



**106GROUP**

# **SAINT PAUL AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORIC AND CULTURAL CONTEXT, 1837 TO 1975**

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**Ramsey County, Minnesota**

May 2017



# **SAINT PAUL AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORIC AND CULTURAL CONTEXT, 1837 TO 1975**

## **Ramsey County, Minnesota**

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### **SUBMITTED TO:**

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## ABSTRACT

Saint Paul’s African American community is long established—rooted, yet dynamic. From their beginnings, Blacks in Minnesota have had tremendous impact on the state’s economy, culture, and political development. Although there has been an African American presence in Saint Paul for more than 150 years, adequate research has not been completed to account for and protect sites with significance to the community. One of the objectives outlined in the City of Saint Paul’s 2009 Historic Preservation Plan is the development of historic contexts “for the most threatened resource types and areas,” including immigrant and ethnic communities (City of Saint Paul 2009:12). The primary objective for development of this Saint Paul African American Historic and Cultural Context Project (Context Study) was to lay a solid foundation for identification of key sites of historic significance and advancing preservation of these sites and the community’s stories.

In 2016, Aurora-Saint Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation received a Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grant to conduct the Project, a groundbreaking effort as the first context statement focused on a non-European cultural group in Saint Paul. The scope of the Project included gathering existing information from a significant body of past research, engaging in additional community outreach, and identifying a preliminary list of related sites of significance to the African American community recommended for future survey. The Context Study’s goal is to lay the groundwork for regulatory bodies to advance their preservation responsibilities to ensure significant African American resources are protected with the same due diligence, through implementation of appropriate professional preservation planning strategies, as historic assets of groups with European origination.

This context describes the history of Saint Paul’s African American community and its development over time, to enable identifying related properties, evaluating their significance, and informing preservation priorities. The physical extent of the context study includes the current boundaries of the City of Saint Paul. The context explores the African American community in Saint Paul through the time period of 1837 to 1975. The first date is the year of the formal establishment of Saint Paul, and the latter reflects National Park Service guidelines that most properties be at least 50 years old to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), unless exceptionally important. Research was conducted on broad themes such as important events and persons, buildings, and cultural values to inform the organization and layout of the context. Within these themes, the context addresses topics pertaining to the African American community, including migration, religious institutions, business and industry, arts and culture, education, politics, journalism, and significant leaders and events. The context provides a history of significant time periods; identifies threats to resources; includes historical photographs of significant historical figures or events; and describes additional research needs.

The report will be made readily available to cultural, civic, and economic development organizations working to draw visitors interested in the cultural heritage and contributions of Saint Paul’s African American community, as well as to arts, educational, and other organizations for use in designing curriculum, performances, and other promotions.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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October 2016 Advisory Group Meeting (106 Group)

### ***Thank you Advisory Group members:***

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## **ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

AFL	American Federation of Labor
ASANDC	Aurora-Saint Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation
BSCP	Brotherhood of the Sleeping Car Porters
DFL	Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party
HPC	Heritage Preservation Commission
ILA	International Ladies Auxiliaries
Legacy Grant	Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grant
MnHPO	Minnesota Historic Preservation Office
MNHS	Minnesota Historical Society
NAAC	National Afro-American Council
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NPS	National Park Service
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
Context Study	Saint Paul African American Historic and Cultural Context Project
Section 106	Section 106 of National Historic Preservation Act
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office

# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Saint Paul’s African American community is long established—rooted, yet dynamic. From their beginnings, Blacks in Minnesota have had a tremendous impact on the state’s economy, culture, and political development. They have influenced national policy through the eras of Western expansion, Civil War, desegregation, and Civil Rights. By the mid-twentieth century, Saint Paul’s thriving African American community had expanded from their origins along the riverfront into downtown and along University Avenue. The construction of Interstate 94 (I-94) in the 1960s demolished Rondo Avenue, the heart of the city’s Black community, along with hundreds of their homes and businesses. Longtime members of Saint Paul’s African American community along with enthusiastic newcomers are working to preserve this important history. They are present-day leaders, advancing social and economic opportunities for the future—including addressing the legacy of Rondo. As one community member explained, “We’re equal to the Mississippi River, constantly moving, constantly changing, constantly growing” (October 2016 Advisory Group Meeting).

Although there has been an African American presence in Saint Paul for more than 150 years, until now, there has not been adequate preservation planning to identify and protect sites with significance to this history. One of the objectives outlined in the City of Saint Paul’s 2009 Historic Preservation Plan is the development of historic contexts “for the most threatened resource types and areas,” including immigrant and ethnic communities (City of Saint Paul 2009:12). The Saint Paul African American Historic and Cultural Context Project (Context Study) provides a historic context of the city’s Black community, laying a solid foundation for identification of key sites of historic significance and the preservation of these sites and their stories. The physical extent of this study comprises the current boundaries of the City of Saint Paul, and the time period covered is 1837 to 1975. Leadership provided by the core Context Study Team and larger Advisory Group—as well as guidance from the broader community—framed this context development to best fulfill future opportunities to capitalize on the social and economic benefits of heritage preservation. Many sites significant to the African American story in Saint Paul remain, but sadly, a number of these structures have been recently demolished, due to lack of awareness of their presence and relevance, lack of official documentation of their significance, lack of local historic designation, or inadequate review by agencies of their records. Others remain at risk due to neglect or redevelopment pressures. These losses of irreplaceable symbols of African American culture undermine the value Black people have brought to this city since 1837. Due to these losses—and since traditional cultural places are often not addressed during historic resources surveys and remain an underrepresented resource in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)—this historic context is also considered a cultural context and has considered the potential for places of cultural significance that may not be embodied in buildings and structures or immediately apparent in the built environment.

In 2016, Aurora-Saint Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation (ASANDC) received a Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grant (Legacy Grant) to conduct the Context Study, a groundbreaking effort as the first context statement focused on a non-European cultural group in Saint Paul. The scope of the Project included gathering existing information from a significant body of past research, engaging in additional community outreach, and identifying a preliminary list of related sites of

significance to the African American community which are recommended for future survey. The Context Study lays the groundwork for regulatory bodies to conduct preservation responsibilities more equitably, ensuring significant African American resources are protected with the same due diligence, through implementation of appropriate professional preservation planning strategies, as historic assets of groups with European origination. This report contains the historic context (Section 3.0) and describes its methodology (Section 2.0); identifies property types (Section 4.1.2) and threats to resources (Section 4.1.4); and documents the outreach approach (Section 1.2) and, of great importance, the community's recommendations for the future (Section 4.2) The report will be on file at the Minnesota Historic Preservation Office (MnHPO), the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC), the City of Saint Paul, and ASANDC, where it will be readily available to cultural, civic, and economic development organizations working to draw visitors interested in the cultural heritage and contributions of Saint Paul's African American community, as well as to arts, educational, and other organizations for use in designing curriculum, performances, and other promotions.

## **1.1 Purpose of Historic and Cultural Contexts**

A historic context provides the framework for evaluating resources for potential NRHP eligibility. A context is a document “created for planning purposes that groups information about historic properties based on a shared theme, specific time period and geographical area” (National Park Service [NPS] 2014). This context describes the history of Saint Paul's African American community and its development over time. The information provided within this context will help preservation organizations, researchers, and community members in the identification of related properties and the evaluation of their significance, as well as aid in informing preservation priorities.

Historic contexts are an integral component of the preservation planning process. Contexts serve preservation planning by assuring that the full range of historic properties are identified and subsequently evaluated, registered, and protected. Contexts help to prioritize preservation decision making by comparing similar historic resources, describing their prevalence, and ascertaining their relative significance. Historic contexts help to guide future survey and designation efforts by proactively and objectively identifying geographical areas, resource types, or themes that are likely to be associated with valued historic resources. In local preservation planning, they allow a heritage preservation commission to pursue designation in a thoughtful, deliberate, and coordinated manner, rather than solely by responding to community or development pressures. For an HPC, historic contexts are particularly critical in justifying the identification and designation of historic resources in a regulatory process. Without a historic context to demonstrate the relative significance of a resource, HPC decisions are less able to withstand public scrutiny and legal challenges (Stark 2008).

## **1.2 Context Study Team and Community Engagement**

A variety of factors influenced the need for a highly collaborative project approach. There is a wide diversity of history and experience among today's African Americans in Saint Paul. Some community members have connections to the earliest of local Black history, others experienced the vitality of Rondo and trauma of its destruction, while still others may have come more recently, translating their experiences from elsewhere into a local context. These similarities and differences are manifested in the

community's goals for the future, many of which are shared, but some of which are uniquely applicable or only relevant to narrower segments of the population. For example, in sharing their goals for involvement in the Context Study, one community member shared memories of his neighborhood (Rondo) literally being demolished, another spoke of only belatedly understanding the historical trauma she carried when she learned as an adult that her family lived in Rondo, and another made connections to the African American experience in her hometown of Chicago (January 2017 Advisory Group Meeting).

To reflect these diverse experiences while maintaining the focus of the Context Study, the following groups collaborated in the process:

- **Context Study Team (including Consultant Team)**—ASANDC (fiscal sponsor), Historic Saint Paul, and Ramsey County engaged a Consultant Team of the 106 Group and CultureBrokers. Together, these organizations comprised the Context Study Team. The consultant team developed the context and facilitated meetings, while the Context Study Team jointly planned the project approach and community engagement activities.
- **Advisory Group**—To ensure the community's expertise drove the Context Study overall and specifically the context's information and analysis, ASANDC convened an Advisory Group of over a dozen elders and other community leaders familiar with African American history and culture in Saint Paul and active in related efforts.
- **Community Members**—The broader community was instrumental in formulating recommendations contained in this report, through their participation in a community workshop and other types of dialogue.

While the bulk of the information contained in the historic context in Section 3.0 was developed through the efforts of 106 Group's historian according to methodology approved by MnHPO, outlined in Section 2.0 and Appendix A, the framing and analysis of this information, and the recommendations provided in Section 4.2, were directly informed by results of numerous Context Study Team meetings, two rounds of Advisory Group meetings, and a community workshop, held throughout the course of the project. Community outreach documentation can be found in Appendix B.

- **Context Study Team**—The Context Study Team met on an ongoing basis throughout the project to discuss the approach and to plan for public meetings.
- **Advisory Group**—The first Advisory Group meeting included an introduction to the project and brainstorming of topics and themes, property types, and future recommendations. The Advisory Group provided specific guidance that was instrumental to understanding the major patterns and trends in the city's African American history. At their second meeting, the Advisory Group received a project update, a presentation on the contents of the draft context, and specific examples of how their input shaped the study's development. In addition, the group helped plan the community workshop, and established initial report recommendations.
- **Community Members**—To cultivate transparency around the process and engage the community for future stages of work, a community workshop was held during development of the draft context. The workshop included an introduction to the project, its purpose, and its timeline, as well as a focused discussion meant to inform the context report's recommendations. The

community was asked, “In learning about the information presented in the context, how does it connect to the future for you?”

The Consultant Team requested feedback on the overall process and on specific meetings, at both Advisory Group meetings and the community workshop. This feedback—offered through discussion documented on flipcharts and a written evaluation—was largely positive but included helpful feedback in planning for future projects (see Table 1).

Table 1. Advisory Group and Community Workshop Evaluation

Feedback	Suggestions for the Future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passion for this is visible, positive, and nourishing.</li> <li>• This is a way to gel work together; help heal; explore how to use history for future prosperity; roadmap.</li> <li>• Intergenerational participation was great.</li> <li>• Feels like we are gaining traction.</li> <li>• Refreshing to honestly explore, learn, listen and participate in a very important process.</li> <li>• I was enlightened, not just about Black history but about myself and what I can do for my community!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need hot food/lunch.</li> <li>• Time conflict.</li> <li>• We should have gotten notice out a little earlier.</li> <li>• What are the next steps, I think I missed them.</li> <li>• What is the goal and final outcome? I am sure you presented it but I am unclear.</li> </ul>

## 2.0 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

All work was conducted in accordance with MnHPO's *Guidelines for History/Architecture Projects in Minnesota* (MnHPO 2010); *Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning, National Register Bulletin 24* (Parker 1985); *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties* (Parker & King 1990); and *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation [as Amended and Annotated]*, by qualified professionals meeting the *Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards* (see Appendix B) (NPS 1983).

The physical extent of the context study includes the current boundaries of the City of Saint Paul. The context explores the African American community in Saint Paul through the time period of 1837 to 1975. The first date is the year that the land where Saint Paul is located was ceded to the U.S. government in the 1837 Treaty of St. Peters; however, pertinent information prior to that date is discussed to lay an appropriate foundation for the remainder of the context. The later date reflects NPS guidelines that most properties be at least 50 years old to be eligible for inclusion on the NRHP, unless exceptionally important. The date was extended from 1967 (50 years from the date of the present context) to 1975, to account for properties that are or may soon become eligible for the NRHP. Research was conducted on broad themes such as important events and persons, buildings, and cultural values to inform the organization and layout of the context. Within these themes, the context addresses topics pertaining to the African American community, including migration, religious institutions, business and industry, arts and culture, education, politics, journalism, and significant leaders and events. The context provides a history of significant time periods; identifies threats to resources; includes historical photographs of significant historical figures or events; and describes additional research needs.

There are no existing statewide post-contact period or thematic contexts related to African American communities or property types in Minnesota. Any historic contexts prepared for architecture/history surveys previously conducted in Saint Paul that are related to African American communities and property types were obtained from MnHPO files.

National Register Bulletin *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties*. *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties* defines a traditional cultural place as a "property that is eligible for inclusion in the National Register because of its association with cultural practices or beliefs of a living community that (a) are rooted in that community's history and (b) important in maintaining the continuing identity of the community" (Parker and King 1990). Because traditional cultural places are properties that have significance for their association with the beliefs, customs, and practices of a living community, in order to identify a property with traditional cultural significance, it is important to more clearly understand the worldview and practices of the community that ascribes value to it. Conventional written records and histories may not include a cultural community's understanding of their past, which is critical for identifying traditional cultural places. Therefore, in addition to archival and online research, members of the community were consulted through a series of



community meetings with elders and the broader community. Their input on key histories, buildings, and places provided direction for researchers. Locations of buildings and places identified in this context are indicated whenever possible.

This historic context of Saint Paul's African American community accomplishes the following:

- 1) Provides a foundation for the identification of key sites of historic and cultural significance;
- 2) Facilitates the preparation of National Register nominations;
- 3) Allows for future efforts within the African American community to capitalize on the social and economic benefits of heritage preservation; and
- 4) Helps fulfill some of the Minnesota statewide preservation plan's goals and strategies for 2012-2017, including filling in gaps in the survey records by focusing on traditional cultural properties, and expanding efforts to include properties associated with underrepresented groups (MnHPO 2012:24-25).
- 5) Helps MnHPO, HPC, city planners, and other agency professionals perform preservation work equitably.

## **2.1 Archival Research and Survey**

Archival research materials reviewed and repositories visited as part of this project are documented in the Research Design included in Appendix A. The references cited section of this report also notates what repositories were used. No field survey was conducted as part of this project. Identification of key property types was based on previous inventories, archival research, and community input. Throughout the context in Section 3.0, sites of significance to the African American community are identified. Future efforts should be made to determine which of these properties are in need of survey (See Section 4.1.2)

## **2.2 Previous Surveys of African American Historic Properties in Saint Paul**

In 1976, historian and then-Ph.D. candidate David Vassar Taylor was hired by the Minnesota Historical Society to conduct a survey of sites associated with African American history in Duluth, Saint Paul, and Minneapolis. Taylor found in the course of the survey that African American communities in these cities had never had access to the same resources, opportunities, advantages, and protections as the white community, and therefore rarely had opportunities to design, build, own, or occupy buildings and structures considered by white society to be architecturally significant. In addition, many of the properties associated with the African American communities were destroyed by urban renewal acts and freeway construction in the 1950s and 1960s. Finally, of the properties that were still extant, very few were over 50 years old at the time of the survey, and many institutions, such as churches, had moved multiple times to meet the needs of their congregations, which were often highly mobile due to economic instability and forced relocations. A plethora of important historical information was collected in the course of the survey (Taylor 1976a), but no properties in Saint Paul were listed in the NRHP as part of Taylor's study.

In 1986, the Highland Park Tower, designed by African American municipal architect Clarence Wigington was listed in the NRHP. Then, in 1989-1990, Thomas R. Zahn and Associates conducted a survey of sites associated with African American history in Minneapolis, Saint Paul, and Duluth as part of

the Minnesota Historical Society’s Black Minnesotans Project (Zahn 1990). Through research and informational interviews in the three cities, 115 potential sites were identified. Of these, only 20 were found to be extant, and nine were found by MNHS staff to be potentially eligible for listing in the NRHP. The following properties were nominated and subsequently listed in the NRHP as part of the 1989-1990 project: four properties in Saint Paul (Harriet Island Pavilion, Holman Field Administration Building, S. Edward Hall House [razed 2011], and the Pilgrim Baptist Church); one property in Duluth (St. Mark’s African Methodist Episcopalian Church); and one property in Minneapolis (Lena Olive Smith House). In 1996, the Casiville Bullard House in Saint Paul was listed to the NRHP.

The 2011 demolition of the S. Edward Hall House was a motivating factor in the development of this study (for more information, see Section 3.2.3.4). The Saint Paul City Council ordered the house razed as a nuisance property after reviews by the HPC and MnHPO failed to identify it as an NRHP-listed property due to a recordkeeping error. This destruction of one Saint Paul’s very few NRHP-listed properties associated with local African American history underscores the importance of effective and equitable recordkeeping and review for all historic properties, particularly those associated with ethnic communities that have been traditionally disenfranchised and underrepresented in the historic record. The loss of the Hall House highlights the disproportionate effect that errors or inadequate historic preservation practices can have on resources significant for their connection with minority communities.

In addition to the NRHP-listed properties identified above, there are at least three more NRHP-listed properties in Saint Paul whose association with African American history is known, although that is not the primary reason the properties are listed. These properties are the Saint Paul Union Depot, the Minnesota State Capitol, and the Fort Snelling Historic District and National Historic Landmark. Further efforts are needed to identify and evaluate properties significant to Saint Paul’s Black community through survey efforts. Many of these properties are highlighted in the context.

Table 2. Properties Listed in the NRHP related to Saint Paul’s African American Community

Inventory No.	Property Name	Address	Property Type
N/A	Caisiville Bullard House	1282 Folsom Street	Residence
RA-SPC-0304	Holman Field Administration Building	664 Bayfield Street	Airport Building
RA-SPC-4720	Harriet Island Pavilion	75 Water Street	Pavilion
RA-SPC-8221	Highland Park Tower	1570 Highland Parkway	Water Tower
RA-SPC-0560	Pilgrim Baptist Church	732 West Central Avenue	Religious Institution
RA-SPC-5444	Germania Bank Building*	6 West Fifth Street	Commercial
RA-SPC-5225	Saint Paul Union Depot*	214 East Fourth Street	Railroad Depot
RA-SPC-0229	Minnesota State Capitol*	75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard	Capitol
DK-MHC-019	Fort Snelling Historic District*+	200 Tower Avenue	Military Complex

\*Although these properties are listed in the NRHP for reasons other than their association with the African American community, they do have significance regarding local African American history.

+Also a National Historic Landmark.

## **2.3 Scope of Context**

The scope of this context is focused on the history of the African American community of Saint Paul from 1837 to 1975. This municipal boundary is artificial, but it is appropriate for this study since it is the scale on which preservation decisions are most often made. A primary constraint of the city boundary is that it does not reflect the complex, interwoven nature of the Twin Cities African American community, encompassing not only Minneapolis and Saint Paul, but the outlying suburban and rural areas as well. Like the Twin Cities themselves, the respective African American communities in Saint Paul and Minneapolis have at times competed and sought differentiation, but they have always been interdependent, supporting and nourishing one another as sister communities. Another key shortcoming of the city-specific focus is that it cannot fully account for the fact that many members of the African American community in Saint Paul were transplants from other areas, maintained strong family ties and connections to other parts of the country, or spent only a portion of their life in Saint Paul. Individuals' lives can only be understood in the context of the many communities they inhabit over their lifetime—their evolving roles, experiences, and relationships. Focusing on Saint Paul-based individuals, events, and organizations tells only a portion of the story, so when appropriate, this study aims to provide at least some broader context. This study may also be used as a foundation to develop a statewide African American context. Readers interested in learning more about the African American community of Saint Paul are strongly encouraged to look beyond municipal boundaries to the rich African American history in the wider Twin Cities area, which in turn has strong connections with regional and national people, places, and events. African Americans have experienced repeated relocations, out of force or economic necessity, as well as migrations inspired by a pioneering spirit and drive to seek new opportunities. This context offers a cohesive, high-level introduction to African American history in Saint Paul, but the authors deeply appreciate there is a regional, national, and in some cases, international, context of these historical experiences.

## 3.0 HISTORIC AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

This historic and cultural context addresses African American history in Saint Paul, from 1837 to 1975. It discusses significant events and persons, buildings, and cultural values, organized into themes within the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Information presented on each century is not necessarily parallel. Because the early Black community was relatively small, and because much of their experience is largely invisible in the historical record, information presented on the nineteenth century tends to focus on a few, better known individuals and discrete organizations. These individuals were often the more affluent, educated, or influential African American residents, who are more visible in the historical record, including in African American owned and operated news sources. The focus expands in the information presented on the twentieth century, again largely due to the information available, to describe broader societal patterns and development.

### 3.1 Nineteenth Century

The nineteenth century saw dramatic transitions for African Americans—the first African Americans arrived in what is now Saint Paul as slaves, and by the turn of the century, they had firmly established themselves as a free, cohesive community.

#### 3.1.1 SETTLEMENT

##### 3.1.1.1 Fort Snelling (1820s–1850s)

The earliest African Americans in the vicinity of what was to become Saint Paul were brought as slaves to Fort Snelling, the westernmost military outpost at the time of its completion in 1824. Fort Snelling was located at the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers, a location identified in 1817 by Colonel Stephen H. Long as a strategic position for asserting American dominance in the fur trade, as well as affirming control over lands recently acquired in the Louisiana Purchase. Long had been sent by Secretary of War John C. Calhoun to map the upper Mississippi River and identify appropriate locations for military outposts on land ceded to the U.S. government by two Dakota leaders in a treaty brokered by Zebulon Pike in 1805 (Anfinson 2003:64; Kappler 1904). Although slavery was illegal in land acquired as part of the Louisiana Purchase north of the 36°30' latitude line (excluding the state of Missouri), most of the officers stationed at Fort Snelling during its early years were from the South and brought their household slaves with them to the Fort. The army did not enforce the ban on slavery, and in fact even provided a stipend to cover the cost of a personal servant as part of an officer's pay. Some officers kept this stipend for themselves while keeping their own slaves, without repercussions from the army (Gilman 2012; Green 2007:7, 8).

##### 3.1.1.1.1 *Rachel's Case*

It is estimated that during the 1820s and 1830s, Fort Snelling housed 15 to 30 African American slaves (MNHS 2016a). Slaveholders at the Fort included the fort's namesake, Colonel Josiah Snelling, and officers such as Major John Bliss and Major John Garland. Major Lawrence Taliaferro, Indian agent for the St. Peters Indian Agency at Mendota for over 20 years, often leased his slaves to other officers at the fort (Blegen 1923). In 1830, a slave named Rachel was purchased in St. Louis by an officer stationed at

Fort Snelling named T.B.W. Stockton, who had her delivered to the fort. Stockton was later stationed at Fort Crawford in Prairie du Chien in 1832, during which time Rachel accompanied him and gave birth to a son named James Henry (Schwalm 2009:22). Stockton sold Rachel and her son to William Walker in 1834, after they returned to St. Louis. Rachel subsequently sued Walker for their freedom. Rachel argued that she had lived in a free territory while at Fort Snelling, and based on the “once free, always free” precedent, she should no longer be enslaved. The St. Louis Circuit Court denied her claim, arguing that her then-owner Stockton did not have a choice as to where the army stationed him. In 1836, however, Rachel won in her appeal to the Missouri Supreme Court, which held that a military officer who brings a slave to free territory loses ownership rights of the slave (Missouri Office of the Secretary of State 2016).

#### **3.1.1.1.2 *Dred Scott and Harriet Robinson Scott***

In 1836, the same year that Rachel won her appeal, Dred Scott was brought to Fort Snelling by the Fort’s surgeon, Dr. John Emerson. While there, Scott met Harriet Robinson, one of Taliaferro’s slaves. They were married by Taliaferro, who transferred ownership of Harriet to Emerson. Notably, the 1836 Wisconsin territorial census listed Dred Scott as head of household, without qualifiers such as “servant,” “slave,” or “dependent” (Green 2007:12). In 1840, Emerson was reassigned to Florida, and his wife, Irene, transported Dred, Harriet, and their daughter Eliza to St. Louis, Missouri. In 1846, the Scotts sued Irene Emerson for their freedom in St. Louis County Court. Although they lost at trial, they won an appeal and were granted freedom in 1850. However, Emerson appealed the verdict, and the Missouri Supreme Court sided with her in 1852. In 1857, the decision was heard before the U.S. Supreme Court, which not only denied the Scotts their freedom, but declared the Scotts did not have the right to bring a case to court, as they were not citizens (MNHS 2016a). For the majority opinion, Chief Justice Roger B. Taney ominously argued that the Scotts, as slaves, had “no rights which the white man was bound to respect” (Missouri Office of the Secretary of the State 2017). The outcome of this controversial case heightened tensions between abolitionists and pro-slavery advocates, tensions that would eventually erupt in the Civil War.

#### **3.1.1.1.3 *Fur Trade***

In 1810, a stockade trading post was constructed on Pike Island, which would later become part of Fort Snelling, by Allen Wilmot, Thomas G. Anderson, and Joseph Rolette. Nine years later, Jean Baptiste Faribault established a post near the proposed location for Fort Snelling at the request of Lieutenant Colonel Henry Leavenworth, who felt that Faribault’s knowledge of Dakota language and culture would be advantageous (MNHS 2016d). Shortly thereafter, an American Fur Company post was established at Mendota that would become the primary location for trade with the Dakota (Nute 1930:376). Original plans had included a trading post at the Fort itself, for direct trade with Indians, but this decision was abandoned in 1822 in the face of opposition from private traders (Hansen 1918:135). In 1834, the American Fur Company stationed Henry Hastings Sibley at Mendota to serve as the company’s regional manager, and a stone house was constructed for him there in 1836. There was also a trading post in the early 1830s approximately one mile upriver from Fort Snelling, kept by Joseph R. Brown (Nute 1930:376). In the early 1830s, Faribault moved his family to Mendota, and in 1833 purchased a slave. In 1839, he had a stone house constructed for his family at Mendota near Sibley’s house (MNHS 2016d).

Another employee of the fur trade, clerk Hypolite DuPuis, lived alongside Faribault and Sibley in the 1840s and 1850s, and helped manage the company store, which closed in 1853 due to the decline of the fur trade (MNHS 2016e).

African Americans in the Minnesota Territory played a vital role aiding other ethnic groups in navigating the cultures and economies of the times. According to one source, a number of fur traders sought out African Americans to serve as negotiators with American Indians, noting that it led to interactions characterized by “less friction” than those between whites and American Indians (Porter 1934:432). Early African Americans in Minnesota involved in the fur trade included George and Stephen Bonga (born in 1799 and 1802 in present-day Duluth), the sons of Ojibwayquay, an Ojibwe woman, and Jean Bonga, a former slave-turned fur trader who spoke English, French, and Ojibwe. The junior Bongas worked as fur traders, translators, and cultural negotiators (Green 2007; Washington 2009), and it is likely that George Bonga served as an interpreter at the Treaty of St. Peters, signed by the Ojibwe at Fort Snelling in 1837 (Porter 1934:426; Taylor 1977:16). Despite the key role that some African Americans played in early negotiations between white and Native cultures during the fur trade, it was not uncommon for fur traders to lease slaves (Porter 1934:424), some of which were owned by officers stationed at the Fort (Green 2007:10).

### **3.1.1.2 Early Saint Paul**

Parallel economies arose around Fort Snelling, some of which were endorsed by the army, such as the fur trade, and others that were not, such as those furnishing supplies and services for entertainment and vice. In 1838, Pierre “Pig’s Eye” Parrant, a former fur trader selling liquor just outside the fort, was moved by the army five miles downstream to the location of present-day downtown Saint Paul. By this time, a community of French Canadians, many of whom were Métis,<sup>1</sup> had begun to settle in the area, drawn by the proximity of the fur trade and the ability to earn supplementary income by providing services and supplies to traders and travelers (Williams 1876; Foley et al. 2013). Many were settlers from the failed Selkirk Settlement<sup>2</sup> in Canada (Kunz 1991:21). For a brief time, the settlement that grew around Parrant was known as “L’Oeil de Cochon” (Pig’s Eye), in reference to his nickname, but it was renamed Saint Paul in 1841 in honor of the first Christian church established in the city that same year, Saint Paul’s Chapel (Kunz 1991:18). While the French Canadian community did not remain intact after the collapse of the fur trade in the mid-1800s, their presence can still be seen in the city name “Little Canada,” which marked the location of one of their former communities just north of Saint Paul (Gitlin 2010).

The geographic setting of Saint Paul proved to be as much of a draw to early travelers and settlers as the presence of Fort Snelling and the local fur trade economy. There are two natural landings on the north bank of the Mississippi River at Saint Paul, one on either side of present-day downtown. Both of these are natural, low, level grounds alongside the river that gently slope up to the river’s bluffs, providing

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<sup>1</sup> The Métis are an ethnic group with a mixed Native and European heritage and distinct cultural traditions.

<sup>2</sup> The Selkirk Settlement, also known as the Red River Colony, was a settlement founded by Thomas Douglas, the Fifth Earl of Selkirk in 1811-1812 as a respite for poor or dispossessed individuals, as well as a business venture. The settlement was established on 120,000 square miles in the Hudson Bay watershed granted to Douglas by the Hudson’s Bay Company, in what are now parts of North Dakota, Minnesota, and Manitoba. The settlement, which came to be populated largely by Métis, was short-lived, mainly due to its geographic isolation.

convenient places for boats loading and unloading people and supplies. Lower Landing is situated where Jackson Street intersects with Shepard Road today, and Upper Landing is located where Chestnut Street intersects with Shepard Road. These locations offered the northernmost accessible landings on the Mississippi River, and quickly became significant foci for the flow of people and supplies. By the 1840s, Saint Paul was an important stop on the route for settlers heading west, and in 1858, more than 1,000 steamboats stopped at Saint Paul's landings (Blegen 1975:180). A vibrant settlement rapidly grew up around this location to provide services to travelers, both those passing through and those who chose to stay. African Americans were among the new arrivals who settled near the landings to participate in the thriving economy (CultureBrokers Foundation, Inc. 2008).

### **3.1.1.2.1 James Thompson**

The first documented Black resident of the settlement of Saint Paul was James Thompson. Thompson was born a slave in 1799 in Virginia, and brought to Fort Snelling in 1827 by his owner John Culbertson, a sutler<sup>3</sup> who staffed the store at the fort. Culbertson sold Thompson to officer William Day. In 1833, Thompson married Mary, daughter of Dakota leader Mahpiya Wicasta (Cloud Man), who had a village on the shores of Bde Maka Ska (Lake Calhoun) in Minneapolis. Three years into their marriage, Thompson and Mary were separated when Day was reassigned to Fort Crawford in Prairie du Chien and took Thompson with him. By this time, Thompson was well versed in the Dakota language and accepted within Dakota culture, and in 1837, Methodist missionary Alfred Brunson purchased Thompson's freedom so that he could serve as an interpreter for Brunson's missionary work among the Dakota. They established a Methodist mission at the Dakota village of Kaposia, approximately five miles from present-day downtown Saint Paul, in 1837 at the invitation of Little Crow the elder (Green 2007:17). Only two years later, Little Crow, dissatisfied with their teachings, which he felt were contrary to Dakota culture, ordered them to close the mission (Green 2007:21). Thompson fell back to selling liquor to make a living. He set up near Fort Snelling, but in 1840, like "Pig's Eye" Parrant, was moved by the military to the nascent community of Saint Paul (Reicher 2016).

In town, Thompson became employed as a carpenter, helping to construct the early homes of Edward Phelan and John Hays, as well as building and operating the first ferry across the Mississippi River between present-day downtown Saint Paul and the present-day West Side neighborhood, just south of downtown. He also helped construct a Methodist Church in downtown Saint Paul in 1849, donating materials, funding, and land. By this time, 30 of the territory's 40 African Americans resided in Saint Paul, comprising seven families and 15 others employed as servants in private homes. One household was headed by a woman, and the six male heads of household were employed as barbers and cooks (Taylor 1977:21; Taylor 1981:73). Thompson and his wife, Mary, had two children, Sarah and George. Thompson, who died in 1884, spent the last years of his life on the Santee Sioux Reservation with his son George (Reicher 2016).

Thompson's time in Saint Paul coincided with the rapid growth of this small bootlegging camp into a thriving metropolis. The city he called home was designated the capital of the Minnesota Territory in

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<sup>3</sup> A sutler is a civilian merchant who sells supplies to the military.

1849, and the capital of Minnesota when it gained statehood in 1858. Thompson saw the advent of a vibrant Black community in the mid-nineteenth century, many of whom were free, successful entrepreneurs like himself, standing in stark contrast to the early days of Saint Paul when many of the areas African Americans were enslaved.

### **3.1.2 THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD**

From 1619 to 1808, approximately 350,000 slaves were brought to British North America from West Africa. Even after the importation of slaves was made illegal in 1808, it is estimated that an additional 51,000 were transported illegally into the southern U.S. between 1808 and 1861 (Taylor 2002:2). The children of slaves were born into slavery as well, and in 1860, just prior to the outbreak of the Civil War, nearly 4 million African Americans were enslaved (Kennedy 1864). In 1787, the Northwest Ordinance, which created the Northwest Territory comprising parts of what are now Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio, prohibited slavery. This established a precedent for the prohibition of slavery north and west of the Ohio River. However, as the additional land the U.S. acquired over the next half-century was carved into states, a bitter debate raged over which of the new states would be free and which would allow slavery. This contentious issue intensified with the purchase of the Louisiana Territory from France in 1803, a sale prompted in part by France's difficulties over slave rebellions at St. Dominique, a French colony on Hispaniola, now part of Haiti and the Dominican Republic (Thomas Jefferson Foundation, Inc. 2016). The Louisiana Purchase resulted in the acquisition of large tracts of land in which slavery was already being practiced, including present-day Arkansas, Missouri, and Louisiana. As the larger Louisiana Territory was divided up into smaller political units, it was hotly debated in Congress whether each new state would allow slavery. The 1820 Missouri Compromise was the first of a series of failed attempts to settle the issue, but ultimately it would not be resolved until the Emancipation Proclamation was issued following the Civil War.

Slavery was never legal in Minnesota under the U.S. government, but as mentioned above, the ban against slavery was often not enforced, particularly in cases where southern slave owners transported their slaves to Minnesota. The tensions between pro-slavery supporters and abolitionists in the nascent state of Minnesota are evident in competing legislation introduced in the 1840s and 1850s on the rights of African Americans. While African Americans were already denied suffrage in congressional, territorial, county, and precinct elections by 1849, bills introduced in 1851 and 1853 extended this ban to village and town elections, respectively (Taylor 2002:5). However, legislation introduced in 1854 that would have required African Americans to post a bond of \$300-\$500 per person to guarantee good behavior before being allowed to become a citizen of the Minnesota Territory was defeated. While bills introduced in the Minnesota Legislature in 1860 to grant African Americans suffrage and protect fugitive slaves failed, another bill failed that year that would have prevented free African Americans from immigrating to Minnesota and forced those already residing in Minnesota to register (Taylor 1977:10; Taylor 2002:5-6). Attempts to extend suffrage to nonwhites failed in 1865 and 1867, but in 1868, African American and "civilized" Native American men were granted the right to vote, two years before the rest of the nation extended suffrage to nonwhite adult males (Taylor 2002:6-7). However, in Saint Paul, "the largest city with the largest black population in Minnesota, referendum voters solidly opposed granting suffrage to blacks" (Green 1996:144). The push and pull of pro- and anti-civil rights legislation being introduced—



and alternatively passing or failing—is indicative of the unstable ground on which African Americans in early Minnesota built their communities.

Significant in this era, the Mississippi River was a vital escape route on the Underground Railroad for slaves fleeing north from the slaveholding states (CultureBrokers Foundation, Inc. 2008; Taylor 2002:5). Traveling upriver offered the prospect of an ultimate escape to Canada, beyond the reach of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, which required the return of escaped slaves to their owners. This concept can be contrasted to being “sold down the river,” a phrase used to describe a significant betrayal that has its literal origins in the phenomenon of being sold down the Mississippi or Ohio Rivers to work in the cotton fields, brutally hard labor that “was seen as tantamount to a death sentence” (Sandlin 2010:121; Gandhi 2014). With its location as the northernmost navigable port on the Mississippi River, its small but growing free African American community, and its location in free territory, Saint Paul became a natural stop on the Underground Railroad (CultureBrokers Foundation, Inc. 2008; Taylor 2002:5).

### **3.1.2.1 Saint Paul’s Underground Railroad Station**

The home and business of William Taylor, an early African American resident of Saint Paul with a barbershop on Third Street (present-day Kellogg Boulevard) near Minnesota Street, constituted a stop on the Underground Railroad during the 1850s. Taylor had arrived in Minnesota from Illinois in 1850, along with Joseph Farr, his 18-year-old nephew who worked for Taylor as a barber (Figure 1). Historian Quincy T. Mills notes that “barber shops have historically been one of the most accessible paths to business ownership and economic independence” (Mills 2013:xii). The same year that Taylor and Farr arrived in Saint Paul, the Fugitive Slave Law was passed, requiring the return of escaped slaves to their owners and providing some slave-owning protection to southern slave owners who traveled to free territories. While Taylor’s shop became an information exchange center, his home provided refuge to fleeing slaves. Taylor and some of his fellow barbers were proficient musicians who performed around town, allowing them to maintain strong social networks that aided the carefully-guarded flow of information and resources necessary to protect fugitive slaves (Swanson 2000:124).



Figure 1. Joseph Farr (*Saint Paul Pioneer Press* 1895:10)

Prior to Joseph Farr's arrival in Saint Paul, he worked as a cabin boy on a steamboat on the Mississippi River, where he witnessed the "desperate efforts made by slaves who were trying to make their way to a place of safety" (*Saint Paul Pioneer Press* 1895). In 1895, Farr sat down with a journalist from the *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*, and talked of his and Taylor's experiences with the Underground Railroad in Saint Paul. He recalled a population of approximately 50-60 African Americans in Saint Paul in 1850, and noted "they were all concerned in getting the slaves out of the way of their pursuers [...] The principal agents in the business at this end were my uncle, William Taylor, David Edward, and a man who worked for my uncle, James Hywadin" (*Saint Paul Pioneer Press* 1895). Farr explained "When the boat came into Saint Paul my uncle, or one of the others I have mentioned, would be at the wharf and the fugitives would be brought to my uncle's house, where I lived" (*Saint Paul Pioneer Press* 1895). Farr also explained how others, including a white livery stable<sup>4</sup> owner, and a French man named Fournier in the White Bear neighborhood, would assist in the rescue of the escaped slaves, and how one of the hiding places Taylor utilized was an ice cream saloon at 15-19 East Fifth Street in Saint Paul (Swanson 2000:126, 129). Tragically, Taylor did not live to see the end of legalized slavery in America, as he was killed by the Dakota while accompanying an annuity party to the Lower Sioux Agency during the U.S. Dakota War of 1862 (Swanson 2000:124, 128). Joseph Farr went on to become a successful member of the early African American community, continuing in the barbering business and becoming one of the founding members of Saint Paul's first African American Masonic lodge in 1866 (Foote 1881:409).

### **3.1.2.2 Reverend Robert Thomas Hickman**

Robert Thomas Hickman, born in 1831 as a slave, had worked as a rail splitter on a plantation in Missouri while providing spiritual leadership within the enslaved community (Figure 2). Following the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, Hickman led a group of 76 slaves on a journey up the Mississippi River to freedom on a handmade raft (Taylor 1977:24). Near Jefferson, Missouri, they encountered the *Northerner*, a steamboat heading upriver to Saint Paul that was transporting contraband<sup>5</sup> teamsters and laborers from St. Louis, Missouri at the request of Henry H. Sibley. The advent of the Civil War had limited immigration, and therefore available laborers, in the West, a shortage that Sibley was attempting to remedy. The steamboat captain attached Hickman's raft to the *Northerner* and pulled it along to Saint Paul (Taylor 1977:7-8; Taylor 2002:7). Although the African American passengers on both the *Northerner* and the attached raft were initially prevented from landing by Irish workers fearful that the new arrivals would take their jobs, Hickman and many of the others eventually settled in Saint Paul, where Hickman helped organize the Pilgrim Baptist Church in 1866, still in existence today and discussed further in Section 3.1.4.1 (Green 1996:144; Murphy and Murphy-Gnatz 2000). Only ten days after the arrival of Hickman's raft, on May 15, 1863, a group of 218 free and contraband African Americans arrived in Saint Paul aboard the *Davenport* steamboat under the protective custody of Company C of the 37th Iowa Regiment. They too had been requested to fill the labor shortage. Although they received a similar unwelcome reception from some local whites, the new arrivals also ended up staying, finding employment at Fort Snelling or as laborers with civilian employers (Taylor 1977:11; Taylor 2002:7-8).

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<sup>4</sup> Historically, livery stables were places where horses and wagons were kept for hire. Some provided boarding for privately owned horses as well.

<sup>5</sup> Contraband refers to the slaves who escaped or were brought to Union territory during the Civil War, or who affiliated themselves with Union forces. Contraband slaves often worked as laborers for the Union effort, for which they received wages and sometimes access to education for themselves and their children.



Figure 2. Reverend Robert Hickman (MNHS 1877)

### **3.1.3 THE WARS OF THE 1860S**

#### **3.1.3.1 The Civil War**

Only four years after African Americans were granted U.S. citizenship with the 14th Amendment, which nullified the Dred Scott ruling in 1857, Minnesota's African American men voluntarily enlisted in the U.S. Civil War in extraordinarily high numbers. In 1860, the U.S. Census recorded 259 African Americans in Minnesota; one year later, 104 African American men had voluntarily enlisted in the Civil War (Scott Publishing Company 1976; Taylor 2002). The authorization of recruiting Black troops had been in question, due to a 1792 Federal law that prohibited African Americans from bearing arms for the U.S. Army, despite the fact that Blacks had served in both the American Revolution and the War of 1812. On July 17, 1862, the Second Confiscation and Militia Act was passed, which freed slaves whose masters were serving in the Confederate Army, and two days later slavery was abolished in the U.S. territories. Following the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, the U.S. military began actively recruiting Blacks. By the close of the Civil War, approximately 10 percent of Union Army soldiers were Black, and nearly 40,000 Black soldiers had died in conflict (Freeman et al. 1999).

#### **3.1.3.2 The U.S.-Dakota War of 1862**

At the same time that the Civil War was sweeping through the eastern part of the country, the U.S. Dakota War unfolded in Minnesota. By the early 1860s, the Dakota who remained in Minnesota were facing starvation as a result of government appropriation of their lands, disease, and failures on the part of the government to deliver on treaty promises. A group of Dakota warriors waged an attack on government outposts and white settlers as winter approached, resulting in the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862. Following the war, the remaining Dakota were first imprisoned in a concentration camp at Fort Snelling over the winter of 1862-1863, and those who survived were then forcibly marched to reservations and prisons in surrounding states and Canada (MNHS 2016b; MNHS 2016c).

##### **3.1.3.2.1 *Joseph Godfrey***

At least one African American fought on the side of the Dakota in the U.S.-Dakota War. Joseph Godfrey, an escaped slave, was born in Mendota around 1830 to French Canadian voyageur Joseph Godefroi and

an enslaved African American woman at Fort Snelling (Figure 3) (Francois 2015). Godfrey first lived as a slave in the household of a man named Alexis Bailly, and later was leased to trader and eventual first governor of Minnesota, Henry H. Sibley, to serve as an aide. Godfrey eventually fled poor treatment and married a Dakota woman, the daughter of Wahpaduta (Red Leaf) in 1857. When war broke out, he fought with the Dakota, surrendering on September 26. Two days later he was tried by a military commission. In exchange for testimony against 11 Dakota warriors, Godfrey's death sentence was commuted to ten years imprisonment. After three years at Camp McClellan in Davenport, Iowa, President Abraham Lincoln issued him a full pardon. Godfrey lived the remainder of his life on the Santee Reservation in Nebraska (Francois 2015).

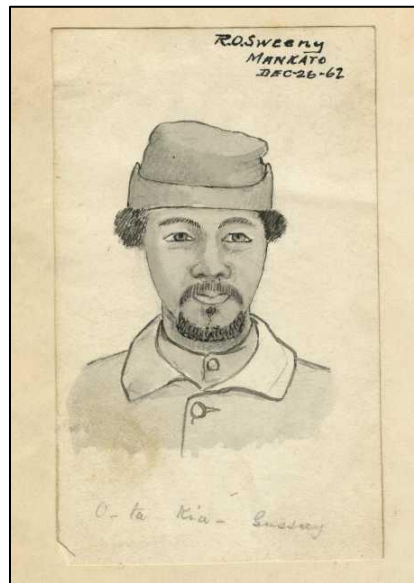


Figure 3. Joseph Godfrey (Sweeney 1862)

### 3.1.3.3 Buffalo Soldiers

In 1866, two Black cavalry units and four Black infantry units were established in Kansas, and in 1869, the latter four were reorganized into the 24th and 25th Infantry Regiments. They were referred to as the “Buffalo Soldiers,” a name they had been given by Native American tribes who likened their hair to that of bison. Only 25 years after the Dred Scott case, which denied slaves their citizenship, the 25th U.S. Infantry, an African American regiment, arrived at Fort Snelling in 1882. They were stationed at the Fort as well in 1883 and 1888, and charged with facilitating the settlement of the west by mapping land, protecting settlers, and constructing forts and roads (Nankivell 2001; NPS 2016). The African American units had the lowest desertion rate in the army, and earned 18 Medals of Honor and 12 Certificates of Merit during the Indian Wars.<sup>6</sup> Despite the longstanding service of African Americans in the military, it was not until 1948 that the military was integrated (NPS 2016).

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<sup>6</sup> In this usage, refers to a series of armed conflicts between the U.S. government and Native Americans that occurred during Euro-American settlement in the Midwest and West.

### 3.1.4 RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

#### 3.1.4.1 Pilgrim Baptist Church

The first African American church in Saint Paul was Pilgrim Baptist Church, founded by Reverend Robert Thomas Hickman and his followers in 1866, identified in historical records as the city's first African American community institution (Figure 4) (Taylor 1977:23). 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. The congregation held their first meeting in Saint Paul in the home of African American Caroline Nelson, who lived on Fifth Street between Washington and Franklin Avenues (Taylor 1977:26, Bailey 1863:82). Nelson, born in Virginia around 1911, was living in Saint Paul by 1850, working initially as a washerwoman, and then as a midwife (MNHS 1850; MNHS 1860; Bailey 1869:168). The congregation went on to hold meetings in a number of rented locations in the commercial district, including the Good Templars rooms at a concert hall on Third Street between Market and St. Peter Streets (Taylor 1977:26).



Figure 4. Pilgrim Baptist Church c. 1975 (MNHS 1975a)

Because Hickman was not an ordained minister in the early years of the congregation, the community obtained mission status from the first Baptist Church of Saint Paul in 1864, until being formally organized into the Pilgrim Baptist Church in 1866. In 1871, a new home for the church was completed at Twelfth and Cedar Streets. The church survives to this day in Saint Paul, now located at 732 Central Avenue West, in a building constructed in 1928 and listed in the NRHP in 1991 (Sluss 1990a). While Pilgrim Baptist was initially served by two white ministers from First Baptist, Hickman continued in his capacity as an important spiritual leader for the congregation while working to complete the requirements for ordination. He was formally ordained to the ministry in 1877 and became Pilgrim Baptist's first ordained Black minister (Taylor 1977:27-28). Though a number of Blacks continued to worship in white congregations, the formation and endurance of Pilgrim Baptist was "an important catalyst for other organizational efforts" among Saint Paul's African American community (Taylor 1977:28).

#### 3.1.4.2 St. Mark's Episcopal Church and St. Philip's (Mission) Episcopal Church

Only one year after the Pilgrim Baptist congregation began, St. Mark's Episcopal Church was founded within Saint Paul's African American community under the leadership of Reverend T.H.N. Gerry, a white

minister and teacher in a public school for African American children. The church was officially incorporated the following year, but disbanded in 1871, three years after Gerry's death (Taylor 1977:28; Williams 1876:434). Twenty years later, a group of former members of St. Mark's, many of whom attended the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd founded in 1869, began work to reestablish the congregation as a mission in the Black community (Friedman-Shedlov 2008; Pope 1911:220; Taylor 2002:11-12). They received formal approval in 1894, and on May 1, 1894, the mission was formally reorganized by Archdeacon Appleby as St. Philip's Mission (Friedman-Shedlov 2008). In 1905, the congregation purchased its first building at 457 Mackubin Street, which was demolished in 1954 for the construction of a new church in the same location. In 1950, Denzil Carty came to St. Philip's, where he served as rector until his retirement in 1975. A new building was constructed under his leadership in 1955 (Taylor 1993:22). Carty, born in the British West Indies in 1904 and educated at the City College of New York, Xavier University, and Wayne State University, also served in World War II as captain and chaplain of the 512<sup>th</sup> Battalion. In addition to his religious work, he was a civil rights activist and respected community leader (African American Registry 2016). Carty Park, at Iglehart Avenue and St. Albans Street, was named in Carty's honor in 1975, the year of his death (Empson 2006:43). In 2008, St. Philip's merged with another predominantly Black congregation, St. Thomas Episcopal Church, which had been founded in 1899 as a mission of the Gethsemane Church. In 2012, the merged congregation voted to rename the church Holy Trinity Episcopal Church. The church is still located at 1636 Van Buren Avenue (Holy Trinity Episcopal Church 2016).

#### **3.1.4.3 St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church**

St. James African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) church of Saint Paul was organized in 1876 as a prayer group in the home of Hamilton Giles. Founding members included successful African American entrepreneurs such as Thomas A. Lyles, his wife, Amanda Lyles, and James Kidd Hilyard (St. James AME Church 2016). The congregation's numbers remained relatively steady through 1880, when it secured a site at Galtier Street and West Fuller Avenue for the construction of a building under the leadership of W.H. Brown. The church built there (completion date unknown) partially burned in 1908, and during its reconstruction, the congregation held services in Freyer Hall at 505 1/2 Washington Avenue. In 1926, a new basement unit was constructed at the church's present location, 624 Central Avenue West, and in 1949 the substructure was completed (St. James AME Church 2016).

#### **3.1.4.4 St. Peter Claver Catholic Church**

St. Peter Claver Catholic Church, the first African American Catholic Church in Minnesota, was founded informally in 1888 or 1889 under the leadership of African American civil rights supporter Archbishop John Ireland, who himself was white. Following the 1888 canonization of Peter Claver, a white missionary to African slaves in Latin America during the early 1600s, Archbishop Ireland and professional leaders in Saint Paul's early African American community—such as lawyer Fred McGhee and newspaper founder Samuel Hardy—began holding services on Market Street in Saint Paul (Goetz 2016; Catholic Online 2016). In 1892, a church was erected at Aurora and Farrington Avenues. It served as a cultural center of the African American Catholic community, hosting men's and women's community groups, Sunday school classes, a church choir, and the Toussaint L'Ouverture Literature Society. Father Stephen Theobald, born in British Guiana, was the first African American ordained at the Saint Paul Seminary and served as pastor from 1910 until his death in 1932. In 1950, the church moved to

a new complex at Oxford Street and St. Anthony Avenue, which included a tuition-free school, gymnasium, convent, church, and rectory (Goetz 2016).

### **3.1.5 EDUCATION**

#### **3.1.5.1 Diversity in the Early Schools**

Early education was integrated in territorial-era Saint Paul and its environs. In a relatively small community with a high degree of diversity and inter-reliance among its residents, there seemed to be little reason to separate children by race in so few classrooms (Green 1996:139). Peter Garrioch, a white Anglican teacher from the Selkirk Colony who established a school in Mendota in 1837, taught 30 students of European, Native, and African descent, reflecting the diversity of the community at that time (Gunn 1939). In 1846, Dr. Thomas S. Williamson, a white missionary and physician, established a school at the Dakota village of Kaposia just southeast of downtown Saint Paul. That same year, he wrote to the governor of Vermont, who was president of the National Popular Educational Society, requesting that a teacher be sent to serve Saint Paul. In the letter, Williamson noted, “A teacher for this place [...] should be entirely free from prejudice on account of color, for among her scholars she might find not only English, French and Swiss, but Sioux and Chippewas, with some claiming kindred with the African stock” (quoted in Williams 1876:163).

#### **3.1.5.2 Segregation & Desegregation During the 1850s-1860s**

Even as the establishment of the Minnesota Territory in 1849 limited key rights to white males, such as suffrage and participation in courtrooms as jurors and referees, the legislature established a fund “for the education of all of the children and youth of the Territory” (quoted in Green 1996:140). However, the seemingly relaxed view towards racial integration was short-lived. In the mid-1850s, the number of both free Blacks and slaves arriving in Saint Paul had increased. Despite their small numbers compared to white immigrants, the white community feared that a growing number of Blacks would become “dependent” on the territory (Green 1996:142). In 1857, the Saint Paul Board of Education passed a resolution to segregate Black students, introducing a policy that stated, “Whenever thirty pupils of African descent apply for instruction, the Secretary be authorized to employ a teacher for the same” (quoted in Green 1996:143). Because of this requirement, the first segregated school that did open in Saint Paul, with Moses Dixon as the teacher, closed shortly after due to low enrollment. A few Black students continued to attend white schools over the next two years, but in 1859, the Saint Paul Board of Education reestablished a school for Black students, this time requiring only 15 students. However, this school too closed within a few months (Green 1996:144). Finally, the Board actively banned Black students from white schools. As William D. Green recounts, when Benjamin Drew, hired to head the city’s schools, discovered in 1859 that a “quadroon” boy was attending a white school, he told the teacher that “she had done wrong to receive him, as [the boy] would not be allowed to remain.” The teacher responded that the mixed-race boy “is no darker than many Indians-mixed who are here,” to no avail (quoted in Green 1996:144).

The 1860s saw stronger effort to establish schools for Blacks in Saint Paul, paired with reaffirmations of the prohibition against Blacks attending white schools. In 1865, a “School for Colored Children” opened at Ninth and Jackson Streets in Morrison’s Building, serving 40-50 Black students, with Miss Morrow appointed as teacher. However, by 1867, the building was described by the *St. Paul Daily Press* as “very



dilapidated,” in contrast to the “convenient and comfortable buildings, well supplied with maps, charts, blackboards, and the usual equipments of such institutions” that white students attended (quoted in Green 1996:146). The article described broken windows in the school for Blacks, which were partially boarded up in an effort to conserve warmth, despite the effect this had of reducing light in the classroom. Finally, in February 1869, a white Republican representative, William H.C. Folsom of Taylors Falls, sponsored a bill that would deny funding to school districts if they prevented Black children from attending based on race. The bill passed and was enacted March 4, 1869, thereby ending segregation in Saint Paul public schools (Green 1996:147). By the time *Plessy v. Ferguson* found “separate but equal” schools constitutional in 1896, the concept of integrated schools was already well established, and Jim Crow practices held little appeal for Saint Paul (Green 1996:149).

In the 1890s, the first Black school teachers were hired in Saint Paul: the Farr sisters Minnie and Maria Elizabeth (who went by her middle name, or the nickname Bessie) (Griffin 1978:2). Minnie, born around 1862 in Minnesota, and Bessie, born around 1863 in Washington, D.C., were the daughters of Joseph and Sarah Farr. Minnie was the first African American graduate of Saint Paul High School (*The Appeal*, July 15, 1905). Minnie and Bessie taught at Lincoln School and Madison School respectively, and it appears that neither sister married (*The Appeal*, July 15, 1905; *The Appeal*, March 8, 1919). Through their early 40s, they lived in their parents’ household at 59 East Eleventh Street, retaining their maiden surname (U.S. Census Bureau 1900; MNHS 1905). By 1904, Bessie was working as a clerk, while Minnie continued teaching (R.L. Polk & Co. 1904). Minnie died in 1905 at the age of 42 after a long illness; she had worked for the Saint Paul public schools for nearly 20 years (*The Appeal*, July 15, 1905).

### **3.1.6 A GROWING COMMUNITY**

From 1860 to 1870, the African American population in Minnesota nearly tripled, from 259 to 759 (Taylor 2002:7). Some of the new arrivals were former slaves, while others were drawn to Minnesota to fill labor shortages that resulted from the Civil War. In 1862, the Saint Paul and Galena Packet Company, a steamboat company, recruited Black deckhands in St. Louis, Missouri, and the following year the *Saint Paul Press* reported that 5,000 workers were needed to fill local labor shortages. That same year Sibley, who had finished his term as governor in 1860 and was serving as colonel of the state militia, requested teamsters and laborers from St. Louis to support the military at Fort Snelling in the aftermath of the U.S.-Dakota War. This request was the impetus for the arrival of hundreds of Black laborers, including those transported on the steamboat that towed Reverend Robert Thomas Hickman and his followers to Saint Paul (see Section 3.1.2.2) (Taylor 1981:75). From 1870 to 1890, the Black community again increased rapidly, by over 600 percent. This was largely due to the arrival of young men from the South in pursuit of employment opportunities. The largest employers in Saint Paul during the 1880s were the Metropolitan Hotel and the Hotel Ryan, which employed Blacks as waiters, porters, and cooks. Beginning that same decade, railroads headquartered in Saint Paul employed a large number of Blacks as porters (Taylor 1981:77).

During the latter part of the nineteenth century, the city’s Black population was concentrated along lower Jackson Street and along West Third, Fourth, and Fifth Streets between Jackson and Franklin Streets (a block west of Washington), in the city’s commercial district (Taylor 2002:13), as well as along the railroad corridors just north of Summit-University (Martin and Goddard 1989:102–104). Many of the



single men boarded in hotels, boarding houses, and private homes near their places of employment, resulting in a high turnover in residents along lower Cedar, Minnesota, and Robert Streets (Taylor 1981:77). However, African American families tended toward stable housing. By 1870, “many male and female heads of household owned substantial amounts of real and personal property,” despite being predominately restricted to the commercial district due to racial bias, economic necessity, and proximity to work (Taylor 1981:76).

### **3.1.7 CIVIC INSTITUTIONS**

Despite facing systemic discriminatory obstacles to education, the Black community in Saint Paul was highly literate, and was flourishing by the last few decades of the nineteenth century. The Black community in Saint Paul had been stable and literate to a high degree from the beginning, in contrast to a large percentage of the single European men who immigrated to the city in its early years (Green 1996:141). In 1865, African Americans R.T. Grey, Maurice Jernigan, and Ed James established “a literary association for the young men of Saint Paul” called the Golden Key Club. The following year, a group of African American residents founded the Pioneer Lodge of the Masonic Order (Green 2007:182; Foote 1881:409). In 1869 or 1870, the Sons of Freedom, the “first statewide black civil rights organization” was founded, with Grey, Jernigan, and James as officers (Green 2007:142). The Pioneer Lodge belongs to Prince Hall Freemasonry, a branch of Freemasonry established by African American abolitionist Prince Hall in the late eighteenth century (Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge 2016; Muraskin 1975). The Sons of Freedom was formed to protect the welfare of Black residents in Minnesota and to serve as a resource for information on housing, employment, property leases, and apprenticeship opportunities (Taylor 2002:29). The Robert Bank’s Literary Society was founded in 1875 as an intellectual club that welcomed both men and women interested in discussing philosophical and practical considerations regarding issues of race (Castle 1912:108; Taylor 2002:11; 21-22). Also established in the nineteenth century was the T.S.T.C. Social Club. Founded in 1896, it is the oldest extant African American men’s club in Minnesota (Taylor 1988:8).

### **3.1.8 EARLY ENTREPRENEURS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS**

Despite the high degree of literacy among the African American community, many were actively restricted by bias and racism to working as waiters, porters, and servants (Green 2007). Even so, many African Americans in early Saint Paul did achieve success as business owners. In the early 1880s, a number of businessmen from the African American community recruited young Black professionals to Saint Paul, hoping to fill the dearth of trained Black lawyers, doctors, dentists, and educators. They took out an ad in the November 24, 1883 issue of the *New York Globe*, lauding both the ample business opportunities and the desirable quality of life characteristics of Saint Paul. Members of the community also used their connections and influence to bring successful professionals to their home city (Taylor 2002:22).

#### **3.1.8.1 Harry Shepherd**

Harry Shepherd, a Black photographer, arrived in Saint Paul in 1887 from Virginia and transformed a failing gallery at 93 East Seventh Street into a successful studio in only a month’s time. Within two years, he owned two galleries, including the one at 93 East Seventh Street, and employed a staff of eight (Wilson 1990:57). Shepherd won a gold medal for his work at the 1891 and 1892 Minnesota State Fairs, and was hired as the official photographer for the 1900 “Afro-American Exhibit” at the Paris Exposition

(Wilson 1990:58; McLeod County Historical Society 2016). He was prolific in his work, and photographed a diverse clientele, including Blacks, whites, and Native Americans. When Shepherd relocated to Chicago in 1905, *The Appeal* published the following statement: “Mr. Shepherd has established nine photograph establishments during his business career here, all of which were disposed of advantageously. He has been one of our most enterprising and successful business men and his loss will be deeply felt” (*The Appeal*, May 20, 1905, quoted in Wilson 1990:59).

### **3.1.8.2 Thomas H. Lyles**

Thomas H. Lyles, a successful entrepreneur who was also committed to advancing the rights of Saint Paul’s African American residents, arrived in Saint Paul in 1874. After establishing himself as a barber, he opened a real estate agency in 1887, followed by a funeral parlor in 1906. Lyles was an active Republican; a founder of the Black Masonic lodge and St. Mark’s Episcopal Church; the first grand master of the African Grand Lodge of Minnesota (founded 1894); and the first president of the Robert Bank’s Literary Society (Taylor 2002). He was also instrumental in convincing Saint Paul’s mayor to hire African Americans to the police and fire departments. Lyles and his wife, Amanda, resided at 782 Selby Avenue Northeast (Black Minnesotans Project documentation, on file at MnHPO).

### **3.1.8.3 Amanda Lyles**

Lyles’ wife, Amanda Lyles, was also a successful entrepreneur and active member of the community (Figure 5). She established The Hair Bazaar at the intersection of Fourth and Wabasha Streets, which offered beauty salon services and rented and sold party, wedding, and mourning attire (Kunz 1990:76; CultureBrokers Foundation, Inc. 2010). Amanda Lyles was also state superintendent for work among the African American community for the Minnesota Women’s Christian Temperance Union from 1897-1901 and a founding member of the St. James A.M.E. Church. She served as president of the Minnesota Women’s Loyal Union (a national organization formed to promote the work of African American civil rights activist and women’s suffragist Ida B. Wells) and as an executive committee member of the National Women’s Association. From 1894-1897, she chaired and helped organize a movement to erect a marker at the gravesite of abolitionist John Brown, and to establish a social institution for Black children in his name (Taylor 1977:104-105; Taylor 2002:25).



Figure 5. Amanda Lyles (Kregel Photo Parlors 1913)

#### **3.1.8.4 James K. Hilyard**

James Kidd Hilyard was another resident who found success in a number of different entrepreneurial avenues (Figure 6). Born in Pennsylvania in 1830, he initially arrived in Saint Paul in 1856, voluntarily enlisted and fought in the Civil War, and then returned to Saint Paul in 1864 to open a renovated clothing store where he also offered clothing repair and cleaning services, at 468 Robert Street. Hilyard also resided at this address, along with his wife, Sabre or Saba (née Halford), who worked as a housekeeper, and son William, who worked as a Pullman Porter (Foote 1881:542; Taylor 2002:21; U.S. Census Bureau 1880; R.L. Polk & Co. 1886:496). Hilyard sold real estate and insurance, and served as bandmaster for Hilyard's Quadrille Band, which performed both within the city of Saint Paul and on the riverboats that stopped over (Taylor 2002:21; R.L. Polk & Co. 1886:496). In addition to his business ventures, Hilyard was a social activist, raising money for relief efforts for Blacks migrating from the South to Kansas (Taylor 1977:83). Hilyard passed away in 1891 in Philadelphia, and was interred in Oakland Cemetery in Saint Paul (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Death Certificates Index, 1803-1915, FHL Film Number 1887562; Findagrave.com 2016a).



Figure 6. James K. Hilyard (MNHS 1886a)

#### **3.1.8.5 Dr. Valdo Turner**

Dr. Valdo Turner, born around 1867 in Tennessee, was one of the first Black physicians in Minnesota (Figure 7) (U.S. Census Bureau 1910; Taylor 2002:23). He moved from Nashville to Saint Paul around 1908, established a practice in the Kendrick Block at 27 East Seventh Street in downtown Saint Paul (Marshall-Bruce-Polk Co. Publishers 1907:1335; R.L. Polk & Co. 1909; *The Appeal* June 6, 1911 and Nov. 22, 1913), and resided at 412 Sherburne Avenue and later at 386 St. Albans Street (U.S. Census Bureau 1910; U.S. Census Bureau 1920; Taylor 1976b). Turner was an advocate for civil rights, helping to organize—and eventually leading—the Saint Paul branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1913, and protesting a bill banning intermarriage (Bessler 2003:276; Wilkins 1982:36). Turner was instrumental in initiating the NAACP's investigation of the 1921 lynching of three imprisoned African American circus workers in Duluth (Bessler 2003:197, 276). Turner's ex-wife, Sally Alexander, was described as a strong, independent woman by civil rights activist Roy Wilkins. In his autobiography *Standing Fast*, Wilkins describes how Sally earned a degree at the University of Minnesota at the age of 40, divorced her husband, moved to the eastern U.S., and married a Dr. Alexander. She became involved in the NAACP and befriended W.E.B. Du Bois (Wilkins 1982:115).

Dr. Turner died in 1948 in Nashville and was interred in Saint Paul (Tennessee Deaths and Burials Index, 1874-1955, Family History Library Number 2137399).



Figure 7. Dr. Valdo Turner (MNHS 1915)

### 3.1.8.6 **Fredrick L. McGhee**

The first African American lawyer in Minnesota was Fredrick L. McGhee (Figure 8). Born in Mississippi, McGhee spent his childhood in Knoxville, Tennessee, graduated from law school in Chicago in 1885, and moved to Saint Paul in 1889. He had been recruited to Saint Paul's Black community by African American newspaper editor John Quincy Adams. In 1892, McGhee was selected to be a presidential elector for the Minnesota Republican Party, but the decision was met with opposition by white members and reversed a few months later. Disheartened by the racism within the Party, evidenced by both this and subsequent incidents—including being denied a seat as a delegate at the Republican National Convention—McGhee became one of the first African Americans of national prominence to join the Democratic Party. He also converted to Catholicism at a time when the majority of African Americans were Baptist, and along with John Ireland, helped incorporate St. Peter Claver, a historically Black Catholic church (see 3.1.4.4) (Nelson 2001; Taylor 2002).



Figure 8. Frederick L. McGhee (Shepherd 1890)

In addition to his activism in traditional politics and religion, McGhee was a strong advocate for racial equality. He served as legislative director for the National Afro-American Council (NAAC), a national civil rights organization active from 1898-1907, playing an instrumental role in organizing its 1902 annual meeting in Saint Paul. Although the 1902 meeting did not have McGhee's desired effect of healing divides within NAAC, it did result in a lifelong friendship and alliance between McGhee and W.E.B. Du Bois, who along with fellow civil rights activists including William Monroe Trotter, founded the Niagara Movement in 1905. This civil rights organization was a direct precursor to the NAACP, founded in 1909 (Nelson 2015). Other early African American attorneys in Saint Paul included William R. Morris, who arrived from Tennessee in 1889, and William T. Francis, who had arrived in Saint Paul from Indiana by 1895, served as presidential elector in 1920, and was appointed U.S. minister to Liberia in 1927 (MNHS 1895; Taylor 2002:23).

### **3.1.9 POLICE AND FIRE DEPARTMENTS**

It was during the late nineteenth century that the Saint Paul police and fire departments first hired African Americans to their staff. Instrumental in this was Thomas H. Lyles, the Saint Paul businessman. In the late 1870s and early 1880s, he persuaded Saint Paul's mayor Edmund Rice to add African Americans to the staff of both the police and fire departments. The first Black policeman in Saint Paul was Louis or Lewis W. Thomas, who lived at 76 Old West Ninth and was hired as a patrolman in 1881 (R.L. Polk & Co. and J.D. Leonard 1881:733; Taylor 2002; Saint Paul Police Historical Society 2016). Another officer was James H. Burrell, a former Pullman Porter, who was hired in October of 1892 and served at the Rondo Sub-Station throughout his career (Griffin 1978:5). In an interview with oral historian Kate Cavett, James S. Griffin, the first Black police captain in Saint Paul, noted that "seventeen Black officers were appointed to the department from 1881 to 1921, but then we went from 1921 until 1937 and not a single Black was appointed to the police department. They had a Commissioner at that time—I can't remember his name, but he had gone on record. As long as he was commissioner, there'd be no more colored policemen" (Griffin 1998).

William R. Godette, the first Black firefighter, was hired in 1885, eight years after Saint Paul's first full time paid fire department was organized (Figure 9) (Griffin 1978:31-32). It was at this time that Chemical Company No. 4, the Black company, was established (Taylor 1977:64). Godette served for 41 years, becoming the first African American lieutenant and first Black captain. In 1887, Philip H. Anderson and Charles H. Brown were hired to the fire department, followed by John Benjamin in 1888 and Fred Tobie in 1897. The African American company, which was headquartered at 293 Front Street, was assigned the most dangerous and undesirable duties, such as putting out fires at the city dumps and bogs (Placeography 2010; Griffin 1978:32-33). In 1923, the African American company moved to Engine House No. 9 (built in 1885; non-extant) at Edmund and Marion Streets (Heath 1998:33), which closed in 1942 due to a manpower shortage. As a result, the African American company was integrated into crews at other engine houses in Saint Paul. However, within individual engine houses, the African American members remained segregated from white members. For examples, they were only allowed to occupy designated beds at their assigned stations (Heath 1998:121). Additionally, at Engine House No. 10 at 754 Randolph Avenue, the African American firefighters had separate kitchens and entrances from the white firefighters (Gottfried 2010). The fire department became fully desegregated in 1957 (Heath 1998:121). In 2010, the Saint Paul Fire Department Headquarters and Station 1 at 1000 West Seventh Street was named the

William and Alfred Godette Memorial Building, after William and his younger brother Alfred who also worked for the fire department (Hallman 2010).



Figure 9. William Godette (Wurzer 2010)

### **3.1.10 NEWSPAPERS**

In his 1977 dissertation, David Vassar Taylor writes eloquently of the importance of the Black press, noting that, in addition to the Black church, it was one of the two “pillars upon which Black communities were built during the reconstruction period. Wherein the church gave the community form and substance, the press made it a political and social organism. Both worked in tandem against racial oppression and for racial uplift and redemption” (Taylor 1977:124). He describes how the press “quickly became one of the principal elements in the organization of community life and the development of a collective racial consciousness” (Taylor 1977:125). Between 1880 and 1970, at least 27 African American newspapers were established in the Twin Cities. Of these, the earliest and one of the longest-lasting was *The Western Appeal*, later renamed *The Appeal* (Taylor 1988:12).

#### **3.1.10.1 The Western Appeal/The Appeal**

The first effort to begin a Black newspaper in Saint Paul was in September 1875, when the *Saint Paul Daily Dispatch* reported the formation of a Republican African American newspaper to be called *The Western Appeal*. The paper, however, was short-lived. In November 1879, E.P. Wade and A.F. Hilyer organized a new newspaper, titled the *Northwest Review*, which was in publication until 1884 (Taylor 1977:84). In June 1885, Samuel E. Hardy and John T. Burgett joined forces to reestablish a newspaper within the Saint Paul African American community, for which they selected the previously used title *The Western Appeal*. They hired Fredrick Douglass Parker from Washington D.C., a Howard University graduate, as the editor. After the newspaper folded the following year due to financial insolvency, Hilyard and Lyles established The Appeal Publishing Company, of which Lyles was president and Hilyard was secretary and treasurer. The company was reorganized in 1887 as the Northwest Publishing Company with John Quincy Adams, *The Western Appeal's* new editor (Figure 10) (Taylor 1977:85, Taylor 2002:22).





Figure 10. John Quincy Adams (MNHS 1922)

Adams had been born to a minister in Kentucky and attended private schools in Wisconsin and Ohio before graduating from Oberlin College in Ohio. He went on to work as a teacher first in Louisville, Kentucky and then in Arkansas, where he became assistant superintendent of public instruction for the state. Throughout his career in education, Adams took an active role in politics. He served as secretary to two Republican state conventions, was elected a justice of the peace in 1872, served as clerk of the state senate and deputy commissioner of public works, and was an alternate delegate to the Republican National Convention of 1880, as well as a member of both the city and state executive committees. In 1879, Adams and his brother Cyrus Field Adams founded the weekly *Louisville Bulletin*, for which Adams was editor until he sold his interest in 1886 and moved to Saint Paul (Taylor 2016).

Initially Adams served as assistant editor to Parker, but soon replaced him as sole editor in 1887, at which time he incorporated the Northwestern Publishing Company with Hilyard and Lyles. Under Adams, *The Western Appeal* opened offices in Minneapolis, Chicago, St. Louis, Dallas, and Washington D.C., in addition to the Saint Paul office. In 1889, the name was changed to *The Appeal* (Taylor 2016). Throughout his career, Adams utilized his position as editor to promote and defend African American civil rights. In response to the jailing of Black architectural designer William A. Hazel in May 1887 after Hazel protested verbal abuse from a hotel manager who refused him lodging, Adams encourage Hazel to sue under the Minnesota Civil Rights Law of 1885. When Hazel was only awarded a fraction of the monetary damages, Adams solicited funds to cover Hazel's expenses, and called for the "formation of a protective league to oversee all cases in which the rights of Afro-Americans in Minnesota were abridged or denied"—this call resulted in a statewide convention for African Americans that led to the formation of the Minnesota Protective and Industrial League in 1887 (Taylor 1973:292). Although the Minnesota Protective and Industrial League was not able to sustain its initial momentum, the banner was taken up by the establishment of the Afro-American League in 1889 (Taylor 1973:293). The local branch of the Afro-American League held its first meeting at Market Hall at Seventh and St. Peter Streets, and elected Adams the chair of the first organizational meeting; two years later, he and McGhee were elected as delegates to the Chicago convention. They also both served on the National Afro-American League's

executive committee, and helped found the American Law Enforcement League of Minnesota (Taylor 1973:293). In 1892, Adams married Annabelle (Ella) Smith, and they moved into a home at 527 St. Anthony Avenue (razed) (Gibbs 1970:21).

After 1900, the newspaper's circulation numbers declined, prompting the close of all but the Minneapolis and Saint Paul offices within 15 years. The paper continued publication until Adam's death in 1922 (Taylor 2016). In 1923, it was sold to, and merged with, its competitor the *Northwestern Bulletin*, which became *The Northwestern Bulletin-Appeal* (Huber 2016). Because of Adam's role as editor of *The Appeal*, his strong stand on civil rights, and his persuasive editorials, Taylor names Adams as "the most influential person in the Twin Cities Black community during the last decade of the nineteenth century" (Taylor 1977:90).

### **3.1.10.2 Other Newspapers**

Other African American newspapers established in Saint Paul in the late nineteenth century include the *Afro-American Advance* (1899-1905), the *Afro Independent* (1888-?), the *Broad Axe* (1891-1903), *Negro World* (1892-1900?), and *The St. Paul Review* (1892-1948). *The Twin City American* (May 4, 1899-May 18, 1899) and *The Twin City Guardian* (1895-1923) were published in both Minneapolis and Saint Paul (MNHS 2016f). There were also a number of African American newspapers published in Minneapolis that covered Twin Cities news.

### **3.1.11 ARTS**

Both musical performances and art shows were widely advertised in Saint Paul's African American newspapers during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Music was enjoyed on Victrolas in parlors, as performed by friends and family members, and at a variety of events, including recitals and civic organization meetings. Though they were often denied accommodations at white establishments and venues, a few African American artists in Saint Paul achieved prominence in white society in the late nineteenth century. In contrast, within the African American community, musical and artistic accomplishments of Blacks were frequently advertised and celebrated by the African American newspapers, organizations, and businesses. Examples include advertisements for piano, guitar, and opera recitals by African American musicians, including praise for Professor A. Dayman as "the most successful Colored musician who has ever lived in our city," as well as accolades for Black artists such as illustrator Edward H. Lee, painter Mr. S.P. Bell, and portrait artist N.A. Forseen (*The Appeal* January 4, 1890; *The Appeal* February 8, 1890; *The Appeal* August 2, 1890; *The Appeal* March 16, 1889; *The Appeal* September 21, 1889; *The Appeal* June 1, 1895).

#### **3.1.11.1 John R. White**

One of the earliest known Black artists in Saint Paul was John R. White, who was born in Indiana around 1856, and was living in Saint Paul by 1890 (MNHS 1895; *The Appeal*, September 20, 1890). In 1890, White won first prize in the oil painting competition at the Minnesota State Fair, for which he received \$10 and a diploma (*The Appeal*, September 20, 1890). The following year, White presented *The Appeal* with one of his works, entitled "Afterglow." The painting depicted fishermen returning to shore just after sunset and was displayed in *The Appeal's* office (*The Appeal*, January 3, 1891). White resided at 613 Martin Street in 1890 and 1891, and by 1892 was living at 606 St. Anthony Avenue, which *The Appeal* described as a "beautiful residence." White served as the chairman of the World's Fair Committee of



Ramsey County in 1892 and hosted the event at his home, with the help of members of the Phillis Wheatley Club (now the Phyllis Wheatley Community Center in Minneapolis) (*The Appeal*, July 16, 1892). Throughout these years, he also worked as a porter (R.L. Polk & Co.1890; R.L. Polk & Co.1891; MNHS 1895). In 1897, his work was exhibited at the Negro Building at the Tennessee Centennial Exposition (Cheekwood Museum of Art 2000:26).

### **3.1.11.2 William Augustus Hazel and Rosa Hazel**

Another African American artist in Saint Paul during the nineteenth century was William Augustus Hazel, an architectural and stained glass designer. Hazel was born in North Carolina 1854, and married Rosa Hazard in 1882 in Rhode Island (U.S. Census Bureau 1900; Wilson 2003:274). Hazel, who had apprenticed under architect Charles Dexter Gambrill, was hired by Tiffany & Company of New York. In 1887, Hazel arrived in Saint Paul as a representative for the company, for whom he worked as a salesman and a designer. Hazel was not only denied accommodations at local hotels when he first arrived in Saint Paul in 1887, but was jailed for protesting the abusive treatment he received from a proprietor when requesting a room (discussed in Section 3.1.10.1). Despite the disturbing experience of being jailed for seeking accommodations, Hazel and Rosa remained in Saint Paul for over 15 years.

While in Saint Paul, Hazel was affiliated with Brown & Haywood Stained Glass Works, a local company, and gave presentations to students and architects. Though invited to present at a Minnesota Chapter of the American Institute of Architects meeting, he was barred from membership because of his race. He also continued his work as a designer, working with Saint Paul architect Francis Jefferson Roberson on St. Peter's African Methodist Episcopal Church in Minneapolis, constructed in 1888, and winning a competition for the design of a \$3,000 stained glass window for a Catholic church in Austin, Minnesota. Hazel's wife, Rosa, was also notable. She was the first African American teacher hired at Hampton Institute's Butler Demonstration School in Hampton, Virginia in 1874 (Wilson 2003). She was also musically talented. At a May 31, 1892 meeting of the Minnesota Afro-American League and the Minnesota Civil Rights Committee, organized in response to lynching and mob violence in the South, Rosa sung lyrics she had composed in honor of the event (Alexander 2012:56-59). In 1900, following the death of their middle son, Rosa Hazel and the Hazels' four remaining children moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where William rejoined them in 1904. In 1909, William was hired at the Tuskegee Institute. He taught there for a decade, then joined the faculty at Howard University, where he organized an architecture program and taught the first courses in architecture (Mitchell 2003; Wilson 2003).

## **3.2 Twentieth Century**

### **3.2.1 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMMUNITY**

In the late nineteenth century, the African American population of Saint Paul was primarily concentrated in the city's commercial district downtown. Other African Americans residents lived in smaller numbers on the West Side Flats, along the railroad corridors north of the Summit-University neighborhood, and in a growing tenement district between the State Capitol and downtown Saint Paul (Taylor 2002:33; Martin and Goddard 1989:103). By the close of the nineteenth century, white immigrant groups, many of whom initially settled near Lower Landing, had moved out of the commercial district towards residential areas to the northwest and northeast, including up onto the bluffs, such as in the Dayton's Bluff neighborhood.

The area surrounding downtown Saint Paul had been infilled with residential housing. However, these residential neighborhoods were largely hostile to the inclusion of African Americans. The exception was to the north and northwest of downtown, where a Jewish community had formed around Rondo Avenue (Taylor 220:13-14).

### **3.2.1.1 Rondo**

The Rondo neighborhood is located within the larger Summit-University neighborhood, which had its origins in the 1870s and 1880s, when wealthy members of Saint Paul's elite began constructing mansions along Summit Avenue and adjacent streets. The epicenter of wealth was along Summit Avenue, while the degree of affluence gradually decreased northward towards University Avenue, where a streetcar line constructed in 1890 connected residents to the commercial district downtown (Martin and Lanegran 1983; Martin and Goddard 1989:102-104). Rondo Avenue, and in turn Rondo neighborhood, is named for Louis Rondo, the son of Joseph Rondeau, a French Canadian who had worked as a voyageur for the Hudson's Bay Company and eventually settled near Fort Snelling with his wife, Josephine Beaulieu, who was Kutenai (First Nations), after leaving the failed Selkirk Colony. When Rondeau and his family were moved off the land near Fort Snelling by the military in 1840, along with "Pig's Eye" Parrant and James Thompson, they settled in Saint Paul. After first purchasing a claim from another early settler, Edward Phelan, Rondeau acquired land in what was to become the Rondo neighborhood (Hoffman 1927:45; Kunz 1977:9; Empson 2006:167).

At the turn of the century, there was a lower middle class Jewish neighborhood centered on Rondo Avenue consisting of predominantly single family dwellings (Taylor 2002:33). The Jewish community was not as resistant to the inclusion of Black residents as other white communities, and as a result Blacks were able to purchase housing in these areas in the early twentieth century as they began to leave the downtown commercial district. The movement of Blacks from the commercial district increased following World War I, and a growing African American neighborhood formed along Rondo Avenue and the adjacent avenues between Rice and Dale Streets. In time, "Upper Rondo," the section west of Dale Street, became known as "Oatmeal Hill" in reference to more affluent residents, while "Lower Rondo," east of Dale, became known as "Cornmeal Valley," referring to the greater degree of poverty among the residents in that section (Taylor 2002:32; Empson 2006:61).

By 1920, the majority of African Americans lived along and around the Rondo Avenue commercial thoroughfare, and by 1940, "nearly 90% of Saint Paul's Black population lived in the general area of low-cost housing stretching from the Rondo area east to the Capitol environment" (Figure 11) (Martin and Goddard 1989:31). By 1930, almost half the population of the enumeration district<sup>7</sup> in which Rondo was located was Black (Schmid 1937:177). One of the factors that resulted in the strong concentration of African Americans in these areas was the severe housing shortage they faced in the years following World War I. This shortage of housing for Blacks was mainly the result of restrictive housing covenants, which prohibited the sale of housing to African Americans in many areas (Taylor 2002:32), as well as restricted economic opportunity. The situation was exacerbated by competition from returning World War

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<sup>7</sup> A geographic area representing a specific part of a city or county assigned for the purposes of census taking.

I veterans, as well as from a mass migration of African Americans from the South to urban cities such as Saint Paul between 1915 and 1920 in search of employment opportunities (Taylor 1977).



Figure 11. Rondo Avenue at Arundel Street, Rondo neighborhood c. 1940 (MNHS 1940a)

### **3.2.1.1.1 Housing Discrimination**

The harmful effects of restrictive housing covenants were brought to the wider public's attention in 1924, when William T. Francis, a successful lawyer who had served as presidential elector of the Republican Party in 1920, and his wife, Nellie Griswold Francis, a civil rights activist and suffragist, purchased a home at 2092 Sargent Avenue, in the Macalester-Groveland neighborhood (Figures 12 and 13) (Donofrio 2016; Griffin 1978:4). Their move into this white neighborhood was met with destruction and threats of violence, including two separate cross-burning incidents at their home. Unable to rely on the protection of local authorities, the Francises were forced to hire private security for their protection (Donofrio 2016). The Francises remained at the home until 1927, when William was appointed consul general to Liberia, where they relocated (Brown 2016). The harassment the Francises endured from white community members coincided with a resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan in Minnesota (Hatle 2013). The growing violence and racism against African Americans in Minnesota gained widespread attention with the horrific public lynching in Duluth in 1920 of three of a total of six Black circus workers who had been accused of assaulting a white woman. This incident galvanized civil rights activists in both the African American and white communities. The NAACP and a number of prominent Black professionals in northern Minnesota and the Twin Cities became involved in the investigation of the incident and the defense of the surviving three circus workers. Nellie Griswold Francis drafted anti-lynching legislation that following February, which passed into law two months later (Stolle 2010; Taylor 2002:62; Brown 2016). The life of Nellie Francis Griswold is discussed further in Section 3.2.3.3.



Figure 12. William T. Francis (MNHS 1940b)



Figure 13. Nellie Griswold Francis (Taylor 2002:83)

The incidences at the Francises' home occurred almost a decade before a better known case of housing discrimination in Minneapolis, when World War I veteran Arthur A. Lee and his wife, Edith Lee, moved into a home at 4600 Columbus Avenue South in Minneapolis in 1931, only to be threatened and harassed by a mob of 4,000 whites that rioted outside. Lena O. Smith, a prominent Minneapolis-based African American lawyer, represented the Lees, and they remained in their home until fall 1933, when they relocated to a different residence in Minneapolis. The Lees' home on Columbus Avenue was listed in the NRHP in 2014 (Fritz and Donofrio 2014). These are only two of the better-documented instances of racism that flared up in response to African American's attempts to purchase homes in white neighborhoods in the Twin Cities during the first half of the twentieth century.

In the 1930s, the government-sponsored Home Owner's Loan Corporation and social research studies produced maps of American communities which ranked blocks or areas by socioeconomic and racial characteristics, using labels such as "Best," "Still Desirable," "Definitely Declining," "Hazardous," and "Slum" (Figure 14) (Schmid 1937; Nelson et al. 2017). The sections labeled "Hazardous" and "Slum" often corresponded to areas where African Americans lived; on the Home Owner's Loan Corporation map, these areas were shaded red and spurned by financiers for the presence of "inharmonious" racial groups (Badger 2015). This practice, commonly called redlining, cut off these "Hazardous" sections from funding from private banks, which made it extremely difficult, and in many cases impossible, for African American residents to acquire home mortgages, leverage home equity, and build wealth at the same scale as white homeowners (Badger 2015). Throughout the twentieth century, Blacks were discriminated against in accessing social and economic services that would help them find affordable housing, and were often denied placements when affordable housing units did become available. Civic organizations, religious institutions, and local businesses often stepped in to fill this role, serving as clearinghouses for job and housing referrals. Barbershop and beauty salon proprietors were often particularly well connected



through their interactions with patrons, and therefore frequently served as important communication centers within the community (Taylor 2002:35).

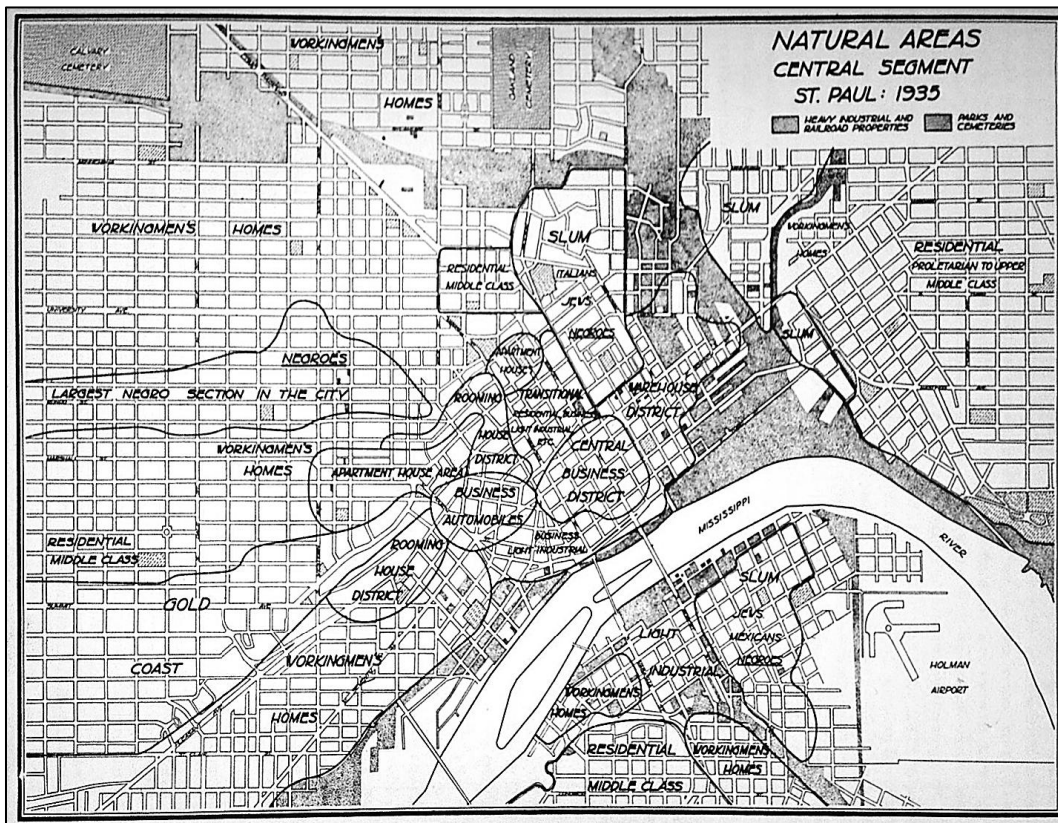


Figure 14. Map of Saint Paul Reflecting Redlining Trends (Schmid 1937:180)

### 3.2.1.1.2 I-94 and the Destruction of Rondo

In the 1940s and 1950s, government sponsored urban renewal acts led to the displacement of disenfranchised communities across Saint Paul, and many of the displaced African Americans settled in Rondo. By this time, Rondo was a thriving community that housed the majority of Saint Paul's Black community as well as whites and other minorities. Deborah "Debbie" Gilbreath Montgomery, the first female Saint Paul police officer to complete the same training as male officers, and the first black woman to serve as a Saint Paul police officer, grew up in Rondo at 978 St. Anthony Avenue (Debbie Gilbreath Montgomery is discussed further in Section 3.2.2.7.2). She described the Rondo neighborhood as "a strong village environment, and everybody looked out for each other's family. If you needed something, you could holler across the street ... everybody kind of shared, Whites and Blacks together. It was a really close-knit community. It was a really loving community. People cared about you. They were concerned about your success" (Cavett 2005:260). This is a sentiment echoed in many of the other oral histories of Rondo residents published in *Voices of Rondo* (Cavett 2005). Taylor, who grew up in Rondo, notes, "My

recollection of the black community of my youth is of a self-contained, tightly knit, and socially stratified neighborhood of families, close friends of our family, fictive relatives<sup>8</sup>, and others” (Taylor 1993:20).

In 1956, a route for the I-94 freeway was selected that ran directly through the heart of the Rondo neighborhood. Despite protests from the community, the freeway was constructed, destroying hundreds of their homes, businesses and institutions. Of those forcibly displaced, over 75 percent were Black, totaling approximately 600 African American families (Martin and Goddard 1989:31; McClure 2016). When Reverend Floyd Massey, minister at the Pilgrim Baptist Church, learned of the I-94 project to be built through Rondo, he led an effort to form the Rondo-St. Anthony Improvement Association so that local citizens would have a voice regarding the project. Local barber Timothy Howards served as the association’s president (Cavanaugh 2008:93). Rev. Massey and Howard also successfully lobbied local and state officials to end Saint Paul’s restrictive real estate covenants (CultureBrokers Foundation, Inc. 2010).

Although the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) offered relocation services to displaced community members, redlining, racial discrimination, as well as a desire to remain near friends, family, and what was left of the community prompted many to remain in the area, just south and west of where Rondo had been. Wide scale movement of whites to the suburbs during this time opened up additional housing in the Summit-University neighborhood, facilitating Black families’ desire to remain near the heart of their community (Martin and Goddard 1989:31). The destruction of the Rondo neighborhood was devastating both emotionally and economically to the community. Residents reported feeling devalued and expendable. Local African American businesses that had become established over decades were forced to close, people no longer had easy access to daily needs, and friends and neighbors were separated from one another. The economic disparities that resulted from the devastation had repercussions far beyond the immediate destruction of the neighborhood. An additional emotional injury came with the renaming of what remained of Rondo Avenue to Concordia Avenue, after the nearby university.

One former resident of Rondo, when asked how he felt when the freeway was built, explained that people were afraid of “the loss of their homes and the connection they had with neighbors. It destroyed what was ... bringing black people to a point of ownership and feeling good about themselves. The debris, the cranes, the trucks, the dirt, the dust, everything—it was like a war zone ... it was slowly watching your roots being swallowed up by giant machinery, knowing that there was a possibility it’d never be again” (quoted in Eller-Isaacs et al. 2002). Another former resident of Rondo, Saint Paul Police Chief William Finney,<sup>9</sup> noted “You can always tell what kind of neighborhood a freeway has been cut through. When the road is straight, it [went] through a poor neighborhood” (quoted in Eller-Isaacs et al. 2002).

Despite the physical destruction of the Rondo neighborhood in the mid-1950s, the Rondo community itself has proven resilient and enduring. Members of the community have established organizations, such

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<sup>8</sup> “The concept of fictive relatives was used in the black community to incorporate very close friends into an extended family network. Adults were called uncle, aunt, or cousin, even though they weren’t blood relatives. Children used these terms as titles of respect” (Taylor 1993:20).

<sup>9</sup> Finney’s mother, Lola Vassar Finney, owned a popular beauty salon in the Rondo neighborhood.

as Rondo Avenue, Inc., dedicated to both preserving and commemorating Rondo's past, and embracing a diverse, community-oriented future for the new neighborhoods that have formed in the Rondo area. Likewise, the community has maintained a strong, vibrant, and visible presence through events such as Rondo Days, which has been held annually since its founding by Dr. Marvin Roger Anderson and Floyd G. Smaller, Jr. in 1983 (Figure 15). Dr. Marvin Roger Anderson was born and raised in Saint Paul. He attended Central High School, earned a bachelor's degree from Morehouse College, a Juris Doctor from Hastings College of the Law, and a master's degree in library science from the University of Minnesota. He worked at the University of Minnesota Law School until his appointment by the Minnesota Supreme Court as State Law Librarian in 1980 until his retirement in 2002. Smaller grew up both in Rondo and in the South. After attending a traditional black college in Arkansas, he returned home to Saint Paul, where he became a teacher and coach, as well as commander of the Elks Gopher Lodge No. 105 Drum and Bugle Corps (Cavett 2004b). Anderson and Smaller formed Rondo Avenue, Inc., to plan the first Rondo Days festival in order to claim the title of "St. Paul's best neighborhood" (Carol Carey, Historic Saint Paul, email communication with the author, February 22, 2017). The history and values of Rondo continue to be preserved through efforts such as that of Anderson and Smaller, Rondo Avenue Inc., ASANDC, CultureBrokers LLC, and Kate Cavett's extensive oral history documentation with Rondo residents, the latter which has been made available through the Voices of Rondo book and the Rondo Oral History Project on the MNHS website. In addition, Rondo's history and values are celebrated in books, educational projects, community programs such as history tours, and exhibits, including a 2016 exhibit at MNHS and the proposed Rondo Commemorative Plaza.



Figure 15. The Half Pintz Drill Team performing at Rondo Days (Garvin 2009)

### **3.2.2 EMPLOYMENT**

Due to consistent racial discrimination and lack of access to equal education and opportunities, most African Americans in Saint Paul in the early twentieth century continued to be restricted to employment in service positions, including waiters, cooks, janitors, porters, and servants. Some members of the community owned their own shops and businesses, such as barbershops, real estate companies, beauty parlors, and funeral homes, while a smaller number found employment as educators, activists, architects, and lawyers (Murphy and Murphy-Gnatz 2000; Zahn 1990).

#### **3.2.2.1 1900 to World War I**

Throughout the twentieth century, African Americans in Saint Paul were subject to the push and pull of the employment market, intensified by discriminatory hiring practices and restricted access to employment information, training, and opportunities. During both World Wars, labor shortages resulted in more employment opportunities for African Americans. When immigration from Europe fell during World War I, Blacks from the South were recruited to move to urban centers in the North, including Saint Paul, to fill the labor shortages. During this time, Saint Paul's Black population did not grow as much proportionally as in other urban centers, due to the relatively small number of job openings compared to places such as Minneapolis and Detroit. Between 1910 and 1920, Minneapolis' African American community eclipsed that of Saint Paul, growing from 2,592 to 3,927, while Saint Paul's only grew from 3,144 to 3,376 (Taylor 2002:30). However, a 1924 Saint Paul Urban League Study found that 75 percent of Blacks in Saint Paul had arrived between 1920 and 1923 (Sluss 1990b).

Most of the new arrivals found work consistent with jobs held by the majority of Saint Paul's African American community—on the railroads, in meat-packing plants, or in service industries. The arrival of migrants from the South put a strain on the limited resources within the established African American community in Saint Paul, generating some tensions (Taylor 2002:31). Despite the fact that African Americans had a high service rate in World War I, Black veterans also had a difficult time finding employment (Griffin 1978:2). The arrival of the new migrants from the South also exacerbated tensions with the white community. In 1919, the Armour and Co. meatpacking plant opened in South Saint Paul, just five miles from downtown Saint Paul, and was described as the “largest meatpacking plant in the history of the world” (*Pioneer Press* 2009a). During one of the largest strikes in the plant's history, African American workers were brought in as strike breakers, reinforcing the white community's fears that Blacks were a threat to their jobs (Griffin 1978:2). In 1922, a Saint Paul branch of the National Negro Business League (which was founded nationally in 1900 by Booker T. Washington) was established to promote African American businesses locally (*The Appeal*, September 23, 1922).

#### **3.2.2.2 Great Depression**

As it did nationwide, the Great Depression brought difficult times for the African American community of Saint Paul. There were layoffs by the railroad lines, resulting in job losses among sleeping car porters, railway porters, and other employees within the rail industry (Taylor 2002:39; Murphy 1993:13), as well as layoffs in other industries and service positions. Even so, historian Arthur McWatt noted that “while the stock market crash and Great Depression resulted in some layoffs, the Pullman porters, waiters, and station redcaps were among the most economically secure groups in the Black community during the depression years” (McWatt 1997:211). The Depression also exacerbated wage gaps between whites and



Blacks (Taylor 2002:39). Even in the midst of job shortages, 58.1 percent of African Americans age 10 or older were “gainfully employed” in the 1930s—higher than the 51.6 percent employment rate for whites (Schmid 1937). The vast majority of African Americans were employed in domestic and personal service positions—60.2 percent of men and 79.7 percent of women. Men worked as porters, janitors, waiters, and barbers, while the most common positions for women were matrons,<sup>10</sup> maids, nannies, cooks, and housekeepers. Jobs outside of the domestic and personal service industries for African Americans included laborers in manufacturing industries and street and railroad construction work; Calvin F. Schmid reports that a “relatively small percentage” held clerical or professional positions (Schmid 1937:176).

Despite higher employment rates than whites in the years immediately following the Great Depression, it was reported at a 1938 Saint Paul Urban League meeting that “approximately 69 percent of the city’s Blacks were either on direct relief or participating in such federal assistance programs as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) or the Works Progress Administration (WPA)” (Taylor 2002:40). These New Deal programs were largely racially segregated (Lumpkins 2008:179; Rippelmeyer 2015:98-99). In addition to employing men in public works projects, the WPA held classes locally to teach skills such as printing and sewing, while the CCC opened camps in rural areas, and employed unmarried men in natural resources work. There was an African American camp just south of Saint Paul in Mendota, named Mendota Work Camp No. 1. It had a population of 171 men, whose average age was 40 years old. The men quarried sandstone for building projects, and worked on road and structure construction. The camp, which opened in 1935, had a baseball team in the summer that played against other local teams. The camp was closed in 1941, and the buildings were razed (Withrow 2003). Throughout the 1930s, employment opportunities remained very limited for young Black women, who were typically restricted to positions as matrons, domestic servants, elevator operators, or lounge attendants. For a few, prostitution became a last resort (Murphy 1993:14).

African American participation in federal relief programs was complicated by widespread discrimination in how the programs were administered (Taylor 2002:40). Therefore, African Americans continued to rely on their own community resources, such as the housing and employment referral services offered by Black churches, clubs, civic organizations, and local businesses (Taylor 2002:35). Even though access to white collar employment for African Americans in Saint Paul was restricted, the community maintained an extraordinarily high literacy rate. In 1930, the literacy rate among Saint Paul’s Blacks was 98.8 percent, compared to a nationwide rate of 83.7 percent (Schmid 1937:176).

### **3.2.2.3 World War II**

World War II “virtually eliminated” unemployment, resulting in the end of the New Deal programs (Withrow 2003). Suddenly, a large percentage of both men and women were mobilized to support war efforts, whether by enlisting or being drafted (in the case of men) into the military, or by staffing a variety of industrial and manufacturing jobs. As in World War I, widespread discrimination in the military resulted in inferior conditions for African Americans, who received subpar housing and rations (Stuart 2016). African American women were not allowed to join the Women’s Army Corps (WAC) until 1941,

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<sup>10</sup> In this usage, a matron was a woman employed to manage domestic or housekeeping arrangements at a business or institution.

or the Navy until 1945 (National World War II Museum 2012). Throughout the War, African Americans served in segregated units; it was not until 1948 that the military began to integrate. Many African American units, such as the Tuskegee Airman, the 761st Tank Battalion, and the 452nd Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion became highly distinguished for their service (Lee 1966; Taylor 2016). In addition to their roles in the military, Saint Paul's African Americans also found work in defense plants. In particular, the Twin City Ordnance Plant of the Federal Cartridge Corporation in New Brighton, Minnesota, employed over 1,000 Blacks from the Twin Cities (Taylor 2002:49). Other plants, however, were less willing to hire African American workers. Despite President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Executive Order 8802, which forbid discrimination by all defense employers and trade unions and set up the Commission on Fair Employment Practices (McWatt 1997:214), unfair hiring practices continued.

One industry that was unmoving in the refusal to hire Black workers through the 1940s was the brewing industry. In response, Cecil Newman, African American founder and editor of *The Minneapolis Spokesman* and *The St. Paul Recorder*, initiated a one-year consumer boycott of major breweries Hamm, Schmidt, Grain Belt, and Gluek, but it was not until after World War II that these breweries began to hire Black workers (Taylor 2002:48). Similarly, department stores refused to hire Black workers, "except as porters, matrons, elevator operators, or stock clerks, until 1948, when eight large stores in the Twin Cities took on a total of 14 Black salespeople" (Taylor 2002:48). It was not until 1955 that the first fair employment practices legislation was passed at the state level (Taylor 2002:49). For some, the Federal Relief programs and positions held during war time provided an opportunity to acquire skills and education that would lead to better employment opportunities in the future (Murphy 1993).

#### **3.2.2.4 Railroads and the Union Depot**

While at least 12 railroads had track in Saint Paul by the early twentieth century, three major railroads were predominant—the Great Northern, the Northern Pacific, and the Chicago, Saint Paul, Minneapolis, and Omaha (Omaha Line) (Zellie and Peterson 2001:2-3). With the opening of the first Union Depot in 1881, and its replacement by the current Depot in 1923, Saint Paul became a central hub for the railroad industry (Diers 2013). The railroad lines employed large numbers of African American men as cooks, porters, and waiters at the station and on the cars, while women were employed as matrons and maids. Dining car cooks frequently worked as cooks in other capacities when not traveling with the railroad, catering galas, and preparing meals for church, community, and union events (Marvin Anderson, personal communication, March 9, 2017).

##### **3.2.2.4.1 *Pullman Porters***

In the 1860s, industrialist George Mortimer Pullman designed the Pullman railroad sleeping car, a new version of sleeper cars intended to provide passengers an experience of comfort and luxury in comparison to the previous sleeper cars, which were spare and uncomfortable (Tye 2011). Seeing a ready labor source in recently emancipated slaves, following the Civil War, Pullman hired large numbers of former slaves, in particular those who had worked as house servants, to staff the Pullman cars. He also featured the Black porters heavily in his advertisements, reinforcing the view of African Americans as servants of whites. Historian Arthur C. McWatt notes that "All were ordered to answer to the name "George," a custom from slavery days when slaves were called by their master's name" (McWatt 1997:205).

In time, Pullman became the single largest employer of African Americans in the country, and other competitors followed his lead, staffing African Americans as porters, waiters, and cooks on railroad lines (Tye 2011). While Pullman Porters were subject to mistreatment, overwork, and unfair wages, the position itself carried prestige within the African American community. It offered an opportunity to earn a steady income, travel, and for the most part did not include heavy physical labor (WWCI 2016). Even so, Pullman Porters “were expected to work 400 hours a month or travel 11,000 miles with almost no provisions for periods of rest”—they were granted only three hours of sleep during their first night of travel and none for the remaining travel days—and the majority of their income came from tips (McWatt 1997:205). One former Pullman Porter, Clarence Duke, recounted to McWatt that in his early years as a porter, “porters were still held responsible for all items lost on their cars ... the Pullman company deducted money from his wages to pay for combs, brushes, and towels that were lost or stolen” (McWatt 1997:213).

#### **3.2.2.4.2 Red Caps**

Another position that African Americans frequently held in the railroad industry was that of railway station porters. Because of the outfits they wore, they came to be known as Red Caps (Figure 16). Both sleeping car porters and Red Caps were often highly educated. A 1938 article in *Ken* magazine about Red Caps was titled “Ph.D. Carries Your Bags” and reported that “among Red Caps, one of three has had college training ... M.A.’s are common; men studying for doctors’ degrees are no rarity” (Ken 1938). A number of African American men who went on to become professionals and community leaders first worked as porters, including early African American Minnesota-based lawyer Charles Scrutchin, who worked as a Pullman Porter in Saint Paul before earning both a law degree and a master’s degree, and establishing a successful criminal defense practice in Bemidji, Minnesota. In 2013, a room at the Saint Paul Union Depot was dedicated to the Red Caps, and an exhibit on the Red Caps’ history was installed at the Depot in recognition of their significant role (Volante 2015a). A 2013 article on the Red Caps exhibit included interviews with descendants of Red Caps, who expressed pride in their fathers for their strong commitment to supporting their families on low wages, as well as the pride they took in their work. James Melvin Young, Sr., one of the last two surviving Red Caps, traveled from Arizona at the age of 87 to attend the event, explaining, “My wife and children are really proud of me, and they really wanted me to be here ... There were not many jobs for a black man in those days. You couldn’t even drive a cab” (quoted in Lee 2013). This is reinforced by Nieeta Presley, also quoted in the article, who said, “These jobs were why my family moved from the South to St. Paul ... One of the only jobs they could get was a Red Cap, and it might not seem like much to many people. But to my family it meant the kids could go to college and buy homes” (quoted in Lee 2013). Marvin Roger Anderson explained how the Red Caps did not let “discrimination .... get in their way. They took what they had and brushed aside all the obstacles in their way ... They had a positive response to adversity” (quoted in Lee 2013).



Figure 16. Red Caps at Union Depot (Wright 1952)

### 3.2.2.5 Labor Unions

Historically, labor unions in the U.S. have excluded Black members (Delton 2009). Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, African Americans continued to be turned away from white unions, and at times were even forced to side against the white unions which prevented them from being hired (Kurzman and Maiden 2010:125). In its early days, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) enforced a policy of racial integration among its charter unions, but by 1895 this was no longer the case, and it refused to charter African American unions until 1900 (McWatt 1997:206). However, although discrimination was prevalent within unions, not all unions excluded African American members. Charles E. James, an African American resident of Saint Paul in the early twentieth century, was a national leader of the Boot and Shoe Workers Union, an affiliate of the AFL, at the time he was elected to the first of three terms as president of the Saint Paul Trades and Labor Assembly in 1902 (Hoover 2009). Another early African American union member in Saint Paul was stone mason and bricklayer Casville Bullard, discussed further in Section 3.2.2.6.4, who was a member of the Bricklayers Benevolent Union No. 1 of Saint Paul Minnesota for several years, including 1906 and 1908. Due to an absence of records, it is not known if he was a member of a union during his work on the Minnesota State Capitol, which was constructed from 1896-1905 (Labor Education Service 2015). In addition, while the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Union (HERE), founded in 1891, included African American members from the beginning, they were few in number until the first quarter of the twentieth century (Cassius 1982:53). The following section focuses predominantly on the formation of the Brotherhood of the Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) union, which, following its establishment as the first Black-led union to gain recognition from the AFL, went on to “serve as a role model for black unions throughout the nation” (McWatt 1997:213).

### **3.2.2.5.1 Brotherhood of the Sleeping Car Porters and Frank L. Boyd**

Even though some unions did allow African American members in the early twentieth century, Blacks were excluded by unions in the industry that employed the largest number of workers—the railroad. Beginning in the early 1900s, African American railway workers made repeated attempts to unionize, but discrimination from the AFL, attempts by companies in the railroad industry to quash the early Black unions, and lack of access to resources to organize prevented early successes. One of the first attempts to gain traction occurred in 1918, when the Railway Men’s International Benevolent Industrial Association was organized by porters from the Chicago, Milwaukee, and Saint Paul Railway. Despite its intention to represent all categories of railway workers, it did not prove successful, and Saint Paul-based porter and labor organizer Frank Boyd, who was an active member, described it as “a capital idea poorly sponsored” (McWatt 1997:206). Boyd and other porters in railroad hubs in the Midwest and East initially attempted to obtain AFL recognition. When that proved unsuccessful, they enlisted the help of organizers A. Philip Randolph and Milton P. Webster to organize the BSCP in Harlem in 1925. The BSCP was an independent union of sleeping car porters and maids who were employed by the Pullman Company. The leaders of the BSCP were determined to advance the cause of their members by gaining recognition for the union within the nationwide organized labor movement. In 1934, it became the first labor union led by African Americans to be chartered by the AFL (McWatt 1997: 206, 212). With the obtainment of collective bargaining rights by the BSCP a year later, porters received over \$1 million in backpayment. In 1935, the BSCP was certified by the federal National Mediation Board (NMB) (Taylor 2002:43).

Frank L. Boyd, who went on to establish the local branch of the BSCP in Saint Paul, was born in Kansas in 1881 (Figure 17). He relocated to Saint Paul in 1904 and, after being hired as a Pullman Porter, became active in attempts to organize. Boyd participated in a 1912 petition circulated among Pullman Porters nationwide calling to double their monthly wages from \$25 to \$50, and to raise them to \$60 after two years on the job. The Pullman Company only raised the wages by \$2.50 per month, and Boyd came under scrutiny for his efforts (McWatt 1997). Boyd, who was also a board member of the Saint Paul NAACP and Urban League, was named one of the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party’s (DFL) 11 presidential electors in 1944; Boyd was the first African American in Minnesota to be an elector for the DFL and one of the first two presidential electors for the DFL nationwide (McWatt 1997:216). In 1976, Boyd Park at Selby Avenue and Virginia Street was dedicated in Boyd’s name by local African American citizens led by Reginald Harris, a former member of Firefighters Local #21 (McWatt 1997:216). Another early organizer of the Pullman Porters was Nat Evans, who resided at 387 North St. Albans Street at Central Avenue in the late 1920s (Zahn 1990:11).



Figure 17. Frank L. Boyd (Buzz Brown Photographic Studios 1951)

The BSCP's efforts were supported by the work of women in the African American community, including activists Della Roberts, Caroline (Carrie) B. McWatt, and Allie Mae Hampton, who, as part of the Colored Women's Economic Councils (Councils) raised money, ran meetings while the porters were traveling for work, and hosted events (McWatt 1997:204). The first meeting of the Councils in Saint Paul was held in 1926 at the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) at 508 West Central Avenue. Della Roberts was elected president of the Councils, an appointment that was made official by A. Phillip Randolph (McWatt 1997:210). In addition, the Councils' work was not limited to supporting the BSCP's efforts. They also fought for eight-hour work days for women, protection for child laborers, workmen's compensation, aid to the poor, and quality affordable housing (McWatt 1997). In 1938, the Councils officially became the BSCP International Ladies Auxiliaries (ILA). They continued to be active not only in supporting the BSCP but also by initiating social programs and organizing leadership training, for which they offered women scholarships to attend (McWatt 1997:210)

The slow-to-integrate unionization movement, powered by large numbers of diverse laborers concentrated within metropolitan areas, heralded a new era. In 1934, the racially and ethnically diverse Minneapolis Teamsters went on strike in the Warehouse District, receiving support from the Hotel and Restaurant Employees International Union. The Teamsters in turn expressed their commitment to the Hotel and Restaurant Employees International Union, declaring "No non-union cook, waiter, or bartender would be found working in Minneapolis" (Mielke 2016). Despite the fact that two of the striking teamsters were fatally shot by police, the Teamsters eventually won the strike and, in solidarity with other massive labor strikes in 1934, initiated the rise of industrial unionism (Teamsters 2016).

#### **3.2.2.5.2 Local 516 of the Dining Car Employees Union**

By the late 1930s, the unionization movement had become a focus in the struggle for racial equality. In 1938, Maceo Littlejohn, Hector Vassar, and Maceo Finney organized Local 516 of the Dining Car Employees Union, which was chartered by HERE and the Bartenders International Union (Delton 2002a:427; Delton 2002b:72). Littlejohn, a waiter on the Northern Pacific, served as general chairman to

the Local 516 from 1940 to 1947, followed by Robert Patterson, who served as general chairman for approximately 15 years (Cassius 1982:54; Gardner 1988:13). By 1958, the Local 516 was headquartered at 327 Fisk Street; the building was demolished in September 2013 (*Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder* 2013). Efforts to organize laborers and secure basic civil rights intensified with the return of African American soldiers from World War II, who faced discrimination and lack of access to vital resources (Taylor 2002).

### **3.2.2.6 Entrepreneurs and Business Leaders**

At the time of the Rondo neighborhood's destruction in the mid-1950s, there were over 60 African American institutions, schools, churches, and businesses in the community (CultureBrokers Foundation, Inc. 2010).

#### **3.2.2.6.1 *Medical Supplies and Services***

One of these was La Fayette Fields' Majestic Drug Store at 620 Rondo Avenue, which ASANDC describes as "an institution" in Saint Paul from the 1940s until Fields' death in 1986. Born in Arkansas in 1896, Fields was the first Black pharmacist to graduate from the University of Minnesota, and for many years was the only Black pharmacist in Saint Paul to own his own store. He resided at 803 Saint Anthony Avenue with his wife, Johnnie Mae (US World War II Draft Registration Card 1855; ASANDC 2015a). Another long-standing medical member of the community was Dr. James W. Crump, who practiced family medicine in Saint Paul for over 40 years. Crump, who was born in Mississippi to George Washington Crump and Sarah Jane Crayton or Creighton, married Hazel Bonzetta (maiden name unknown), resided at 639 Fuller Avenue, and practiced at 6 West Fourth Street, 319 Wabasha Street, and 138 East Sixth Street (U.S. World War II Draft Registration Card 2672 1942; Minnesota Death Index 1969 Record #1758931; R.L. Polk & Co. 1929; U.S. Census Bureau 1930; R.L. Polk & Co. 1933). In addition to being a family physician, Dr. Crump was a community leader of social causes (ASANDC 2015a).

#### **3.2.2.6.2 *Local Lending Institutions***

Jim Williams' Tavern at 560 Saint Anthony Avenue, the first African American-owned restaurant in Saint Paul to hold a liquor license, is an example of how African American businesses served the community in different ways (Anderson 2016). Williams' Tavern served as a lender to a local family, enabling them to put a down payment on a home (Nieeta Presley, communication at Context Study meeting, October 28, 2016). The Tavern was demolished in 1960 (Anderson 2016). The community's ability to provide opportunities for financial growth was key during an era when African Americans were commonly denied loans at white-owned banks through discriminatory systems such as redlining. In 1949, when Minneapolis-based African American businessman Anthony Cassius attempted to secure a loan to start a restaurant from the Midland National Bank in Minneapolis, he experienced a refusal accompanied by laughter. Although Cassius managed to convince the bank president to approve the loan by explaining that he was a union leader, the bank "considered black borrowers to be a poor risk and normally refused them loans," suggesting that this was far from an isolated incident in the Twin Cities (Delton 2002a:419).

To serve the African American community of Rondo, the Credjafawn Social Club (1928-1980), discussed further in Section 3.2.4, organized a credit union during World War II to provide loans to members and purchase war bonds to support the war effort. Following the war, Credjafawn opened a food co-op at 678 Rondo Avenue, which was open until the mid-1950s (Figure 18) (Mississippi Market 2015). Zahn notes in *Black Minnesotans Final Survey Report and Recommendations*, “a second black-owned credit union was established in the 1950s in St. Paul ... for the 516 union. It was organized by Mr. Royal Gooden” (Zahn 1990:13). The credit union was initially located at 525 Rondo Avenue, then at 820 Rondo Avenue, and finally at 344 Milton Street. It closed circa 1965, when it was sold to a credit union located on University Avenue (Zahn 1990:13).



Figure 18. Credjafawn Co-op Store (MNHS 1950)

### 3.2.2.6.3 Tiger Jack's Shack

A well-known local business was Jack “Tiger Jack” Rosenbloom’s Tiger Jack’s Shack, at 369 North Dale Street (Figure 19). Rosenbloom, a former amateur boxer, sold a variety of items, including firewood, candy, and chips, for decades from his 8-foot by 10-foot store, which was moved to that address in 1969. A 1999 *City Pages* article reported that Rosenbloom, age 92, still had no plans to retire (*City Pages* 1999). In 2001, the segment of Dale Street between St. Anthony Street and Central Avenue was renamed “Mr. and Mrs. Tiger Jack Street”; currently, an interpretive kiosk with biographical information on Rosenbloom and his wife, Nurceal, is located at the corner where his store once stood (ASANDC 2015b). The store itself was donated to the Minnesota Historical Society, along with some of its inventory, in 2002 (*Pioneer Press* 2009b).



Figure 19. Tiger Jack's Shack (MNHS 1949)



#### **3.2.2.6.4 Casiville Bullard**

Casiville Bullard, a stone mason, was born in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1873. As a child Bullard worked in the cotton fields with his parents. His father was enslaved, a topic that Bullard was reluctant to discuss with his own children (Weber 2004:63). Bullard acquired skills in masonry and bricklaying from a brother-in-law to help support his family. He arrived in Saint Paul in 1898 to assist in the construction of the third State Capitol building in Saint Paul, which had been designed by architect Cass Gilbert. A number of other African Americans worked on the construction of the State Capitol, including Judge Jarrett, John H. McMurtry, Benjamin Stephens, Isaac Suddeth, Oscar Suddeth, Coy Johnson, Ernest Jones, and Henry Taggert (Labor Education Service 2015). African American Mary E. Taggert was hired to work as a building attendant at the Capitol once it was completed, and later found work as a nurse (Labor Education Service 2015). At first, Bullard worked in Saint Paul seasonally, but in 1902 he and his wife, Addison, settled in the city permanently. Bullard constructed two successive homes for the family at 1282 Folsom Street. The first house was a temporary wooden structure, in which his family resided while he completed construction of a brick home on the property; the brick home was listed in the NRHP in 1996 (Huber 2015; Granger and Grossman 1996). Over the course of his career, Bullard worked on a number of significant buildings, including the Federal Courts Building (the present-day Landmark Center), the Governor's Residence, the Saint Paul Union Depot, the Cathedral of Saint Paul, and the Highland Park Water Tower (Huber 2015), which was designed by Saint Paul-based African American architect Clarence Wigington (discussed further below).

#### **3.2.2.6.5 Clarence "Cap" Wesley Wigington**

The first African American municipal architect in the U.S. was Clarence "Cap" Wigington, who worked as lead architect for the City of Saint Paul on over 90 projects (Figure 20) (Nelson 2015). Wigington was born in Kansas in 1883 and grew up in Omaha, Nebraska. During his teen years, he won three first-place certificates in drawing at the Omaha World's Fair of 1899. In 1902, upon graduation from high school, Wigington was hired by an accomplished Omaha architect, Thomas R. Kimball, as a draftsman. In 1914 Wigington moved to Saint Paul. Three years later, he was hired as a senior draftsman in the newly created Saint Paul City Architect's office after earning the highest score on the qualifying exam. Although many of Wigington's designs were constrained both by the tight city budgets during the Great Depression and the utilitarian needs of many of the projects he led, he unleashed his creativity in the design of the Saint Paul Winter Carnival ice palaces in the late 1930s and 1940s, which had been phased out during the previous decade but returned with the establishment of the WPA. Three of Wigington's buildings are listed in the NRHP—the Harriet Island Pavilion (present-day Clarence W. Wigington Pavilion), the Highland Park Water Tower, and the Holman Field administration building—all three buildings are built of Kasota limestone and designed in the Moderne style (Nelson 2015).



Figure 20. Clarence “Cap” Wigington (Nelson 2016)

Wigington was not only an accomplished architect, but also a community leader in Saint Paul’s African American community. In 1917, Wigington gained the nickname “Cap” when he was appointed captain to the new African American battalion of the Minnesota Home Guard—a unit he had successfully petitioned Governor J.A.A. Burnquist to form (Nelson 2015). He lived at 679 St. Anthony Avenue, and was an active member of the Urban League, the Sterling Club, the Elks Lodge, and the St. James Episcopal Church (Murphy 1984).

### **3.2.2.7 Saint Paul Police**

#### **3.2.2.7.1 *James S. Griffin***

In 1941 James S. Griffin, who was born and raised in Rondo, joined the Saint Paul Police Department. Although the department had first hired African Americans beginning in the early 1880s, Griffin became the first Black officer to be promoted to Sergeant (in 1955), Captain (in 1970), and Deputy Chief (in 1972). During his years in the department, Griffin had to fight discrimination. In 1972, he was passed over for a promotion to Deputy Chief despite earning the top exam score. In response, Griffin filed a lawsuit, prompting the city to create another Deputy Chief position to which Griffin was appointed that year. Griffin also served on the Saint Paul school board from 1978 to 1990, the board of directors at the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center, and as a high school and college football and basketball referee at games throughout Minnesota (Griffin and McDonald 2001). Along with his wife, Edna, Griffin established a scholarship in his daughter’s name at Central High School, where he participated in athletics as a student (Griffin and McDonald 2001). In 1988 the sports stadium at Central High School was renamed the James Griffin Stadium, and in 2004, two years after his death, the Saint Paul Police Department’s headquarters were dedicated to Griffin and named the “City of Saint Paul James S. Griffin Police Headquarters.”

### 3.2.2.7.2 *Debbie Gilbreath Montgomery*

Debbie Gilbreath Montgomery, another native of the Rondo neighborhood, became the first woman police officer in Saint Paul who completed the same training as men in 1975 (Figure 21).<sup>11</sup> Prior to this, Montgomery had already forged a path in civil rights and professional success. Montgomery was the president of the Saint Paul NAACP Youth Group in the late 1950s (Debbie Gilbreath Montgomery, personal communication with the author, February 13, 2017). She was the youngest member to serve on the NAACP's National Board of Directors at the age of 17, participated in Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s March on Washington, D.C., in 1963, and took part in a 50-mile march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, in 1965 for voter's rights (Minneapolis Community and Technical College 2014). At the time that Montgomery became a police officer, she was a mother of four with a master's degree working as a city planner in Saint Paul. The NAACP had placed an injunction against the Saint Paul Police Department because it did not have a representative percentage of Black officers in 1971. In 1975, the Equal Employment Opportunity officer for the City, Ron Jones, approached Montgomery and asked her to take the police tests, telling her, "You're the only woman I know that can pass it, and if you can't pass it then I'm going to challenge them to say it's discriminatory against women. We're fighting for African American[s], but they don't have any women officers on patrol either" (Cavett 2008:7). Montgomery agreed, on the condition that she could return to her job as a city planner. However, after becoming the only woman to pass the written and physical exams and agreeing to stay in the job for initially two weeks, and then a month, Montgomery found that she was skilled at the work and saw an opportunity to apply her abilities to better serve the community.



Figure 21. Debbie Gilbreath Montgomery (Cavett 2004a)

Montgomery went on to become the first African American woman to be promoted to Sergeant (1987), Lieutenant (1988), Commander (2000), and Senior Commander (2003). In a 2007 interview with Kate Cavett, Montgomery recalled that the thing she was most proud of in her career with the police department was her work with young people (Cavett 2008:25). She also served on the St. Croix Valley Girl Scout Board of Directors and the International Association of Chiefs of Police Juvenile Justice

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<sup>11</sup> Carolen Fay Bailey was appointed as a policewoman in the Saint Paul police department in 1961. Bailey was promoted to Sergeant in 1971 and Lieutenant in 1985 (Cavett 2008).

Advisory Committee, which proposed programs for our at-risk youth. She currently serves as the Board President of the YWCA of St. Paul. Montgomery was also the first African American woman elected to the Saint Paul City Council, where she focused on issues of economic development, housing, and opportunities for youth and seniors (Debbie Gilbreath Montgomery, personal communication with the author, February 13, 2017).

### 3.2.3 CIVIC AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS

#### 3.2.3.1 Crispus Attucks Home (1906)

In 1906, upon finding that most of the local orphanages would not admit Black children, AME missionaries James William (Will) and Frances (Fannie) King opened a home for African American orphans, the elderly, and ill individuals in Saint Paul. Will King, a clergyman, was born in Illinois in 1861, and Fannie King was born in Missouri in 1858. They were sent from Illinois to Minneapolis in 1898, and to Saint Paul in 1903 by the AME church. Although the Saint Paul AME Mission they established at 741 Mississippi Street only lasted two years, the home they founded for orphans and the elderly in 1906 proved much more enduring. The Kings named the home, on East Acker Street near Oakland Cemetery, the Crispus Attucks Home after an African American patriot who was killed in the Boston Massacre of 1870 (Figure 22) (Nelson 2014). In 1908, the Kings selected a new location for the home on a large lot on Randolph Avenue, which they called “the farm.” At the new location, the children received access to schooling and church services, and learned skills such as farm and domestic chores. To support the home, the Kings formed a board composed of leading members of the Black community, and held fundraisers such as baseball games, charity balls, and card parties. In 1912 and 1914, Will King was convicted of embezzling funds from the home, and left Saint Paul in 1914. The Wilder Foundation provided assistance to the home in King’s absence. The Crispus Attucks Home moved to 469 Collins Street on Railroad Island, where it remained for 50 years until its closure in 1966, at which time the building was razed and the Eileen Wieda Park was built in its place. In 1974, a scholarship for African American high school students was established by former members of the Crispus Attucks Home board, who had reorganized as the Crispus Attucks Social Welfare and Education Association (Nelson 2014; Nelson 1998).



Figure 22. Crispus Attucks Home (*St. Paul Daily News* 1933)

### **3.2.3.2 NAACP (1909), the Twin City Protection League (1912), and the Saint Paul Branch of the NAACP (1912)**

The NAACP was formed in 1909 by a group of national African American and white leaders, including W.E.B. Du Bois, Ida B. Wells, Archibald Grimke, Moorfield Storey, and Mary White Ovington. Its founding was prompted by a 1908 race riot in Springfield, Illinois, and widespread lynchings of African American men. The NAACP's direct precursor was the Niagara Movement, which Fredrick McGhee founded with W.E.B. Du Bois and William Monroe Trotter in 1904. The NAACP's "stated goal was to secure for all people the rights guaranteed in the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution, which promised an end to slavery, the equal protection of the law, and universal adult male suffrage, respectively" (NAACP 2017). The NAACP's national office was established in New York City in 1910, and Du Bois became director of publications and research, establishing the NAACP's official journal, *The Crisis*, that same year (NAACP 2017).

In March 1912, members of Saint Paul's African American community, including Fredrick L. McGhee and Dr. Valdo Turner, established the Twin City Protective League, which was dedicated to "the betterment of the condition of the Afro-Americans of the Twin Cities"; the first meeting was in the Union Block building (*The Appeal*, March 30, 1912). With its founding in 1912, the Twin City Protective League decided to alternate monthly meetings between Saint Paul and Minneapolis, and to become a member of the NAACP. In 1913, its charter was formalized and a Minneapolis branch was also established (Kenney 2016). The Saint Paul chapter was dedicated to McGhee's memory, who had died the previous year (ASANDC 2015a). From its start, the Saint Paul branch of the NAACP played a prominent role in defending and advancing the rights of African Americans. In 1920, the NAACP came to the defense of a group of Black men who were accused of an alleged assault, three of whom were lynched while in jail. A number of African American professionals from Saint Paul were involved in the effort (Kenney 2016).

#### **3.2.3.2.1 Roy Wilkins**

One of the most accomplished and well-known leaders of the NAACP was Roy Wilkins (Figure 23). Wilkins, born in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1901, grew up in Saint Paul and graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1923. After graduating, he worked as a journalist for the *Northwest Bulletin* in Saint Paul and then *The Call* in Kansas City, but was soon recruited to work for the NAACP as editor of *The Crisis*. Wilkins became the Executive Director of the NAACP in 1955, and went on to advocate for key legislation, including the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the 1965 Voting Rights Act, and the 1968 Fair Housing Act. In addition to serving as Director of the NAACP from 1955 to 1977, Wilkins also served as advisor to several U.S. presidents. He was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Lyndon B. Johnson and the NAACP Spingarn Medal for his work with the organization. The Saint Paul Auditorium, which was designed by African American architect Clarence Wigington and constructed in 1907, was renamed in Wilkins' honor in 1984, and in 1995 a monument to Wilkins was dedicated at the State Capitol Mall (MNHS 2016g).

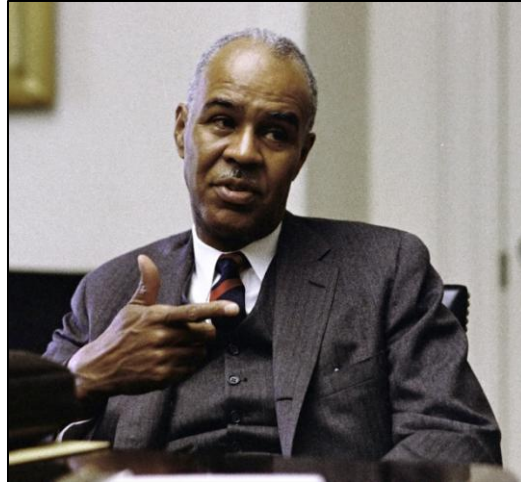


Figure 23. Roy Wilkins (Okamoto 1968)

### **3.2.3.3 Nellie Griswold Francis and the Everywoman Suffrage Club (1914)**

In 1914, Nellie Griswold Francis, wife of William T. Francis, established the Everywoman Suffrage Club in Saint Paul (Figure 13). It was affiliated with the Minnesota Woman Suffrage Association (MWSA), which was founded in 1881. Francis, who moved among the upper echelons of the African American community and had connections with the white community as well, utilized her networks to promote both African American and women's civil rights. Francis was born in Tennessee in 1874 and moved to Saint Paul as a child. She was the only Black member of her 1891 graduating class from Saint Paul High School, and worked as a stenographer before marrying William T. Francis in 1893 (R.L. Polk & Co. 1893). Nellie Francis was also a member of the NAACP, the Urban League, the Woman's Welfare League, which had a largely white membership, and the Schubert Club (a non-profit organization that promotes recital music) (Stuhler 1995:80-81; Schubert Club 2017). After attending a meeting of the Everywoman Suffrage Club, Minneapolis-based suffragist Clara Ueland wrote of Francis, "the leader of the club is a star! Mrs. Frances [sic] is petite ... but her spirit is a flame" (quoted in Stuhler 1995:81). After women won the right to vote with the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920, the Everywoman Suffrage Club was renamed the Everywoman Progression Council and continued its commitment to women's issues with Francis at the helm (Placeography 2016a). Francis also served as president of the Minnesota State Federation of Colored Women and authored the state anti-lynching bill, spurred by the lynching of three Black circus workers in Duluth in 1920 (Taylor 2002:62; Brown 2016). Francis is commemorated at the Minnesota Woman Suffrage Memorial at Cedar Avenue and Martin Luther King Boulevard in Saint Paul.

### **3.2.3.4 Saint Paul Urban League (1923)**

The Saint Paul Urban League (SPUL) was founded in 1923 to improve race relations; monitor discrimination; assist African Americans, other minorities, and the impoverished in obtaining access to social services; and advocate for housing, employment, healthcare, and educational opportunities. The Chamber of Commerce initially objected to the organization's founding, fearing that it would "only encourage further black migration" (Taylor 2002:36). To overcome this objection, Black leaders had to negotiate with the Chamber of Commerce and promise to make an effort to slow Black migration into Saint Paul (Delton 2002:420). To accomplish their mission, the SPUL, which was governed by an



interracial volunteer Board of Directors, drew from diverse disciplines, including economics, social work, public administration, and law (Saint Paul Urban League 2008). During their first year, the SPUL received \$700 from Community Chest and raised \$1,500 in donations from the Black community. The organization formed strong connections with other organizations, including the NAACP, churches, fraternal organizations, YWCA and YMCA, Boy Scouts of America, the Salvation Army, United Charities, the Hammond Vocational School, and the Crispus Attucks Home, as well as the Ramsey County Child Welfare Board and the Ramsey County Mother's Aid Department (Sluss 1990b:8-5). The SPUL's projects included "sponsor[ing] population surveys, race-relations research, and educational services, including job-interview and health-improvement classes" (Delton 2002:420-421). They also defended the rights of African American students at the local colleges and universities, provided case work support to county agencies to ensure Blacks received beneficial services, and forged relationships with area businesses such as St. Paul Sheet Metal, the Ford Plant, the Armour meat-packing plants, and American Radiator Company to advocate for fair hiring quotas for Blacks. As a result of the work of the SPUL and other advocacy organizations, businesses such as St. Paul's Ford Automobile assembly plant began to hire and retain Black employees (Delton 2002:420; Sluss 1990b:8-5, 8-6). By 1925, the SPUL was located at 71 West 7th Street, in the Central Block building (*The Helper* 1925:1). In the 1960s, the SPUL moved to 401 Selby Avenue after occupying a series of offices in downtown Saint Paul (Figure 24).



Figure 24. Saint Paul Urban League (MNHS 1975b)

#### **3.2.3.4.1 S. Edward Hall**

An instrumental founder and leading member of the SPUL was Stephen (S.) Edward Hall. Hall was born in Illinois in 1878 and moved to Saint Paul in 1900 to join his brother Orrington (Orrie) C. Hall. S. Edward Hall initially obtained employment as a barber at African American W.V. Howard's barbershop at 4th Street and Jackson Street in Saint Paul. In 1906, S. Edward and Orrie C. Hall established the Hall Brothers Barbershop in the Pittsburg Building<sup>12</sup> at 12 West Fifth Street in Saint Paul. By 1910, S. Edward Hall had married Harriett Grissom, a musician and piano teacher, and they were living with their two

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<sup>12</sup> The Pittsburgh Building was constructed by Germania Bank in 1890 at the corner of Fifth and Wabasha Streets in downtown Saint Paul. A decade after its construction, Germania Bank liquidated its assets. The building became known as the Ernst Building in 1902, then the Pittsburgh Building in 1907, and in 1934, it was renamed the St. Paul Building. It was listed in the NRHP in 1977 (Mathison 2017; Nelson and Zeik 1977).

daughters, Dorothy and Ermine, at 996 Inglehart Avenue in Saint Paul (U.S. Census Bureau 1910; Guthrey 2014). In 1915, Orrie left the business to become a clerk for the Ramsey County Auditor's office; S. Edward and Orrie's half-brother, Arthur (Art), joined the Hall Brothers business in Orrie's place (R.L. Polk & Co. 1930:606; Sluss 1990b:8-3). In 1947, Hall Brothers moved to the southwest corner of Selby Avenue and Victoria Street (Sluss 1990b:8-3; Placeography 2016b). S. Edward Hall was an active Republican who also helped found the Saint Paul branch of the NAACP and the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center (the latter is discussed further in Section 3.2.3.5).

The Hall Brothers Barbershop was a vital locus of a job service system that grew through a network of barbershops, churches, and other community organizations. Through his work as a barber providing services to a white clientele, S. Edward Hall learned of job openings, and inquired about employment opportunities, on behalf of African Americans. When African Americans arrived at the Union Station in search of work, Red Caps would refer them to Hall's barbershop to find job opportunities. A 1915 advertisement in the St. James A.M.E. Church's weekly bulletin *The Helper* read "DO YOU WANT WORK? See Ed Hall at shop on 4th and Wabasha, Pittsburgh building" (Sluss 1990b:8-4). Though Hall was a member of the Pilgrim Baptist Church, not a member of the A.M.E. Church, he served as Vice President of the A.M.E. Helpers movement (the church's extensive social services outreach program) into the 1920s (Sluss 1990b:8-5). In the July 18, 1925 edition of *The Helper*, Hall is listed as Vice President of the Helpers, Orrie as Secretary, and the Hall Brothers Barbershop was listed as the Helpers' office (*The Helper* 1925:4). Though the founding of the SPUL was intended to provide employment services for Blacks, among other efforts, Hall also continued to provide employment referrals for St. Paul's Black community after the founding of the SPUL. Hall's references led to St. Paul's African American residents obtaining positions with institutions such as the Park Board and the Census Bureau (Sluss 1990b:8-5).

Hall was highly active in the promotion of African American rights and access to resources throughout his life. He was a founding member, Executive Board member, and Chairman of the Membership Committee of the SPUL. He was a member of the Perfect Ashlar Masonic Lodge and helped organize Union Hall as a recreational center for Blacks in 1915. In addition, he was an appointee to the Mayor's Advisory Board in 1922; an appointee to the General Unemployment Council in 1931; a Republican Presidential Elector four times between 1932 and 1948; Director for the Organization of Black Voters in the Ramsey County Republican State Central Committee; a trustee of the Pilgrim Baptist Church, a longtime member of the St. Paul NAACP; Executive Secretary of the Master Barber's Association; a member of the National Negro Business League; and one of the founders, as well as a lifelong member, of the Hallie Q. Brown Center (Sluss 1990b). Hall was a President Emeritus and honorary board member of the SPUL up to his death in 1975.

Hall's elder daughter, Dorothy Hall McFarland, worked as a preschool teacher for over half a century in both Minneapolis and Saint Paul, eventually retiring from Wilder Elementary in Minneapolis (Guthrey 2014). Hall's younger daughter, Ermine Hall Allen, was a celebrated contra-alto and the first African American singer to perform with the St. Paul Civic Opera. During the 1960s, Allen toured throughout the country performing traditional African American spirituals (Parsons 1996). At the age of 106, McFarland



fondly recalled her father's abilities as a storyteller to neighborhood children, as well as his legacy of social activism (Guthrey 2014).

In 1991, S. Edward Hall's home at 996 Iglehart Avenue was listed in the NRHP for its association with Hall, who demonstrated a lifelong commitment to St. Paul's African American community (Figure 25). This included both Hall's outstanding contributions to the community at an individual level, and "as a representation of the broad patterns of social organization within the St. Paul Black community" resulting in the formation of organizations and institutions such as the Helper Movement, Union Hall, the SPUL, and the Hallie Q. Brown Center (Sluss 1990b:8-7). In 2011, the Saint Paul City Council ordered the house razed as a nuisance property after reviews by the HPC and MnHPO failed to identify it as an NRHP-listed property due to a recordkeeping error. It was subsequently removed from the NRHP in 2016 (Sluss 1990b; U.S. Department of the Interior 2016). The loss of one of Saint Paul's very few NRHP-listed properties associated with local African American history, and its role as a motivating factor in the development of this historical and cultural context, is discussed further in Section 2.2.



Figure 25. S. Edward Hall House (Sluss 1990b)

### **3.2.3.5 Hallie Q. Brown Community Center (1929)**

Settlement houses were a vital resource for new arrivals to urban centers in the early twentieth century. The first African American arrivals in the early 1900s utilized services at the Neighborhood House in Saint Paul's West Side Neighborhood, established in 1897 as a Jewish settlement house and reorganized in 1903 to serve other ethnicities as well, and the Welcome Hall Community Center, which opened in 1916 under the auspices of the Zion Presbyterian Church at 321 St. Anthony Avenue (Taylor 2002:36-37). The Welcome Hall was initiated and overseen by the church's pastor, Reverend George W. Camp, and his wife, Anna, and provided the first Black daycare facility in Saint Paul (Taylor 2002:36-37). Another church-organized center was the Christian Center, founded in 1926 by Reverend Joseph Walter Harris. The Christian Center, located at 603 West Central Avenue, was completed in 1927 and featured classrooms, library, music room, reading rooms, social room, dining hall, guest rooms, and an apartment for the residential director. Although it burned 10 years later, it "sponsored many social, intellectual, cultural, and religious programs for its patrons" during its time (Taylor 2002:37).

In January 1929, an advisory committee organized by the Saint Paul Urban League conducted a study of potential facilities within the city that could house needed programs and services. In response, they identified the need for a new community center. The former Central Avenue Branch of the YWCA at 598 Central Avenue, which had housed an African American program from 1923 to 1938, was selected as the new facility. The new center was named the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center after African American educator, suffragist, and activist Hallie Q. Brown. Shortly after opening, the center relocated to the Masonic Hall at 553 Aurora Avenue (Figure 26), and in 1972 moved to its current location at 270 North Kent Street; it is now known as the Martin Luther King Community Center (Figure 27) (Hallie Q. Brown Community Center, Inc. 2016; Taylor 2002; Anderson 2016).



Figure 26. Hallie Q. Brown Community Center at 553 Aurora Avenue (MNHS 2016h)



Figure 27. Martin Luther King Community Center (Prepare and Prosper 2017)

The first director of the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center was I. Myrtle Carden, a social worker, who served as director from 1929 to 1949. Under Carden's leadership, the community center developed a variety of social services and programs to serve families, youth, working mothers, and senior citizens (Taylor 2002:39). The community center also served an important role in providing opportunities for recreation and entertainment that were closed off to Blacks at many white establishments. Similarly, the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center, along with other African American community centers in the Twin Cities, provided lodging for visiting Black professionals, entertainers, and travelers, who were often prohibited from staying or eating at white hotels (Taylor 2002:45). Many former residents of Rondo recall

the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center as a hub of the community, one in which nearly everyone participated at one time or another (Taylor 1993; Cavett 2005). Classes at the community center included health, drama, dance, social etiquette, and literature of the Harlem Renaissance (Murphy 1993:14). The Hallie Q. Brown Community Center continues to serve as a vital resource in Saint Paul, providing a wide range of services for both youth and adults of all ethnicities (Hallie Q. Brown Community Center, Inc. 2016).

### **3.2.3.6 North Central Voters League (1963)**

The North Central Voters League (NCVL) was founded by a small group of African American residents in Saint Paul in 1963, with the goal of advancing voter registration and voter rights, as well as promoting access to services and facilities for the city's African American residents. The founding members, who included Ray Hill, Jessie Miller, Robert Anderson, Mr. "Blotch" Perkins, Jester Howell, and Mr. Thurman, held their first meeting at the Elks Lodge on Kent and Carroll Streets, and were soon joined by local women, including Charlie Hollins, Joann Favors, and Allie Mae Hampton. Projects undertaken by the NCVL included voter registration campaigns, the installation of a stoplight at Dale and Rondo Avenues, a local library, and the construction of a swimming pool in the Summit-University neighborhood. In 1964, the NCVL supported the campaign of civil rights activist and mother of four Katie McWatt, the first African American to run for city council in Saint Paul (El-Kati 2016). Although McWatt lost the election by a narrow margin, she was unstoppable as a tireless advocate for the rights of African Americans and women, and was active in the Council on Black Minnesotans, the League of Women Voters, the Saint Paul NAACP, and the Urban League throughout her life. The portion of Dayton Avenue between Lexington Avenue and Dale Street was co-named "Katie McWatt Avenue" in 2010 in her honor (Yuen 2010; Havens 2010). Katie's husband, Arthur McWatt, was a civil rights activist, author, historian, and educator (Ashenmacher 2012).

### **3.2.3.7 Inner City Youth League (1967)**

In 1967, the Inner City Youth League was founded in Saint Paul (Figure 28). The organization's mission was to provide a place for African American youth to learn and become empowered through the Civil Rights movement. Founder Kofi Bobby Hickman had watched the youth in the community during the 1960s struggle with a lack of access to productive methods for addressing the injustices that the community faced.<sup>13</sup> Some were resorting to violence and in-fighting in response to issues such as a lack of places to socialize, discrimination and police brutality, lack of affordable quality housing, and an absence of jobs. The Inner City Youth League provided leadership and validation to the community's youth, offering places and ways to participate in peaceful protest, learn skills, and have a voice. By 1968, less than a year after its founding, "120 boys between the ages of 15 and 18 were taking classes in French, Spanish, and black history, and were involved in drama, boxing, painting, and photography" (Connolly 1988:25). Despite the Inner City Youth League's positive programming for youth, it was viewed with suspicion and fear by some in the white community (Connolly 1988:26). Hickman, who was raised in the Rondo neighborhood, was a descendant of the founders of Saint Paul's Pilgrim Baptist Church, and a nephew of photographer Gordon Parks. He worked as a mechanical engineer in the Air Force, and then in the airline industry, before founding the Inner City Youth League at the age of 31 and serving as its

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<sup>13</sup> Hickman received the name "Kofi" from elders during a trip to Africa (Walsh 2015).

executive director for 20 years. He also owned a tax service with his brother, and was active in politics and a strong Civil Rights advocate (Hickman 2012; Walsh 2015).



Figure 28. Inner City Youth League (MNHS 1975c)

### 3.2.4 CLUBS

David Vassar Taylor reports that “by 1935 more than a dozen [African American] fraternal and secret orders and two dozen clubs of various kinds existed in the Twin Cities” (Taylor 2002:45). In Saint Paul, these included the Sterling Club, Credjafawn Social Club, the Regalettes, the Continentals, the Forty Club, the Aquarian Club, the Cameo Club, the Jack & Jill Club, the Golden Agers, and the Zodiac Club, as well as fraternal organizations such as the Black Elks and the African American Pioneer Masonic Lodge. The Elks Gopher Lodge No. 105 building on Rondo Avenue between Dale and Kent Streets was the locus of a variety of activities, including fraternal meetings, the Gopher Lodge’s Drum and Bugle Corp, and even a restaurant (Marvin Anderson, personal communication, March 9, 2017). Youth organizations, in addition to youth programs administered by churches, included the 3/4s Girls Club, the Ober Boys Club, the Inner City Youth League, and The Loft, as well as more informal social groups, such as the Eight Debs and the Crazy Eights. Children also socialized and played at local play spaces such as roller gardens, Oxford Park, Dunning Fields, and the Hollow playground (October 2016 Advisory Group Meeting).

The Sterling Club was founded in 1918 and incorporated the following year as a private club for African American men. The Sterling Club was one of the few African American clubs to own its own building. The Sterling Club’s first home, a Moderne building at 315 North Dale Street, was designed by Clarence Wigington (Figure 29). In 1958, the club had a new building constructed at 300 North St. Albans Street (Cavett 2005:33). The club provided a location for African American men to meet and socialize, and was founded at a time when many places would not serve Blacks. If an establishment did serve Blacks, the employees would often break the glass that the Black customer drank from after each drink, to demonstrate that “they would not serve a White person from a glass used by a Black person,” according to Benjamin Louis Alexander, Sr., a member of the Sterling Club (Cavett 2005:33).



Figure 29. Sterling Club (MNHS 1926)

The Credjafawn Social Club, one of the longest operating African American social clubs in the Twin Cities, was founded in 1928 by eight youth from the local community who were committed to increasing the number of social activities available to them. The club's unique name comes from a combination of the first letters of the names of the founding members. In addition to being a social club, the Credjafawns also served the community in a variety of ways, including the establishment of the Credjafawn Credit Union to provide low interest loans to members, and a food co-op. The club also offered scholarships to local students, and advocated for the integration of hotels and other facilities that refused to allow Black social events (Hennessy 2008). Another social club, The Regalettes, was founded in the 1950s and dedicated to charitable work. The club, composed of working women, hosts both formal and informal fundraisers, and networks with social clubs throughout Midwest. The Regalettes continue to support local nonprofits through their charitable work (Open Cities Health Center 2015).

The Forty Club was formed in 1925, with the purpose of “promot[ing] social activities” (quoted in Little 2010) Their edicts included quarterly dance parties and annual summer outings (Little 2010). Music groups that performed at the club's dances included Babe Salters, and Percy Hughs and his orchestra; Percy's father was one of the founding members. Myrrhene Crawford, a third-generation member and granddaughter of S. Edward Hall, one of the founding members along with Clarence Wigington, noted that the club often held events at a cabin in Little Canada that was owned by her grandfather and his brother. The club's name comes from the restriction of its initial membership to 20 couples from Minneapolis and 20 couples from Saint Paul, with the goal of bringing the African American communities of the two cities closer together; this restriction on membership numbers has continued into the present to keep the club a manageable size for socializing (Little 2010).

The Ober Boys Club, named after Edgar Ober, president of 3M from 1909-1929, was established by the St. Paul Union Gospel Mission in the 1940s (Figure 30). The club offered recreational activities such as week-long camps at Snail Lake and Bible classes. The afterschool programs offered at the Ober Club were some of the only such programs opened to all youth, regardless of race (CultureBrokers Foundation, Inc. 2010). Associated with the club was the Welcome Field, an athletic field where the Rondo community held social and sporting events. Gospel Mission also ran an associated Girls Club at the



Welcome Hall Community Center. The Ober Community Center, which is still owned by Gospel Mission and leased to the Salvation Army, is located at 375 St. Anthony Avenue. Casiville Bullard was one of the stone masons who worked on its construction (Placeography 2016c).



Figure 30. Ober Boys Club (MNHS 1975d)

### **3.2.5 RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS**

#### **3.2.5.1 Mount Olivet Baptist Church**

The Saint Paul Independent Baptist Church, founded on March 1, 1922, initially held its meetings at Reverend T.J. Carr's home at 499 Saint Anthony Avenue, and later at a storefront on Rondo Avenue and Kent Street. Construction began on a building for the church in 1927; services were held in the building's basement from 1927 to 1951, when the church was completed. In 1932, the church's name was changed to Mount Olivet Missionary Baptist Church. In 1973, construction began on the current church building, located at 451 West Central Avenue. From 1972 to 1998, Reverend Dr. James W. Battle, Sr., served at the church and was active both locally and regionally as a religious and civil rights leader (Cavett 2005:49; Saint Paul Historical 2016a).

#### **3.2.5.2 Camphor Memorial United Methodist Church**

Camphor United Methodist Church was founded in 1919. The congregation held its first meeting at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Alfred McFarland; subsequent meetings were held in a variety of locations, including the former Pilgrim Baptist Church. The congregation first purchased the former Danish Norwegian Methodist Church at 13th and Broadway Streets, and then in August 1931, purchased the Messiah Episcopal Church building at 585 Fuller Avenue. In 1970, the building was demolished and a new church was completed in 1973 at the same location; during construction, the congregation worshipped in the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center. The church is named for Bishop Alexander Priestly Camphor, a Black Methodist bishop, missionary, and educator from Louisiana (Camphor Memorial United Methodist Church 2017; Saint Paul Historical 2016b).

#### **3.2.5.3 New Hope Baptist Church**

The New Hope Baptist Church started as the Welcome Chapel Mission in the former Zion Presbyterian Church at 373 Farrington Street in April of 1952. With the destruction of the building at 373 Farrington

Street during the I-94 construction, the congregation began holding services at a variety of locations, including 525 Rondo Avenue, 325 Chatsworth Street, and members' homes. In December of 1954, the congregation organized into the New Hope Baptist Church, and in 1958, construction was completed on a new building at 321 Edmund Street. In 1969, the congregation moved to 1115 Dayton Avenue, and, in 1998, relocated to 712 Burr Street. Reverend Dr. Kneely Williams served as pastor from 1952 to 1992 (New Hope Baptist Church 2011).

#### **3.2.5.4 Church of God in Christ**

The Minnesota Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction of the Church of God in Christ began in 1923 when six individuals in Muskogee, Oklahoma were “inspired by the Spirit of God” to relocate to Minnesota to found a mission. They were later joined by others from Oklahoma and Kansas. During the 1920s through the 1940s four Churches of God in Christ were founded in Minneapolis. In 1947, Elder John LaGrone established St. John’s Church of God in Christ at 178 Eaton Street, Saint Paul, and in the 1950s, Dr. Walter Battle and his wife, Willa Battle, established the Gospel Temple Church of God at 247 Grotto Avenue in Saint Paul (Community Church 2017; Melo 2013). Dr. Battle led the church until his death in 1995, at which point his sister, Thelma Battle Buckner, became the church pastor. At the time that Gospel Temple was established, the Battles were the only two Black founding members, but today the congregation, while predominantly Black, has an ethnically diverse membership, and “Longtime members say they’ve always prided themselves on being a welcoming congregation” (Melo 2013). This highlights a trend observed by Curtiss DeYoung, professor of reconciliation studies at Bethel University in Arden Hills, who noted “the Twin Cities seems to have a high number of these multiracial congregations” (Melo 2013).

#### **3.2.5.5 Christ Temple Apostolic Church**

The Christ Temple Apostolic Church in Saint Paul was founded in 1935 by members from three different Apostolic churches who, troubled by issues such as bigotry within their local congregations, sought to establish a church that would follow the laws of the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, Inc. They chose Elder Alfred Lawrence to serve as pastor. The church, which was originally named the Apostolic Faith Mission, later became the Christ Temple Apostolic Church, and throughout its history has partnered with community organizations and other churches to address community concerns such as drug abuse and violence. Pastors have included Elder Alfred Lawrence, District Elder Edward Ervin, District Elder Louis H. Ervin, and District Elder Harold V. Harris. In 1997, the church relocated from 983 West Central Avenue in Saint Paul to its current home at 2651 North Hamline Avenue in Roseville, Minnesota (Christ Temple Apostolic Church 2014; Ancestry.com 2017).

### **3.2.6 EDUCATION**

Schools attended by African American youth in Saint Paul in the twentieth century included Maxfield Elementary School (Figure 31) (opened in 1890 at St. Albans Street and St. Anthony Avenue; moved to 380 North Victoria Street in 1955), McKinley Elementary School (opened in 1903 at 485 Carroll Street; closed in 1966; destroyed by fire in 1972), John Marshall Junior High/High School (Figure 32) (opened in 1924 at 707 Holly Avenue, and merged with Webster Elementary School in 1975, becoming the Webster Magnet School); Webster Elementary School (opened in 1926 at 707 Holly Avenue and merged with John Marshall Junior High School in 1975, becoming the Webster Magnet School); Central High School (Figure 33) (founded in 1866 as Saint Paul High School, moved to its current location at Marshall Avenue

and Lexington Parkway North in 1912); and Saint Paul Mechanics Arts High School (Manual Training High School) (Figure 34) (opened in 1911 at its third location at Central Avenue and Aurora Street and was consolidated with Central and Washington High Schools in 1976 due to declining attendance and the drive to integrate schools) (Vang 2005; Sigvertsen c.1994; Butler 2012). David Vassar Taylor notes that the construction of the new Maxfield Elementary School in 1955 was the successful result of “intense lobbying by the black community,” due to a desire to replace the old, hazardous Maxfield building with a new one within the Rondo neighborhood (Taylor 1993:22).



Figure 31. Maxfield Elementary School (*St. Paul Dispatch & Pioneer Press* 1955)



Figure 32. Students and teachers playing checkers at John Marshall Junior High/High School (MNHS 1955)





Figure 33. Central High School c. 1886 (MNHS 1886b)

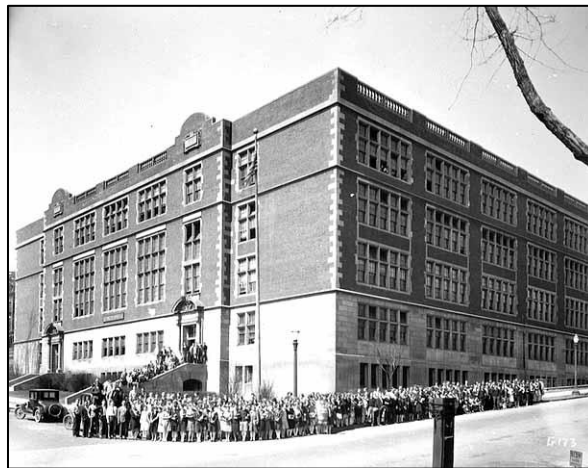


Figure 34. Saint Paul Mechanic Arts High School (MNHS 1928)

One of the biggest upheavals that African American students experienced in Saint Paul was the process of integration in the 1950s through the 1970s. In 1954, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* was decided, in which the Supreme Court ruled that the establishment of separate public schools for Blacks and whites under state laws was unconstitutional. The decision did not provide direction on how segregation in public schools should be ended, and it was not until the 1964 Civil Rights Act that further guidance on how to implement the decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* was provided. The Saint Paul Board of Education began the process of integration following the 1964 Civil Rights Act by redistricting, constructing new schools, and offering open enrollment. Busing as an integration method was only implemented when the other efforts proved unsuccessful in reaching integration goals (Lorenz-Meyer and O'Brien Wagner 2016:45).

The process of integration was further intensified by the transition of John Marshall High School (Marshall) to a junior high school in 1953. Marshall had originally been a junior high school until 1937, when it began adding a grade each year until 1940 when it became a full high school. At the time that Marshall reverted to a junior high school in 1953, the majority of Black high school students attended Marshall, and had to choose between either the largely white Central High School or Mechanic Arts High School. A small number of Black students already attended Central High School, but faced racism and discrimination (Lorenz-Meyer and O'Brien Wagner 2016). Constance Jones Price, born in 1930, recalled

how she and a friend pleaded with a school administrator to be allowed to attend Marshall. According to Price, “The school administrator responded that students were ‘dying to get in to Central,’” to which Price replied, “We’re dying to get out” (quoted in Cavett 2005:141). Price explained, “We were desperate. We wanted a social life as well as a good environment to be in where there wasn’t all this racism” (quoted in Cavett 2005:141). Integration was also difficult on African American educators. Black teachers lost jobs or had to transfer to other schools, while white teachers were able to remain at the same schools (October 2016 Community Meeting).

Scott Price, an African American student who attended Central High School in the late 1960s and early 1970s, recalled “It was a pretty tough transition for a lot of people, a lot of fights and things. A lot of racial tension ... [the white students] didn’t want them [the Black students] there” (quoted in Cavett 2005:106). The integration process coincided with the destruction of the Rondo community with the construction of I-94, as well as the activism of the broader Civil Rights movement (Lorenz-Meyer and O’Brien Wagner 2016:48). Racial tensions at Central High School erupted following an incident in which a white parent called a Black student a name on November 28, 1968. Students, teachers, and parents organized in support of the African American student, and high school senior Larry Clark, the spokesperson for the group, submitted a list of grievances to the school. Mrs. James Taylor, the program director at the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center, stated, “We have a very serious situation at Central, far more serious than many realize. And communications are terrible. Central requires immediate action” (quoted in Lorenz-Meyer and O’Brien Wagner 2016:49). Protests, including sit-ins and walk-outs, were held, in which one-third of the student body participated. In response, a new principal was hired, who agreed to address many of the grievances, Black teachers were recruited (only two of the 70 teachers had been African American), and a full-time social worker was hired—the first in the district (Lorenz-Meyer and O’Brien Wagner 2016:49).

Though some members of Saint Paul’s early African American community graduated from the University of Minnesota, the university traditionally admitted low numbers of Black students, and of those who were admitted, a number felt that they received a lower quality of education than their white peers. On January 14, 1969, as the Civil Rights movement in the Twin Cities reached its peak of activity, 60 Black students occupied the admissions and records offices in Morrill Hall over the course of 24 hours in protest due to their demands for equal treatment which had been ignored. The university was prompted to concede to the demands, and the results included the establishment of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Program and the Afro-American Studies department (today the Department of African American and African Studies) that same year, as well as an effort to recruit more Black students (Taylor 2002:55; University of Minnesota 2017a). Both programs remain active at the University (University of Minnesota 2017a; University of Minnesota 2017b).

### **3.2.7 NEWSPAPERS**

African American newspapers established in Saint Paul in the first half of the twentieth century include the *St. Paul Recorder* (founded in 1934, it merged in 2000 with the *Minneapolis Spokesman* to become the *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder*), the *St. Paul Echo* (1925-1927), the *Saint Paul Sun* (1941-1976), and the *Twin City Leader* (published in both Minneapolis and Saint Paul, 1940-1941) (MNHS 2016f; *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder* 2017; Sanna 2008).

### **3.2.7.1 The *St. Paul Echo* and Earl Wilkins**

Earl Wilkins was born in 1905 in Missouri, and as an infant was brought to Saint Paul along with his older brother Roy and older sister Armeda to be raised by his aunt and uncle, Samuel and Elizabeth Williams, upon the death of the children's mother (Volante 2015b:25; U.S. Census Bureau 1920). Wilkins graduated from Mechanic Arts High School, and along with his older brother Roy, attended the University of Minnesota (Volante 2015b:25). At the University of Minnesota, Wilkins won the Ludden Real Estate Freshman-Sophomore Oratorical Contest, was appointed to the editorial board of the *Minnesota Daily*, and was the first African American student invited to attend the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity's Xi chapter annual Minnesota Gridiron Banquet (Xi Chapter 2017). While still a junior in college, Wilkins was recruited by the owner of the *St. Paul Echo*, Owen Howell, to serve as the newspaper's editor. Though the paper was only in publication from 1925 to 1927, during his tenure Wilkins "transformed the *St. Paul Echo* into the voice of Minnesota's civil rights struggles," chronicling the African American community's efforts to assert their rights, celebrating the community's achievements, and proclaiming solidarity with the nascent BSCP union (Volante 2015b:25, 27).

### **3.2.7.2 The *St. Paul Recorder* and Cecil Newman**

Entrepreneur and civil rights leader Cecil Newman was the founder of popular Twin Cities newspapers the *St. Paul Recorder* and the *Minneapolis Spokesman*. Newman, born in 1903 in Kansas City, worked in the office of a Black community paper as a teen, and later as a Pullman porter. In 1934, he founded both the *St. Paul Recorder* and the *Minneapolis Spokesman* in his home at 677 West Central Avenue, Saint Paul. Newman became the first African American president of the Minneapolis Urban League in 1948, and in 1965 received an honorary Doctorate of Laws Degree from Allen University in South Carolina. The papers were merged into the *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder* in 2000, which today is the "oldest continuously operated black newspaper in Minnesota" (Placeography.com 2011; Sanna 2008; Burnside 2017).

### **3.2.7.3 The *Saint Paul Sun* and Estyr Bradley Peake**

For much of its existence, the *Saint Paul Sun*, which was in print from 1941 to 1976, was published by Saint Paul native Estyr Bradley Peake. Estyr Lillian Bradley was born in Saint Paul in 1909 to Charles Bradley and Martha Jackson (U.S. Census Bureau 1910, 1930). While she was a senior at Central High School in 1927, Estyr began working as a social columnist for local African American newspapers (St. Catherine University 2014). She obtained work first as a stenographer for a doctor's office, and then as an assistant and later a writer for the WPA Writer's Project (U.S. Census Bureau 1930, 1940; Glasrud and Wintz 2012). Estyr married a man with the last name of Anderson (first name unknown), and later married George B. Peake; by 1959, she was listed as the widow of George B. Peake in the St. Paul City Directory (R.L. Polk and Company 1959:583). For decades, Estyr worked as a publisher for the *Saint Paul Sun* and wrote a social column, chronicling daily life in Rondo (*Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder* 2014). She died in Saint Paul in 1995 at the age of 85 (State of Minnesota 2002).

## **3.2.8 ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT**

### **3.2.8.1 Sports**

Sports were an important part of life for many members of the African American community, both youth and adults. African American children organized informal games at local playgrounds, and many also participated in sports at school and in afterschool programs at community organizations and churches. Former Central High School student Melvin Thomas Henderson recalled that “athletics kept us out of trouble because you had to work out and you had to do certain things and stay in shape ... [it] kept us kinda on the straight and narrow for the most part” (quoted in Cavett 2005:46). Many of the sports teams and events were sponsored by the community centers. A popular place for baseball and football games was a sandlot called the “Old Hollow“ or “The Hollow,” located at St. Anthony Avenue and North Kent Street, which was flooded during the winter and turned into an ice skating rink, complete with a small portable warming house installed by the city (Taylor 1993:20).

#### **3.2.8.1.1 *Black Baseball***

One sport that gained early traction within the African American community was baseball. The first teams to include Black players in the state were formed between 1870 to 1906. According to historian Frank White, son of local African American baseball player Louis “Pud” White II, Black baseball built pride and self-esteem within the community as spectators enjoyed watching the game and players enjoyed showing off their talent (White 2016:22). The first teams in Minnesota included the Saint Paul Colored Gophers, the Young Cyclone Team, and the Occola Team in the Saint Paul City League. From 1907 until 1942, teams became more strictly segregated, with all-Black teams including the Saint Paul Uptowns (Saint Paul Uptown Sanitary Team, which later became the Saint Paul Colored All-Stars), the Johnny Baker Post Team, and the Saint Paul Monarchs. Throughout this time, African Americans were excluded from the Major League and its affiliated Minor Leagues. Travel throughout Minnesota and the Upper Midwest for games was challenging for these African American teams. The Saint Paul Colored Gophers, for example, “faced suspicion or even open hostility from residents and fans” as well as unfair umpiring, such as “inconsistent strike zones and outright bad calls” (White 2016:24). The Great Depression in the 1930s also caused financial difficulties for some local ball clubs, although others, such as the Saint Paul Colored Gophers, Saint Paul Monarchs, and the Twin Cities/Twin City/Saint Paul Colored Giants, were able to endure (White 2016:72). Desegregation of organized baseball occurred in 1945 with the signing of Jackie Robinson to the minor league (White 2016:91). In 1948, the Major League was integrated, the same year that famed African American catcher Roy Campanella played for the Saint Paul Saints. Later that year, he made his Major League debut when he went to play for the Brooklyn Dodgers. Campanella played for the Dodgers through the 1950s, and in 1969 became the second African American inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame (Hoffbeck 2005; White 2016; Thomas 1993). In the 1950s, Black baseball teams were losing fan and press interest in favor of integrated teams, including the Saint Paul Saints, and due to rising Black players in the Major League. The area’s last all-Black team, the Twin City Colored Giants, played its final season in 1955 (White 2016:128). Frank White points to Dave Winfield as one of the greatest African American ballplayers to come from the Twin Cities (White 2016:155). Winfield, born in Saint Paul in 1951, made his Major League debut in 1973 for the San Diego Padres, went on to play for a number of other teams, including the Minnesota Twins in 1993-1994, and was inducted into the

National Baseball Hall of Fame in 2001. He is also a 12-time MLB All-Star, seven-time Gold Glove Award winner, and six-time Silver Slugger Award Winner. Winfield was named third-best all-around athlete of all time in any sport by ESPN in 2004, and was, at that time, the only athlete to be drafted into all three professional sports—baseball, football, and basketball (Merron 2004).

Another well-known name in Saint Paul’s African American baseball history is Marcenia (Toni) Lyle Stone, the first of only three women to play Negro League baseball (Figure 35).<sup>14</sup> Stone was born in 1921 in Saint Paul, and grew up playing baseball with local boys’ teams at places such as the Welcome Hall and Dunning Field sandlots. At the age of 16, Stone pitched several games for the Twin Cities Colored Giants. ““She was as good as most of the men,” remembered teammate Harry Davis, ‘She could throw just like a man!’” (quoted in Pitch Black Baseball 2016). Stone caught the eye of Gabby Street, the former manager of the St. Louis Cardinals who was managing a minor league team in Saint Paul, earning her a place in Street’s baseball camp. From there, Stone went on to barnstorm with Minor League teams in the 1940s, and in 1953, was signed to play with the Indianapolis Clowns, a Negro League team. Although part of the drive to hire Stone was to attract publicity, she was also signed for her phenomenal skill on the field. Stone was inducted into the Women’s Sports Foundation’s International Women’s Sports Hall of Fame in 1985 (Thomas 1996; Silverman 2016; McClean 2007). Locally, Stone is commemorated at Toni Stone Field in the Dunning Sports Complex at 1188 Concordia Avenue, between Hamline and Lexington Avenues.



Figure 35. Marcenia (Toni) Lyle Stone meeting boxer Joe Louis (MNHS 1988)

### 3.2.8.2 Music

Music has been a significant part of the Saint Paul’s African American community since its earliest years. The 1910 quatro-centennial edition of *The Appeal* features portraits of key Black community members, both men and women, and includes a number of musicians and music teachers in Saint Paul and Minneapolis. These include Madame R.C. Minor, a music teacher and leading soprano of Saint Paul; Madame Helen A.W. Yancey, a leading pianist; and C.H. Miller, a baritone and musical director in Saint Paul (*The Appeal*, September 24, 1910). A similar feature page in the October 28, 1911 edition of *The Appeal* included Edna Shull and Marianne Jeffrey, violin and piano artists; Kenneth J. Hamilton, mandolin soloist; Miss Myrtle Mae Williams, a leading pianist; Madame Addie Crawford-Minor, a music

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<sup>14</sup> The Negro leagues were professional baseball leagues made up of primarily African American players; some Latin American players also participated in the leagues.

teacher and leading soprano; and Earl C. Walker, a leading basso (*The Appeal*, October 28, 1911). The local African American newspapers carried advertisements for musical instruments for sale, Victrolas and record players, and dances, as well as advertisements for musical training both locally and nationally, including ads for the New England Conservatory of Music. Local music groups, such as James Kidd Hilyard's Quadrille Band, which performed throughout Saint Paul, and more nationally known African American musicians, such as Louis Armstrong and James Brown, performed in the Twin Cities. Prior to desegregation, African American traveling performers frequently had to stay at African American organizations or businesses as they were denied lodging at white hotels. One of the popular local African American music groups was the Treble Clef Club, which included compositions by African American composers in their performances (Taylor 1988:14).

Churches were also important places in which music was nourished and promoted; they offered an opportunity for both children and adults to perform music at a variety of services, holidays, and events. The Cantorians, a musical group formed in the mid-1950s, combined religious songs with popular music. Another successful music venture was had its origins in Macalester College's effort in the 1960s to recruit faculty and staff knowledgeable in African American culture, including music. This endeavor led to the 1969 formation of an ensemble called "Sounds of Blackness" (Figure 36). The acclaimed ensemble features a wide variety of African American music in their performances, and in 1991 worked with James "Jimmy Jam" Harris and Terry Lewis's recording company to release an album; it went on to win a Grammy in 1992 (Taylor 2002:57).



Figure 36. Frank Wharton, member of Sounds of Blackness (middle)  
with other musicians (Chamblis c. 1975a)

Prominent African American musicians from Saint Paul include classical musician and opera singer James T. Murray, jazz and gospel singer Roberta Davis, saxophonist Irv Williams, saxophonist William Lewis "Willy" Brown, and James Samuel "Cornbread" Harris, Jr. Cornbread Harris, born in 1927, was orphaned at the age of three, and at the age of 11, he and his sister left foster care to live with their grandparents in Saint Paul (Figure 37). Harris is the father of James "Jimmy Jam" Harris III, a successful record producer who has produced records for Janet Jackson, Mariah Carey, and Usher. Cornbread Harris was also one of the writers of the hit song "Hi Yo Silver," sung in 1955 by Mexican American musician Augie Garcia, and lauded as Minnesota's first rock n' roll recording, on which Harris also performed (Riemenschneider 2006).



Figure 37. James Samuel "Cornbread" Harris, Jr. (Gonzalez 2006)

A popular Black-owned venue of the mid-1940s was the Treasure Inn at 1691 Rice Street. Richard Mann, Claude Mason, and Howard Brown opened the jazz club in 1946, and soon had a line-up of performers that included Twin Cities greats Lester Young, Oscar Pettiford, Percy Hughes, and Prince Rogers, Sr., the father of Prince. The club was a favorite place for both whites and Blacks, including college students, and live shows were broadcast from the Treasure Inn on Leigh Kamman's "We Call it Jazz Shows" (Anderson 2015). A shooting in 1948 at the venue contributed to the business's decline. Two years prior to the construction of I-94, Mann opened a tavern at 979 Chatsworth Street called The Chatsworth Inn, which he ran successfully for a few years, until economic decline and urban renewal forced its closure (Cavett 2005:15-16). Other popular venues for Black musicians in Saint Paul in the mid-twentieth century included William's Tavern, Road Buddy's Cafe, the Ebony Lounge, North Saint Paul's Swing City Night Club, the Saint Paul Armory at 389 North Exchange Street, and the Gopher Grill and the Spanish Room at the Saint Paul Hotel (Figure 38). In December 1938, when the Saint Paul Hotel hired Black musician El Herbert and His Swing City Band for a three-week gig, it was "the first engagement of a colored band in any of the larger hotels in the Twin Cities in recent years," as reported by *the Minneapolis Spokesman* (Figure 39) (Price et al. 2011; Anderson 2016).



Figure 38. Frank Edwards at the Ebony Lounge (Chamblis c. 1975b)





Figure 39. El Herbert and His Swing City Band (MNHS 1930)

### 3.2.8.3 Arts

Beginning around 1918, a cultural and artistic movement began in Harlem, New York, known as the Harlem Renaissance. The movement, which continued into the 1930s, was characterized by a celebration of African American culture through the creative arts, including literature, music, theater, and visual arts. Through their works, African Americans explored and asserted their identities, rejecting white stereotypes and the Victorian ideals of the previous era (Hutchinson 2016). Although the movement began in Harlem, it quickly spread throughout the U.S., its influence extending into European cultural centers such as Paris. Despite the fact that African American arts achievements in Saint Paul during the early 1900s through World War II received little coverage in public media, individuals within the local community exercised their artist skills at home, in social clubs, at school, and at church. Rondo resident Anisah Hanifah Dawan recalled in a 2003 interview enjoying and excelling at drawing, which she took at the Mechanic Arts High School in the 1930s (Dawan 2003). In 1939, the *Minneapolis Spokesman* reported that a Black art show in Saint Paul received 700 visitors, indicating that, despite racism, there was a wider audience for African American artistic achievements that were publically showcased (*Minneapolis Spokesman*, September 1, 1939).

During the Great Depression, the WPA was established in 1935 to provide employment for unemployed individuals on relief. In addition to traditional infrastructure projects, workers were also employed in art, music, theater, writing, and historical projects. This provided an important opportunity for African Americans to acquire and develop skills in the arts. In 1935, approximately 250,000 African Americans were employed in WPA projects (Salmond 1975). Although racial discrimination was initially an issue within the WPA, by 1941 the NAACP praised the program for keeping discrimination to a minimum and affording many African American their “first real opportunity for employment in white-collar occupations,” particularly in northern urban centers (Howard 1973:295).

In the mid-1960s, the Black Arts Movement arose out of the Black Power Movement. The movement was initiated by the establishment of Black art schools, beginning with the Black Arts Repertory Theatre/School (BARTS) in Harlem in 1965. As part of the Black Power and Civil Rights Movements, African American artists embraced more politicized expressions of their creativity to address the rapidly evolving social and cultural ideas about race and oppression within society. One of the key foci of the



Black Arts Movement in the Twin Cities was the Inner City Youth League in Saint Paul (Jones 1999; discussed further in Section 3.2.3.7). The Inner City Youth League provided residencies to local artists, including mixed media artist Maurice Carlton (Jones 1999).

### 3.2.8.3.1 Maurice Carlton

Born in Illinois in 1909, Maurice Carlton served in the army as a Technician Fifth Grade in World War II (Figure 40) (U.S. Death Index; Findagrave.com 2016b). He was employed by the Northern Pacific Railway as a train attendant for 27 years in Saint Paul, working with activist A. Philip Randolph during Randolph's efforts to organize the railroad workers. Throughout Carlton's time in Saint Paul, he created mixed media sculptures and collages composed of found items from Rondo, and placed his works around the neighborhood (Connolly 1988; Jones 1999). His 1968 work "A Shrine to Black Mothers" explored and documented the "collective condition" of the community (Jones 1999). Carlton was a member of the United Negro Improvement Association, an organization founded by Marcus Garvey "to improve the economic, social, and political conditions of African Americans through self-sufficiency," and had a residency at the Inner City Youth League during the 1960s (Jones 1999; Connolly 1988). Carlton's residency grew out of his desire to utilize his mechanical and artistic skills to help youth, as well as a long-time friendship between himself and Inner City Youth League founder Bobby Hickman, which dated back to Hickman's apprenticeship under Carlton as a train attendant (Connolly 1988:26). In addition to public sculptures, Carlton was known for the walking sticks he created, which were "invitations to conversations" and inspired by the staffs used by traditional African staff keepers who advised community leaders (Connolly 1988:23). Carlton served as a volunteer ambassador for the Inner City Youth League until his death in 1985 (Connolly 1988:27).



Figure 40. Maurice Carlton (MNHS 1978)

### 3.2.8.3.2 Gordon Parks

Photographer, composer, film producer and director, writer, and musician Gordon Parks was born in Kansas in 1912, but moved to Saint Paul as a teenager, where he soon found himself homeless and living on the streets (Figure 41). Park worked in a variety of jobs, including as a piano player at a brothel,

busboy, porter, and janitor. In his mid-20s, Parks purchased a camera after being moved by photographs of migrant workers he saw in a magazine, and began taking pictures. Encouraged by the praise of the clerks who developed his film, Parks asked for and received the opportunity to take fashion photographs at Frank Murphy's clothing store in Saint Paul. Parks' works were well received, and at the prompting of Marva Louis, wife of heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis, Parks moved to Chicago in 1940 to pursue a career as a photographer. From there, he built his portfolio doing portraits and fashion photography, as well as documenting Chicago's South Side, and in 1941 won a photography fellowship with the Farm Security Administration (FSA), where he worked under Roy Stryker. Stryker, an economist and photographer, hired many other soon-to-be well-known photographers for the FSA, including Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans, and Arthur Rothstein. In addition to his career in photography, Parks went on to become an accomplished artist in many different media. He was the first Black photographer for *Life* magazine, directed the influential movie *Shaft*, and authored a number of books, including memoirs and an autobiography (Parks 2005; Parks 2010). The Gordon Parks High School in Saint Paul, founded in 1991, is named in his honor.



Figure 41. Gordon Parks (Parks, Sr. 1970)

### 3.2.8.3.3 *Seitu Jones*

Local artist Seitu Jones, who was born in Minneapolis in 1951, began producing his first artistic works in Saint Paul in the 1960s (Figure 42). Jones was a member of the Inner City Youth League, where he met artist Maurice Carlton while Jones was exploring his own artist identity. Jones' father was a skilled artist as well, who trained in art at the University of Minnesota but was denied the opportunity to be employed in his chosen field due to discrimination. Jones earned a bachelor's degree in landscape design and a master's degree in environmental history at the University of Minnesota (Goddard College 2017). Inspired by the Black Power movement, including the Black Panther party and cultural nationalism, as well as visits to his grandparents' South Side neighborhood in Chicago where public art was on display at the Wall of Respect outdoor mural, Jones became a public artist. Jones, who creates environmental artwork, is motivated by the belief that "One should leave their community more beautiful than they found it" (Goddard College 2017). His home/studio is an old cigar factory in the Frogtown neighborhood, where he has worked with area gardeners to "greenline" the neighborhood by increasing the amount of plants and trees. Jones has been awarded a Minnesota State Arts Board Fellowship, a McKnight Visual Artist Fellowship, a Bush Artist Fellowship, a Bush Leadership Fellowship, and a National Endowment

for the Arts/Theater Communication Group Designer Fellowship. He was the first Artist-in-Residence for the City of Minneapolis and is currently a faculty member in the MFA in Interdisciplinary Arts program at Goddard College's campus in Port Townsend, Washington (Goddard College 2017). He continues to create public works of art, expanding on the different ways that art can strengthen and empower the community (Jones 1999; Jones 2016).



Figure 42. Seitu Jones (Tundel 2012)

#### **3.2.8.3.4 Ta-coumba Aiken**

Ta-coumba Aiken, born in Evanston, Illinois, in 1953, moved to Minnesota in 1970, a year after winning the Young African Americans on the Move Award in the Container Corporation of America's International Aspen Design Conference at Aspen, Colorado (Figure 43) (Aiken 2015). One of Aiken's early works in Saint Paul was a mural for the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center, completed in 1975. Aiken also found inspiration in the Black Power Movement and his cultural identity as an African American. He has created over 300 murals and public art sculptures since that time, in collaboration with schools, neighborhood organizations, and city planning and development departments, and has worked as a graphic designer and illustrator for Honeywell throughout his career (Rupersburg 2014; Lowertown Lofts Artist Cooperative 2017; Perlman 2007; Aiken 2015). Like Jones, Aiken maintains a strong focus on community building through the creation of his artistic works.

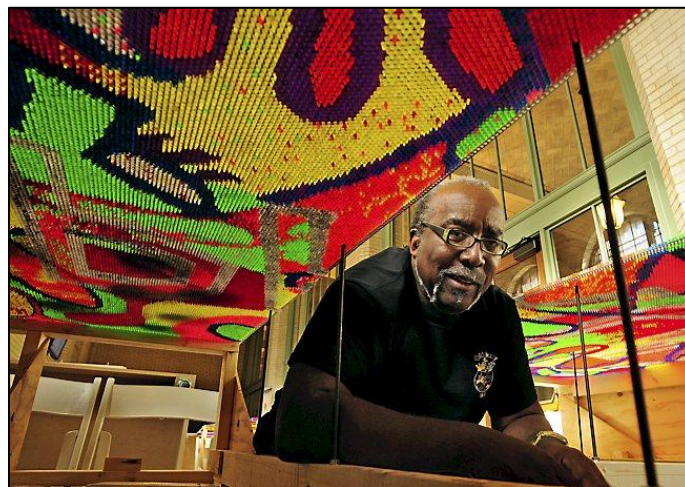


Figure 43. Ta-coumba Aiken (Takushi 2013)

#### **3.2.8.4 Penumbra Theatre and Lou Bellamy**

Lou Bellamy, born in Chicago, Illinois in 1944, was raised from infancy in Minnesota and attended Central High School in Saint Paul. While an undergraduate at Minnesota State University - Mankato, Bellamy was recruited by the Director of the Theatre and Dance department, Dr. Theodore Paul, to fill the role of an African American character in a production of Paul's play *Finian's Rainbow*. The experience proved formative for Bellamy, who noted "I began to recognize the power of theatre ... to build community by bringing people together, to criticize, comment, and educate society" (Sampson 2017; Harrison 2006). After graduating from Minnesota State in 1967, Bellamy obtained a Master of Arts in theater from the University of Minnesota. When the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center was awarded a \$150,000 Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA) grant in 1976 to develop arts programming, Bellamy was hired as art director and founded the Penumbra Theater, providing local actors and community members with training and a forum in which to confront social issues through art (Burghardt 2017). Renowned African American playwright August Wilson, who moved to Saint Paul in 1978, launched his career at Penumbra (Kerr 2016). Penumbra Theatre, the recipient of the national Jujamcyn Award in 2000, and one of only a handful of professional African American theaters nationwide that performs year-round, continues to thrive at the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center. Bellamy was named the 2006 McKnight Foundation Distinguished Artist, and awarded an Obie Award in 2007 (Penumbra Theatre 2017; McKnight Foundation 2006; Lou Bellamy, personal communication, May 12, 2017).

#### **3.2.9 1950S–1970S: A TIME OF CHANGE**

From 1950 to 1970, the Black population in Minnesota grew from 13,775 to 34,868, and Saint Paul's African American community experienced an increase of 388 percent during this time (Taylor 2002:51). Contributors to this growth included employment opportunities and a belief that Minnesota was more accepting of racial diversity (although the racial climate in the Twin Cities was not substantially different than that of other northern cities). The majority of new arrivals were from the South and north-central states (Taylor 2002:51). Also during the 1950s, in part due to the influx of young people seeking work, the African American population of the Twin Cities became progressively younger—by 1960, the median age was 25 (Taylor 2002:52).

Throughout the 1950s, racial discrimination in housing, home loans, and insurance continued unchecked difficulties in finding affordable housing intensified with the return of veterans and the arrival of African Americans from other parts of the country. A study by the Governor's Interracial Commission in the mid-1940s found that "the overwhelming number" of Blacks were unable to find housing to rent or buy outside of the "definite neighborhoods to which white persons 'expect Negroes to be restricted'" (Taylor 2002:50). Finally, urban renewal programs, Model Cities Program<sup>15</sup> planning, and freeway construction resulted in the demolition of housing in Black neighborhoods and displacements of large percentages of the African American population (Taylor 2002:51). Taylor notes, "In their attempts to revitalize the inner cities, urban planners altered socioeconomic and political bases, undermining the stability of

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<sup>15</sup> The Model Cities Program, introduced by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964 as part of the federal government's War on Poverty effort, was authorized in 1966 and ended in 1974. The Program, part of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, was intended to "improve coordination of existing urban programs and provide additional funds for local plans," but ultimately exacerbated some of the problems it was intended to address (Harrison 2007; Hunt 2004).

neighborhoods, irrevocably damaging certain institutions, and compounding the housing problem” (Taylor 2002:51). As a result of these displacements, some of Saint Paul’s African American population formed communities along Wheelock Parkway and in suburban Maplewood (Taylor 2002:50-51).

While lessening discrimination in hiring practices begun during World War II continued to some extent into the 1950s, the time of postwar prosperity in the 1960s still found most Blacks employed in the “service and menial sector of the economy” (Taylor 2002:52). Unemployment rates were also higher among African Americans. In the Summit-University area in 1965, 9.2 percent of Blacks were unemployed compared to 6 percent of whites, and in 1970, 21 percent of African Americans were on public assistance. In addition, in 1970 only 18 percent of Blacks were employed in professional, technical, managerial, or administrative jobs, and African Americans’ wages continued to lag behind that of whites (Taylor 2002:52)

African American communities during the mid-twentieth century faced continuing discrimination in a variety of sectors, including housing, public institutions, and employment, and ongoing wage depression. Members of the community were seeking new ways to express their dissatisfaction with current conditions, and bring about change in lasting and meaningful ways. Out of this struggle arose the Civil Rights Movement, a campaign of civil resistance to end segregation and discrimination. The movement began in the mid-1950s and continued through 1968, ending with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1968. Although the historical Civil Rights Movement is recognized as ending in 1968, the commitment of individuals, communities, and organizations to continue to fight discrimination continues in many different forms. In many ways, the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 was just the beginning of the legal recognition of important rights for African Americans. Much of the struggle to assert and maintain these rights followed the passage of the act, when its practical implementation, in some cases by individuals and institutions who opposed it, presented a variety of challenges. The Black Power movement, which started in the mid-1960s, developed alongside, and in some ways, as a critique of, the Civil Rights Movement, and encompassed diverse forms of activism with the goal of empowering African Americans. During the Movement, which had its origins in response to the 1965 assassination of Malcolm X and a growing Black Nationalist movement led by the Nation of Islam, political entities such as the Black Panther Party and the Black Liberation Army were formed. The Black Power Movement continued into the late 1970s, by which time membership in its associated organizations was in decline.

Prior to the passages of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968, and the subsequent process of desegregation, African Americans in Saint Paul had experienced nearly a century of segregation. They had been denied access to public and private institutions, such as schools, restaurants, hotels, and clubs, as well as services that were available to individuals of other ethnicities. The Black community had adapted to these discriminatory practices by establishing their own institutions and businesses to meet their needs, despite their often constrained economic resources. By the mid-twentieth century, however, African Americans were prepared to push beyond the segregated social structure. On April 2, 1960, members of the NAACP picketed outside of Woolworth’s in Saint Paul, in solidarity with the African American communities in the South who had to eat at segregated lunch counters due to the company’s national segregation policy (Taylor 2002:54; Cavett 2005:212). In response to picketing and boycotts of



Woolworth's across the nation, most Woolworth stores in the South ended their policy of segregation that same year (Figure 44) (International Civil Rights Center & Museum 2017; *Jackson Sun* 2003).



Figure 44. Picketing at Woolworth's (*St. Paul Dispatch & Pioneer Press* 1960)

The 1960s were a time of both immense advances and tragic losses in the area of civil rights for African Americans. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) was created as part of the act to facilitate its implementation. Four years later, the Civil Rights Act of 1968, also known as the Fair Housing Act, was passed, prohibiting discrimination of house sales, rentals, and financing based on race, religion, or national origin. However, only seven days prior to the enactment of the Fair Housing Act, beloved Civil Rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated on April 4, 1968, in Memphis, Tennessee. His assassination was followed by demonstrations and riots across the nation. On Labor Day weekend in 1968, demonstrations were held by the African American communities in the Twin Cities in response to national events such as King's assassination and ongoing discrimination (Taylor 2002:54). On August 30, 1968, a riot took place on Selby Avenue, which resulted in the shootings of four police, and multiple injuries and arrests (Lorenz-Meyer and O'Brien Wagner 2016:49). Students took part in demonstrations that year at Central High School and the following year at the University of Minnesota, as well as other regional schools and colleges, in response to discriminatory practices. Their efforts eventually led to concessions, including the establishment of an Afro-American Studies Department (today the Department of African American and African Studies) and Martin Luther King, Jr. Program, and increased recruitment of Black students at the University of Minnesota (Lorenz-Meyer and O'Brien Wagner 2016:49; Taylor 2002:55; University of Minnesota 2017a).

The same year of King's assassination and the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, Stephen L. Maxwell became the first Black district court judge in Ramsey County, after he was named to the bench in the Second Judicial District following a year as a municipal judge in Saint Paul. The African American community made further advances as they secured more white-collar jobs at companies with fairer hiring practices following the Civil Rights Act of 1964, such as Honeywell, Control Data, and the Donaldson Company (Cavett 2005; October 2016 Community Meeting). Through the 1960s and into the 1970s, African Americans in Saint Paul continued to assert their rights in the wider society while maintaining a

strong community base, a struggle that was heavily disrupted by the destruction of the Rondo neighborhood with the construction of I-94. Despite the devastation caused by the demolition of the community's homes, businesses, and economic and social base, efforts by individuals and organizations to keep the values and spirit of the Rondo neighborhood alive while embracing new arrivals to the area speak to the enduring nature of the African American community that has formed in Saint Paul over a century and a half.

### **3.3 A Point in Time**

The preservation of the history and values of Saint Paul's African American community is made possible through the lasting legacies of individuals, organizations, and institutions, as well as the work of community historians such as Dr. David Vassar Taylor, Yusef Mgeni, Marvin Roger Anderson, Lisa Tabor, Dr. William Green, Arthur McWatt, Daniel Bergin, Kate Cavett, Frank White, Paul Nelson, Mahmoud El-Kati, Steve Trimble, and others, including many listed in the references cited section of this report. Their efforts over the past half-century have been essential to bringing the community's history alive and leveraging it for the future, and this Context Study relies heavily on, and aims to build upon, this ambitious existing body of work.

This context explores the African American community in Saint Paul through 1975, in compliance with NPS guidelines that most properties be at least 50 years old to be eligible for inclusion on the NRHP, unless exceptionally important. The date was extended from 1967 (50 years from the date this context was prepared) to 1975, to account for properties that are or may soon become eligible for the NRHP. This is, of course, a somewhat arbitrary endpoint, and excludes many people, places, organizations, and other significant additions that could be made if the date were to be extended. It is hoped that future efforts will be made to account for these post-1975 topics, and that this study provides a solid foundation for such efforts.



## 4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

With the context established above for Saint Paul’s African American history, this section contains an overview of the historic preservation process as it applies to this Context Study, including recommendations that emerged from the development of the context. It then summarizes priorities advanced by the community through the Context Study’s engagement efforts.

### 4.1 Preservation Overview

#### 4.1.1 HISTORIC DESIGNATION

Designation is the keystone for future preservation efforts. In order to be designated historic—hence, deserving of systematic preservation—a property must fit into one or more federal, state, or local preservation frameworks. In addition, the property must be one of a recognized number of types eligible for designation. This section provides an overview of the three different levels of designation for a historic property—national, state, and local—and discusses the relevant laws and regulations for a property’s designation at each level. It then describes building types eligible for designation.

##### 4.1.1.1 Federal Designation

###### 4.1.1.1.1 *National Register of Historic Places*

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) is legislation for the protection of cultural resources in the U.S. The NHPA establishes the NRHP, “the official list of the Nation’s historic places worthy of preservation,” as well as a State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for each state, and a Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) for some federally recognized tribes (NPS 2017a). To qualify for listing in the NRHP, a property must possess significance under one or more of the following criteria:

- A. Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. Is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic values, or represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Certain kinds of properties are not typically eligible for listing in the NRHP. Under the criteria considerations, properties such as cemeteries, birthplaces or graves of historical figures, properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, structures moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings, commemorative properties, and properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years are not considered eligible unless they are integral parts of historic districts that do meet the criteria, or if they fall under one of the categories below:

- A. A religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance; or

- B. A building or structure removed from its original location but which is significant primarily for architectural value, or which is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or event; or
- C. A birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance if there is no appropriate site or building directly associated with his productive life; or
- D. A cemetery which derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events; or
- E. A reconstructed building when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other building or structure with the same association has survived; or
- F. A property primarily commemorative in intent if design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own exceptional significance; or
- G. A property achieving significance within the past 50 years if it is of exceptional importance.

If a property is determined to possess historic significance under one of these criteria, its integrity is evaluated using the seven aspects of integrity. The National Register Bulletin *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (NPS 1997) identifies the aspects of integrity, summarized as follows:

- **Location**—The place where the property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.
- **Setting**—The physical environment/character of the place where the property played its historical role.
- **Design**—How well the property retains combinations of elements creating its form, plan, space, structure, and style.
- **Materials**—How physical elements were combined at specific time periods and in particular patterns to create the property.
- **Workmanship**—How well a property retains physical evidence of the crafts of a particular time period in history.
- **Feeling**—The combination of the property’s physical features that express the historic sense of a particular time period.
- **Association**—The direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.

If a property is determined to possess historical significance under one or more criteria, retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance, and meets the criteria considerations, the property is determined to be eligible for listing in the NRHP.

#### **4.1.1.1.2 Other Federal Designations**

A property eligible for the NRHP can also be designated as a National Historic Landmark (NHL) if it possesses national significance. NHL criteria are similar to NRHP criteria, but more stringent, since NHLs are meant to “illustrate and commemorate our collective past and help us to understand our

national identity” (NPS 1999). For example, Historic Fort Snelling—”once the farthest outpost of the U.S. in the homeland of the Dakota Indians,” in addition to being an NRHP-listed historic district, is also an NHL (MNHS 2017a).

In addition to the NRHP, NPS manages other designations for preserving the nation’s cultural resources—in fact, over half of NPS areas preserve places or commemorate persons, events, and activities. National monuments are intended to preserve nationally significant resources but are typically smaller than national parks. National historic sites (often related to military history) and national historical parks (often larger or more complex sites) also exist. National memorials are most often primarily commemorative (NPS 2003). Grand Portage National Monument, for example, aims to “explore the partnership of the Grand Portage Ojibwe and the North West Company during the North American fur trade” (NPS 2017b).

#### **4.1.1.2 State Designation**

Chapter 138 of the Minnesota Statutes (MS) includes legislation for the protection of historic properties, including the Minnesota Historic Sites Act (MS 138.661-138.6691) and the Minnesota Historic Districts Act (MS 138.71-138.75). Other state laws relating to preservation and cultural resources include the Minnesota Field Archaeology Act (MS 138.31-138.42), Municipal Heritage Preservation (MS 471.193), the Minnesota Private Cemeteries Act (MS 307), and the Minnesota Environmental Rights Act (MERA) (MS 116B).

The Minnesota Historic Sites Act establishes the State Historic Sites Network (Network) and the State Register of Historic Places (State Register), and requires that state agencies consult with Minnesota Historical Society (MNHS) before undertaking or licensing projects that may affect properties on the Network, the State Register, or the NRHP. The Network and State Register are lists of historic sites and places, respectively, that have been determined significant to the state’s history. The Minnesota Historic Districts Act designates certain historic districts throughout the state and allows local governing bodies to create commissions to maintain architectural design review control over these areas.

#### **4.1.1.3 Local Designation**

Chapters 73 and 74 of the Saint Paul Code of Ordinances, enacted in 1976, comprise the City’s existing Heritage Preservation Ordinance. Chapter 73 establishes the City’s Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC), authorizes the City to designate heritage preservation sites (including historic districts), presents criteria for eligibility for designation as a heritage preservation site, and authorizes the HPC to review applications for work proposed at locally designated heritage preservation sites. Chapter 74 (Heritage Preservation Districts and Programs) codifies City-designated historic districts, and presents design guidelines for the review of repairs, alterations, new construction, and demolition to properties within a designated district (City of Saint Paul 2017a; City of Saint Paul 2017b)

The HPC considers the following criteria in determining whether an individual building or district is worthy of historic designation (City of Saint Paul 2017b):

- Its character, interest or value is part of the heritage or cultural characteristics of the city of Saint Paul, State of Minnesota, or the United States.

- Its location is the site of a significant historic event.
- Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the City of Saint Paul.
- Its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural or engineering type or specimen.
- Its identification as the work of an architect, engineer, or master builder whose individual work has influenced the development of the City of Saint Paul.
- Its embodiment of elements of architectural or engineering design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represents a significant architectural or engineering innovation.
- Its unique location or physical characteristic representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community or the City of Saint Paul.

#### 4.1.2 PROPERTY TYPES

As described above, throughout its history in Saint Paul, the African American community lacked equal access to the resources possessed by white communities, leading to fewer opportunities for Blacks to design, build, own, or occupy architecturally significant buildings and structures. In addition, many of the properties associated with the African American community were destroyed by urban renewal efforts and freeway construction in the 1950s and 1960s. Finally, African American individuals, families, and communities were often highly mobile due to economic instability and forced relocations in response to events such as urban renewal and freeway construction. Based on the research conducted in the development of this Context Study, it appears that few of the extant properties associated with the African American community's history are over 50 years of age, but a reconnaissance survey will be needed to verify this. Local designation, however, does not have a restriction on age of property.

Out of economic necessity, African Americans often resided in industrial or economically depressed areas, and historic properties in those areas have often been the first buildings slated for demolition when urban renewal is planned. Examples of historic buildings associated with Saint Paul's African American community demolished over the past half-century include many of the residences, businesses, and institutions in the Rondo neighborhood, as well as significant residences, businesses, and institutions in downtown Saint Paul, the heart of the African American community in the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, a variety of historically significant properties remains.

NRHP-eligible and listed properties generally fall into one of five broad categories:

- **Building**—Created principally to shelter any form of human activity. *Examples:* house, barn, church, hotel.
- **Structure**—Functional constructions made for purposes other than creating human shelter. *Examples:* bridge, highway, fence.
- **Object**—Constructions that are primarily artistic in nature or are relatively small in scale and simply constructed; may be movable but is associated with a specific setting or environment. *Examples:* monument, sculpture, fountain. (Note that objects relocated to a museum are not eligible for listing in the NRHP.)

- **Site**—The location of a significant event, occupation, or activity; or a building or structure, whether standing, ruined, or vanished, where the location itself possesses historic, cultural, or archaeological value. It does not need to be marked by physical remains, but documentation should be provided to confirm its location. *Examples:* natural feature having cultural significance, ruins of a building or structure, community site, ceremonial site.
- **District**—A significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development (NPS 2002:4-5).

In particular, properties may be eligible as traditional cultural properties (TCPs) if they possess traditional cultural significance. According to NPS National Register Bulletin 38: *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties*, a traditional cultural property is one that is “associated with the cultural practices or beliefs of a living community that are (a) rooted in the community’s history, and (b) are important in maintaining the continuing cultural identity of the community. They can also include locations “where a community has traditionally carried out economic, artistic, or other cultural practices important in maintaining its historic identity” (NPS 1998).

Buildings are the most common type of property associated with the African American community in Saint Paul and are discussed further below. TCPs are further described as well. A reconnaissance survey and additional historical research are necessary to identify which properties and property types are extant, and to identify other property types that may be eligible for listing in the NRHP for their significance related to Saint Paul’s African American community.

#### **4.1.2.1 Buildings**

##### **4.1.2.1.1 Residences**

A residential property is any building that has housing as its primary purpose. Common residential properties associated with the African American community in Saint Paul consist primarily of single and multi-family dwellings, including houses, apartments, boarding houses, and residential hotels (Tim Kelly Consulting et al. 2016:174). Residences significant for their association with individuals, events, or themes important to Saint Paul’s African American history must be extant and may include the residences of individuals who have played an important role in history at the local, state, or national level, such as Toni Stone (baseball player), Frank L. Boyd (labor activist), or Maurice Carlton (artist). Residences may also be significant for their association with a particular theme, such as the residence where William T. Francis and Nellie Griswold Francis experienced harassment for moving into a white neighborhood with housing covenants that prohibited Blacks, or the series of townhomes on Carroll Avenue built in 1947 by Edward Tilsen of Tilsenbilt Homes, Inc., the first privately-developed integrated rental property in the country (CPED 2016).

##### **4.1.2.1.2 Religious Institutions**

Religious properties such as churches are eligible for listing in the NRHP if they derive their primary significance from their historical importance, or architectural or artistic distinction. The Pilgrim Baptist Church was listed in the NRHP in 1991, and other church properties related to Saint Paul’s African

American community, whether or not they are currently used for religious purposes, may be eligible for listing as well.

#### **4.1.2.1.3 Institutional and Commercial Properties**

Institutional properties include civic, political, and government institutions (e.g., community centers) and private assembly buildings (e.g., social and fraternal halls and clubs). Commercial properties include buildings such as stores, offices, restaurants, and depots. These buildings may be significant for their role in the community as Black-owned or operated institutions and businesses, or because they employed significant portions of the African American community.

Community organizations like Hallie Q. Brown, political organizations like the Saint Paul Urban League, and social clubs like the Sterling Club were all important community resources. These places provided respite from a racist society, promoting cultural values and providing access to services, learning opportunities, and recreation. Likewise, educational institutions such as the Saint Paul Mechanic Arts High School played an important role in the development of African American youth in Saint Paul, both positive (e.g., acquiring skills and knowledge, forming friendships, and receiving mentoring), but also negative (in the form of experiences such as racism, discrimination, and lack of access to the quality materials or facilities to which students at predominantly white schools had access).

The Rondo neighborhood in particular hosted a multitude of African American businesses, including William's Tavern, Finney's Beauty Parlor, Tiger Jack's Shack, and the Majestic Drug Store. Downtown Saint Paul had the Hall Brothers barbershop and *The Western Appeal* newspaper office. While it is likely that a high number of buildings that housed Black-owned businesses were demolished as part of urban renewal and redevelopment efforts (including the construction of I-94), some of these buildings do in fact remain. Another important type of commercial property is industrial property, where goods were manufactured, assembled, processed, or stored. During certain periods, many of Saint Paul's African Americans were employed in industries such as meat-packing and ordnance (although many of these employers were located outside the municipal boundaries of Saint Paul and primarily employed other ethnicities).

Many African Americans in Saint Paul during the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century were employed by the railroad—in particular out of Union Depot—as well as by the U.S. Post Office and in service positions both in commercial ventures (such as hotels) and in private homes. The Saint Paul Union Depot is already listed in the NRHP for its significance in the areas of art, architecture, industry, and transportation, but other buildings that housed businesses or institutions that employed large numbers of African Americans may be eligible for listing as well. Buildings such as Chemical Company No. 4 at 293 Front Street, which remains extant and housed the African American fire company in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, likewise are important in the community's history.

Finally, commercial and institutional buildings may be significant for events important to African American history that occurred at those locations. For example, demonstrations were held by members of the NAACP outside Woolworth's and Grants in Saint Paul in 1960, in protest of these companies'

national segregation policies. The occurrence of these demonstrations and related boycotts across the nation eventually led to the elimination of these businesses' segregation policies. Likewise, demonstrations and occupations of administrative buildings on the University of Minnesota campus led to changes in the university's policies and programs.

#### **4.1.2.1.4 Architecturally Significant Properties**

A building may be significant if it represents the work of a master. Examples include three extant buildings designed by African American municipal architect Clarence Wigington that are listed in the NRHP: Highland Park Water Tower, Harriet Island Pavilion, and the Holman Field Administration Building. Other works by Clarence Wigington may also be eligible for listing in the NRHP, and William Augustus Hazel, an African American architectural designer discussed earlier in this context, may also have extant work within the city and elsewhere in the state.

#### **4.1.2.2 Traditional Cultural Properties**

TCPs are properties eligible for the NRHP for their traditional cultural significance. This significance is derived from “beliefs, customs, and practices of a living community of people that have been passed down through the generations, usually orally or through practice” (Parker and King 1998). NPS provides the following examples of TCPs:

- An urban neighborhood that is the traditional home of a particular cultural group, and that reflects its beliefs and practices.
- A location where a community has traditionally carried out economic, artistic, or other cultural practices important in maintaining its historic identity.

For Saint Paul's African American community, TCPs might include traditional outdoor gathering places, places of protest or organizing, or perhaps even the historic Rondo community itself.

### **4.1.3 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

Historic preservation connects the past to present, providing perspective on where we came from and where we are today. Successful preservation creates a strong sense of place, knits together communities around shared values, and improves quality of life for residents while attracting visitors. Historic preservation is also a strong tool for economic development, creating jobs (in some cases more than new development), stimulating investment, and contributing to the tax base. Incremental, property-by-property reinvestment based on a cohesive preservation approach is a stable, economically viable strategy over the long term. Common funding and partnership strategies to support the socioeconomic benefits of preserving Saint Paul's African American culture and history are described in this section. Specific ideas identified during community meetings are included in Section 4.2.

#### **4.1.3.1 Funding Sources and Incentives for Historic Preservation**

##### **4.1.3.1.1 *Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credits***

The Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program supports the rehabilitation of historic and older buildings and structures “of every period, size, style, and type” (NPS 2012:2). The program is



administered by the NPS with the Internal Revenue Service in partnership with SHPOs. The program's tax incentives attract private investment, generate jobs, enhance property values, and increase state and local government revenues, as well as assist in the development of moderate and low-income housing in historic buildings (NPS 2012:2). The tax incentives offered are:

- A 20 percent tax credit for the certified rehabilitation of certified historic structures; and
- A 10 percent tax credit for the rehabilitation of non-historic, non-residential buildings built before 1936.

NPS provides the following definitions for terminology used above. For more information, see the NPS brochure *Historic Preservation Tax Incentives*, 2012.

- A *certified historic structure* is a building that is listed individually in the NRHP or a building that is located in a registered historic district and certified by the NPS as contributing to the historic significance of that district. A registered historic district is any district listed in the NRHP. A state or local historic district may also qualify as a registered historic district if the district and the enabling statute are certified by the Secretary of the Interior.
- A *certified rehabilitation* is a rehabilitation of a certified historic structure that is approved by the NPS as being consistent with the historic character of the property and, where applicable, the district in which it is located. (NPS 2012:4-5).

For buildings that have not yet been listed in the NRHP, the NPS provides building owners the opportunity to submit Part 1 of the Historic Preservation Certification Application to request a preliminary determination of significance, which allows NPS to review Part 2 of the application describing the proposed rehabilitation. If a preliminary determination of significance is made, the owner is then responsible for having the property listed in a timely manner (NPS 2012:6).

The City of Saint Paul's 2009 Historic Preservation Plan identified the use of Federal Historic Preservation Tax credits as a preservation strategy for rehabilitating NRHP-eligible or listed income-producing properties and increasing affordable housing by encouraging the conversion of historic buildings such as warehouses and commercial buildings into housing. The plan also notes that the credits can be used in combination with Federal New Market Tax Credits (City of Saint Paul 2009). The New Markets Tax Credit Program provides incentives for private investors to invest in business and real estates in low-income communities in the U.S. (U.S. Department of the Treasury 2017).

#### **4.1.3.1.1 Minnesota Historic Structure Rehabilitation Tax Credits**

The Minnesota Historic Structure Rehabilitation Tax Credit offers a 20 percent tax credit for qualified historic rehabilitations. This program parallels the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program (Minnesota Department of Revenue 2017; MnHPO 2017).

#### **4.1.3.1.2 Legacy Grants**

The Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund portion of the Minnesota Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment allocates 19.75 percent of sales tax revenue to support arts, arts education, and arts access, and to preserve Minnesota’s history and cultural heritage. One of the ways in which funding is disbursed is through Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grants (Legacy Grants). Legacy Grants fund a variety of culture and history projects throughout the state, and offer history and culture organizations, as well as municipalities, the opportunity to further their goals in areas such as historical preservation, access, and programming. Eligible project categories include heritage tourism projects, such as heritage tourism plans, wayfinding for historic resources, and walking and mobile tour development; interpretation and public education projects, such as exhibits, historical markers, tour brochures, and the development of educational curricula; and historic preservation projects, such as historic preservation survey, inventory, and evaluation, and the preparation of NRHP nominations (MNHS 2017b). Development of this report was funded by a Legacy Grant.

#### **4.1.3.1.3 Historic Saint Paul’s Restore Saint Paul Loan Program**

Historic Saint Paul, a local nonprofit established in 1998 to serve as a catalyst for the conservation of Saint Paul’s heritage resources, achieves its mission in part through the Restore Saint Paul Loan Program. Through this program, Historic Saint Paul works directly with property owners to provide low-interest loans and technical assistance that support rehabilitation projects sensitive to the structures’ cultural and architectural context. Historic Saint Paul also works with property owners and partners to evaluate reuse alternatives and to mobilize public and private support and resources for rehabilitation projects (Historic Saint Paul 2017).

#### **4.1.3.2 Partnership Assessment and Priorities**

This Context Study is the result of a partnership between ASANDC, the Rondo Arts and Cultural Business District, and Historic Saint Paul. The partnering of community, cultural, and historic preservation organizations and consultants supports historical and cultural projects by assembling the necessary expertise to make a project effective and successful. Below is a discussion of potential partners for future projects to preserve, protect, and promote Saint Paul’s African American heritage.

##### **4.1.3.2.1 Community and Cultural Organizations**

Various community and cultural organizations such as ASANDC, Rondo Avenue Inc., Hallie Q. Brown Community Center, NAACP, CultureBrokers LLC, and Model Cities of St. Paul, Inc.<sup>16</sup> possess in-depth knowledge and understanding of the community’s history as well as its current strengths and resources. These organizations are able to leverage extensive networks, both within and beyond the community

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<sup>16</sup> Model Cities of St. Paul was founded in 1967 by members of St. James AME Church “to remedy health access issues among low income residents of St. Paul’s Summit-University community.” While it has its origins in the federal Model Cities Program, Model Cities of St. Paul is a private nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the health and wellbeing of the communities it serves and fully integrating human services with economic development (Model Cities of St. Paul, Inc. 2010).

itself, and by partnering with one another, are able to utilize each organization's resources and efforts to achieve wider successes.

#### **4.1.3.2.2 *Individuals***

Individuals working to promote community culture, history, health, and values, including local artists, musicians, writers, activists, and historians, are key resources and potential partners as well. Public outreach geared toward individuals and the organizations with which they are associated is a powerful tool to support preservation education and advocacy.

#### **4.1.3.2.3 *Educational Institutions***

Partnering with local schools, colleges, and universities offers the opportunity to share expertise, networks, and resources, as well as provide students with valuable opportunities to learn and acquire skills while increasing their knowledge of community history and fostering community pride.

#### **4.1.3.2.4 *Historic Saint Paul***

The mission of Historic Saint Paul, founded in 1998 by a group of citizens, in cooperation with the City of Saint Paul, is “to preserve and promote the cultural heritage, character, and vitality of Saint Paul neighborhoods” (Historic Saint Paul 2017). Historic Saint Paul works in partnership with private owners, community organizations, and public agencies to leverage Saint Paul's cultural and heritage resources as assets in economic development and community building initiatives. Historic Saint Paul works through three program areas: neighborhood preservation (including the Restore Saint Paul Loan Program discussed above), advocacy (advancing policies and projects that protect and enhance St. Paul's historic resources), and cultural heritage (promoting areas of cultural interest city-wide) (Carol Carey, Historic Saint Paul, email communication with the author, February 26, 2017).

#### **4.1.3.2.5 *Preservation Alliance of Minnesota***

The mission of Preservation Alliance of Minnesota (PAM) is “to lead and inspire people to connect with historic places, promoting community vitality.” PAM offers fee-for-service assistance to support the use, reuse, and preservation of historic buildings and sites, including educational and training opportunities, planning and advocacy, and real estate services. Organizations such as Historic Saint Paul, PAM, and MNHS (discussed below), are also positioned to work with community organizations to help educate property owners about the importance of preserving the historic fabric of the city, and about the economic benefits of having a property designated.

#### **4.1.3.2.6 *Ramsey County Historical Society***

The Ramsey County Historical Society (RCHS) contains a repository of local historical information, offers research assistance, and provides programming on a variety of local history topics.

#### **4.1.3.2.7 Minnesota Historical Society**

MNHS is a multifaceted resource, providing state and local history services, overseeing funding opportunities such as Legacy Grants, offering programming and educational resources for a variety of historical themes and topics, and serving as a repository for the state's history. MNHS has sponsored the Minnesota Black History Project (1970-1975), the Rondo Oral History Project (in partnership with RCHS, 1997-1998, 2003-2004), Our Gathering Places Oral History Project (1997-1998), Black Minnesotans Project (1989-1991). It maintains extensive collections on African American history statewide, including a variety of materials on Saint Paul's African American community. These include books, articles, and academic works on the Black community, organizational records of Black social clubs and churches, and the digitized oral history transcripts and audio files of the oral history projects mentioned above.

#### **4.1.3.2.8 Digital Placemaking Websites**

Digital placemaking websites such as Saint Paul Historical (SaintPaulHistorical.com) and Placeography (Placeography.org) offer virtual tours of historic locations in Saint Paul. CultureBrokers LLC (and CultureBrokers Foundation, Inc.) has partnered with Saint Paul Historical and Placeography to provide a digital version of the African American Heritage Tour and Discover Black Minnesota Tour. These websites also provide the opportunity for individuals to submit locations, photos, and historical information to help document Saint Paul's African American history.

### **4.1.4 THREATS TO RESOURCES**

There a finite number of resources in Saint Paul associated with its African American history and culture, and many are irreplaceable. Underlying these threats is the fact that, despite an African American presence in Saint Paul for over 150 years, insufficient resources have been committed to preservation. These resources face a variety of common threats, including but not limited to the following:

- Lack of direct and deep engagement by city departments and commissions with its African American community.
- Lack of awareness and understanding about the significance of a property, primarily because of lack of official documentation and designation.
- Development pressures.
- Lack of prioritization, in some cases, in the appropriate city departments and commissions (e.g. Planning and Economic Development, HPC) for certain preservation activities.
- Lack of reuse opportunities or lack of resources to implement reuse.
- Neglect or intentional destruction, sometimes leading to demolition.
- Lack of community awareness of government and legal processes and resources to enable preservation.

## 4.2 Community Recommendations

In addition to the above overview of the historic preservation process as it applies to this Context Study, and recommendations that emerged from the development of the context itself, this section summarizes recommendations advanced by the community through the Context Study’s engagement efforts. The Advisory Group initially brainstormed these priorities, then further developed and categorized them. They provided the framework for discussion at the broader community workshop, where they were further expanded and defined. The points included below are the Consultant Team’s documentation of this feedback. These bullet points have been included in their entirety rather than summarized, so that the community can decide how to best utilize the information to pursue self-identified goals.

The Advisory Group identified a number of issues as most urgent, reflecting community input, among those presented in full in the seven categories below:

- Obtain more oral histories from elders.
- Develop a research design and literature review to prepare for conducting a reconnaissance survey of buildings and sites.
- Secure financial and other resources to support the work.
- Build a team of preservation “watchdogs” or ombudsmen who will stay alert to threats to historic resources, and will act to ensure community interests are protected.
- Plan for meaningful restitution for losses of the Black community’s historical and cultural assets.

### 4.2.1 PRESERVE & PROTECT

- Resources are needed for preservation—funding, how-to information, information on partners and partnering strategies, and collaborators themselves.
  - Create an MNHS Rondo History Fellowship Program.
- Additional research is needed:
  - Additional research should be done on specific people and places significant to Saint Paul’s Black history and culture.
- It is integral to ensure people’s access to historical archives and the wealth of information that’s available.
  - The community should not have to pay to see and print photos of our people in the MNHS archives.
- Oral histories are a priority:
  - There is an urgency to conduct oral histories due to aging elders—it’s important to access their stories and resources now.
- Reconnaissance survey is an important next step.
- It is important to establish control over our narratives, history, and assets.
- African American burial sites need protection.
- Preservation is also regenerative:
  - It’s important to preserve stories associated with places, as well as to preserve, maintain, and create venues for telling stories.
  - Efforts should be institutionalized so they have continuity.

#### **4.2.2 COLLABORATE & BUILD COMMUNITY**

- Community-based collaborations can help sustain this effort:
  - Continue the Advisory Group or subgroups that build special interest communities (e.g. history group)—consider starting an African American history club.
  - Leverage existing social capital, including existing groups—like the Cultural Wellness Center.
- Connections are key:
  - Partner with powerful and allied mainstream organizations.
  - Enable and support the sharing of information.
  - Invite and include current, future, and potential funders (individuals, organizations, and businesses) to the effort.
  - Include other, non-Rondo communities and histories (e.g. downtown)—some relocated to or from Rondo.
  - Include new residents.
  - Value allies and relationships—include current and potential allies (like planners, developers, Historic Saint Paul, Ramsey County, Ramsey County Historical Society).
- Efforts must be expanded, cross racial lines, and go beyond education:
  - Use online, social media, and technology.
  - Enable collective investments and create mutual benefit.
- Make history personal:
  - Love, respect, and refer opportunities to each other.
  - Build intentional internal strength.
  - Cultivate regenerative culture and history.
  - Come to know the heart and community of the past (e.g. Rondo) to enable healing.
  - Work together across events and situations to communicate history.
  - Connect elders and youth over history.

#### **4.2.3 EDUCATE, INTERPRET & CREATE**

- Focus on youth:
  - History can feel confusing, boring, hidden, and not “about me”—make it personal.
  - Focus on connections and topics important to youth—connections to family and community, national themes like the Harlem Renaissance, elders’ involvement at schools and other classroom activities.
  - Promote History Day at schools.
  - Include Rondo in school history curriculum—make recommendation to the school district and provide this historic context and other materials.
  - Cultivate perspective that learning about history makes the future better.
  - Youth need to understand the “shoulders they’re standing on.”
  - Seeing yourself in history leads to academic success.
- Art is a multifaceted opportunity:
  - Options are limitless—masks of historical figures as a school activity, Highwaymen performance at MnDOT employee panel, etc.
  - Art can be policy education.

- Public and commercial artwork is an important artistic response.
- Emphasize continuity by teaching history repeatedly and in different ways—Rondo Plaza, “story behind Rondo” event, Juneteenth, elders’ storytelling at events, weekly sharing, etc.
- Education should include information about preservation:
  - What does preservation mean or not (e.g., limitations placed on property owner).
- Interpretation can uncover important themes:
  - Cultivating knowledge of Rondo among all, and the connections to migration and knowing ones roots and understanding a national context.
  - Understanding epigenetic trauma.

#### **4.2.4 INFLUENCE POLICY**

- Address systems that are problematic to our goals related to Black history—policy should be a tool for positive change.
- Work with other cultural groups and related efforts to champion policy changes.
- Contribute to information for HPC review of condemned buildings.
- Explore taking information directly to policy makers, e.g., Highwaymen reading to MnDOT.
- Citizens need to exercise civic responsibility—there’s a new wave in people exercising their civic responsibility working with the political apparatus.
- It’s important to document economic injustices and changes in wealth brought about through public policy decisions.
- Need institutions and processes to ensure regeneration and protection of our history.
- Need to find resources to influence policy, e.g., banks.
- Recognize history of how policies have affected where people live, e.g., the map of the “Negro slums.”

#### **4.2.5 REMEDY LOSSES**

- Have a plan, options, and resources to secure meaningful, commensurate restitutions for any future losses of the Black community’s historical and cultural assets which may occur.
- Need to ensure mistakes are not repeated—the community shouldn’t be ignored, undermined, exploited, or provided with inadequate options. Efforts must benefit and value the community, etc.
  - Tell stories of history to avoid repetition, e.g., I-94 through Rondo and now LRT.
  - Cultural amnesia and epigenetic trauma affects descendents and others.
- Need to gather resources to remedy losses and preserve what’s most important to us.
- Consider a regenerative process to gather, preserve, and reconcile our history:
  - Need to understand what we have lost—the unified community of Rondo.
  - Acknowledge and remedy a skipped generation because of loss of capital from I-94—need a plan for remediation for individuals’ and institutions’ economic and cultural losses. Explore concepts of inheritance, a gap, and loss of assets.
  - Restitution involves restoring information and truth in historical events and narratives.
  - Forgive each other, come together, and “throw the rope back.”
  - This should be model for future processes.



- Consider models like “Coming to the Table” group in Virginia and Truth and Reconciliation in Bemidji.

#### **4.2.6 BUILD LOCAL ECONOMIES**

- Career-building opportunities for African Americans are needed in heritage preservation and related fields.
  - Whites have always benefited from exploiting Black history.
- Preservation and rehabilitation/improvements are needed to support economic opportunities—this work must connect to future economic opportunities.
- Need to find ways to protect what we create.
- Consider the idea of “the village”—Rondo encompassed everything we needed.
- History can be an economic driver—this is how history “lives” and has continued relevancy:
  - Provide visitors an African American history of Saint Paul and places to visit.
  - Develop cultural tourism opportunities, e.g., tour facilities, places (local businesses) to stop on a tour.
  - See other communities nationwide for examples.

#### **4.2.7 CULTIVATE LEADERSHIP & ACCOUNTABILITY**

- People from the community should write the content of their history.
- Everyone—Blacks, whites, and other groups—are accountable to our shared history; what came before.
- Dialogue is needed on both sides, and among groups.
  - Plan and methods need to be in place to hold leaders accountable to history, their decisions, and implementation.
  - This includes protecting new and renewed resources from being taken (again) through political, legal, and physical protection.
  - Hold mainstream institutions accountable for sharing and protecting Black history.
  - Ensure we have choices.
- Hold others and ourselves accountable to protect, preserve, and regenerate—exercise our civic responsibility, leverage our political capital, and get involved.
  - Ensure it is for our wellbeing and benefit when others use our history and culture to attract and retain assets (funding, attention, etc.).
- Integrate this context into a “master plan” for Black communities, the foundation for and part of a whole.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

Saint Paul’s African American community is long established—rooted, yet dynamic. From their beginnings, Blacks in Minnesota have had tremendous impact on the state’s economy, culture, and political development. Although there has been an African American presence in Saint Paul for more than 150 years, adequate research has not been completed to account for and protect sites with significance to the community. The Saint Paul African American Historic and Cultural Context Project made progress toward this end: it had as its primary objective development of a historic context of the city’s Black community, to lay a solid foundation for identification of key sites of historic significance and advancing

preservation of these sites and their stories. Leadership provided by the core Context Study Team and larger Advisory Group—as well as guidance from the broader community—framed the context development to best fulfill future opportunities to capitalize on the social and economic benefits of heritage preservation.

This report contains the Saint Paul African American Historic and Cultural Context, as well as recommendations informed by it and, most importantly, priorities in a number of areas as identified by the community. It is the hope that the report lays a solid foundation to advance preservation of critical African American cultural sites, places, and stories, and for future efforts that allow the community to capitalize on the social and economic benefits of heritage preservation. The report should be made readily available to cultural, civic, and economic development organizations working to draw visitors interested in the cultural heritage and contributions of Saint Paul's African American community and by arts, educational, and other organizations.

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## **APPENDIX A: RESEARCH DESIGN**



**106GROUP**

# **SAINT PAUL AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORIC AND CULTURAL CONTEXT RESEARCH DESIGN**

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**Saint Paul, Ramsey County, Minnesota**

October 2016



# **SAINT PAUL AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORIC AND CULTURAL CONTEXT RESEARCH DESIGN**

**Saint Paul, Ramsey County, Minnesota**

SHPO File No. Pending

106 Group Project No. 2206

**SUBMITTED TO:**

Aurora Saint Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation

774 University Avenue

St. Paul, MN 55104

**SUBMITTED BY:**

106 Group

1295 Bandana Blvd.

Suite 335

St. Paul, MN 55108

October 2016

# 1.0 OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this investigation is to develop a historic context of the African American community in Saint Paul. The development of a historic context will provide a foundation for the identification of key sites of historic significance throughout the city. In addition, despite the availability of research materials on the history of the African American community in Saint Paul, and the inventory of some structures associated with African American history, traditional cultural places are often not addressed during historic resources surveys and remain an underrepresented resource in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Therefore, this historic context is also considered a cultural context and will consider the potential for traditional cultural properties, places that are of cultural significance but may not be embodied in buildings and structures. For the purpose of this study, these places will be referred to as traditional cultural places (TCPs). The physical extent of the context study will include the current boundaries of the City of Saint Paul.

There are no existing statewide Post Contact Period or Thematic contexts related to African American communities or property types in Minnesota. Any historic contexts prepared for architecture/history surveys previously conducted in Saint Paul that are related to African American communities and property types will be obtained from the Minnesota Historic Preservation Office (MnHPO) files.

Known places with significance in the African American community of Saint Paul include, but are not limited to, the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center, Urban League Building, Central High School, Saint Paul Mechanic Arts (Manual Training) High School, Pilgrim Baptist Church, and Union Depot. Additional property types to be identified in the context will include properties and places associated with the African American community, including migration, religious institutions, business and industry, arts and culture, education, politics, journalism, and significant leaders and events.

Historical documentation to be gathered will include community studies, articles, manuscripts, books, oral histories, and media materials located at the Minnesota Historical Society; Ramsey County Historical Society; Saint Paul Public Library - George Latimer Central Library and Rondo Library; Hallie Q. Brown Community Center Archives; Rondo Neighborhood, Inc. Archives; and additional repositories such as various Minnesota State Colleges and University campuses libraries and African American social clubs (which may potentially include the Credjafawn Social Club, Pioneer Club, Black Elk, and Cameo Social Club).

Materials to be reviewed in order to develop the context may include, but are not limited to, the following:

## Archives and Manuscripts

- Anderson, Marvin. "A Short History of the Saint Paul Union Depot Red Caps," 2013.
- Credjafawn Social Club (Saint Paul, Minn.): An Inventory of Its Club Records, 1927-2071.
- Hallie Q. Brown Community House: An Inventory of its Records, 1921-1996.
- Marvin R. Anderson: An Inventory of Rondo Neighborhood Photographs, 1900-1969.
- Mount Olivet Baptist Church: An Inventory of its records, 1922-1998.
- Ramsey County: St. Paul: School Records: Independent School District No. 625: An Inventory of its Miscellaneous School Materials, 1865-1996.
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## Books and Articles

- A Study of Interstate Highway 94 from Pillsbury to Aldine Streets, Saint Paul: Merriam Park Area. Saint Paul, MN: Minnesota Department of Highways, 1961.
- Department of Fire and Safety Services. *Proud Traditions: A History in Words and Pictures of St. Paul Firefighters 1854-1979*. Saint Paul, MN: Department of Fire and Safety Services, 1979.
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- ———. “St. Paul’s Resourceful African-American Community.” *Ramsey County History* 26, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 4–15.

## Community Studies

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- Davis, F. James. “Freeway Exodus; Experiences in Finding Housing as a Result of the St. Anthony-Rondo Freeway Displacement from Western to Lexington Avenues in St. Paul; a Research Report, August 1, 1962.” Hamline University, August 1962.
- Housing and Redevelopment Authority of the City of Saint Paul “Summit-University: A Community in Crisis,” 1966.
- Nation, Marcia. “Black Businesses on Rondo Avenue, St. Paul.” Honors Paper, Macalester College, 1985.
- Torstenson, Joel S. “Summit-University: Profile and Prospectus of an Inner-City Community.” Augsburg College, Social Science Research Center and Housing and Redevelopment Authority of the City of Saint Paul, 1966.

## Community Engagement

National Register Bulletin *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties*. *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties* defines a traditional cultural place as a “property that is eligible for inclusion in the National Register because of its association with cultural practices or beliefs of a living community that (a) are rooted in that community’s history and (b) important in maintaining the continuing identity of the community” (Parker and King 1990). Because traditional cultural places are properties that have significance for their association with the beliefs, customs, and practices of a living community, in order to identify a property with traditional cultural significance, it is important to more clearly understand the worldview and practices of the community that ascribes value to it. Conventional written records and histories may not include a cultural community’s understanding of their past, which is critical for identifying traditional cultural places. Therefore, in addition to archival and online research, members of the community will be consulted through a series of community meetings with elders and the broader community. Their input will be sought on key histories, buildings, and places, and this information will provide direction for researchers.

## Documentary

Twin Cities Public Television. North Star: Minnesota’s Black Pioneers. Aired September 24, 2004.

## Maps

- Burbank, Richard H. “Map of the City of Saint Paul, Capital of the State of Minnesota: Done in the Old Style for Your Education and Enjoyment, Showing All Points of Interest.” Saint Paul Association of Commerce, 1931.
- Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Maps, Saint Paul, Minnesota. 1903-1951.

## Newspapers

Review relevant articles in all Twin Cities African American newspapers such as the following:

- Minneapolis Spokesman: Black Newspaper, 1934-2000. Weekly.
- Northwestern Bulletin-Appeal, 1924-1925. Weekly.
- Northwest Monitor, Black Newspaper, 1930-1931. Weekly.
- Saint Paul Recorder: Black Newspaper, 1934- (2000?). Weekly.
- Saint Paul Sun, Black Newspaper, 1941 - 1976. Weekly.
- The Saint Paul Echo: Black Newspaper, 1925-1927. Weekly.
- Twin City Herald: Black Newspaper, 1927, 1932-1940. Weekly.
- Twin Cities Leader: Black Newspaper, 1940-1941. Weekly.
- Twin Cities Observer, Black Newspaper, 1943 – 1976. Weekly.

## Oral Histories

- Minnesota Black History Project Oral History Interviews. 32 interviews, 1970-1975.
- Our Gathering Places Oral History Project. 27 Interviews, 1997-1998.
- Rondo Oral History Project. 34 Interviews, 1997-1998, 2003-2004.

## Online Sources

- African American Registry
- CultureBrokers Foundation, Inc. “Points of Entry: The African American Heritage Guide to Saint Paul.” 2008.
- CultureBrokers Foundation, Inc. “Spirit of Rondo: The African American Heritage Guide to Saint Paul.” 2010.

## Thesis

- Foxworth, Kenneth C. “The Urban Renewal Devastation of the Rondo Community.” Mankato State University, 1991.
- Nation, Marcia. “Black Businesses on Rondo Avenue, St. Paul.” Honors Paper, Macalester College, 1985.

## 2.0 METHODS

All work will be conducted in accordance with MnHPO's *Guidelines for History/Architecture Projects in Minnesota* (MnHPO 2010), the *Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning, National Register Bulletin 24* (Parker 1985), *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties* (Parker & King 1990), and *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation as Amended and Annotated* by qualified professionals meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards (National Park Service 1983).

### Archival Research

Archival research materials to be obtained and reviewed and the repositories to visit as part of this project are documented in the Objectives section. The cultural context will include a bibliography that will notate from what repositories the materials were obtained.

### Survey

No field survey will be conducted as part of this project. Identification of key property types will be based on previous inventories, archival research, and community input. Some visual reconnaissance may be conducted, as appropriate.

## 3.0 EXPECTED RESULTS

Broad themes such as important events and persons, buildings, and cultural values will be identified to inform the organization and layout of the context. Within these themes, the context will address topics pertaining to the African American community, including migration, religious institutions, business and industry, arts and culture, education, politics, journalism, and significant leaders and events. The context will explore the African American community in Saint Paul through the time period of 1837 to 1975. At a minimum, the context will identify known properties of historic significance and describe those eligible for listing in the NRHP; provide a history of significant time periods; identify threats to resources; include historical photographs of significant historical figures or events that substantiate the conclusions of the report; and describe additional research needs.

Development of a context on Saint Paul's African American community will accomplish the following:

- 1) Provide a foundation for the identification of key sites of historic and cultural significance;
- 2) Facilitate the preparation of National Register nominations;
- 3) Allow for future efforts within the African American community to capitalize on the social and economic benefits of heritage preservation; and
- 4) Help fulfill some of the Minnesota statewide preservation plan's goals and strategies for 2012-2017 including filling in gaps in the survey records by focusing on traditional cultural properties, and expanding efforts to include properties associated with underrepresented groups (MnHPO 2012:24-25).



## Proposed Context Outline

- I. Abstract/Management Summary
  - a. Acknowledgments
- II. Introduction
  - a. Historic and cultural context
  - b. Community engagement
- III. Research Design and Methodology
- IV. Community Engagement Approach
- V. African American Settlement in Saint Paul
  - a. Nineteenth century
    - i. Lower Landing
  - b. The Great Migration, 1910-1970
    - i. Rondo
    - ii. Summit-University Neighborhood
- VI. Cultural Heritage
  - a. Significant Events
    - i. Underground Railroad
    - ii. Pilgrim Baptist Church Formally Organized, 1866
    - iii. Twin Cities Urban League is founded, 1923
    - iv. Hallie Q. Brown Community Center opens, 1929
    - v. Civil Rights Movement
    - vi. I-94 construction and displacement
  - b. Significant Leaders
    - i. Robert T. Hickman
    - ii. Frederick L. McGhee
    - iii. Roy Wilkins
    - iv. Frank Boyd
    - v. Nellie Griswold Francis
    - vi. Others to be added, as appropriate, based on research
  - c. Significant Entrepreneurs/Professionals
    - i. James Thompson
    - ii. Robert James Hilyard
    - iii. Dr. Valdo Turner
    - iv. Casiville Bullard
    - v. Leona O. Smith
    - vi. William R. Godette
    - vii. Others to be added, as appropriate, based on research

- VII. Property Types (with examples provided, to be expanded following in depth research)
  - a. Religious Institutions
    - i. Pilgrim Baptist Church
    - ii. Mount Olivet Baptist Church
  - b. Business and Industry
    - i. Union Depot
  - c. Arts and Culture
    - i. Hallie Q. Brown Community Center
    - ii. Sterling Club
  - d. Education
    - i. Central High School
    - ii. John Marshall High School
    - iii. Maxfield Elementary School
    - iv. McKinley School
    - v. Saint Paul Mechanic Arts (Manual Training) High School
  - e. Politics
    - i. Urban League Building
  - f. Journalism
  - g. Traditional Cultural Properties
    - i. Outdoor gathering places
    - ii. Places of protest
- VIII. Potential Threats to Resources
- IX. Conclusion
  - a. Types of historic designation
    - i. NRHP
    - ii. Minnesota Register of Historic Places
    - iii. Local designation
  - b. Social and economic benefits of historic preservation
    - i. Funding sources and incentives for historic preservation
    - ii. Historic preservation laws and regulations, and potential for adoption of a local historic preservation ordinance
    - iii. Partnership assessment and priorities
  - c. Priorities for future work
    - i. Summary of NRHP eligible properties
  - d. Additional Research Needs
    - i. List of properties that should be researched in greater depth

## 4.0 REFERENCES CITED

Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office [MnHPO]

2010 *Guidelines for History/Architecture Projects in Minnesota*. Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul, Minnesota.

2012 *A New Season, Preservation Plan for Minnesota's Historic Properties, 2012-2017*. Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul, Minnesota.

National Park Service

1983 Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. *Federal Register* 48(190):44716-44740.

Parker, Patricia L.

1985 *Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning*. National Register Bulletin 24. Revised. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Washington, D.C.

Parker, Patricia L. and Thomas F. King.

1998 *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties*. National Register Bulletin 38. Revised. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Washington, D.C.

## **APPENDIX B: PROJECT PERSONNEL**

# LIST OF PERSONNEL

## **Principal-In-Charge**

Anne Ketz, M.A., RPA, CIP

## **Project Manager**

Kelly Wilder, J.D.

## **Historian & Principal Investigator**

Nicole Foss, M.A.

## **Facilitators**

Kelly Wilder, J.D.

Lisa Tabor

Anne Ketz, M.A., RPA, CIP

## **APPENDIX C: COMMUNITY OUTREACH MATERIALS**



**106GROUP**

**Main Office**

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St Paul MN 55108

**Locations**

Boston MA  
Richmond VA  
Washington DC

**106group.com**

November 4, 2016

Nieeta Presley

Executive Director

Aurora/St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation (ASANDC)

774 University Avenue West

Saint Paul, MN 55104

Re: Technical Advisory Group Meeting Report  
Saint Paul African American Historic and Cultural Context Study

Dear Nieeta:

I am writing to report back on the Technical Advisory Group meetings held Thursday and Friday, October 27 and 28, at Golden Thyme Coffee & Cafe. The purpose of these meetings was to convene community leaders familiar with African American history in Saint Paul and active in related efforts.

As hoped, we received guidance that will be instrumental as we begin to develop the Saint Paul African American Historic and Cultural Context Study. Specifically, meeting attendees helped us understand the major patterns and trends in the city's African American history. This understanding will directly inform our efforts to gather research materials, and to interpret them appropriately in effectively completing the context study. The study will provide the foundation for future efforts to identify specific occurrences, properties, and sites significant in the city's African American historical and cultural landscape.

Please find attached meeting notes and a list of attendees. We would appreciate your assistance in disseminating this information to attendees as well as Technical Advisory Group members who could not attend. We would like to report back to the Technical Advisory Group when we have a draft of the report completed. Per the current project schedule, this meeting is scheduled for:

**Technical Advisory Group Meeting #2**  
**Friday, January 13, 2017**

*(over)*

After incorporating the Technical Advisory Group's feedback into the draft, we would then appreciate an opportunity to present the project to the broader community. In particular, this will be an opportunity for the community to determine important next steps that we will document in the report. Per the current project schedule, this meeting is scheduled for:

**Community Workshop**  
**Saturday, January 28, 2017**

We look forward to continuing to work closely with ASANDC and project partners over the coming months.

Sincerely,

THE 106 GROUP LTD.



Kelly Wilder  
Senior Resources Planner

cc: Carol Carey, Historic St. Paul  
Noel Nix, Ramsey County  
Lisa Tabor, CultureBrokers



# SAINT PAUL AFRICAN AMERICAN CONTEXT STUDY

Technical Advisory Group Meeting Notes

October 27 and 28, 2016

## Attendees

### **October 27:**

#### **Technical Advisory Group Members**

- Veronica Burt
- Melvin Carter, Jr.
- Clifford Dodd
- Leetta Douglas
- Debbie Montgomery
- Steven Trimble
- Aleah Vinick

#### **Project Team Members**

- Nieeta Presley
- Roxanne Draughn
- Carol Carey
- Noel Nix
- Lisa Tabor
- Anne Ketz
- Kelly Wilder
- Tyler Lund-Kyrola

### **October 28:**

#### **Technical Advisory Group Members**

- Ta'coumba Aiken
- Robin Hickman
- Nick Khaliq
- Lori Peterson
- Steve Wilson
- Haley Wotzka
- Angela Burns

#### **Project Team Members**

- Nieeta Presley
- Roxanne Draughn
- Carol Carey
- Noel Nix
- Lisa Tabor
- Kelly Wilder
- Brooke Dirtzu
- Marika Proctor

## Topics and Themes

### **Notes from October 27:**

- Female professionals and leaders
- Women's rights (+civil rights)
- Children and their experience
- Language
- Performances
- Relations and relationships and alliances
- Allies
- Oral history
- Natural resources
- Crime
- Notable visitors
- Green book
- Wigington properties
- Music and genres
- Military heroes
- Sports
- Rondo
- Schools
- Business leaders
- Businesses
  - Drug stores
  - Barbershops/beauty
  - Entertainment
  - Funeral homes
  - Restaurants
  - Pool halls
- Newspapers/publications
- Transportation/planning
- Employment
  - Railroads
  - Packing house
  - Unions/labor
- Food
- Places of worship
- Housing
- Finance
- Policy
- Politics/government
- Celebrations/rituals
- Migrations
- Underground Railroad
- Missing places and missing stories
- Post-civil rights employment
  - Honeywell
  - Control data
  - Donaldson Company
- Architecture (windows)
- Civic rights
- Religious leaders
- Demonstrations and organizing
- Famous personalities
- Authors
- Segregation
- Violence
  - Physical and economic
- Real estate

## **Notes from October 28:**

- 1921 Anti-Lynching Law
- Education
  - Community schools
  - Desegregation
  - Disparities
- Social and racial justice
- Negative impact of government action/inaction
- Transportation
  - Railroads
- Pathways of belonging and authority
- Early Settlement
  - Joseph Rondeau
  - Gaps in history
- Selby-Dale/Summit-University (rebuilding)
- Professional Black athletes
- Migration
- Soldiers of Fort Snelling
  - Militia - community watch dogs
- Women's Social Groups – Credjafawn, Continental, Zodiac, Regalettes
- Roy Wilkins
- Youth Groups
  - 3/4s
- Social Groups
  - Jack & Jill
  - The 40s Club
  - Inner City Youth League
  - Hallie Q. Brown
  - The Loft
  - Sterling Club
  - Ober Club
  - Black Vikings and Twins Club
- Perception and deception
- Class and "slum clearance"
- Business
- Financial institutions
  - Credit unions
  - Business as community lenders
- Devalued and Expendable
- Connections to Black communities outside St. Paul
- Larger historical context of the US
- Resilience
- Red Cap

## **Property Types**

### **Notes from October 27:**

- Homes
- Businesses
- Recreation/community centers
- Churches and places of worship
- Institutions
  - Civic
  - Military
  - Social
- Civil rights
  - Pilgrim Baptist
- Demonstration sites
- Ballpark
- Political leaders
- MN club
- River
- Railroads
- Bluff (= "made it")
- Marydale Lake
- Roller gardens and rinks
- Prom center
- Buildings w/out windows (violence)
- Parks and playgrounds
- Brothels
- Underworld
- Speakeasies

## **Notes from October 28:**

- Parks and playgrounds
- Oxford, the hallow
- Unwed mothers' homes
- Inner City Youth League building
- Art in the community/Maurice Carleton
- Boarding/settlement homes
- Hallie Q. Brown
- Redevelopments by African American communities

## Recommendations

### **Notes from October 27:**

- Business plan
  - What to mark/recognize
  - vs. what to reconstruct
- Elders' stories and resources
- Survey
  - Identify buildings - core examples and those connected to/representative of Black history
  - Sites
- Seize moments and connections to tell stories (like when BLM took over I-94)
- Preserve what's in place
- Address legislation that's problematic
- Long history of professionals of color at certain corporations, should be recognized
- Two important goals:
  - Tap existing big events
  - Partners
  - Need "product" to market
  - Incorporate story where missing
  - Virtual map/reality
    - Kiosk like proposed @ Victoria Green Line station
  - Full oral history project
  - Tours & excursions (tap river boats)
  - Tourism - tourists staying in a place and spending money there

### **Notes from October 28:**

- Internships and building capacity
- Strategies to ensure that losses are replaced and how to hold people accountable
- Remedies
- Legal action
- Exhibit at MHS that explores issue
- Connect with Super Bowl planning - cultural tour
- Gordon Parks legacy
- Study economic loss from I-94

## For the Future

### **Combined Notes:**

- Dedicated capital
- Policy reform around this work
- Educational curriculum
- Archive
- Economic engine
- Arts
- Restoration and interpretation (onsite or not)



**106GROUP**

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January 24, 2017

Nieeta Presley

Executive Director

Aurora/St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation (ASANDC)

774 University Avenue West

Saint Paul, MN 55104

Re: Technical Advisory Group Meeting Report  
Saint Paul African American Historic and Cultural Context Study

Dear Nieeta:

I am writing to report back on the Technical Advisory Group meeting held Friday, January 13, 2017, at Summit University Planning Council. The purpose of this meeting was to convene community leaders familiar with African American history in Saint Paul and active in related efforts.

Most importantly, we received guidance on “recommendations for the future” to include in the Saint Paul African American Historic and Cultural Context Study, currently under development. In addition, meeting attendees debriefed the first-round Technical Advisory Group meetings in October 2016, helped identify gaps and additional resources for the draft context study, and advised on planning for an upcoming community-wide workshop:

**Community Workshop**  
**Saturday, January 28, 2017**  
**Rondo Library**

The context study will provide the foundation for future efforts to identify specific occurrences, properties, and sites significant in the city’s African American historical and cultural landscape. We are looking forward to providing a draft of the study to the Technical Advisory Group, later this winter.

Please find attached meeting notes and a list of attendees. We would appreciate your assistance in disseminating this information to attendees as well as Technical Advisory Group members who could not attend.

*(over)*

We look forward to continuing to work closely with ASANDC and project partners over the coming months.

Sincerely,

THE 106 GROUP LTD.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kelly". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kelly Wilder  
Engagement Director

cc: Carol Carey, Historic St. Paul  
Noel Nix, Ramsey County  
Lisa Tabor, CultureBrokers  
Roxanne Draughn, ASANDC

# SAINT PAUL AFRICAN AMERICAN CONTEXT STUDY

## Technical Advisory Group Meeting Notes

January 13, 2017

### Attendees

#### Technical Advisory Group Members

- Veronica Burt
- Steve Trimble
- Angela Burns
- Donna Evans
- Frank White
- Jens Werner

#### Project Team Members

- Nieeta Presley
- Roxanne Draughn
- Carol Carey
- Nicole Foss
- Noel Nix
- Lisa Tabor
- Kelly Wilder

### Agenda

1. Welcome, Introductions, and Project Overview
2. Context Report Outline and Themes – Presentation by 106 Group
3. Context Report Recommendations – Group Discussion
4. Community Workshop Planning – Group Discussion
5. Wrap Up and Next Steps

### First Meeting Take-Aways

- Intros were awesome! Memories, stories, projects, riffing, resources. Rich knowledge, competent people. Great to hear other experiences.
- Exciting to see this help the project take shape.
- Passion for this is visible, positive and nourishing.
- Was planful, engaging and energizing. This seems to take care of a significant chunk of needs.
- Powerful, ready to act.
- Here in spirit; shared with others.
- This is a way to gel work together; help heal; explore how to use history for future prosperity; roadmap.
- Intergenerational participation was great.
- Feels like we are gaining traction.
- Connecting our story to national contexts. Local influence <-->National influence.

## Recommendations for the Future

### **Preserve and Protect:**

- Oral histories – urgency
- Research specific people/places
- Resources for preservation – \$, how to, collaborators
- Establish control over our narratives, history, assets
- Set up career-building opportunities for black people in heritage/preservation and related fields
- Elders' stories and resources

### **Collaborate & Build Community:**

- African American history club
- Leverage social capital – existing groups, etc.
- Cross racial lines, beyond education
- Allies & relationships
- Cultural Wellness Center - Atum Azzahir
- Enable & support sharing info

### **Educate, Interpret & Create:**

- Educate – What does preservation mean vs. not (e.g., limitations on owner)
- Connections with Rondo Plaza work
- Migration, cultivating knowledge of Rondo etc. for all, knowing roots (yours & others/national context)
- Epigenetic trauma
- School & community curriculum
- Create MNHS Rondo History Fellowship Program
- "Northern Lights" MNHS Textbook
  - This work should immediately inform that book
- Plan on ongoing advisory committee
- People from the community should write the content

### **Influence Policy:**

- Address systems that are problematic to our goals re: black history
- Work with other cultural groups/efforts to champion policy changes
- Contribute to info for HPC review of condemned buildings

### **Remedy Losses:**

- "Healing & Restoration"
- Remediation for economic & cultural losses – need a plan
- "Coming to the table" group in VA
- Recognize losses – individuals institutions
- Descendents & others' "cultural amnesia"
- Gap & loss of assets
- Inheritance
- Epigenetic trauma
- Look at Bemidji Truth & Reconciliation

### **Build Local Economies:**

- Relevancy around economic wealth
- This is how history "lives"
- Historical themes through business
- Tourism & visitorshop
- Artistic response – public & commercial art work



- Whites have always benefited from exploiting black history

- Jobs for African American historians

**Cultivate Leadership & Accountability:**

- Everyone is accountable to history; what came before
- Dialogue – both sides need
- Plan & methods to hold leaders accountable to the history, decisions, and implementation

**Context Report**

106 Group received guidance instrumental in developing the context study, which directly informed research and interpretation efforts.

**Discussion:**

- May be able to find reference to specific people/places, but the meanings of them are not necessarily available.
- Grant did not fund certain sources of information; pushing the bounds of "traditional historic contexts" as defined by the "system" (regulatory framework).
- Absence of documentation or difficult to access: 20th Century professionals were lifted up by leading companies like Control Data

# SAINT PAUL AFRICAN AMERICAN CONTEXT

Community Workshop – January 28, 2017

## Agenda

10:40	1. Welcome, Introductions, and Background – Project Team
11:15	2. Project Overview and Context Report – 106 Group
11:30	3. Context Report Recommendations – Group Discussion  Lunch  Continue Discussion
2:00	4. Next Steps, Wrap Up, and Evaluation

## Welcome and Introductions

### **Technical Advisory Group Members**

- Marvin – Rondo Ave Inc., resident
- Steve – St. Paul historian; president of commission; support
- Damenica – vision in living life (change is possible)
- Laura – resident, family
- Roxanne – works here; inspired; support the future for kids
- Clifford – resident; entrepreneur, business and wealth here
- Wes – business here; get involved; arts and community
- Jonathan – Hallie Q. Brown executive director; historical archive; support
- Toni – home and family; support and share stories
- Al – resident
- Keith – resident, historian of Rondo
- Veronica – advance historic Rondo district
- Sharon – resident, future legacy
- Leetta – child of Rondo, resident
- Melvin – born here; dislocated due to Rondo
- Mya – family, fun
- Celinda – learner!
- Damone – resident and family
- Zach – have fun and learn
- Dwayne – African American and fun
- Michael – friend and get involved
- Donna – researcher and discover hidden connections
- Cienna – family and friends
- Milo – family and friends
- William – sidekick, protégé, learn and understand
- Debbie – resident and history
- Jeremiah – have fun

### **Project Team Members**

- Nieeta Presley – Grew up here; works here; legacy and future
- Roxanne Draughn
- Carol Carey – to learn and support
- Noel Nix – leadership
- Lisa Tabor
- Anne Ketz
- Kelly Wilder

# Project Overview and Context Report

## Community Workshop

### St. Paul African American Historic and Cultural Context Study

January 28, 2017

## WELCOME INTRODUCTIONS BACKGROUND

### WHAT IS A CONTEXT?

A *historic context* is a broad pattern of historical development in a community, that may be represented by historic resources.

Historic contexts attempt to answer:

- What types of historic resources do we have?
- What is their meaning & significance?
- What are priorities?

### WHAT IS A CONTEXT?

A context is not:

- A survey
- An inventory
- A complete history of African Americans in Saint Paul



... yet!

1912-1949-Engine 22 African American Fire House

### PROJECT BACKGROUND

- African American presence in Saint Paul for more than 150 years
- Construction of I-94 in the 1960s demolished Rondo Avenue
- Many other significant people, properties, & stories exist
- Without a historic context, Saint Paul's African American history is at risk



Women gather at St. James AME Church, St. Paul, approx. 1955

### ST. PAUL HISTORIC CONTEXT

- **Project Area:** City of St. Paul
- **Dates:** 1837-1975
- **Focus:** history, architecture, archeology, engineering, & culture
- **Potential topics:** migration, religious institutions, businesses and industry, arts & culture, education, politics, journalism, & significant leaders or events



St. Paul Depot Red Caps, 1932

## QUESTIONS?

## PROJECT OVERVIEW CONTEXT REPORT

## PROJECT TEAM



## PROJECT GOALS

- Protect resources
- Share stories
- Leverage opportunities

... What else?  
That's what we're here  
today to find out!



St. Paul Central High School track relay team, St. Paul, approx. 1955

## PROJECT SCHEDULE

Date	Task
October-December	Advisory Group Meeting – First Round
November-December	Research
January	Advisory Group Meeting – Second Round
January	Community Workshop
February	Draft Context Study
March	Final Context Study



St. Paul's Credit/Down Co-op at 678 Rondo Avenue, approx. 1950

## SCOPE & PURPOSE

- Research (existing & new)
- Advisory group & community workshops
- Draft and final context studies
- Study will provide the foundation for future efforts to identify specific occurrences, properties, and sites significant in the city's African American historical and cultural landscape



Uptown Sundry Shop baseball team, St. Paul, approx. 1939

## 19TH CENTURY

- Settlement
- Underground Railroad
- Wars of the 1860s
- Religious Institutions
- Education
- A Growing Community
- Civic Institutions
- Early Entrepreneurs & Community Leaders
- Police and Fire Departments
- Newspapers
- Arts



*The Appeal's Quarto-Centennial Edition featuring members of Saint Paul's African American community*

## 20TH CENTURY



*St. Paul's Credit Union Co-op at 678 Rondo Avenue, approx. 1950*

- Establishment of a Community: Rondo
- Employment
- Civic and Political Organizations
- Clubs
- Religious Institutions
- Education
- Arts & Entertainment
- 1950s-1970s: A Time of Change

## ADVISORY GROUP INPUT

- Pushing the bounds of a "traditional" historic context:
  - Walking down the street in Rondo and hearing different kinds of music through screen doors
  - Impact of 1-94: Disparities remain; community felt devalued, expendable
  - Education: During desegregation, African American teachers lost jobs or had to change schools, while white teachers could remain where they were
  - Experience of Black professionals in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century at companies like Control Data



*RondoDays.com*

## QUESTIONS? DISCUSSION?

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### CONTEXT REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

The context will support efforts to:

- Preserve & Protect
- Collaborate & Build Community
- Educate, Interpret & Create
- Influence Policy
- Remedy Losses
- Build Local Economies
- Cultivate Leadership & Accountability

*What will be most impactful?*

*What's missing?*

*How specifically can the context help?*

*Who's responsible for what?*

*These goals evolved from: Legacy Grant award, Advisory Group meetings, project team's synthesis*

## Context Report Recommendations – Group Discussion

### **Preserve and Protect**

- Preserve and upgrade to support economic opportunities
- Regenerate
- Have protection of African American burial sites
- Protect what we create
- “The Village” – Rondo encompassed everything we needed
- Institutionalizing for continuity

### **Collaborate and Build Community**

#### **Develop partnerships**

- Invite and include current, future and potential funders (individuals, organizations, and businesses)
- Include other, non-Rondo communities and histories (e.g. downtown)
  - Some of these folks relocated to or from Rondo
- Real Catalyst Area for Prosperity (RCAP)
- Partner with powerful/allied mainstream organizations
- Include new residents
- Include current and potential allies (like planners, developers, HSP, RC)

#### **Strategies**

- Continue this group / subgroups that build special interest communities (e.g. history group)
- Use online / social media / technology
- Collective investments
- Create mutual benefit

#### **“Make history personal”**

- Love, respect, and refer each other
- Intentional internal strength
- Regenerative culture/history
- Come to know heart and community of past (e.g. Rondo) before healing
- Work together across events, situations to communicate history
- Connect elders and youth over history

## **Educate, Interpret, and Create**

### **Youth perspectives**

- History is confusing!
- What's important to me?
  - Harlem Renaissance
  - MLK
- School history can be boring??
- Hated history until learned—history is me
- Un-hide history
- Make history more interesting and how it relates to our family histories and the community in which we live
- Learn from and about history to make future better

### **Elder perspectives**

- Leadership and community
  - Involvement is unique in this project, unusual
- Black history didn't start in 1837, there's context provided prior to that
- Wealth and history need to be uncovered – “Shoulders that they're standing on”
- Take pride in history of Rondo and share at dinner table. Connects to larger stories.
- Elders talk at schools in Rondo area

### **Ways to share history**

- Art—masks, performances
- Multiple points of entry
- Art as policy education.
- Does each story need to be in context?
  - No, but must fit in broad themes
- Art e.g. Highway Men @ MN DOT panel
- Historical archives
  - There's a wealth of info so people should have access

### **Schools and community events**

- Classroom activities
- Pathfinders – Rondo's history through the railroad. Incorporated into story at Union Depot e.g. Red Cap Room
- Provide visitors an African American history of St. Paul and places to visit.
- Continuity in teaching history through many ways, e.g. story behind Rondo event / June 10th, have elders do storytelling at events, weekly sharing, etc.
- History day at school
- Include Rondo in school history curriculum. Make recommendation to school district and provide historic context and other materials
- Youth programs make history more at heart of events, programs, and activities

- Leads to academic success when you see yourself in history
- RCHS partnerships potential. See their strategic plan.
  - Venues to tell history

## **Influence Policy**

- Policy should be tool for positive change
- Why do we have to pay to see/print photos of our people in the MNHS archive? Access to photos and other access is a challenge
- Example: take info directly to policy makers, e.g. highwayman reading to MN DOT
- As citizens, we need to exercise our civic responsibility. New wave in people exercising their civic responsibility work with political apparatus
- Important to document economic injustices and changes in wealth through public policy decisions
- Need institutions and processes to ensure re-generation and protection of our history
- Find resources to influence policy, e.g. banks
- Policies to protect African American burial sites
- History informs how policies have affected where people live, e.g. map of “Negro slums”

## **Remedy Losses**

### **“As we move forward we must ensure...”**

- Not exploited
- Efforts should benefit and value community
- Gather resources to remedy losses
- Preserve what’s most important to us
- Tell stories of history to avoid repetition, e.g. Rondo → LRT
- Consider re-generative process in gathering and preserving our history
- Need to understand what we have lost, e.g. unified community
- Acknowledge and remedy skipped generation in knowledge of Rondo
- Restitution of information/truth in historical events and narratives
- Forgive each other, come together, “throw rope back”
- This should be model for future processes

## **Build Local Economies**

- Must connect to future economic opportunities
- Develop cultural tourism opportunities e.g. tour facilities, buy books, stop at places (local businesses) on a tour
- See other communities nationwide for examples
- History can be an economic driver
- Challenge of maintaining choices while working together
- Connections and context – St. Paul / National



## **Cultivate Leadership and Accountability**

- Protect new and renewed resources from being taken (again)
  - Political, legal, physical
- Ramsey Co. → Historical Society
- Hold others and ourselves accountable...
  - To protect, preserve, regenerate, etc.
    - Exercise our civic responsibility
    - Leverage our political capital
    - Get involved!
- For our wellbeing and benefits when they use our \_\_\_\_ to attract and retain assets (\$\$, attention, etc.)
- Learn so history doesn't repeat
- Hold mainstream institutions accountable for sharing, protecting Black history
- Integrate this into "master plan" for Black communities, part and foundation of aw hole
- Ensure we have choices