

# Clarence Cross

Birth Year : 1916

Clarence Cross, an architect, was born in Allensville, KY, the son of Ameila Tinsley Cross and Napoleon Cross. Napoleon was a farmer and supported the family of five that included Amelia's mother Jane Tinsley, according to the 1920 U.S. Federal Census. In 1927, the family moved to Kokomo, IN, where Clarence Cross completed high school. He was a student at Tuskegee Institute [now Tuskegee University] and completed one year before enlisting in the U.S. Army on January 14, 1942, at Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indiana, according to his enlistment record.

After receiving an Honorable Discharge from the Army in 1946, Cross enrolled again at Tuskegee Institute and was a 1949 architecture graduate. He was a registered architect in Ohio and Indiana, and had a private practice while also employed by the Base Civil Engineering for Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. He retired from the Air Force Base in 1971. Cross was a founding partner in 1969 of the firm Cross, Curry, de Weaver, Randall and Associates; the firm was dissolved in 1997.

# Clarence Cross

*African-American Architects: A Biographical Dictionary, 1865-1945*  
edited by Dreck Spurlock Wilson

In 1946 Cross reentered Tuskegee Institute with financial assistance from the GI Bill. His major was architecture. One instructor, Milton Love, was particularly influential. Love was a graduate of Tuskegee Institute and had taught there for many years prior to Cross's arrival. Love taught Cross the history of architecture, applied mechanics, architectural design, specifications and contracts, and surveying. After graduating at the top of his class in 1949, Cross returned to Kokomo. There, as a member of American Legion Post No. 177, he designed and supervised construction of the new post home. He served as commander of the post in 1950.

In his continuing quest for education, Cross took architectural engineering courses from Wilson Engineering Corporation in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1953. He also took courses in Air Force management at the University of Dayton in 1967, and attended structural steel design conferences at Purdue University during 1971. Cross had a special interest in churches; therefore he attended national workshops on church design in New York, Chicago, Washington, D.C., and Minneapolis.

Cross moved to Dayton, Ohio, in 1951. He was employed by the Architectural Section, Base Civil Engineering for Wright-Patterson U.S. Air Force Base near Dayton, and became a registered architect in Ohio in 1958.<sup>1</sup> Two years later he became a registered architect in Indiana.<sup>2</sup> Along the way to obtaining registrations, Cross worked in Tuskegee, Alabama; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Kokomo, Indiana. He retired from the federal government in 1971, with the title of chief architect, base unit leader, and head of the architectural unit of the civil engineering division.

His duties included supervision of high school and college students on summer internships, and he was technical supervisor of civilian and military personnel in his unit. In addition, he was the facilities manager for Wright-Patterson Field and Engineer Manager and was responsible for multimillion-dollar construction projects.

Cross maintained a small private practice from 1958 to 1969, in addition to his federal job. In 1969 Cross became a founding partner in the architectural and engineering firm of Cross, Curry, de Weaver, Randall, & Associates. This inter-racial firm was largely responsible for the design and working drawings for the Charles Drew Health Center, Model Cities Neighborhood Facility, Southwest Shopping Center, Dayton Fire Station No. 13, and Parks Copeland Building for the Tabernacle Baptist Church, all in Dayton. The firm was one of three selected to design the multi-million-dollar Rapid Transit Authority office and garage. In 1997 the firm was dissolved.

Churches were Cross's favorite building type, and he is particularly proud of the Second Baptist Church (1958) in Ford City, Pennsylvania. He was the designer but not the architect of record for the church. Other churches that he designed include the Greater Nebo Baptist Church (1962) and the Tabernacle Baptist Church (1985), both in Dayton. He is a member of the latter.

Clarence Cross married Mary Elizabeth Thompson on April 11, 1953. They had no children. He and his wife (who is not a Tuskegee Institute graduate) were founding members of the Dayton, Ohio, Tuskegee Alumni Club. Cross donated the initial gift of books to establish the nucleus of the Tuskegee Institute architectural library. In 1964 Cross also established the Milton Love Prize, in memory of his favorite teacher, which is given each year to the graduating senior showing the most potential in architecture. On two occasions prior to 1981, he furnished the funds for two \$400 competition prizes for students in architecture.

At the height of the civil rights movement in Dayton, Cross became a member of the West Side Citizens Council, Congress of Racial Equality, and the Dayton Alliance for Racial Equality. Cross's other memberships include the Dayton chapter of the American Institute of Architects, Ohio Society of Architects, National Trust for Historic Preservation, and Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers, and he is a life member of Tuskegee University Alumni Association.

## BUILDING LIST

<b>Name</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Charles Drew Health Center	1323 W. 3rd St	Dayton	OH		
Dayton Fire Station No. 13	1723 W. 3rd St.	Dayton	OH		
Dayton Rapid Transit Office & Garage		Dayton	OH	1971	
Greater Int. Nebo Baptist Church	172 Colgate Ave.	Dayton	OH	1962	
Model Cities Neighborhood Center	1520 Germantown Ave.	Dayton	OH	1971	
Second Baptist Church	4th Ave.	Ford City	PA	1958	
Southwest Shopping Center		Dayton	OH		
Tabernacle Baptist Church	380 S. Broadway St.	Dayton	OH	1958	
Tabernacle Baptist Church Parks Copeland Bldg.		Dayton	OH	1985	