

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

The Prince and
The Pearl of
Great Price

Page 17

Fall, 2004

Volume 39, Number 3

Another Lost Neighborhood

The Life and Death of Central Park—
A Small Part of the Past Illuminated

—Page 4



A postcard view of the state Capitol in its heyday when the greenery of grass and trees surrounded Central Park. A layered-cement parking ramp has replaced the park. See the article beginning on page 4 that traces the life and death of Central Park, another of St. Paul's Lost Neighborhoods. Minnesota Historical Society collections.

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RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 39, Number 3

Fall, 2004

THE MISSION STATEMENT OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS IN JULY 2003:

The Ramsey County Historical Society shall discover, collect, preserve and interpret the history of the county for the general public, recreate the historical context in which we live and work, and make available the historical resources of the county. The Society's major responsibility is its stewardship over this history.

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A Message from the Editorial Board

Born in the 1880s and died in the 1970s, Central Park in St. Paul has today passed into urban legend. Fortunately, Paul Nelson has carefully researched the park's history and his account opens our Fall issue. In 1884 four wealthy and powerful St. Paul families donated the land that became Central Park, a rather small space that was laid out formally with walkways, trees, and shrubs and included an ornate fountain. Unlike Como Park, whose city-led development later in the decade was intended as a naturalistic refuge, the practical donors of the land for Central Park conceived it as a neat buffer for their homes against haphazard urban sprawl nearby. Today, or course, all that remains of Central Park is a parking ramp for state government workers.

In celebration of Hamline University's sesquicentennial in 2004, we have John Larson's elegant account of the all-to-brief time that Prince Hubertus zu Loewenstein spent at the liberal-arts school in the fall of 1942. Prince Hubertus had a profound impact on students such as Larson through his courageous opposition to the forces of Nazism. Scion of an old and noble German family, Prince Hubertus had fled to the United States in the early 1930s and subsequently worked tirelessly to persuade Americans of the dangers of Hitlerism. Hamline proved to be a generous and supportive host to the prince at a time when the United States was just entering the fight against fascism.

Our Fall issue concludes with the second in a series of Rondo oral histories. Thanks once more to the interviewing skills of Kate Cavett, we learn of the youth, educational, and employment experiences of Kathryn Coram Gagnon, a graduate of Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, Mass., who spent much of her adult life as a social worker in the Rondo community.

As a service to the Society's members and friends, we want all of our readers to know that there is now a complete listing of articles that have appeared in *Ramsey County History* over the past forty years on the Society's web site at www.rchs.com. We hope you'll make use of this tool when you want to see if a past issue of our magazine has information bearing on a question about St. Paul or Ramsey County.

John Lindley, Chair, Editorial Board

The Rondo Oral History Project—Second in a Series

Kathryn Coram Gagnon: Operettas, Dancing, Parties, and a Growing Love of Music

This is the second in a series of oral history interviews which Ramsey County History will publish over the next year or more. Assembled by the non-profit organization, Hand in Hand, and conducted and annotated by Kate Cavett, the interviews reflect the lives of people who lived, worked, and played in the historic Rondo neighborhood of St. Paul during the first half of the twentieth century before the constriction of Interstate 94 destroyed a vibrant community. Oral histories are the spoken word in print. They do not follow the standard language of the written word. The transcription of the interview that follows has been edited by Hand in Hand only for clarity and understanding.

My name is Kathryn Coram Gagnon.¹ I was raised on St. Anthony and Mackubin, one block north of Rondo, two blocks east of Dale, in St. Paul, Minnesota. In the thirties, forties, fifties, sixties, seventies, eighties, nineties and right now!

My mother's family was really settled into the Rondo area. My great-aunt had married a fellow who ran on the Soo Line. They lived only in this particular area in St. Paul for years, from the early 1900s. My mother was born in Ohio, raised in Minnesota. She lived in a number of houses on Rondo and ultimately at 495 St. Anthony. She graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1919. You know the *Crisis Magazine*? NAACP's

magazine? Well, back in those days, they very often took the pictures of those Black individuals who had graduated from integrated colleges. The year that she graduated, her picture appears in there. So very cool!

She ended up doing social work and ended up meeting my father in the New York area after his first wife died from TB. So when they married, they came back here. She was still doing social work. She worked at Hallie from its beginning, from 1929. And I think because it is such a demanding job to really put your energy in there, she eventually decided she wanted to change and took tests to work for the state government.



Kathryn Coram Gagnon. Unless otherwise noted photographs for this article are from Kathryn Coram Gagnon.

Well, now here's a woman with a college degree, but because she was Black, what they hired her to do was push the mail cart. Eventually, she was able to get a position as the employment interviewer. If you wanted to get a job, you were not the person she spoke with. She spoke with the people who were looking for workers, which is why I never had a summer vacation. She always had a job waiting for me the minute I got home from school! But that's basically what she did.

My father came from a family where there was not a lot of education. He was raised in New York. To the best of my knowledge, his formal education didn't go past maybe fourth grade. He was gifted as a mechanic. He came here because they said the Ford Plant needed workers. When he got here, they hadn't laid the first brick for the Ford Plant,² but they had advertised for all these people, so he ended up being a nightman with Warren Given.³ Warren



Alverta Phillips after receiving her bachelor of arts degree from the University of Minnesota in 1919. Her picture appeared in *The Crisis* (upper left), the national magazine of the NAACP.



Kathryn's father, Ulysses Grant "Duke" Coram, in 1926.

Given had a shop on Grand, and that's where my Dad was a nightman. My Dad used to work on Dillinger's⁴ car when he'd come up here. The stories he would tell! Then he was working over at what was then Hetfield Queenan.⁵ It was a Dodge, Plymouth, DeSoto, and Chrysler dealership on University and Oxford. And he was there almost until he retired. They sort of retired him because it got sold. He was a nightman. He did janitorial stuff and might do some mechanic work, but that's not what he was called, although he did the work on occasion.

My dad, probably he could have been Jewish. He could have been Italian. Both my parents were light-skinned. My mother had no brothers and sisters, but this side of my father's family was

probably the lightest and then they shade down. But there are no cousins that I know of who are really dark. Most of us are pretty obviously Black, but my side of the family, no.

This area was never totally segregated. The block I lived on had a smattering of Black families. There were German families, the Adelhelms. There were Polish families, the Tolendouskys. But the whole block on both sides of the street between Mackubin and Arundel on St. Anthony was highly integrated. Most of the grocery stores in the area were owned by Jewish families. The Gottesmans had the one on the northeast corner of Rondo and Mackubin.⁶ There were little grocery stores on all the corners, just about. If you wanted good fresh meat, that was about three blocks up on Kent and Carroll. That was a white family that owned that.

McKinley School⁷ stood as a bastion there at the corner of Carroll and Mackubin, fortunately or unfortunately, just two short blocks from my house. We never missed a day of school. As a matter of fact, my sister,⁸ who was ten years older than me, had been sent to McKinley one day when I think the temperature was well below zero. And as she arrived there, she found the only other person there was the janitor stoking the furnace! Needless to say, she was sent home. But my mother⁹ was insistent that we actually spend our time in the school.

My mother was the intellect so to speak. See, I had this great sandwich thing going on. My father was one of these people, "Don't come lookin' to me to solve your problems on the street. You got 'em, you got to take care of 'em." He was into the athletics and I loved it. I was really good at sports. And my mother was one of these people who would always encourage the academics. When I was in fourth grade, we had to do a speech about somebody famous. You

go home and you—well, Abe Lincoln, George Washington. My mother said, "Oh, no! Oh, no! You're doing George Washington Carver."¹⁰ And in those days, they didn't teach you Black history, and if you were raised in the North, you really didn't know much Black history. So she had me digging out all this stuff. And she would go in the living room, make me go in the kitchen—it's a decent sized house. And I would have to do my speech from the kitchen so that she could hear me. Oh, she was a taskmistress! But it actually ended up teaching the teacher something. So that's the kind of experience that I had. It was always that they were encouraging me to keep moving forward.

Somewhere in my sixth grade year, as I was looking forward to being one of the patrol people on the corner - that was really one of my goals! - she decided that there was a place that I should go other than McKinley. Apparently, my father's¹¹ boss's children went to University High School,¹² and that sounded really good to her. Plus, the tuition was the same as you were paying at the U. And I enrolled there ultimately, the only Black kid in the school of seventh through twelfth graders for at least four years and probably the first one to go from sixth grade to twelfth and graduate. I think tuition was like \$35 a quarter. I mean, what could you lose?

The Hollow¹³ was where I learned to skate. And I was good! If you were at my house, I would show you my medals and trophies from speed skating. Anyway, my dad had started me skating as a very young child, and had taken me up to the



Sister Yolande in front of the family home at 495 St. Anthony in 1931.

Hollow to skate. And as I got a little bit older, it turned out that I was pretty good. The Hollow was about a half a block from my house, and I won a little race up there, and then the next level of that particular competition was held at Phalen.¹⁴ In that particular race, I used my father's speed skates, which we stuffed with paper so my feet would fit! And I won that! That would be about 1943.

The Midway Speed Skating Club was the big club in St. Paul. It was basically the only club that sponsored speed skating and coached. None of these clubs had Black kids in them. When the Shop Pond gang decided they wanted to establish a speed skating club, they had a competition for kids who were not in Midway, and I won! And they were all excited until they found out I was Black. And then that was it. They never invited me into the club.

Now a year or two later, Mrs. Christoferson, who was the mother of the Midway Speed Skating Club, finally managed to get them to accept me into the club. By now, this is high school. At that time, there were no other Black kids involved. And this is talking about nationally. As a result of my getting involved, there were some other Black kids who came behind me and started doing some speed skating.

I was baptized at St. Philips. It's been



First Black member of the Midway Speed Skating Club, 1951.



McKinley School's third grade in 1941. Kathryn Coram is third from the right in the top row. Others are, back row: Lilian Field, Dorothy Clark, Theresa Brown, Virginia Thomas, Juanite Nelson, Elsie Bjorkman, R. Acheson, and _____; third row: Connie Brown, Alice Atkins, Carola Slaughter, Syvilla Price, _____; Audrey Kadrey, Audrey Cramer; second row: John Fisch, Jerome Sandbloom, Lyle _____, Catherine Norton, Beverly _____, Dianne Freeman,, _____, Lyle _____; first row: _____, Marlow Schultz, Joe Ray, Frank Thompson, Fred O'Neal; sitting: _____, Henry Davis, Albert Tolendousky.

my church all my life when I've been involved in church. We've sort of loosened up these days, so we like to call it St. Philips Baptist Episcopal Church! We do a little gospel singin' up in there now! Just a little bit. Gotta ease it on the sisters, you know!

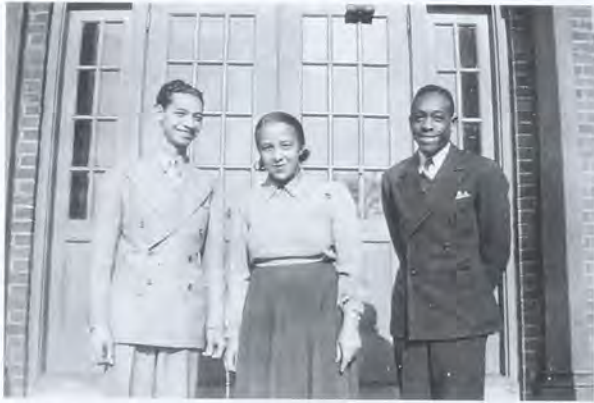
When I was very little, one of the priests there was a Father James. And he used to always be up in the pulpit – this was in the old church – talking about Jesus this and Jesus that and Jesus the other. And apparently, he must have got a reassignment somewhere and was gone. And mother said I looked up one day and said, "Mama, where'd Jesus go?"

When I hit twelve and was confirmed at church, Father Williams said, "You-you will be in the choir." So you know, it wasn't a question of do you want to. I was in the choir from the age of twelve. Episcopal music! We did some chanting, but it was mostly stuff straight out of the hymnal, which is a lot of minor key stuff. No gospel. And maybe once in a very rare while, a spiritual, but very rarely.

Around Rondo, we very often fre-

quented Hallie Q. Brown and Hallie was founded in 1929. We had an exceptional opportunity, both with Hallie and St. Philips. One of those things at Hallie was the Forum Council. Folks like A. Philip Randolph,¹⁵ Thurgood Marshall,¹⁶ and Judge William Hastie,¹⁷ amazing people, spoke to those gathered at the Forum Council.

Hallie has a history of being involved with music from the very beginning. People like the late Deputy Chief Jimmy Griffin's brother, Billie Griffin. Mother used to constantly extol Billie. Billie was so clever and he was so brilliant and was such a genius and he did choreography and directed shows and he did musicals and he designed the costumes. Actually, for a while I used to get sick and tired of hearing about Billie, but it's true that from early on the interesting music in the community had a place where it could reside and that was Hallie. John Whitaker was one of the big names. In terms of perpetuating music there, he had several choral groups going on there. Some traditional choral music, some things that were very classic, you know. It was a



Billie Griffin, Hazel Butler, and John M. Whitaker who were involved in the music program at Hallie Q. Brown.

wide variety of music that he did with us. He was really quite an inspiration there at Hallie. And he liked to have kids do these little operettas.

My first appearance in an operetta was as the Frog Prince. I played the king! I remember one of dear friends could not sing. She still can't sing. So this was her little phrase that she was supposed to sing: sings "Bonjour mon amee from lovely France to thee. See me dress all dainty, it came from gay Paree. France has made the fashions for all the world to see. Bonjour mon amee from lovely France to thee." Now that's what her song was. Here's how she did it, since she couldn't sing. She went, "bonjourmonameeromlovelyFrancetotheeseemydressa lldainty . . ." That's how she did it! I like to kid her about it still today! It was hysterical. That was my first really big experience. One more thing John Whitaker did when he was at Hallie, he had what they call Sunday Evening Salon. This was an effort to provide us with some culture, okay, but he had people—Marion Anderson never came, but he had people like that and you learned how to sit in a chair. I mean, this would be people of all ages, little kids. I had to go 'cause my mother worked there and I loved it. But you learn to sit still until intermission or until the end of the program, to listen, to be at least moderately appreciative, and applaud. The Sunday Evening Salons were wonderful. There were tap dance classes there. Frieda De'Knight was actually Frieda Knight while she was here and she taught my sister to tap dance. So

other way. Creaky! Had great big steel cables. I'm sure they were there to hold the walls up. It must have been limestone slabs that created the foundation. We had dances when Father Williams was there. Father Williams used to stutter. We had dances there and we had blue lights and red lights. You know, sorta keep the lights down and the kids would get over in the corner and get dancin' all close! Well, one of the parents came down there one evening while we had this party going on. Now we had chaperones, mind you, and they were scattered throughout the room. He came down there. He wanted his daughters out of there! What were we doing down there with all this light dimmed down? Where were his girls? He was looking around, and Father Williams, who I said stuttered, went over there and said, "You-you-you-you just gooo on home. I'm in charge here!" Sent him packing. We had a wonderful time down there. And the kids from all the different churches would come and participate in those dances. They were really great!

The only live music that I remember as a kid was at Hallie. And that would have been during World War II. Percy Hughes was stationed out at Wold Chamberlain,¹⁸ in that area, and he used to bring his little band in

we had all kinds of music going on.

At St. Philips Church, we used to have these dances in the undercroft. Now I don't know why they call it that unless they were trying to make it sound like it wasn't really a basement. But most Episcopal churches talk about undercrofts. Anyway, this was more like a basement! This was the old church. It stood on the same corner, but it basically faced the

every now and then and they would play at the old gym at Hallie. And since my mother worked there, I could get to go! But I was really too young to be there. Didn't faze me. It was great fun. Great fun. But for the majority of activities, we had records. Old vinyl.

For dances that were legit, those were basically held either at Hallie or at our church. Hallie used to have dances almost monthly it seemed. Oh, I used to have jumps at my house. You know what jump is? It's like an open house dance kind of thing. It's where you let people know there's a jump at my house at such-and-such a time, and then almost anybody who wanted to come could come. And it was usually your friends. Kids would come by after the dances at church and you'd do the same thing. You'd sort of dim the lights and put the records on and kids would dance. It was fun. Didn't cost a penny. They were not really dressy-dressy. They were casually dress-up. It was always some nice little dress, little skirt, something like that. And the guys, they'd put on some of their best.

At the dances at Hallie, lots of times the guys were really dressed up nicely. And Hallie had the teen dances. It was one of the activities that they used to keep kids out of the street, keep them active. At these dances it was pretty much DJ type thing. Not like now, where you hear scratch-scratch stuff like that, but somebody would be playing records and changing them. There really wasn't the money for live music and so we used what we had.



The cast of "The Frog Prince." Kathryn Coram as the King, Delbert Crushshon as the Frog Prince, Barbara (Petey) Vassar as the Queen, and Constance Brown as the Princess.



The Eight Debs at the Columbia Chalet: Kathryn Coram, Mary Lue Sizemore, LaDoris Foster, Constance Brown, Constance Hill, Yvonne Crushshon, Earline Heil, and Joyce Vassar.

We had a group called the Eight Debs.¹⁹ We were not Debs, and it was a combination of Oatmeal Hill²⁰ and Cornmeal Valley²¹ folk as far as that's concerned, but there were eight of us who had been friends for—let's see, now we're all seventy. We've been friends for at least sixty years. Anyway, the eight of us decided, since the druggist's daughter had a coming out party, we were pretty good kids, so why can't we have one? We got together and decided, okay, if each of our parents can come up with twenty-five dollars, that's eight people with twenty-five dollars each. Out of that, we will rent the Columbia Chalet. We will get some snacks to serve, some punch. We had dresses made, and some of us had our own material. My

material was antique lace. We could each choose what color we wanted. And the dresses were all made on the identical pattern. Sent out invitations and the eight of us had a ball. Then they came back to my house and we had a sleepover after that. It was just great fun!

Of the Eight Debs, there is one of us who is maybe four-foot-ten. Still. Her name's Mary Lou. And Dizzy Gillespie was playing at a place called The Flame²² in downtown St. Paul. We were in high school. We decided we would go down and hear Dizzy at a matinee. Now before we went, we said we've got to be able to drink something, because if we go in and just order Coke, they'll know.

So we had sort of scouted around

and figured out what we could get that wouldn't be too intoxicating, so we decided that we would all get Tom Collinses. Okay? Well, we sent Mary Lou in first, and said, "We figure she can get in, we can all get in." And she got in. Of course, it wasn't much anybody there that afternoon. So he let us all in, and we got these Tom Collinses and we sat with them, with our hands just wrapped around the glasses so they wouldn't take them. And just slowly sipping with the ice melt, so calmed the whole thing down. It was great fun! But we shouldn't have been there. We get home, and we drop Joyce off. She hasn't got in the house. She's at the front door, and her mother's at the kitchen, and her mother

said, "Joyce, you been drinkin'." Now how she could tell from that distance, we never figured out!

We were all very close friends. I think most of them went to Marshall High School²³ back in the day. I think almost all of us finished college. Some of us have advanced degrees. Earline and her husband owned the Estes Hallmark Cards, the one out at the airport and several in Minneapolis. Connee, who is in L.A., she was like just under the provost at UCLA. LaDoris Foster, the only one who is not married in all these years, has been the vice-president of personnel at Johnson Publications in Chicago since forever, and refuses to retire. All of us have managed to do reasonably well, much better than teachers ever encouraged particularly those kids to do.

Then the Elite Grill was probably on Rondo and Milton, somewhere in that area. We would go to activities at the stadium at Central High School and we would stop there on the way home. Now the place was very simple. It was on the southwest corner of Rondo and whatever the cross street was, and they had booths, they had a big jukebox, they had a fountain where you could get cokes and malts and shakes and sandwiches and chips and those kinds of things, and it was almost like a tradition that we stop there. You could not get all the way home without stopping there for a hamburger or something. It was a way to end the evening. But the Elite was one of those places that was very important in our lives because it gave us a reasonably healthy place to hang out.

From U High, I finished Mount Holyoke with a B.A. in Geography. I loved it! And I spent most of my time with the dance, but I had a major in Geography, a minor in Geology, Art and Education. Then I came back here. I was going to do an Anthropology Masters at Columbia, had been accepted. It was at the time they were putting the freeway through. We didn't know how the neighborhood was going to change, but it was obviously changing, so my parents decided to move and it meant that I was not going to have their help. I had no job at Columbia and so that got flushed. Then Alice Ongue, who was head of Hallie²⁴ at the time said, "Why don't you come over here and be



Receiving her masters degree in social work from the University of Minnesota, 1966.

the Junior Girls' Director?" Working with the younger kids, setting up programs for them. So I went over there and I stayed there a couple years, and then I ended up working as a social worker at Jewish Family Service.²⁵ What I was doing was basically intuitive. What Alice had hired me for was the dance, athletics, theatre, all that other stuff. Anyway, I was there for about a year and Max Fassler was the executive director and suggested that I go get my Masters in Social Work. I had fought this for a while because my mother had been a social worker, and you don't just go do what your mother does! And while I was at Hallie, I got a Masters in Theatre from the U. So I had the two Masters, and as of several years ago, I got certified in Educational Administration so that I could be a principal. I was supposed to be getting a Ph.D, and I got as far as through the prelims. But we had great discussions about what I was going to do my dissertation on. They and I could not agree. So I'm ABD! All But Dissertation.

The thing that most people look for to identify individuals is skin color. And because my skin is very light, they just

passed me by. Most of the time ignore. You know, because I would fit in. I'd been fitting in all my life. Not intentionally. It's not like "passing," which a lot of kids did in those days. Not so much the younger kids, but as the girls got to the point where they wanted employment. You couldn't work at the Emporium,²⁶ you couldn't work at the Golden Rule²⁷ if you were Black unless you were willing to work as the janitor or the matron or something of that nature. You were not permitted to be a clerk. Now I knew one girl who was Black and Mexican, Peggy Aparicio, who was working there. And there were two girls, one of whom goes to my church right now, who eventually got jobs as clerks, and we would avoid them because we didn't want to blow their cover. You know, they had got the job. We understood what the situation was. That's how it was in those days.

That's part of being Black and the part of being Black which is the chameleon aspect. If most of my friends who are successful, what they need to know is you have three or four different languages you speak. You speak school. You speak Mama-Daddy. You speak maybe church. You speak friends. They're all different languages. And so when you're in school, you speak that language. When you're with your friends, you speak another. And this is something that most of the Black kids I know are skilled at.

Earlier we talked about music in the community, I think music is an expression of the soul of the community. It has the capability of unifying, it has capability of soothing, it has the capability of providing solace. I think it's important for every community. I think it's an important piece of life that we all deal with basic rhythms and we hear music all the time, whether we recognize it or not. I think one of the things that the music actually allowed us to do was to have a focus when gathering together and a reason for gathering. No matter what the age group, no matter what income level, no matter what the educational level, that there was an opportunity for people to share and to be one. People will go to these churches just to hear a sermon and when they do go to hear the sermon it's because the sermon is music. If you

listen to some of the southern Baptist preachers, they don't talk, they don't orate, they sing their service. And so you may not feel like going to church, but you can have church come to you through the opportunity to sing and to listen to music.

There was vibrancy in Rondo, there was a community, there was a sense of—you know, they talk this stuff about a village raising kids. That's what it was. We didn't call it that. It was just that you knew that if you were a part of that community there were people who cared about you. They cared whether you acted like you had sense. If you acted like you didn't have sense, you will be dealt with, you will be corrected and you better not say anything back. Don't sass anybody. That was not acceptable.

A lot of that has been lost, and I think in part because of the way the community itself was physically disrupted. There are a few of us who still maintain some of that, but we're oddballs. It was a warm accepting place. It was a place with contrasts. There were people there who were on welfare. They called it relief, back in that day. And yet, there were people who were—I suppose we were considered professionals—the postmen, any number of people who actually were doing pretty well back then. But it was a place where you felt safe, really and truly safe.

Notes

1. Kathryn Rebecca Coram Gagnon was born July 11, 1943.
2. Ford Motor Company is located at 966 Mississippi River Boulevard at Ford Parkway in St. Paul.
3. Warren Given was located at 905-909 Grand Avenue (1923).
4. John Dillinger, a well-known bank robber in the early 1930s, often spent time in St. Paul as the St. Paul Police Department ignored his presence.
5. Hetfield Queenan was located at 1037 University Avenue at Oxford. (1949)
6. Lincoln Food Market was at 499 Rondo on the northeast corner of Rondo and Mackubin.
7. McKinley School was located at 481 Carroll Avenue, between Mackubin, Arundel, and Rondo from 1903 to 1966. Fire destroyed the building in 1977.
8. Yolande Enid Coram Holley Jackson Sims was born February 19, 1923 and passed October 4, 1959.
9. Awerta Mae Phillips Coram was born October 26, 1898 and passed November 10, 1982.
10. George Washington Carver (1864?–1943) was born a slave and went on to receive a college degree. As faculty at Tuskegee Institute he gained an international reputation as director of the agriculture research department. His efforts improved the economy of the South and the positions of all Black Americans.
11. Ulysses Grant "Duke" Coram was born August 15, 1898, and passed May 30, 1976.
12. University High School, located at 159 Pillsbury Drive S.E. in Minneapolis, had an outstanding reputation and was on the campus of the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. It was a place for University students to do their student teaching and for faculty and students from the University to explore teaching methods. The building now is Pike Hall.
13. The Hollow was an open space located in the square block between Kent, Mackubin, St. Anthony and Central. It had four playing fields, horseshoe beds, and in the winter, an ice-skating rink. It was used by families, churches, and schools in the area (Fairbanks, Evelyn, *The Days of Rondo*, Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1990).
14. Phalen Park is located between Frost Avenue, Maryland Avenue, Arcade, and East Shore Drive, and was first planned by the St. Paul City Council in 1872. The City acquired the land in 1899 at a cost of \$22,000, and the park was opened to the public soon afterwards. The park was named after early settler Edward Phalen, who staked one of the first claims to the land around Phalen Creek. Today there are 3.2 miles of trails around Lake Phalen, a playground, beach, golf course and clubhouse, and an amphitheater.
15. A. Philip Randolph (April 15, 1889–May 16, 1979) was a labor and civil rights leader. He was known for his organizing work for the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in 1925, the first union of predominately Black workers to be granted a charter by the American Federation of Labor. In 1957 he was elected a vice president of the AFL/CIO.
16. Thurgood Marshall (April 2, 1908–January 1993) became the USA's first Black Supreme Court Justice. He was a staff lawyer for the NAACP and for over twenty years he served as chief counsel for their legal Defense and Education Fund, winning twenty-nine of the thirty-two cases he argued before the Supreme Court. His most important victory came in 1954 with *Brown v. Board of Education*. He was confirmed to the Supreme Court in 1967 and retired in 1991.
17. William Hastie (November 17, 1904–April 14, 1976) was an attorney, Judge/Magistrate, and Government Official/Executive. He was governor of the Virgin Islands from 1946–1949 before his appointment to the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.
18. Wold Chamberlain Field is the airfield that became the Minneapolis/St. Paul Airport. The first flight from the airfield took place in 1919. The field was renamed after the first two pilots, Cyrus Chamberlain and Ernest Wold, who were killed in 1918 in World War I. Fort Snelling, which is adjacent to Wold Chamberlain Field, was an active military base for inductions during World War II. While men were temporarily stationed there waiting for their assignment, they attended dances and women from the community were transported to the base to help keep up military morale.
19. The Eight Debs are Connee Brown Freeman, Earline Neil Estes, Ladoris Foster, Connie Hill Walker, Yvonne Crushshon Robinson Harrington, Mary Lue Sizemore McCoy, Joyce Vassar Smith Clark, and Kathryn Coram Gagnon.
20. Oatmeal Hill was a term referring to Rondo west of Dale Street toward Lexington, sometimes known as Upper Rondo. More affluent residents tended to move into this area, giving the impression the residents had a higher social standing. This middle class neighborhood consisted of predominately single family homes.
21. Cornmeal Valley, also known as Lower Rondo or Deep Rondo, was East of Dale Street. This was a lower middle class residential neighborhood with predominately single-family homes. From the 1930s, this part of the community struggled with growing poverty.
22. Flame Bar was located at 19 East Fifth in downtown St. Paul.
23. Marshall School was built in 1925 at Grotto, Holly, Ashland and St. Albans. It was Marshall Junior High from 1926–1937. In 1937, 10th grade was added; in 1938, 11th grade; and in 1939, 12th grade was added, with graduating classes from 1940 to 1952. It returned to a junior high only in 1952. Webster Elementary School was built on the same site in 1926. The two buildings were connected in 1975 and become Webster Magnet Elementary School.
24. Hallie Q. Brown Community Center was opened in 1929 as a community center specifically to serve the Black community when the Black YWCA closed in 1928. The original location was in the Union Hall at Aurora and Kent Streets. In 1972 it relocated in the Martin Luther King Building at 270 Kent Street at Iglehart in St. Paul.
25. Jewish Family Service was located at 355 Washington, Room 300 (1955)
26. Emporium Department Store was located downtown on Seventh Street at Robert Street.
27. The Golden Rule was originally established as a department store in St. Paul in 1886, and moved into a three-story building at Old 7th Street between Robert and Jackson in 1891. In 1961, the store merged with Donaldson's and became Donaldson's Golden Rule. In later years, the name of the store was shortened to just Donaldson's and remained at this location until 1980, when the business moved into the Town Square complex at Seventh, Minnesota and Cedar Streets.

For more information on the Rondo Oral History Project or on oral histories, Hand in Hand Productions can be reached at 651-227-5987 or handinhand@oralhistorian.org.



3886. CENTRAL PARK. ST. PAUL.
The James Humphrey house on the left, the Gustave Schurmeier rowhouses on the right. See article, "The Life and Death of Central Park," beginning on page 4.

R.C.H.S.
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