council
- C. Everywoman Suffrage Club
- D. Votes for Everywoman



Original artwork by Jennifer Soriano.
Courtesy of Ramsey County Historical Society.

20. Local historian, storyteller and author Frank White worked with Ramsey County Historical Society to create an exhibit and wrote a book telling the local history of what topic?

- A. African American owned businesses
- B. Historic Rondo neighborhood
- C. History of Hallie Q. Brown Center
- D. Black Baseball history



21. This gentleman was a star athlete at Marshall Senior high school. Before graduating in 1953, earned 10 letters in football, track, and basketball. He would captain his prep football and track teams and won all-conference honors in basketball and track. He eventually played for the Gophers in 1955, alongside his brother.

- A. Dick Blakley
- B. Floyd Smaller
- C. Percy Zachary
- D. Leo Lewis



22. Bill Wilson was the first African American to St. Paul City Council. Elected in 1980, he served for 13 years, including as council president. Devoted to helping others get an education, Wilson founded what school in 1998?

- A. STEP Academy**
- B. Higher Ground Academy**
- C. Great River School**
- D. Hope Community Academy**



Check your answers

Let's see how
you did...

13. Memories of the construction of the (A) **Ober Boys Club** have been recalled by James Milsap, who remembers Casiville Bullard – a well-known brick and stone mason and the only AfricanAmerican who worked on the construction of the Ober Boys Club, *“I went down every day during the summer to watch him work. He inspired me... He could lay block, brick, and cement. Mr Bullard was an artisan who could do all of it... Today, bricklayers use tool-like brick saws to cut and fit the brick. Not Mr. Bullard. He took a brick and hammer and knocked the corners off the brick, and laid them... it was impeccable. I was glad to see the Ober Boys Club completed because I could play basketball in there. But I had mixed emotions because it meant I couldn’t watch [him] anymore...”* (James Milsap, interview with Susan Granger, Jan. 1996, transcript, Bullard House file, State Historic Preservation Office). Boys and girls were welcome here, it was one of the places in our neighborhood that was always well attended. This center provided a positive outlet for youth in the Rondo neighborhood.

14. **St. Peter Claver Catholic**

A catholic school opens in 1950, with an 8-lane bowling alley in the basement as well as a Chapel for mass. This congregation also operated the Worn-A-Bit shop, with proceeds to help finance the school, one of the reasons for the 8-lane bowling alley.



*First all-Negro Choir of St. Peter Claver Church organized under
Rev. John T. Andrzejewski*

*FRONT ROW—Mary Pitts, Emma Porter, Organist, Claude Jackson, Director,
Mattie McGhee, Rev. J. T. Andrzejewski.*

MIDDLE ROW—Adda Tobie, Eva Harris, Hattie Shepard, Charles Miller.

TOP ROW—Joseph Harris, Birdie King, Allen French.

15. Who founded Pilgrim Baptist Church, the first African American church in Saint Paul? **Reverend Robert Hickman**

He and his followers established the church in 1866. After their arrival in Saint Paul in 1863, Hickman's congregation, who called themselves pilgrims and were mostly escaped slaves, initially boarded in an old building near the corner of Hill (now Hope Street) and Third streets, until they were able to find more permanent housing.



Reverend Robert Hickman (MNHS 1877)

16. The answer is **B. Saint James African Methodist Episcopal Church**. When The Sterling Club founders first began meeting [in 1917], St. James AME Church housed Saint Paul's largest African American congregation at over 500 members.

In the 1920s, the Club hosted an annual celebration for high school and college graduates from the African American community at St. James Church.

By 1927, both the Sterling Club and St. James were housed in new structures, each designed by Sterling Club founder Clarence Wigington, which were walking distance from each other.

In 1936, Sterling Club founders John H. Hickman, O.C. Hall, Bismark C. Archer and Joseph E. Johnson served as St James church officers or trustees.



Saint Paul Daily Globe 1887

17. “Cap” Wigington was the last founder to serve as president in (C) 1961. He designed and built the original clubhouse, and presented plans for the new building in 1962. The Sterling Club welcomed visiting dignitaries, gathered for formal balls, and enjoyed time together celebrating individual and collective accomplishments. But they also had an additional purpose: mobilizing against discrimination and creating community cohesion through engagement. This story by author Jeremiah E. Ellis is the third nominee for this year’s Virginia B. Kunz award.

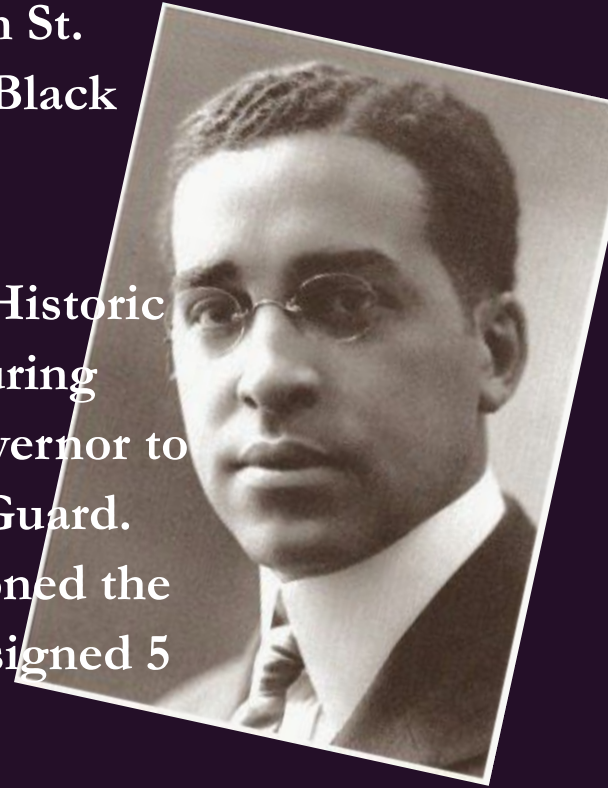


*Courtesy of the Sterling Club Archives.
History courtesy of Jeremiah E. Ellis.*

18. A. Central High School

Clarence Wigington (1883-1967) was a senior designer in St. Paul's office of architecture for 34 yrs. He was the first Black municipal architect in the U.S.

Many of his buildings are on the National Register of Historic Places (including all 3 shown on the question slide). During World War I, he successfully petitioned Minnesota's governor to create the all-black 16th Battalion of the state's Home Guard. He earned his nickname, "Cap," after being commissioned the battalion's captain. In addition to buildings He also designed 5 Winter Carnival Ice Palaces!



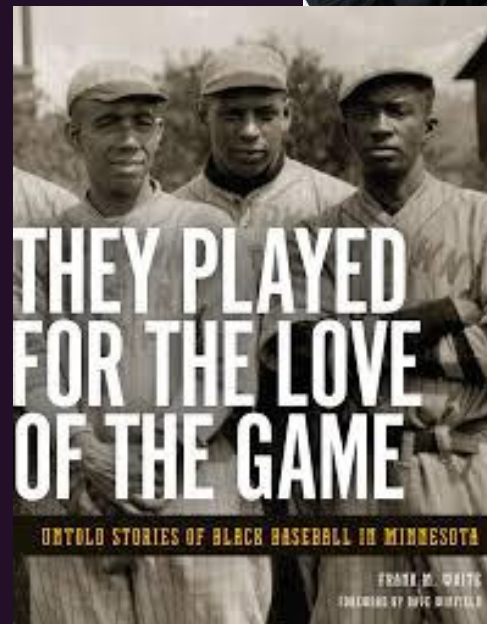
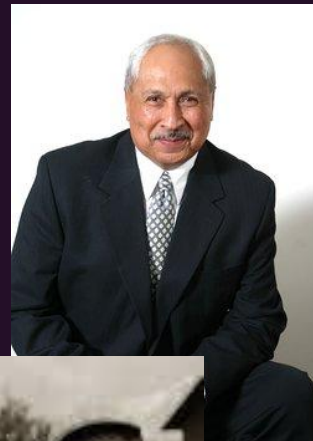
19. The story of St. Paul's Black suffrage organization, **(C) Everywoman Suffrage Club**, is told in "Votes for Everywoman: Nellie Griswold Francis, the Women of Rondo and their Suffrage Crusade" by Leetta M. Douglas. The club changed its name to Everywoman Progressive Council after the passage of the nineteenth amendment. Francis's story, as well as the stories of twelve other Minnesota women who worked for suffrage, can be found in the RCHS exhibition "Persistence: Continuing the Struggle for Suffrage and Equality, 1848-2020." The exhibit opened online in October.



Suffragist Theresa Peyton. Artwork by Klaire A. Lockheart. *History courtesy of Leetta M. Douglas and Mollie Spillman.*

20. Frank White is the local expert on **(D) Black Baseball history!** His book, *“They Played for the Love of the Game: Untold Stories of Black Baseball in Minnesota,”* was just chosen as one of Minnesota Monthly’s 10 Must-Read Minnesota sports books from the past decade. White was born in the historic Rondo neighborhood, his father Louis “Pud” White was a outstanding athlete, playing both for and against the Negro leagues in the 1950’s.

www.minnesotablackbaseball.com



21. (A) **Dick Blakley** would be named the St. Paul Lions club award winner given to the top amateur athlete; he would be the first African American to win this award. He attended Muskogee, Mich Junior college and join the Gophers in 1955, joined by his brother who was an all-conference football player for St. Paul Central where he also competed in track and basketball. Both brothers would be named to the St. Paul City Conference All-Time Greatest Athletes at a banquet in 1999.

INTRODUCING NEW GOPHERS

St. Paul's Dick Blakley

Dick Blakley won 10 letters in football, track and basketball at St. Paul Marshall. The 6-1, 190-pound Gopher sophomore captained his prep football and track teams and won all-conference honors in basketball and football.

In 1953, he won the St. Paul Lion's club award given to the city's top amateur athlete.

He ran the 100-yard dash in 10.1 while in high school and has speeded up to where he is running under 10 seconds now.

Blakley attended Muskogee, Mich., junior college in 1953. He had planned to enroll at Michigan State. However, he changed his mind and last fall entered Minnesota.

This fall he was joined at Minnesota by his young brother Bob, who was an all-conference football player at St. Paul Central where he also competed in track and basketball.



DICK BLAKLEY

22. Bill Wilson founded **(B) Higher Ground Academy** in 1998, a K-12 charter school named by U.S. News & World Report as one of the top high schools in the state. Wilson had a deep appreciation and belief in the power of education. According to his wife, Willie Mae Wilson (who herself served as Executive Director of the Saint Paul Urban League for 30yrs), students at Higher Ground Academy, couldn't graduate until they showed Wilson an acceptance letter from an institute of higher learning.

Wilson also served as Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Human Rights under Gov. Wendell Anderson and Gov. Rudy Perpich. He passed away in Dec 2019 at the age of 79. May 21st is Bill Wilson Day, proclaimed by Gov. Perpich in 1994.



Questions, comments?

All done ~ congrats!

Thank you to our questions contributors . . .

Frank White

Jeremiah Ellis

Jonathan Palmer

Paul Nelson

You can help!

Please send your Trivia questions & ideas to:

info@historicsaintpaul.org

And, as always, we appreciate your financial support!

If you are able to contribute please visit:

www.historicsaintpaul.org and click **Donate!**

And thanks to you for joining us!