

Remembering Jack Rogers, Village Engineer

John B (“Jack”) Rogers III passed away on November 6, 2018 at age 94. From 1962 until 1994, in addition to appointment on the faculty of civil engineering department at Cornell University, he served as the superintendent of public works for the Village of Cayuga Heights. As such he was responsible for the physical infrastructure of the village, including the road, water and waste water systems, as well as for the application of village zoning laws and for overseeing compliance with fire and building code regulations. He was one of only three men to have held the position since the incorporation of the village in 1915.

His accomplishments during thirty-two years at the helm were too numerous to list, so here are but a few highlights. On his watch the capacity of the village waste water plant was increased from one to two million gallons, and management of the plant was transitioned from village staff to an outside contractor. Cayuga Heights successfully negotiated reimbursement when village-owned land was taken by New York State for the construction of Route 13. North Triphammer Road was substantially rebuilt; sidewalks were added there and elsewhere, including Pleasant Grove Road. Marcham Hall was purchased and, under Jack’s direction, repurposed to become the Village’s municipal hall. From Cornell he acquired a trove of unused slate tiles, which made it possible to repair the roof of the building and restore it to its original condition at minimal cost. It is thanks to him that two chandeliers founding hanging in the village courtroom were taken down and stored in the attic where they were found in time for restoration to mark the village centennial in 2015.

In a series of oral history interviews held in the winter of 2016 Jack remembered with particular fondness working with the members of the village Department of Public Works. There were only two men employed when Jack assumed his position. In the ensuing years the number increased, and the village purchased its first garbage compactor and a four-wheel drive truck for snow plowing. Jack remembered winters as being much fiercer from the 1960s to the 1990s. One night during a terrible snowstorm he relieved members of the crew so they could get some sleep on cots in the old village firehouse while he drove the plow and his son, then 12-years old, ran the wing. Near the end of his tenure Jack advocated for the village budget to include funding for the subsequent construction of a much needed new DPW facility on Sheldon Road.

The list could go on, but that much is clear: Many of the important physical features that characterize Cayuga Heights as we know it today received great stewardship during Jack Roger's long and devoted service to the community. For this, the village will remember him.

Beatrice Szekely, Village Historian, at the request of Mayor Linda Woodard