

Renaming the 2nd St N to Mary Fields Street

The purpose of this letter is to express the importance of who Mary Fields was and how she made a lasting impact not only for Great Falls, but for African-American history.

Mary Fields, also known as "Stage Coach" Mary, was born into slavery, and her first taste of freedom was at the early age of 33 in 1865. After being freed, she would work for a judge as house maid. Once the wife of the judge passed away, she relocated to Toledo, Ohio with the family's five children to live with their aunt. When the aunt, being a mother superior of a convent, was transferred to Montana, she was stricken with pneumonia shortly afterwards. This drove Fields to move to Montana to nurse her back to health. After spending three decades in Montana she was hired as a mail carrier at the age of 60. Mary Fields became a star route mail carrier not only for Great Falls, but the United States. Her efforts from 1895-1905 played a vital role in the hiring processes for people of color in the mail carrier business and paved a way for future prospects. Her outstanding work ethic became the standard for all mail carriers, and after becoming semi-famous in state-wide newspapers, it brought more attention to the fact that Great Falls was willing to hire African-American people, making it a huge beacon of diversity in the country for the time. The reasoning why I chose 2nd Street North is because it's adjacent to a historical post office. This makes it only fitting because of Fields's occupation and contribution to the history of Great Falls and America as a whole. Mary Fields Street will honor her legacy to the African-American community and it will demonstrate that Great Falls has always been a community of inclusion and diversity.

Good Evening to the City Boards, City Commissions members, and Great Falls Residents,

My name is Michelia Rivera-Acosta, I'm currently stationed at Malmstrom Air Force Base and have been for the past three years. Before I present my proposal, I want speak briefly about myself. Prior to joining the armed forces, I was homeless. This taught me the value of dedication, persistence, and resiliency. Previously, I spent a year at Kunsan Air Base in The Republic of Korea, five years at Seymour Johnson in North Carolina, and numerous deployments. When receiving notification that Montana would be my next duty assignment, I had no prior knowledge where the state was located in the United States- let alone Great Falls. I preemptively judged this community by the percentage of African-Americans who reside in Montana. My uneasy feeling of being discriminated against for my skin color made me question why God would place me here. Venturing through this city, a phone call from my mother led me to park my vehicle parallel to Great Falls Public Library. My emotions took over, and tears of frustration covered my face. That is when I came across the Alma Smith Jacobs mural displayed with pride; the weight of my fear no longer existed. Beyond a shadow of doubt I knew this community would embrace my culture. I purposely did not inform my mother of the mural when she came to visit. I wanted her to experience the sense of relief that her child was in good hands in this community. In fact, the Great Falls Public Library was the first of many locations which I presented to her. This why I am proposing the change of 2nd Street North to Mary Fields Street, adjacent to the historical post office which will honor her legacy as the first female, African-American mail carrier not only here in Great Falls but the entire United States. Your vote on this proposal is not only monumental, but also a demonstration of the residents of Great Falls having always embraced diversity. The renaming of 2nd Street North to Mary Fields Street will provide a piece of history and a sense of comfort for future military members, minorities, and residents. If this proposal is not feasible perhaps placing an honorary plaque on top of this street commemorating her legacy would pave a way and recognition of Montana leaders.

Thank you for allowing me to voice this proposal. I hope that my words capture not only your ears and heart, but also your pen.