

West Tampa's Pioneers Celebrated In New Mural At Salcines Park

Tampa paying homage to West Tampa's history of diversity and leadership with unveiling of mural at Salcines Park. Patch.com, D'Ann Lawrence White, Patch Staff | Posted Tuesday, February 23, 2021 at 9:07 pm ET



Tampa is playing homage to West Tampa's history of diversity and leadership with the unveiling of a mural at Salcines Park. (Illsol)

On the mural, from left, are Rick Casares, Clara Frye, George Edgecomb, Robert W. Saunders, Sr., Lou Piniella, Mr. and Mrs. Salcines, Carl "Red" Guggino (boxer, E.J. Salcines, Alton White, Leon Claxton, Jetie B. Wilds, Jr. and Blas O'Halloran. (City of Tampa)

TAMPA, FL — Tampa is paying homage to West Tampa's history of diversity and leadership with the unveiling of a mural at Salcines Park titled the "Faces of West Tampa."

Husband and wife team Michelle Sawyer and Tony Krol, known as Illsol, were commissioned by the city to create the mural depicting Tampa trailblazers who fought for civil rights, broke racial barriers and were instrumental in the development of the West Tampa community.

Pictured on the mural are:

- Rick Casares, a Tampa native who excelled at athletics at Jefferson High School, received an athletic scholarship and played fullback at the University of Florida in the 1950s. He then was picked in the 1954 draft to play for the Chicago Bears, and joined the team after completing military obligations.
- Clara Frye, a nurse in Tampa, opened a hospital out of her home to treat African American patients in the early 1900s. She later established the Clara Frye Hospital in West Tampa located at what is now the site of Howard W. Blake High School.
- George Edgecomb became Hillsborough County's first African American judge at the age of 31. He died nearly three years later in 1976. The downtown Hillsborough County Courthouse is now named in his honor.
- Robert W. Saunders Sr., a civil rights activist, served as the NAACP Florida field director and was chief of civil rights for the Southeast region for the U.S. Office of Equal Opportunity.
- West Tampa native Lou Piniella went on to be a professional baseball player and manager for the New York Yankees, Cincinnati Reds, Seattle Mariners, Tampa Bay Devil Rays and the Chicago Cubs.
- Emiliano Jose and Juanita Salcines immigrated to Tampa from Spain in the early 1900s and opened the West Tampa Department store on the corner of Howard and Main Street. This is now the location of Salcines Park, named in honor Salcines' honor.

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- Carl "Red" Guggino was a lightweight boxer who learned to box at the West Tampa Boys Club. Boxing was a popular sport in both West Tampa and Ybor City. Many Florida Boxing Hall of Famers called the area home.
- E.J. Salcines, son of the park's namesake, was born and raised in West Tampa. Salcines served as a state attorney and appellate judge, and is also a local historian.
- Alton White was instrumental in the civil rights movement in Tampa. During his career, White was a Hillsborough County teacher, coordinator for the federal Model Cities Program, which brought federal redevelopment funds to Tampa, and was the executive director of the **Tampa Housing Authority**. White was also the first African American to run for mayor of Tampa.
- Leon Claxton led one of America's most successful traveling shows, Harlem in Havana, which ran from the 1930s through the 1960s. The shows launched the start of many careers, broke carnival records and significantly influenced the Black and Latin entertainment industry during the Jim Crow era. Harlem in Havana had its winter headquarters in West Tampa.
- Jetie B. Wilds Jr. was a public servant who had a 30-year career with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He was also a community activist, columnist for La Gaceta and hosted a community radio show on WTMP-AM. His father, Jetie B. Wilds Sr., was a strong role model for all 12 of his children as a community activist, humanitarian and human rights activist.
- Blas O'Halloran was co-owner of the O'Halloran Cigar Company, a place of significance for the start of the Cuban War of Independence. A cigar containing instructions to start the revolution was rolled at the O'Halloran Cigar Company and delivered to Havana in 1895.

Other murals by Illsol can be seen throughout Tampa Bay including the interior stairwell mural at Anchor Riverwalk in Tampa, inside the Tampa Convention Center, Tampa Heights, Westshore, the Novel Riverwalk, the Fortune Street Bridge and Cafe Hey mural in Tampa Heights.

Salcines Park is located at 1705 N. Howard Ave. in West Tampa.