Originally chosen by the City Planning Commission as the "East Junior High School site", it was developed as a running track and athletic field by the nearby Garfield High School. Upon the acquisition and development of a playfield at the school, the "Garfield Track" was abandoned in 1962, sold to the Department of Parks in 1966. Playground improvements were accomplished by the community through the Central Area Motivation Program (CAMP) in 1967, based upon a design by William Talley, landscape architect.

Upon the suggestion of the Leschi Elementary School students and sponsored by the Seattle Model City Program, the playground was named in 1969 to honor the Leschi Improvement Council's organizer and first president, POWELL BARNETT, a former athlete active in in sports since age 30. Born in Brazil, Indiana 1889, he came to Seattle in 1906; worked as a coal miner from age 16 to 22, was construction foreman on several projects including the Waldorf Hotel (Seattle), was clerk for State Senator Frank Connor, was morning caretaker at King County Courthouse. Led in the organization of the East Madison YMCA, Chairman of the Board, and was instrumental in uniting Black and Caucasian programs and Boards of the YMCA and USO. Elected a Trustee of USO, 1934 to 1961, and honorary member. Chairman of the Committee that revised the Seattle Urban League and his efforts strengthened the League; served two terms on Board of Community Chest; organized (1906) and chaired Black Musicians' Union (played sousaphone), and was prime mover in uniting black and white unions. Organized semi-pro baseball Umpires Association in Seattle and was Executive Secretary 1944-1961, secured affiliation with National Association.

Honored in 1967 by King County Council on Aging; received "Man of Year Award" (1964) by Jackson Street Community Council; the KOL Award for Outstanding Citizen Service; Public Service Recognition Certificate from the Civilian Protection Division of the Civilian War Commission for Emergencies in WW II.

His son, Doug Barnett, was Director of Black Arts Theatre.

EMPIRE WAY honors "the Empire Builder", James J. Hill, whose efforts resulted in the transcontinental railroad to Seattle in 1891, opening a direct route of trade between Japan, China and the East (famed Silk Trains), (a Great Northern train was named "Empire Builder"); achieved construction of railroad tunnel under city center, removing main line from waterfront.

HISTORY:  BARNETT PARK
4/6/73