

JOSEPH W. ROBINSON, SR. FAIA

Biographical Sketch

Joseph Robinson was born in Georgetown, South Carolina. He attended public schools there and graduated from Howard High School in Georgetown. He chose to attend Hampton University in Hampton, Virginia and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Architecture.

Arriving in Atlanta, he found that employment in his chosen field was denied to African-Americans and chose to teach in the public school system. *He was the first* to teach descriptive geometry in the school system. More than a teacher, he inspired his students, many of whom went on to become architects, engineers, doctors, lawyers and other professionals. He then established *one of the first* of three African-American owned architectural practices in Georgia. In 1995 *he became the first* African-American in Georgia to be elevated to Fellowship in the American Institute of Architects.

Mr. Robinson used architecture to reshape changing communities with compassion during a time of segregation, designing over 200 private homes with exceptional recreational facilities so that people unable to use public spaces could socialize, entertain and host political gatherings in the privacy of their own homes.

As a mentor to scores of African-American architects through his practice, Robinson understood the need to enhance the profession for future generations and was a charter member of the National Organization of Minority Architects. As a vice president and Director of the Southern Region he was active in two of NOMA's task forces: Government and Education.

Joe Robinson's concern for educating others to the contributions of African-Americans in the building of this country, led him to become a major player in bringing the Martin Luther King, Jr. Historic District into reality. He provided preservation design for the King Birth Home, the home next door, which became an office of the King Center for Non-Violent Social Change, the King Community Center and the MLK Natatorium. He also provided restoration and renovation design for other buildings that were important to the district such as the Oddfellows Building, Big Bethel AME Church and most recently the historic Friendship Baptist Church renovation and multipurpose building addition.

Joe Robinson *forged two of the first* major Black and white joint ventures for significant projects in Atlanta: Hartsfield Atlanta International Airport, Concourses C & D, the shell for the Airport MARTA Station, and the Ashby Street MARTA Station.

Mr. Robinson has been honored by nearly 40 personal awards for professional and civic contributions, two of them from the Atlanta Business League in 1980 for Outstanding Professional Leadership in A/E Services, and in 1999 he received the Trailblazer Award for his contributions to business leadership over a span of 30 years.

Against great odds, J. W. Robinson has exemplified determination and a pioneering spirit; A spirit that has led him to become an empowering influence on future generations. Through his commitment and his actions, he has shown those who aspire to greater challenges, how to strengthen, organize, and blend those characteristics that make communities better parts of an imperfect whole -- a nation founded on freedom!