

Pride of Parks

INFLUENTIAL BLACK CULTURE:

Leaving a Lasting Legacy in the City of Indianapolis

It is with great honor that Indy Parks and Recreation presents to you, "Pride of the Parks". We recognize the significant impact that African Americans have had on our community, and have chosen to highlight the achievements and contributions of this special group of trailblazers by naming several of our most beloved parks and facilities in their honor.

This brochure provides a brief overview of a few of the outstanding individuals who have contributed to the Indianapolis community and touched the lives of the people of our city. These individuals represent a diversity of backgrounds, experiences and achievements.

We hope that you will take the opportunity to learn more about these important people whose names and legacies are preserved through Indy Parks.

- A. Marshall Walter Taylor is the namesake for the Major Taylor Velodrome.
- B. Eva Talley Park is named after Eva Talley-Sanders, the first African American woman to hold the rank of Deputy Chief with the Marion County Sheriff's Department.
- C. The Dr. Martin Luther King Park & Landmark for Peace Memorial was named for the famous Civil Rights Leader Rev. Dr. King, Jr.
- D. Oscar Charleston was considered one of the best players in the Negro Baseball League.
- E. Bertha Ross is best remembered for founding the Golden Hill Junior Baseball League. She believed providing organized recreation activities for young boys would deter vandalism and petty crime.



E

BERTHA ROSS

Bertha Ross Park | 3700 N. Clifton St.

As president of School #41's PTO, Bertha Ross organized a baseball league for children between the ages of 7 to 15. Each year, Ross and her husband would raise money to outfit 12 teams. Other groups and businesses helped to sponsor the teams by raising money to furnish bats, mitts, uniforms, and coaches. Baseballs were provided by the Parks Department.

Anyone within the age limits could play in this league, but Ross set up one condition: any child playing in her league could not get into any trouble.

B

EVA TALLEY

Eva Talley Park | 5900 E. 38th Street

Eva Talley-Sanders was the first African-American woman to hold the rank of Deputy Chief with the Marion County Sheriff's Department. Her brother, Steve Talley, was a City-County Councilman.

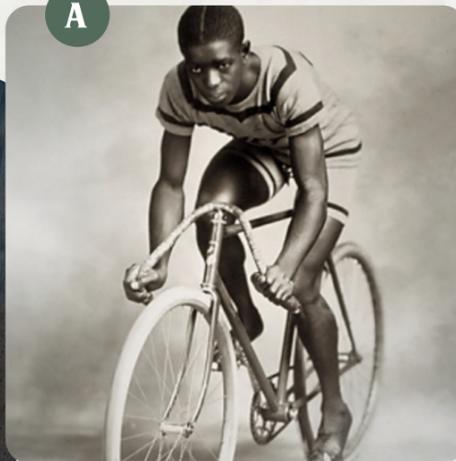
Eva Talley Park is named for Eva Talley-Sanders, her brother Steve Talley, who served as a City-County Councilman, and their family including their parents Eva M. Talley and Van Lawson.



D



A



C



HONOR BLACK HISTORY: VISIT INDY PARKS!

As Indy Parks creates places and experiences that inspire, Indy Parks is proud to honor the contributions of African-American trailblazers, visionaries, and remarkable leaders in our community. With over a century of history advancing the value of parks, Indy Parks is committed to protecting and enhancing the community's assets for the future. We will be a leader in making Indianapolis a vibrant, happy and healthy place to live. By providing premier greenspaces and recreation opportunities, we will connect all residents to nature, to the community, and to themselves. Our work is vital to contributing to the economic, social, and environmental health of our city.

- 🌿 Frank Beckwith Park | 2302 E. 30th Street
- 🌿 Elwood & Mary Black Park | 4241 Fairview Terrace
- 🌿 Oscar Charleston Park | 2800 E. 30th Street
- 🌿 Doris Cowherd Park | 4050 N. Irvington Avenue
- 🌿 Babe Denny Park | 900 Meikel Street
- 🌿 Frederick Douglass Park | 1616 E. 25th Street
- 🌿 John Ed Park | 2000 E. Roosevelt Avenue
- 🌿 James Foster Gaines Park | 2100 N. Tibbs Avenue
- 🌿 J.T.V. Hill Park | 1806 N. Columbia Avenue
- 🌿 Martin Luther King, Jr. Park | 1702 N. Broadway St.
- 🌿 Lt. Junior Grade Graham Edward Martin Park | 1302 Fall Creek Pkwy E. Dr.
- 🌿 Wes Montgomery Park | 3400 N. Hawthorne Lane
- 🌿 Al. E. Polin Park | 100 E. 29th Street
- 🌿 Andrew Ramsey Park | 310 W. 42nd Street
- 🌿 Ransom Place Park | 801 N. Indiana Avenue
- 🌿 Bertha Ross Park | 3700 N. Clifton Street
- 🌿 Rev. Mozel Sanders Park | 1300 N. Belmont Street
- 🌿 Juan Solomon Park | 6100 Grandview Drive
- 🌿 Talley Park | 5900 E. 38th Street
- 🌿 Major Taylor Velodrome | 3700 Cold Spring Road
- 🌿 Watkins Park | 2360 Dr. MLK Jr. Street
- 🌿 Rev. Charles Williams Park | 3252 Sutherland Ave.
- 🌿 Frank Young Park | 1000 Udell Street



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All programs of the Department of Parks and Recreation are equal opportunity programs and discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, age or sex is strictly prohibited by federal law.

Pride of Parks

HONORING BLACK CULTURE
THROUGH INDY PARKS



FRANK BECKWITH

Beckwith Memorial Park | 2302 E. 30th Street

A native of Indianapolis, Frank R. Beckwith was born in 1904 to former slaves. He grew up to become a successful attorney and an industrious civil rights activist. He was instrumental in the naming of Douglass Park (now Frederick Douglass Park) and the paving of Martindale Avenue.

Beckwith was the first African American to run as a candidate for President of the United States. He believed in breaking down psychological barriers so that people might successfully develop in their endeavors. In 1970, Beckwith Memorial Park was dedicated to honor the life and work of Frank Beckwith.

DORIS COWHERD

Doris Cowherd Park | 4050 N. Irvington Avenue

In 1899, Doris Cowherd was born the daughter of share croppers who moved often. As a young woman in 1923, she moved to Indianapolis where she married, raised a family and began her career. She worked for the Flanner House for 25 years as a cook. She also taught canning and gardening there as a means toward the self-sufficiency she believed in.

Cowherd was a role model to the young people who lived in her neighborhood. She was instrumental in establishing the concept of neighborhood participation and cooperation. She encouraged her community to get involved with the parks, especially the one named for her at 41st and Irvington.

JAMES FOSTER GAINES

James Foster Gaines Park | 2100 N. Tibbs Avenue

James Foster "Bruiser" Gaines served 27 years in the Indianapolis Police Department. Gaines was born and raised in Indianapolis and attended Crispus Attucks High School where he played football and basketball. He later served in the Navy from 1944-46, and managed the PAL project. During his time in the Police force, Gaines devoted much of his time, energy and resources to mentoring the youth and assisting people in need in the city of Indianapolis.

GRAHAM EDWARD MARTIN

*Lt. Junior Grade Graham Edward Martin Park
1302 Fall Creek Pkwy E. Drive*

Graham Edward Martin graduated from Crispus Attucks High School, Indiana University, and Howard University before enlisting in the Navy.

In 1944, the Navy chose Martin as one of the first 13 African-American men to train to become officers. They were commissioned as officers, which created a path that changed the armed forces. Martin served four years in the Navy as a ship commander with the rank Lt. Junior Grade. Upon his return to Indianapolis, he coached varsity football and baseball at Crispus Attucks from 1947 to 1982.

AL E. POLIN

Al. E. Polin Park | 100 E. 29th Street

Having resided in the Mapleton Fall Creek area for his entire life, Al. E. Polin is a community activist that has helped keep this Indianapolis neighborhood thriving. Before retiring, Polin worked as the coordinator for the Quality of Life Human Relations at the Allison Division of General Motors.

He continues to stay actively involved in his community and serves on the Indianapolis Community Policing Board, Indianapolis Neighborhood Resource Center, and the Drug Free Indiana Commission. Polin is also active in promoting parks to youth.

REV. MOZEL SANDERS

Rev. Mozel Sanders Park | 1300 N. Belmont Street

Minister and community leader Rev. Mozel Sanders began his life in Indianapolis in 1945, where he worked at a foundry during the day and preached at a local church at night. In 1959 he became the pastor of the Mount Vernon Missionary Baptist Church and served there until his death in 1988.

Sanders hosted a daily radio program and was the founder of a national job training program. He started a Thanksgiving dinner event to feed individuals and families in need. The Mozel Sanders Thanksgiving Day Dinner continues to live on, bringing together hundreds of volunteers and serving thousands of meals each Thanksgiving Day.

MARSHALL "MAJOR" TAYLOR

Major Taylor Velodrome | 3700 Cold Spring Road

A native of Indianapolis, Marshall Walter Taylor began his bicycle racing career in Indiana, but was unable to train in the area because of racial prejudice. Major Taylor moved to Worcester, Massachusetts, and made it his home and training grounds. From that time, he trained vigorously and won national and international acclaim.

Taylor was the first black athlete to achieve championship status in any competitive sport. After a 16-year racing career, Taylor retired with three U.S. championship titles and two world championship titles to his credit.

WILLIAM WHITFIELD

Watson McCord Park (Plaque) | 3600 Watson Road

William Whitfield was a 12-year veteran with the Indianapolis Police Department. On patrol in a predominantly white neighborhood in 1922, Whitfield was shot and, sadly, later died in the hospital. He was the first black officer shot in the line of duty in Indianapolis. A plaque commemorating his service is on display in Watson McCord Park.

ELWOOD BLACK

Elwood & Mary Black Park | 4241 Fairview Terrace

Elwood Black was a public servant, community activist and advocate for union labor and civil rights issues. He was elected City-County Councilman for District 6 in 1991, serving on the Community Affairs and Metropolitan Development committees. He worked as a basketball coach, maintenance worker, and delivery driver, and he served as president of United Auto Workers Union Local 550.

BABE DENNY

Babe Denny Park | 900 Meikel Street

The first African-American Motorcycle Officer in the Indianapolis Police Department was Edward Bay "Babe" Denny. He managed Ray St. Center and Mielke Street Park in the 1940s, and later served as a consultant to the mayor. Throughout his life, Denny was heavily active in the Indianapolis community.

J.T.V. HILL

J.T.V. Hill Park | 1806 N. Columbia Avenue

Born in 1855 in Ohio, James T.V. Hill moved to Indianapolis in his early years. Hill was first employed in Indianapolis as a postal clerk and later as a barber. Eventually, he was admitted to law school at Central Law School, and graduated in 1882.

Hill was one of the first black attorneys admitted to the bar in Indianapolis. Hill was extremely active in the community and served as a deputy prosecuting attorney for Marion County.

Pride of Parks

HONORING BLACK CULTURE THROUGH INDY PARKS

ANDREW WILLIAM RAMSEY

Andrew Ramsey Park | 310 W. 42nd Street

After moving from Tennessee with his family, Andrew William Ramsey graduated from Manual High School in 1925. Ramsey went on to obtain his B.A. in Romance Languages from Butler University and his M.A. in French from Indiana University. Ramsey then devoted his life to teaching.

Ramsey was an instructor in Romance Languages at the University of Louisville's Municipal College. Ramsey was also highly involved with the NAACP, Indianapolis Urban League, and the Indianapolis Museum of Art. He also served as a long-time columnist for the Indianapolis Recorder.

JUAN SOLOMON

Juan Solomon Park | 6100 Grandview Drive

Juan Solomon was highly involved in civic activities within the Indianapolis and African-American community. Solomon served as director of the Community Service Council, Indianapolis Urban League, and was a board member of the Indianapolis Department of Parks and Recreation. He also served as the lead on the Mayor's Employment Task Force. Solomon made a living working for Eli Lilly for 32 years.

JOHN ED WASHINGTON

John Ed Park | 2000 E. Roosevelt Avenue

While growing up in Indianapolis, John Ed Washington was a dedicated basketball player who graduated from Arsenal Technical High School where he was co-captain of the basketball team in his senior year and carried an 18.5 point per game average. He then went to the University of Evansville and became the star player of the University's basketball team.

His dedication to the sport won him honors including All-City player, and All-Sectional player. Tragically, Washington was a member of the University of Evansville basketball team that perished in a plane crash in December 1977.

REV. CHARLES WILLIAMS

Rev. Charles Williams Park | 3252 Sutherland Avenue

Rev. Charles Williams was instrumental in the development of the Indiana Black Expo where he served as president from 1938 to 2004. Ordained in 1979, Williams helped shape many Indianapolis organizations including the Indiana Sports Corporation, Indianapolis Downtown Promotion Council, Indiana Convention and Visitor's Association, Indianapolis White River State Park Development Commission, and the Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee. He also served as special assistant to the Mayor from 1976 to 1983.

OSCAR CHARLESTON

Oscar Charleston Park | 2800 E. 30th Street

Esteemed baseball player Oscar Charleston was born and raised in Indianapolis along with his 10 brothers and sisters. He was one of the most influential contributors to the Negro League baseball teams here in the city.

Charleston spent 33 seasons playing for and managing the Indianapolis ABCs and the Chicago American Giants, as well as other Negro League Teams. He retired from baseball in 1945 and went to work as a baggage handler for the Pennsylvania Railroad. In 1976, Charleston's contributions to baseball were recognized through his election to the Baseball Hall of Fame.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

Frederick Douglass Park | 1616 E. 25th Street

Born a slave in 1817 in Maryland, Frederick Douglass escaped to freedom to become one of the leading abolitionists of his time. After relocating to Massachusetts, Douglass attended anti-slavery meetings where he began giving speeches on the topic. He was widely recognized for his eloquent speaking ability.

Douglass was later appointed to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society. He also founded and published his own anti-slavery weekly newsletter, the North Star. Douglass also wrote Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, among other abolitionist books.

REV. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Park | 1702 N. Broadway St.

Georgian-born Baptist minister Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. became nationally known as a proponent of civil rights and equality for all human beings.

King's fight for racial equality through non-violent demonstrations included the civil rights march on Washington in 1963, speeches, and conferences with national and international leaders concerning civil rights. King's efforts led to the establishment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. On April 4th, 1968, King was tragically shot and killed in Memphis, Tennessee. He will always be remembered for his impact on civil rights.

WES MONTGOMERY

Wes Montgomery Park | 3400 N. Hawthorne Lane

Jazz guitarist Wes Montgomery launched his music career from Indianapolis, to become nationally and internationally recognized as one of the world's greatest jazz guitarists. Montgomery, a self-taught musician who could not read music, won every notable honor possible for a jazz musician during his career.

At the height of his music career, and at only 45 years of age, Montgomery suffered an unexpected fatal heart attack which left the jazz world shocked at his loss. His music remains an inspiration to all jazz musicians.

FREEMAN B. RANSOM

Ransom Place Park | 801 N. Indiana Avenue

Influential lawyer, businessman and civic activist Freeman Bailey Ransom came to Indianapolis in 1910 after completing his law degree. He was an integral part of the success behind the Madam C.J. Walker Company, serving as the company's attorney and general manager. Ransom was a member of the City-County Council as well as a legal consultant for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

JOHN STEWART

John Stewart Basketball Court | Gardner Park, 6925 E. 46th St.

In 1999, John Stewart was an 18-year old Indiana Basketball phenome. At 7-feet tall, the Lawrence North star player was signed to play for the University of Kentucky. At a game vs. Columbus North High School, Stewart collapsed shortly after complaining of shortness of breath. He died at the hospital of a previously unknown heart condition. His mother now runs the John Stewart foundation, which promotes cardiac screening for youth. The basketball court is named after him at Gardner Park.

CHARLES WATKINS

Watkins Park | 2360 Dr. MLK Jr. Street

A pastor of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church for eight years and minister of St. Paul AME Church before that, Charles Watkins was deeply involved in the Indianapolis community. Watkins served on the Mayor's Commission on Human Rights and was President for two years. Watkins was also the President of the Indianapolis Social Workers Club and was heavily involved with the YMCA. Watkins spent a lot of time abroad representing various local, state, and federal government affairs.

FRANK YOUNG

Frank Young Park | 1000 Udell Street

Frank F. Young was born in Indianapolis in 1873, the last child in a family of six children. Young began his ministry in 1892, serving at both Olivet and Garfield Baptist Churches. In 1907, he began the pastorate of the First Baptist Church North Indianapolis where he remained for the next 60 years. During that time, the church relocated twice as its membership steadily grew.

Young lived to be 94 years old. The longevity of his life was enhanced by his love for people both young and old. He served in many leadership capacities and his social concern for and contributions to the betterment of his community and the City of Indianapolis were innumerable.