**Alice Parker  
Gas furnace, 1919**

Before 1919, people had to cut wood to burn in fireplaces or stoves to heat their home. Cutting wood took a great deal of time and the smell and smoke from the fire could be unpleasant. Leaving a fire lit throughout the night could also be dangerous so people extinguished the fire at night. Then, the house became cold. Alice Parker, an African American inventor from Morristown, NJ, designed a new way of heating the home. On March 29, 1919, she was awarded a patent for a natural-gas heating furnace. Using gas as fuel, the furnace carried warm air throughout various rooms of the house. It was the first time anyone had thought of using natural gas for home heating. In an era when most women didn’t attend college, Alice Parker graduated from Howard University with honors. Unfortunately, little else is known about Alice’s life but every time you reach for your home’s thermostat to raise or lower the heat, think of Alice Parker!