

D. Kenneth Sargent

By Anita Wagner



Photo Credit: Estate of Yousuf Karsh

Author's Note: As St. Paul's celebrates the completion of the Open Doors construction project which includes many improvements to the Sargent Foyer, it is fitting to remember the good works of architect, educator, and long-time member, D. Kenneth Sargent (b.1904 - d.1991).

In a 1984 proclamation dated the Fifteenth Week after Pentecost, D. Kenneth Sargent was honored "by the Dean, Vestry, and congregation of St. Paul's Cathedral in recognition of in excess of 40 years of continuous service to the Cathedral and Parish" as Vestryman, Warden, and chairman of several committees. A commemorative scrapbook in the church archives contains the proclamation and more than two dozen photographs of building projects Kenneth had led.

Seven years later, for the celebration service of Kenneth's life, the writer of the worship leaflet observed that "Much of the beauty enjoyed by everyone who comes to St. Paul's is the result of his love. He designed much of the Chancel furniture, the Peace Altar, the cases for the main and antiphonal organs, the Sacristy paneling, and the Chancel stenciling. He oversaw the redecoration of the Hadley Chapel, the Brewster Room, the Hansen Dining Room, and the Sargent Foyer" (named in honor of Kenneth's son Thomas Jay Sargent, who died in 1980).

Kenneth had a dual-career as an architect and educator. He graduated with honors from Syracuse University's School of Architecture in 1927; joined the faculty in 1930; became dean in 1958; and was named professor emeritus upon his retirement in 1970. He was also the senior partner of the architecture and engineering firm Sargent, Webster, Crenshaw & Folley, which became one of the largest in the Northeast, designing office buildings, banks, churches, private homes, and schools, including many in the Liverpool School District.

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In Syracuse, you can see several buildings designed in the firm's modernist style, including the James M. Hanley Federal Building and the Toomey Abbott Tower. Upon retirement, he was asked which project in his long career he was most proud of – the Justice Building on the Empire Plaza in Albany (built in 1970).



Photo Credit –
John Deacon
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Active in community service, Kenneth championed the re-design of Liverpool's Johnson Park; served on the Liverpool School Board; and chaired the village's zoning board of appeals. He was a founding director of the Friends of Onondaga Lake.

Over the years, Kenneth received numerous awards. In addition to having been elected to the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Architects, he was the 1956 recipient of the Syracuse University George Arents Pioneer Medal, the highest award bestowed upon alumni. At the SU School of Architecture, the Sargent Visiting Professorship fund continues to support two visiting professors each year.

In 1967, a photograph of Kenneth, taken by renowned Armenian-Canadian photographer Yousuf Karsh, was included in the "Portraits of Greatness" series, commissioned by Northwestern Mutual and appeared in Newsweek and Time.

Kenneth had two children with his first wife, Jane Cyril Skerritt, who died in 1942. In 1946, he married Marjorie Stevens of Liverpool. At the celebration service of Kenneth's life in 1991, he was remembered as a man who loved his family, his church, his professions, and his community.