

Brief history of the Rondo Days celebration

Written by Timothy Houston
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Celebrating 30 Years



As a people, we have learned to turn lemon into lemonade. Every day, we experience events that would break the spirit of ordinary people, but as a resilient people, we have managed to find the silver lining. Time and time again we have found positive responses to adversity. The annual Rondo Days celebration is a testament of our resilience. Here is a little history of the Rondo Days celebration.

According to the Rondo Days website, In the 1930s, Rondo Avenue was at the heart of Saint Paul, MN's largest Black neighborhood. African-Americans whose families had lived in Minnesota for decades and others who were just arriving from the South made up a vibrant, vital community that was in many ways independent of the white society around it. The construction of I-94 in the 1960s shattered this tight-knit community, displaced thousands of African-Americans into a racially segregated city and a discriminatory housing market, and erased a now-legendary neighborhood.

The website further stated that in 1982, Marvin "Roger" Anderson and Floyd Smaller came up with an idea to bring back a sense of community, stability, and neighborhood values of the old Rondo community. It was their intent to create an organization dedicated to sharing the contributions of African Americans and the rich cultural history of the Rondo community to the City of Saint Paul, and the great State of Minnesota; and to bring people together to celebrate the positive growth and diversity of our beloved Rondo community.

As the founders, their hard work and dedication to the memory of the Rondo community resulted in the formation of the "Rondo Avenue, Inc." organization and the Rondo Days Festival. The Rondo Day Festival celebrates the best and brightest of Minnesota's African-American stories, achievements and culture. It reunites a dispersed people, welcomes new neighbors and encourages everyone to be mindful of the extent to which neighborhoods nourish our souls.

Today, Rondo Avenue, Inc. is a community based 501(c) 3 organization that sponsors a number of community events and workshops that seek to preserve Rondo's rich heritage for future generations while rebuilding and strengthening present community relationships. The Festival plays a critical role in educating our youth on the history of our community.

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It is that time again to join with others in our community during the Rondo Days celebration. Although the construction of I-94 radically changed the landscape of the neighborhood, the community of Rondo still exists and its persistence and growth are celebrated through events like Rondo Days and the Jazz Festival. Come on out on this Saturday and enjoy the lemonade of our resilience.

Timothy Houston is an author, minister, and motivational speaker who is committed to guiding positive life changes in families and communities. To get copies of his books, for questions, comments or more information, go to www.tlhouston.com.