

W. Edward Jenkins (1923-1988)

Greensboro

Born in Wake County, Willie Edward Jenkins was a dedicated architect who left a modernist mark on the state.

After serving in World War II, Jenkins studied architectural engineering at North Carolina A&T, graduating in 1949. He was the first Black architect hired by the firm of white architect, Edward Loewenstein in Greensboro, who was known for his modernist home designs. Jenkins became the third licensed Black architect in North Carolina in 1953.

Working alongside Loewenstein, Jenkins dedicated himself to modernist design. Along with many of his Black clients, Jenkins embraced the progress and innovation that modernism symbolized in the segregated South. The optimism of designing for the future was often favored over architectural styles that looked to the past. No building better demonstrates this optimism than Jenkins' 1956 award-winning design for the (all Black) Dudley High School Gymnasium.

In 1962, Jenkins opened his own architectural practice, focusing on modernist residential designs including a 1960 house in Greensboro for prominent Civil Rights leader J. Kenneth Lee.



John W. Winters, Sr. (1920-2004)

Raleigh

John W. Winters was a Raleigh native. He attended three universities, including Duke, but never received a diploma. Nevertheless, he achieved enormous success as a real estate developer and politician.

After realizing that Raleigh was being overlooked by developers in the growth of the city, Winters and John W. Winters and Company in 1957. He worked all jobs, including as a skipper at RCU, to make money while he worked to establish his business. Starting out building live homes a year, his company expanded by 1960 he was developing subdivisions, shopping centers and apartment complexes. Two of his subdivisions, Wakeview and Ballantyne Hills, were built to meet increasing demand for a growing African American middle class for new suburban homes in neighborhoods that did not respect their purchase based on race.

Winters ran for and won a seat in Raleigh's City Council in 1966. The first African American elected to city council since Reconstruction, he achieved the success prior to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Winters served three terms as Councilman, and in 1974, Winters was the first African American elected to the North Carolina Senate since the Reconstruction era.

Despite always experiencing a welcomed politician and businessman, he experienced racial discrimination in one instance in a white neighborhood. For his family a building to rent while other white-only residents in the area, after he replaced an existing building on the market he had to build a new one out. Half of the new build to white better as he had two weeks.



Oliver Nestus Freeman (1882-1955)

Wilson

Oliver Nestus Freeman was a prolific, creative, and multi-talented craftsman active in Wilson from 1910 to his death in 1955. Educated at the Tuskegee Normal School where he majored in industrial arts (building trades), he became Wilson's preeminent brick and masonry craftsman. Freeman's bold, rough stone-work for foundations, chimneys, columns, and other architectural elements are distinctive throughout Wilson. In addition to his work on buildings, he is known for creating imaginative masonry sculptures, especially the quirky stone-work and sculptures designed and built on his own property.

After settling in Wilson in 1910 with his wife, he built a modest brick cottage as their home. A decade later, he transformed the brick cottage into an elaborate stone bungalow, near his home. Freeman built a certain rough-stone house as a rental in the 1940s. Over the years he added fanciful stone and concrete garden sculptures in his property including a 7' foot dinosaur.

The Freeman Rural House is now a museum in Wilson showcasing Freeman's career as a builder and artist.



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