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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SPRINGFIELD PARK DISTRICT TO CUT THE RIBBON ON NEWLY NAMED OTIS B. DUNCAN PARK

Duncan Park, Springfield, IL 62702 |
Madison & Mason Streets | GPS 39.806149, -89.6669924



MAJOR O. B. DUNCAN

[Springfield, IL] – The Springfield Park District (SPD) is pleased to cut the ribbon on the newly named Otis B. Duncan Park. The naming of the park comes after an extensive community outreach campaign designed to provide community members with an opportunity to submit their ideas on a new name for the park. While several names were submitted, local war hero, Otis B. Duncan, quickly rose to the top.

Otis B. Duncan was born on November 18, 1873 and was a member of a long-established African-American family of Springfield, Illinois. His father was a grocer and his mother was the daughter of Abraham Lincoln's barber and friend, William Florville. His wife's name was Mary and his daughter's name was Minnie Lee Duncan. He had one sibling named Clara A. Duncan-Ware.

In 1897, Duncan became a worker for the State of Illinois, serving in the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. In 1902, Duncan entered into the Illinois National Guard where he was assigned to the 8th Illinois and commissioned as an officer. He was called into National service in 1916 during the Mexican border war. Duncan served as a major on the regimental staff along with Operational Office, CPT George S. Patton.

After the American entry into World War I, the 8th Illinois was renamed the 370th Infantry Regiment. It was the only African-American regiment to go into the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) while retaining most of its African-American command structure. During World War I, Duncan was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel where he became the highest ranking African-American officer in the AEF. While serving on the Western Front against the German Army, Duncan was awarded the Purple Heart and the French Croix de Guerre for gallantry in action.

After the war, the 370th Infantry reverted to its prewar status as the 8th Illinois Infantry. Duncan was promoted on March 18, 1919, to the rank of Colonel and became the Regimental Commander stationed at Springfield's Camp Lincoln.

Colonel Duncan retired from the state education bureau in 1929 and died on May 17, 1937. He is buried in Camp Butler National Cemetery near Riverton, Illinois. Duncan is the namesake for American Legion Post 809 effective June 25, 1937 and the Springfield Park District's "Duncan Park" effective November 18, 2020.



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We are honored to cut the ribbon on the newly named Otis B. Duncan Park on Tuesday, June 22nd at Noon.

*“This park name change allows us the opportunity to give an overdue honor to a true Springfield hero. He served our country with honor and bravery and we are pleased to be able to recognize his service.” – **states Leslie Sgro, President of the Springfield Park Board of Trustees***

Plan to join us on Tuesday, June 22nd at 12pm to celebrate a local war hero and cut the ribbon to Duncan Park.

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For more information on this topic and any other Park District news related items, please visit our Website at www.springfieldparks.org