

Village of Pittsford E-News



PASSING OF LONG TIME VILLAGE VOLUNTEER & COMMUNITY ADVOCATE: JEAN FRANCES

For many years local architectural historian Jean France has volunteered her time to serve as a consultant for the Village of Pittsford. The Village Board is saddened to announce the passing of longtime Pittsford resident Jean France.

Jean France moved to Rochester in the late 1950s after her husband Robert accepted a position at the University of Rochester. In addition to raising a family, Jean quickly became an advocate for historic preservation and architecture in Rochester and in Pittsford, the community she loved.

One of her first accomplishments was helping to select Louis Kahn as the architect for the New Unitarian Church to be built on Winton Road in Rochester. Kahn's break-through design re-interprets the "Part II" of Frank Lloyd Wright's Unitarian Temple. It is a beautiful and beautifully detailed building that the American Institute of Architects has called "the most significant religious structure built in America in the twentieth century" Jean was justly proud of her role in giving Rochester this masterpiece.

Jean served for decades on the Board of the Landmark Society of Western New York. She was involved in many of the Society's successful initiatives. She was fearless in her advocacy for historic preservation and was intimidated by no one. The Rochester Community owes her a great deal of gratitude for her tireless efforts to protect Rochester's rich historical legacy.

Jean also taught architectural history at the University of Rochester. She was an expert on acclaimed local architects Harvey Ellis and Claude Bragdon. She fostered a passion in generations of students who entered the fields of architecture and preservation.

In Pittsford she was instrumental in the formation of Historic Pittsford, the listing of the village in the National Register of Historical Places, and the enactment of preservation ordinances in both the village and the town. In the 1960s, with a core group of preservation pioneers, she halted the beginning of destructive changes in Pittsford Village. As a volunteer, she consulted with both the town and the village for many years. Jean also served on the Perinton Historic Architecture Commission. Although she lived in a beautiful modern house outside of the village, her true preservation love was the historic core of Pittsford Village.

On behalf of the Village of Pittsford Board, Mayor Robert Corby made the following statement: "To me, Jean was both a respected colleague and a dear friend. Her energy level never diminished and she repeatedly inspired others who heard her speak. Her willingness to give over and over is a value I have seen repeatedly in the Pittsford community. However, I can think of no one who better exemplified this trait than Jean. The legacy of her work is all around us and fortunately it will remain even though Jean is gone."

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