



Student Name:
Class Period:
Date:

Meet the Originals

Texas Originals is a radio series about people who made an impact on Texas. You can hear it online and on radio stations around the state. Read or listen to the episode on John Saunders Chase Jr. Then, answer questions about it.

John Saunders Chase Jr. 1925–2012

On June 5, 1950, the U. S. Supreme Court issued a ruling desegregating graduate and professional schools in Texas. Two days later, twenty-five-year-old John Saunders Chase became the first African American to enroll in The University of Texas's master's program in architecture. Chase earned his degree two years later. He soon became the first licensed African American architect in Texas.

In a distinguished career spanning more than five decades, Chase designed buildings throughout southeast and central Texas, including many Black churches, homes, and businesses. His style was distinctly modern, inspired by the work of Frank Lloyd Wright. Chase's buildings have clean lines and bright, open public spaces—their designs guided not by tradition, but rather by the needs of the individuals and communities they would serve.

As Chase gained success, he took on larger public projects that included multiple buildings on the Texas Southern University campus and, in collaboration with other architects, Houston's George R. Brown Convention Center and the 1988 Astrodome renovation.

Chase's legacy extends beyond his buildings. In 1971, he co-founded the National Organization of Minority Architects. As a member of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, he helped select Maya Lin to design the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC.

Chase died in 2012. He is remembered as a professional and civic leader and one of Texas's most important progressive architects.

Check for Understanding: Answer the questions below based on evidence from the episode on John Saunders Chase Jr. Refer to the text included above if needed.

1. John Saunders Chase Jr. became the first African American to enroll in graduate school at The University of Texas at Austin. What subject did he study?
2. Describe Chase's architectural style.

Going Further: Write or discuss your answer to the question below, supporting your answer with evidence from the episode or additional information you have learned in class.

3. **Taking a Position.** What do you think are the most important human needs to keep in mind when designing buildings? Explain.