

Hi, I'm  
Harriet.



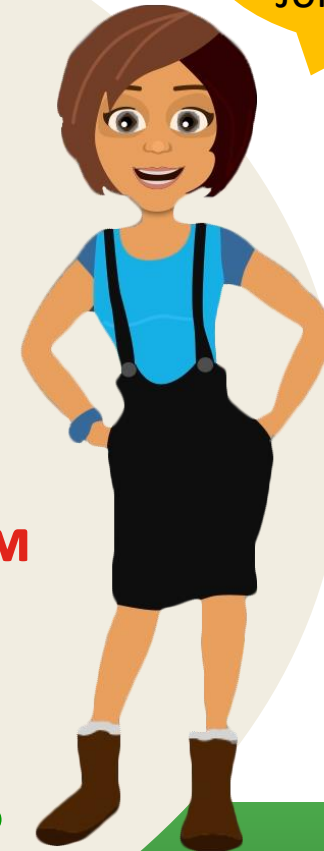
# TALKING HISTORY


with

**Harriet and Roxanne™**

**The First Black Architects**

And I'm  
Roxanne.  
Join us for...



A colorful illustration of a classroom. A woman with dark skin, wearing a green headband, a green jacket, a blue skirt, and green shoes, stands in the center. She has a friendly expression. To her left is a large window with a flower box containing green plants and pink and white flowers. To her right is a desk with a chair, a blackboard, and a television mounted on the wall. A yellow speech bubble points to her.

Roxanne, today we are going to study early architects in America from the late-1800s to the mid-1900s.

Harriet, what's an architect?







An architect is a person who plans, designs, and oversees the construction of buildings.

Oh, its too bad that we don't have any examples of black architects from back then.

**BUT WE DO!**  
Let's take a look...

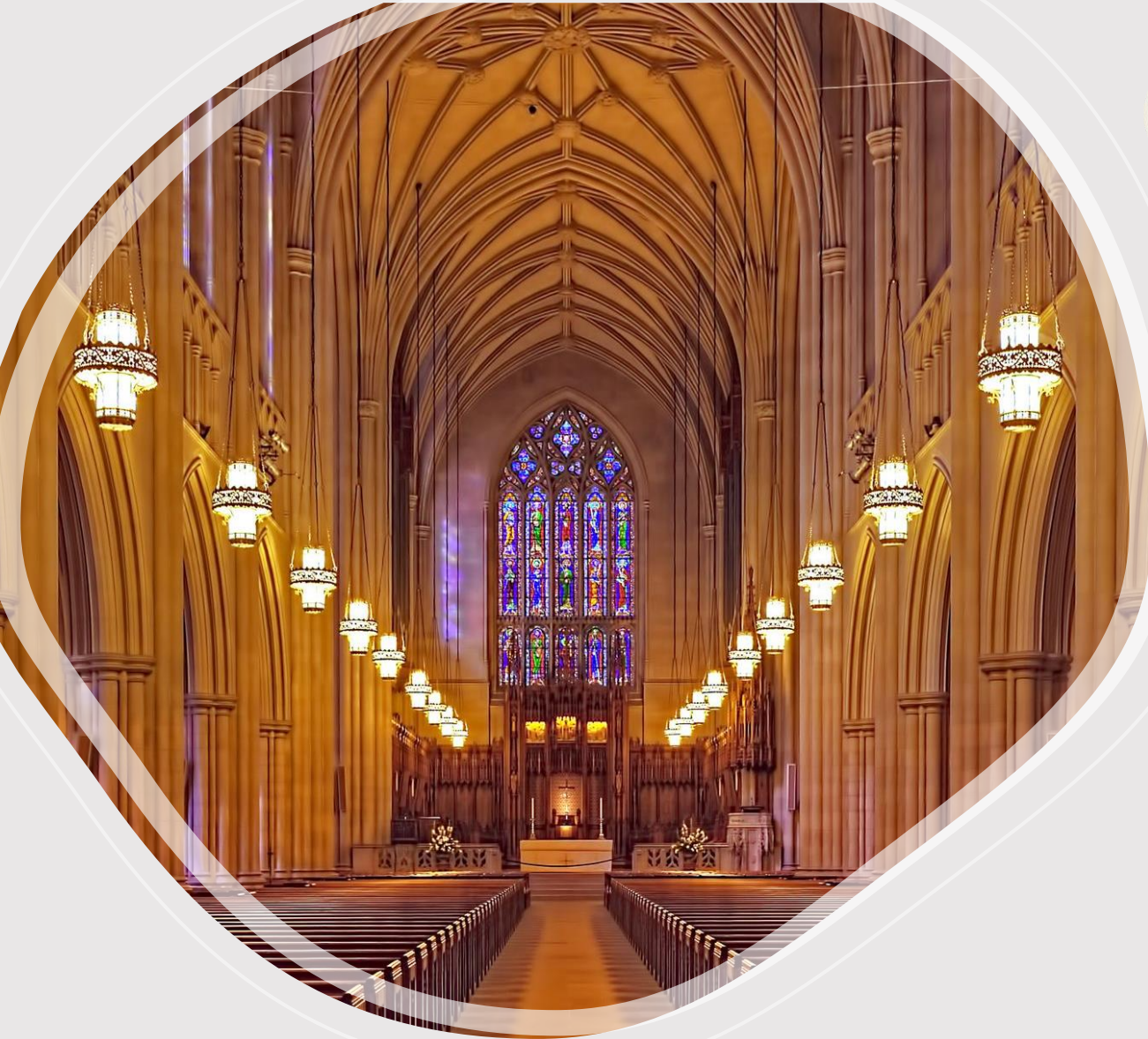
Meet Julian Abele. He did not get credit, in his lifetime, for his beautiful work at the Duke University campus. It would be the 1980s before the credit was given.



Julian Abele (1881-1950)

What did he design at Duke?






I am proud of Julian Abele and his incredible work at Duke University.



Julian designed much of Duke's west campus, but his most magnificent work is the Duke University Chapel, completed in 1932.








Harriet, are there any other black architects that you can tell me about?

Yes, first, let's talk about the history of blacks in the building trade.

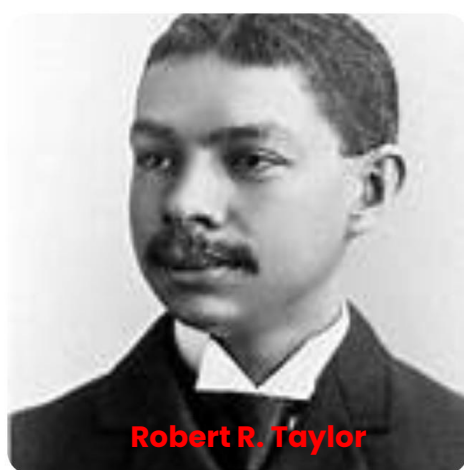


Before the Civil War, blacks learned the building trade to benefit their owners, but they passed their skills to their children after the Civil War.

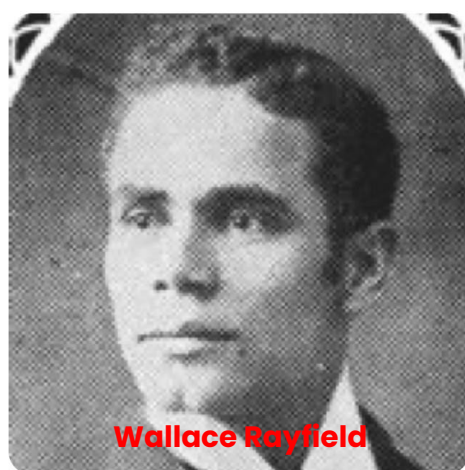
These budding architects would eventually attend school and lead the way for other black architects. Let's look at some of them.



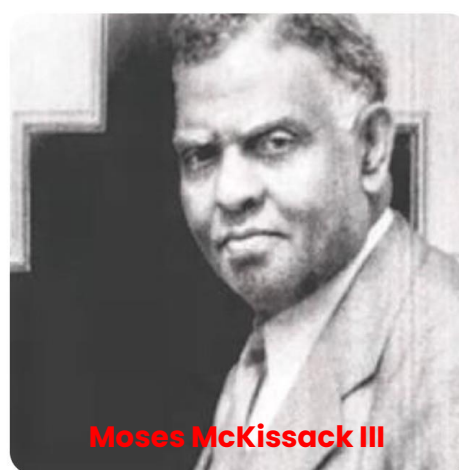
Wow, Harriet,  
this is amazing!  
So many black  
architects.



**Robert R. Taylor**



**Wallace Rayfield**

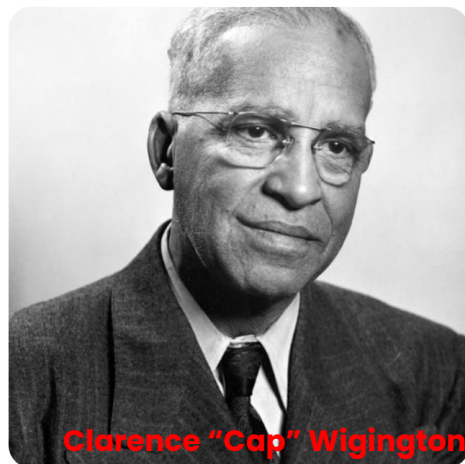


**Moses McKissack III**

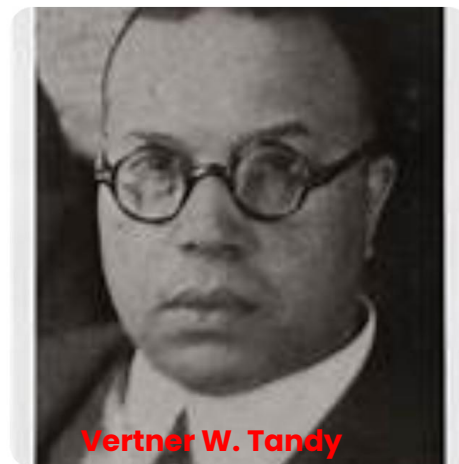
Let me show you  
what they created!  
We already looked  
at Julian Abele's  
work, let's see the  
others.



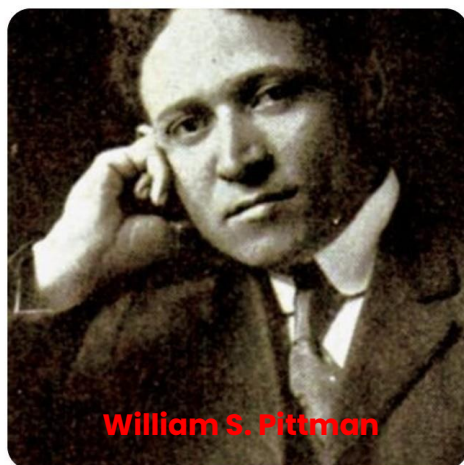
**Julian Abele**



**Clarence "Cap" Wigington**



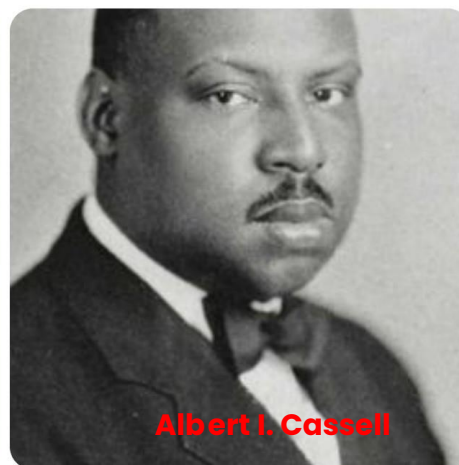
**Vertner W. Tandy**



**William S. Pittman**



**John E. Brent**



**Albert I. Cassell**





I can't wait to hear more!



Robert was the first accredited black architect in America and a graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1892. Booker T. Washington recruited him to establish Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. His first building was the science hall, now known as Thrasher Hall. Students and teachers made the bricks on campus and erected the structure in 1893.



**Robert R. Taylor (1868-1942)**



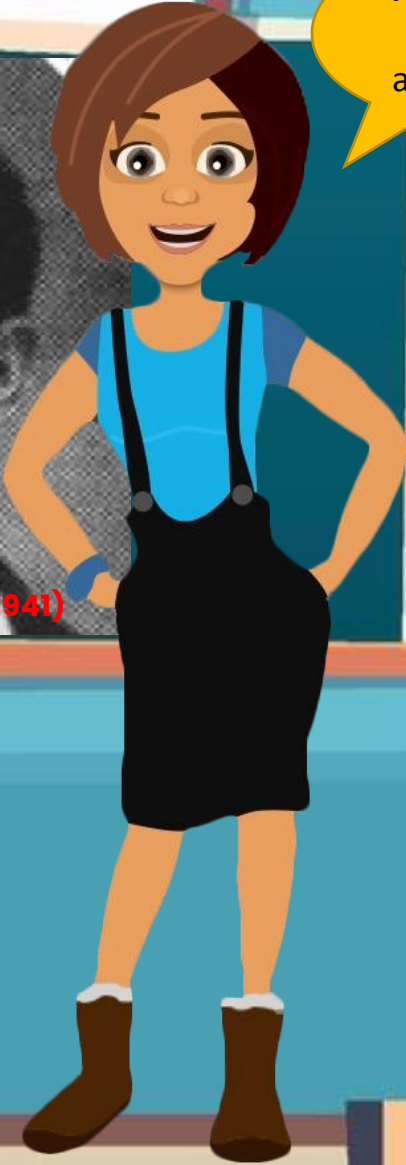


Wallace Rayfield worked alongside Robert Taylor at Tuskegee Institute. He designed many beautiful churches; one was the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church, completed in 1911 in Birmingham, Alabama; a photo is on the board behind you.



Wallace Rayfield (1874-1941)

Who is the next architect?





Roxanne, meet Moses McKissack III, another prolific architect, and with his brother, Calvin, who founded the first black-owned architectural firm in America that is still in practice today.

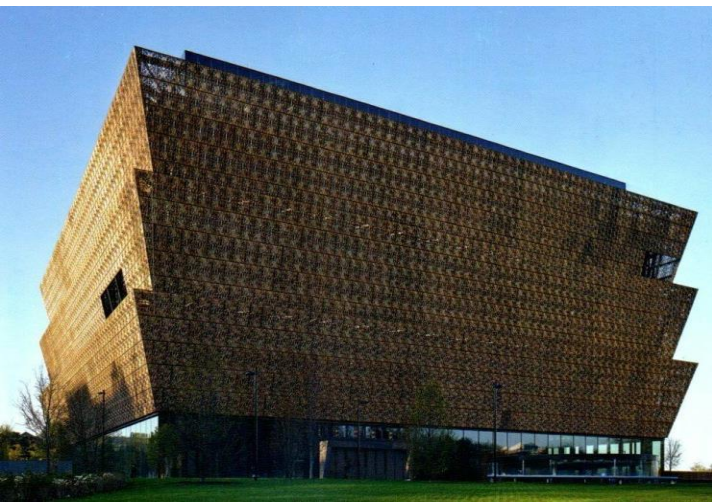


## Some important projects from McKissack & McKissack

**1908** Carnegie Library for Fisk University (above photo)

**1942** McKissack won a \$5.7 million contract to build the 99th Pursuit Squadron Air Base in Tuskegee, Alabama, which was the largest federal contract ever awarded to a black-owned firm. This air base serviced the Tuskegee Airmen of World War II.

**2016** National Museum of African American History & Culture (below photo)

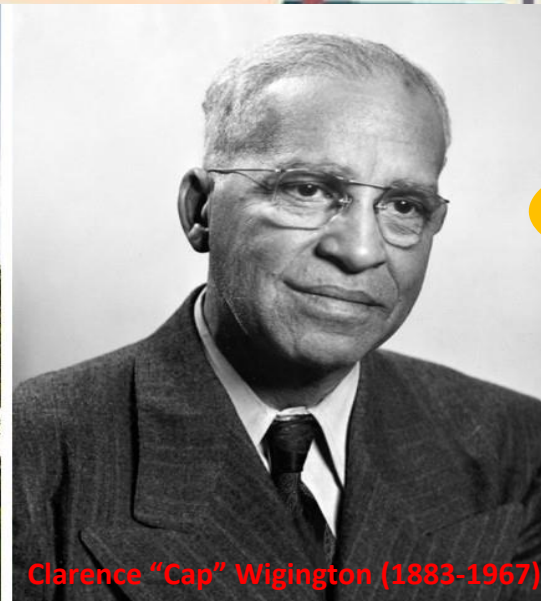


**Moses McKissack III (1879-1952)**



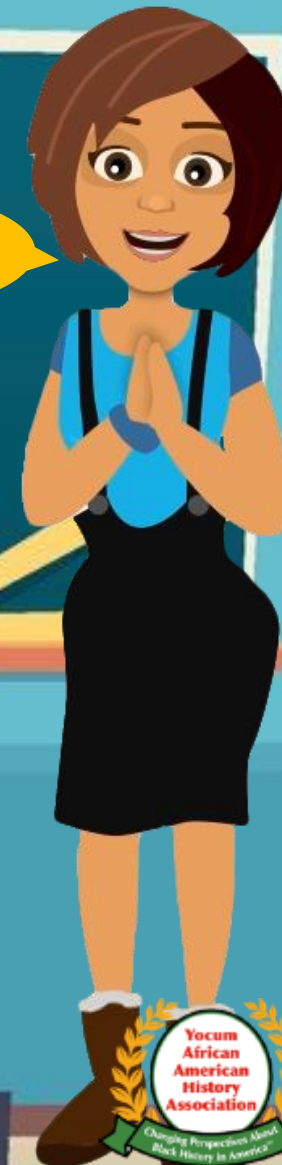


“Cap” Wigington was a successful architect in Illinois, Nebraska, and Minnesota. He was the mastermind of the Highland Park Water Tower. He also designed schools, fire stations, homes, and the Harriet Island Pavilion in Minnesota. Yet, this remarkable man worked for 34 years without getting full credit for his work.



Clarence “Cap” Wigington (1883-1967)

That is unbelievable!

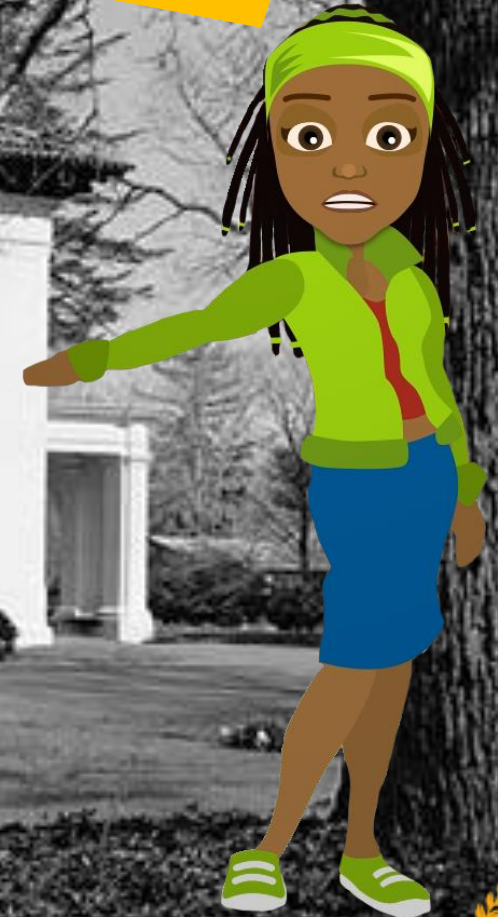




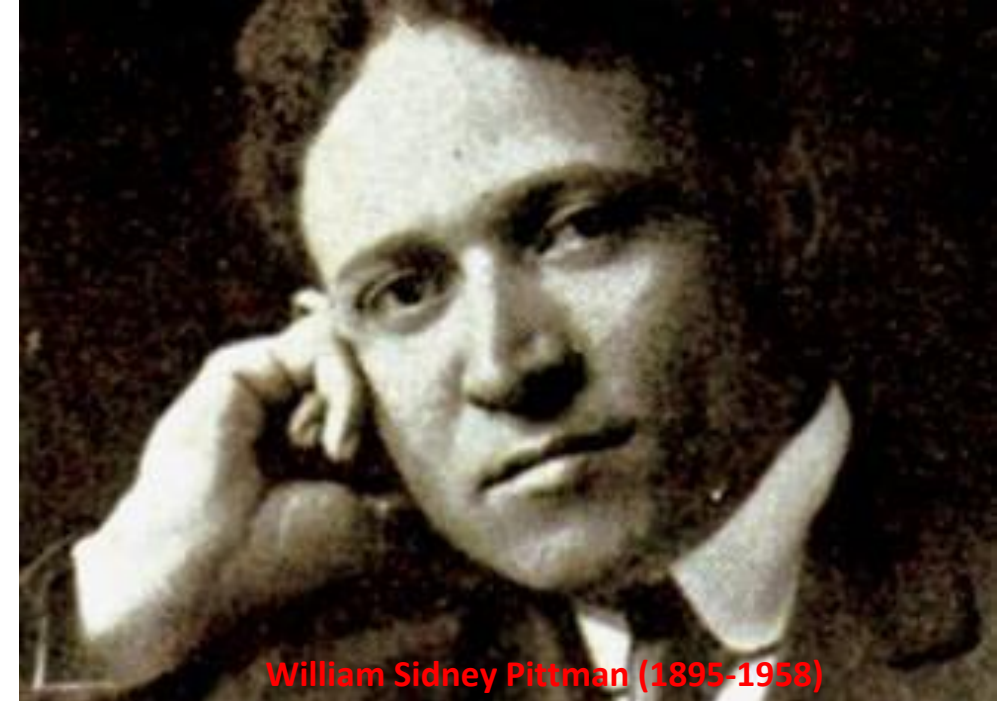
Roxanne, look at this beautiful home, a 1916 Regency Revival home designed by the gifted **Vertner W. Tandy**. The home was designed for Madame C.J. Walker, the black millionaire haircare entrepreneur.



Vertner W. Tandy (1885-1949)









Roxanne, William was the first black professional architect in Buffalo, New York. He designed many churches, public schools, hotels, and college buildings from 1905 to 1909. The Jamestown Exhibition was created to commemorate the 300<sup>th</sup> year founding of the first permanent settlement of Jamestown in Virginia. Some people complained that separating exhibits in the “Negro Building” was not right; others felt it promoted a better representation of what blacks could achieve. Nevertheless, it was designed by a black man and contained many black achievements that few Southerners thought possible.



Roxanne, this is John Edmonston Brent (1889-1962). He was the first black professional architect in Buffalo, New York. John was the son of a former slave and was educated at Tuskegee Institute. John was the lead architect of Buffalo's YMCA, which became the cultural center for blacks in that city.

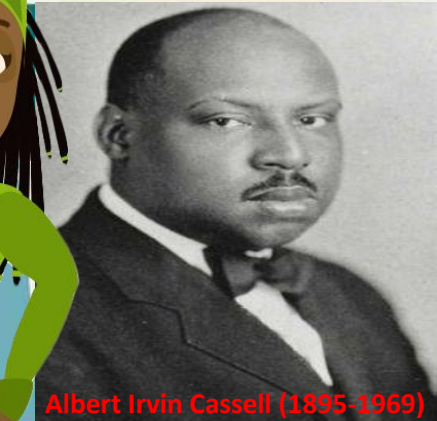
I have one more architect to share, Albert Irvin Cassell.





Roxanne, hold the photo high so everyone can see it. The photo is of Albert's Georgian-style Founders Library for Howard University.

Albert's architectural work was with academic communities, the Reagan International Airport, and the Pentagon.



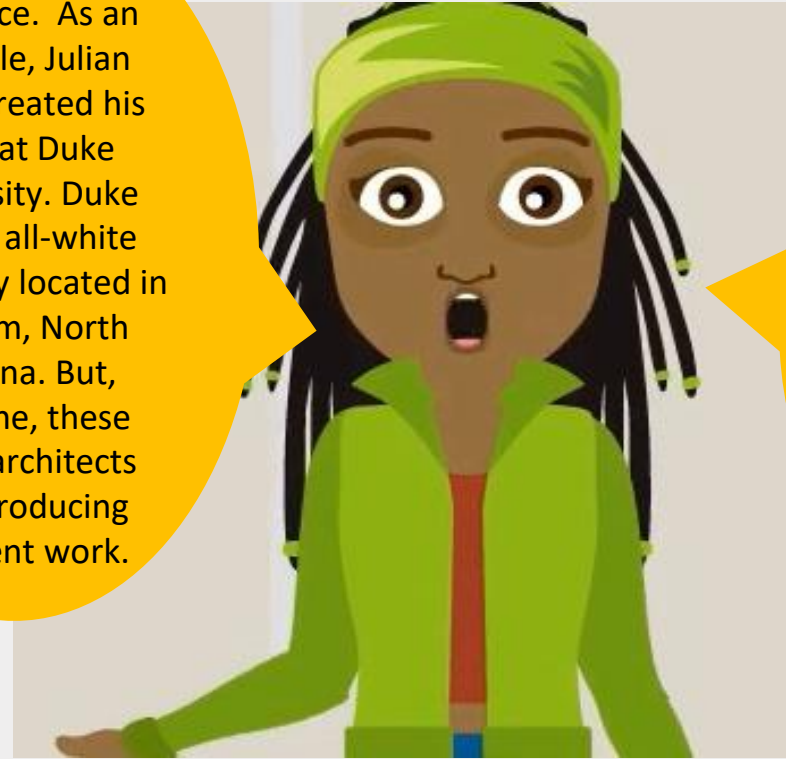
Albert Irvin Cassell (1895-1969)



One thing I don't understand, you mentioned that several of the black architects didn't get credit for their work. Why?



It was because of prejudice. As an example, Julian Abele created his work at Duke University. Duke was an all-white university located in Durham, North Carolina. But, Roxanne, these gifted architects kept producing excellent work.



That's all for today. Please come back soon for more "Talking History with Harriet & Roxanne."



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