



EASON CROSS FAIA

Eason Cross, who studied under Bauhaus founder Walter Gropius at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, was a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects and a prominent architect in the Washington area for more than half a century. As President of the Northern Virginia Chapter of the AIA in the early 1980s, Cross successfully fought to modify proposed Virginia state legislation that would have endangered the public by allowing individuals without architectural or engineering training to design buildings. By writing alternative legislation and educating legislators, he laid the groundwork for a compromise that gave officials the discretion to require a professional seal, an accomplishment for which the Virginia Society of the AIA presented him with the Noland Prize, its highest honor.

His architectural work garnered a wide range of design awards, including an AIA National Honor Award in 1968 and an AIA Middle Atlantic Region Honor Award in 1967. Cross's early interest in energy-efficient buildings led to his firm's 1980 Virginia Society AIA Energy Award and its winning entry in the 1981 Virginia Passive Solar Residential Design Competition.

A modernist, Cross's architectural legacy comprises elegantly functional public buildings, such as the Pohick Regional Library and the award-winning Washington and Lee Gymnasium; dramatic custom homes; and residential communities designed around their natural settings, such as Bethesda's Wynkoop development. As an associate architect with Charles M. Goodman Associates, Cross was one of the lead designers of Hollin Hills, which gained a National Register of Historic Places national historic district designation in 2013.

Eason Cross, Jr. was born on November 14, 1925 in Bisbee, AZ to Eason Cross, Sr., an Episcopal minister and Olive Hardwick Cross, an educator who later became a professor of humanities at Florida State University. By 1929, the family had moved to Maynard, MA, where his father provided food and clothes to unemployed families and his mother ran children's camps and organized local women's theater productions. When Cross was ten, his father was named rector of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Allston, MA, and the family moved into the rectory, which served as Cross's home base for the next decade.

Cross attended Longwood Day School, the Fessenden School, and Phillips Academy, Andover, from which he graduated in 1943. He entered Harvard College that year, but after several terms shipped out to Great Lakes Naval Training Center and spent the waning days of WWII as a quartermaster at the helm of destroyer escort U.S.S. Neil A. Scott.

After the war, Cross was readmitted to Harvard and began taking courses at the Harvard Graduate School of Design under Gropius, Marcel Breuer, and other modernists. He showed early promise when he and fellow student Dick Wheeler won the Ware Prize for a joint weekend sketch project in a competition among MIT, Harvard, and Boston Architectural Center students. Cross received his Masters of Architecture from Harvard in 1951 as a member of the war class of 1947.

In 1950, Cross married Diana Johnson and, after an abortive move from Boston to Florida and back, the couple relocated to Washington, DC, where Cross found work with Georgetown architects Diegart and Yerkes, starting in 1952. Two years later, he joined Goodman's firm, where he was the lead designer on one of the nine standard Hollin Hills models, as well as on an early National Homes prefabricated house model. In 1961, he and architect Harry Adreon founded Cross and Adreon, which quickly established its

reputation on both the local and national scenes. Its first major project was the Oak Meadow Nursing Home in Alexandria, VA, featuring a novel twin-circular floor plan, configured around the nurses' patterns of providing care. In a joint project with architect Stevenson Flemer, the firm followed up with the Washington and Lee High School Gymnasium, which reimagined the elevation perspective by paring away unused space under the bleachers. The American Institute of Steel Construction recognized the striking new aesthetic by awarding the building a National Honor Award in 1967.

The firm was perhaps most admired, however, for its residential work, both community developments and custom homes. In many of those projects, Cross explored the interplay of light and shadow through exposed trusses, creating soaring, multi-story open spaces contrasting with the complex lines of the structural elements. After the firm split up in 1987, Cross founded Cross Associates, as well as being a founding member of the cooperative Virginia Architects Accord, and continued practicing architecture into his mid-80's.

Cross was active in community affairs throughout his life, primarily in Fairfax County, VA. As Chairman of the Fairfax County Appeals Board, he oversaw the county's adjudication of the 1973 collapse, while under construction, of Skyline Towers, a 26-story condominium project. In that capacity, he focused attention on the State of Virginia's failure to create a Workmen's Compensation system capable of providing adequate assistance in such cases. As Vice President of the Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors in the late 1970s, he successfully advocated for increasing the percentage of revenue generated from the commercial sector in comparison with that from residential property taxes. While Chairman of the Chamber's Education Committee during that period, he anticipated current trends by bringing education and business leaders together to develop career and employment programs. In local Democratic politics, he was a Delegate to the 1976 VA State Democratic Convention and a Delegate to the 1972 and 1976 8th District Democratic Conventions, as well as a primary candidate for County Supervisor in 1974. He volunteered as a poll-worker into his late eighties.

A prolific writer, Cross published extensively on both architecture and politics, often intertwining the two. Over his career, he contributed articles to reference works and professional journals, as well as writing a regular column, "Architectonica," which appeared from 1982 through 1987 in "Virginia Record," the journal of the Virginia Society of the AIA. In the 1990s, he was a regular political columnist for "the King George Journal," a local newspaper in King George County, VA, where Cross maintained a weekend home. In recent years, Cross had turned his hand to longer-form literature, in 2008 self-publishing a children's novel, "The Boy Boy and Me!," based on his own childhood, and, at the time of his death, having just completed an architectural memoir, "Form Follows...Fancy?," designed as a guide to the profession for young architects.

Cross died on January 28, 2016 at the Greenspring Retirement Community in Springfield, VA of complications following a stroke. He had lived independently at Greenspring since moving from Hollin Hills in 2013. Cross was predeceased by his wife of 64 years, Diana Johnson Cross, and is survived by his four children, Ben, Rebecca, Amy and Susan; and five grandchildren. A memorial service will be held at 1 p.m. on April 30 at the Mount Vernon Unitarian Church, where Cross served as a trustee from 1968 to 1979 and sang in the choir. A memorial service will be held at 1 p.m. on April 30 at the Mount Vernon Unitarian Church, where Cross served as a trustee from 1968 to 1979 and sang in the choir.

Published in The Washington Post on Feb. 28, 2016