

WE BUILT THIS

Profiles of Black Architects and Builders in North Carolina

Many of the historic buildings we revere in North Carolina are credited to their owners. Rarely are the people responsible for the labor and craftsmanship recognized. *We Built This* seeks to acknowledge the countless African Americans who built the historic buildings we collectively treasure. These individuals were skilled in principles of engineering, construction and business. Many became political and social leaders in their communities. Acknowledging the significance of this history is a start to preserving a tangible link to the past through our built environment.

This exhibition reveals the extraordinary stories of more than two dozen builders, craftsmen, and architects responsible for the construction of some of North Carolina's treasured landmarks. Spanning more than three centuries, *We Built This* provides personal profiles and historic context on key topics including slavery and Reconstruction; the founding of HBCUs and Black churches; Jim Crow and segregation; and the rise of Black civic leaders and professionals. *We Built This* offers endless opportunities for expanded programming at each venue.

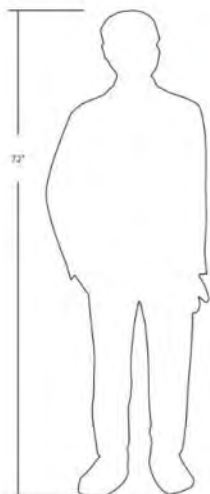
Exhibit Specs:

- Six (6) 89" x 89" x 12" Freestanding Backdrops
- Fifteen (15) 33.5" x 80" Double-sided Banner Stands
- Space Required: approximately 800sf (various configurations)
- Rental Fee: \$2,500 + shipping to your site (coordinated by renter)
- Loan Period: 8-16 weeks suggested



SIZES-
Intro/ Conclusion Panels, Condensed Backdrop Panels, and Profile Panels are all the same size (33.5" X 80").

Historic Backdrops, HBCU's Backdrop, and Black Churches Backdrop are all the same size (89" X 89").



CONTACT:

**Walker Hinerman
Programming and
Events Manager**

whinerman@presnc.org
919-832-3652 x238



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**SAMPLE OF
FEATURED
BUILDERS**

Gaston Alonzo Edwards (1875-1943) was the first Black architect licensed in North Carolina. He worked at Shaw University where he planned and superintended construction of key buildings like Leonard Medical School Hospital (1910), now Tyler Hall, utilizing students in the construction.

L: Gaston Alonzo Edwards, ca. 1912. Image courtesy of Hazel Ruth Edwards.

R: Leonard Medical School Hospital (right), Shaw University, Raleigh. Built 1910.



Stewart Ellison (1834-1899) was an enslaved carpenter hired out in Raleigh where he helped construct the North Carolina Hospital for the Insane (now Dorothea Dix Hospital). He became one of the state's longest serving Black legislators of the 19th century, representing Wake County in five legislative sessions. He was also the first Black citizen to serve on what is now the Raleigh City Council.

L: Stewart Ellison, date unknown. Image courtesy of Elizabeth Anne Ray Williamson.

R: North Carolina Hospital for the Insane (Dorothea Dix Hospital), Raleigh. Built 1850-1852. Image courtesy of North Carolina Collection Photographic Archives, Wilson Library, UNC-Chapel Hill



William B. Gould (1837-1923) was an enslaved plasterer in Wilmington who made his mark on the elaborate plasterwork at the Bellamy Mansion. His initials, WBG, were found on the back of decorative plaster pieces during the 1993 restoration of the mansion.

L: William B. Gould, ca. 1890. Image courtesy of William B. Gould IV and Stanford Law Library.

R: "WBG" etched into decorative plaster at the Bellamy Mansion, discovered during restoration in the 1990s. Image courtesy of the Bellamy Mansion Museum.



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SUGGESTED LAYOUTS

RED

BACKDROP 1- Colony & Early Statehood

- 01- Joe Welcome
- 02- Donum Montford
- 03- Waller Freeman
- 04- The Pattersons
- 05- Howe Family
- 06- Thomas Day

BLACK

BACKDROP 2- Before & During the Civil War

- 07- Elvin Artis
- 08- William Gould
- 09- Stewart Ellison
- 10- James Vester Miller
- 11- William Houser
- 12- George Mathewson

GREEN

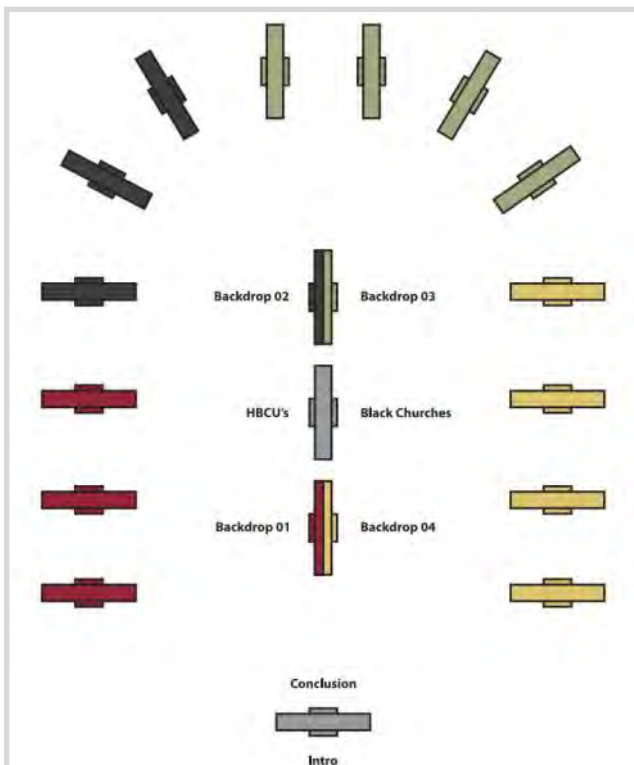
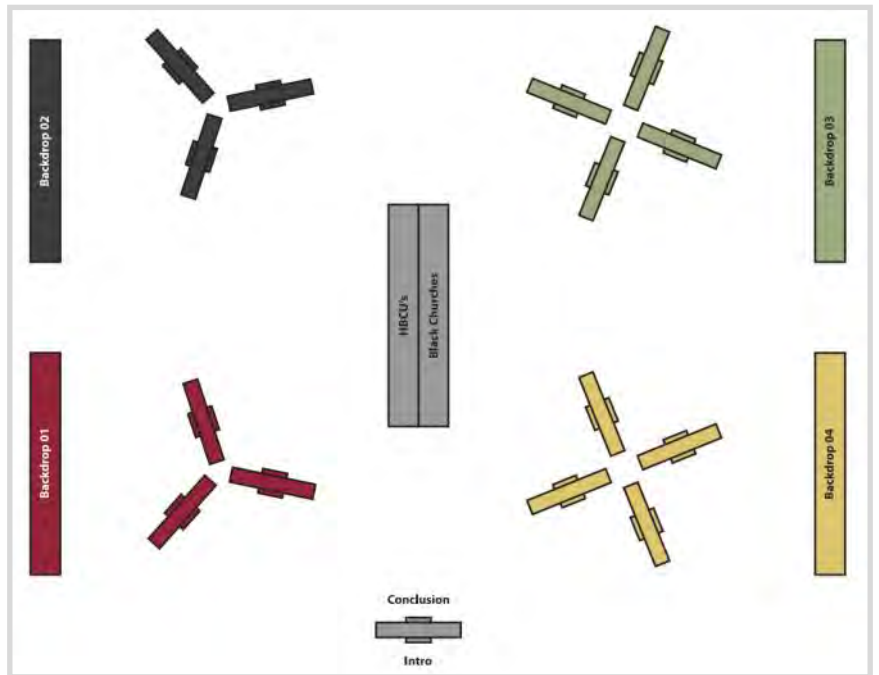
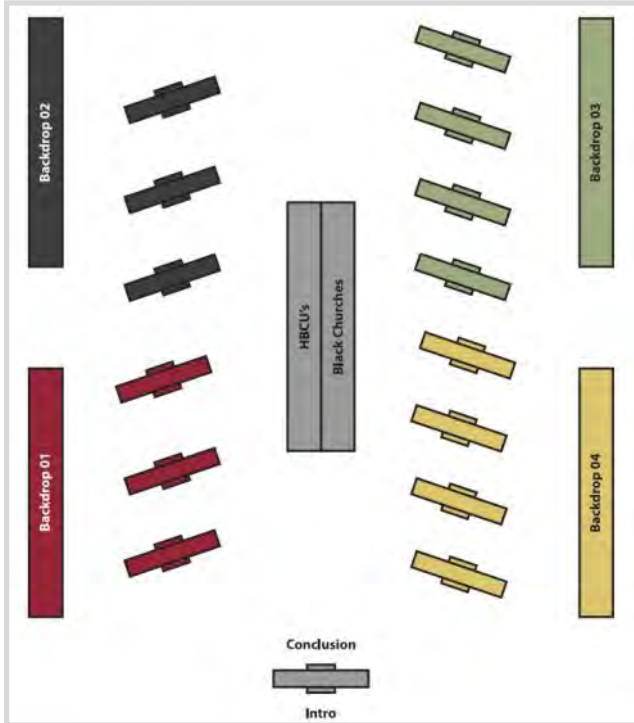
BACKDROP 3-Reconstruction & Late 19th Century

- 13- Bishop Delany
- 14- Willis Graves
- 15- William W. Smith
- 16- John Merrick
- 17- The Fitzgeralds
- 18- CE Lightner
- 19- Gaston Alonzo Edwards
- 20- Robert Taylor

YELLOW

BACKDROP 4- 20th Century & Beyond

- 21- Julian Frances Abele
- 22- Oliver N Freeman
- 23- George Black
- 24- John Winters
- 25- Edward Jenkins
- 26- Merlyn Macon
- 27- Harvey Gantt
- 28- Philip Freelon



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SAMPLE LAYOUTS
FROM PAST VENUES

Profiles of Black Architects and Builders in North Carolina



Union Station, Winston-Salem, 2024



Historic Oak View, Raleigh, 2023



Historic Rosedale, Charlotte, 2022



H.C. Taylor Gallery at NC A&T, Greensboro, 2022



Dix Park, Raleigh, 2022