



Norman S. Rice

August 11, 1926 - October 22, 2021

Albany - Norman Shepard Rice, 95, and a pillar of the Albany, New York, cultural community for nearly seventy years, slipped peacefully away on October 22, 2021, in Albany. He was born in Salem, Massachusetts, on August 11, 1926, the son of Bertram Upton Rice and Edith Williams Rice, and was raised in nearby Marblehead. He earned two degrees from Harvard University, a Bachelor of Arts in history and fine arts (1949) and a Master of Arts in education (1951). Following two years as a Teaching Fellow in the Harvard Graduate School of Design, Norman arrived at the Albany Institute of History & Art, where he would spend fourteen years as the inaugural curator of collections (1953–1967) and the next nineteen years as director of the Institute (1967–1986).

A proud native of Essex County who never lost his distinctive eastern Massachusetts accent, Norman thoroughly embraced the Upper Hudson Valley, developing a deep and encyclopedic knowledge of its history, a particular interest in its architecture and fine and decorative arts, and a special fascination for the men and women who assembled great collections of cultural objects. From the time of his arrival, Norman's guide to the city was James Gwynn, an artist born and raised in Albany, who was his life partner for sixty-two years. The impeccably dressed couple were omnipresent at lectures, celebrations, luncheons, dinners, benefits, and other events—especially any

happenings at the Fort Orange Club—including those where Norman was being honored or had been engaged to speak. He was fluent on a wide variety of topics, some likely discovered during two decades as the Albany City Historian (1966–1987), and others simply the product of his boundless curiosity.

Though the Albany Institute was always his primary focus, Norman established a holistic approach in his personal support of the region's cultural organizations. In over forty years of community service, he was concurrently a trustee or advisor for institutions from Hamilton College and the Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute east to the Rensselaer County Historical Society, Berkshire Museum, and Williamstown Art Conservation Center. Most of his board involvement, however, was in Albany, including the city's Historic Resources Commission, Saint Andrews Society, Historic Albany Foundation, Society of Architectural Historians Turpin Bannister Chapter, Albany County Historical Association, Shaker Heritage Society, Historic Cherry Hill, Albany Public Library, Friends of the New York State Library, and Albany Rural Cemetery, where he was the board's longest-serving trustee and could often be found out on the grounds giving tours. Norman was also a leader in planning significant local commemorations, serving on the Albany Tricentennial Commission and the Albany Medical College Sesquicentennial Committee. He enthusiastically joined commissions formed to restore and preserve the New York State Capitol, the New York State Senate Chamber, the Executive Mansion, and the Thomas Cole House in Catskill. He organized scores of exhibitions for the Albany Institute, authored scholarly catalogues on Albany silver and New York furniture, wrote journal articles, contributed to publications by his colleagues, and donated hundreds of items to the Albany Institute's museum and library collections. Recognized for these and other achievements, Norman received an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree from Siena College in 1986. In reviewing his accomplishments, he was heard to

say, "I don't know how I had time to do it all," but he did do it all, and in a style that was all his own.

Norman S. Rice was predeceased by his partner James E. Gwynn in 2015, and his brother William Marshall Rice in 1999. He is survived by his sister-in-law Ann Wilson Rice, nephews and nieces William (Stephanie) Rice Jr., Peter (Nancy) Rice, Linda (Edward) Collins, Susan (Robert) McNeil, and Dr. James (Carol) Rice, all of Marblehead, several great-nieces and nephews, and by his many friends and colleagues whose lives, too, will never be the same without him. All wish to thank Chuck Tiley for his steadfast support of Norman and Jim, and to Sonya Barnes and the team of aides who removed every obstacle in Norman's path during the past two years.

Norman's Funeral Service has been rescheduled for Saturday, June 18, 2022 at 11:00 am at the Cathedral of All Saints, 62 South Swan Street, Albany. The Mass can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUZ9EISnRPCSr uKhJUq2PA/videos>. Memorial contributions may be sent to the Norman Rice Memorial Fund, Albany Institute of History & Art, 125 Washington Avenue, Albany, New York 12210-2202.

To leave Norman's family a special message on his guestbook, obtain directions, or view other helpful services, please visit www.mcveighfuneralhome.com

Previous Events

Service

JUN 18. 11:00 AM (ET)

Cathedral of All Saints
Albany, NY

Tribute Wall



“ *Norman S. Rice*

October 08, 2023 at 09:24 PM



“ *Melanie lit a candle in memory of Norman S. Rice*



Melanie - June 17, 2022 at 07:08 PM



Mr. Rice was a walking Institution and Albany was lucky that he contributed so much to it's Historical Significance! I didn't know he was from Salem, MA, where I lived just north of for past 15 years. I worked for the City of Albany as a Planner alongside Carol Sweet in the 80s who introduced me to him. We saved "Nipper" & so many other Historical Structures. He will be Very much missed& I wished I had talked with him more when I last saw him 2018; God Bless his sweet soul and his family!

Melanie - June 17, 2022 at 07:16 PM



“ *Rest In Peace Good Friend Norman!
Maryellen & Steve Stofelano Jr*

steve stofelano jr - February 22, 2022 at 07:14 PM

RH

“ One Saturday afternoon, probably 35 years ago, my doorbell rang and there stood Norman and Jim. "We came to see your house," Norman announced. And in so doing, provided me more detailed information than I had garnered over the previous several years of research and restoration. He was a wonderful source of information on architecture, decoration: He verified a swatch of period (1838) carpeting I had discovered, dated the coal-burning fireplace inserts, and the marble mantles, gave me detailed information on the local (Sand Lake) glass in my oculus atop my staircase and even the Empire newel post at the foot of it.

Not much escaped Norman's observations, and they were always accompanied by a crisp, authoritative review of the item and often its owner. He was wonderful and we miss him, especially at the Ft. Orange Club, where he most often appeared, in full tweedy attire, even in his dotage

Godspeed Norman, We'll be with you and Jim in June.

*Ray Hull
Rensselaer*

Ray Hull - January 09, 2022 at 10:08 AM

CH

“ Nicholas Lynch introduced me to Norman many years ago, and I am the better for it. Nicholas was the perfect host and Norman was the quintessential guest.

Charlene - December 28, 2021 at 02:31 AM

WL

“ To the family of Norman Rice,

I became aware that Mr. Rice had died after reading his obituary in the New York Times on November 21.

My brief recollection of Mr. Rice was when he came to visit my family on a Sunday back in 1970 when I was a teen. And I remember his interesting conversation that he shared with us. After that encounter I never had the opportunity to meet him again and hear of his wide ranging experiences and knowledge of the finer things in life.

Oftentimes the achievements that a person has during their lifetime do not come to light until their death, and for me that was the case with your loved one. The amount of activities that Mr. Rice was involved in is difficult to fathom and obviously he followed-up on everything stating "I don't know how I had time to do it all."

The City of Albany will forever be indebted to this kind man a paragon who contributed so much to its cultural heritage.

With deepest sympathy,

William Lassiter

William Lassiter - December 09, 2021 at 02:34 PM

JB

“ Conveying our feelings of Norman and Jim over the many years of friendship and admirable respect, we’re grateful to have shared many fun and enjoyable moments chatting about life and history of successful and not so, men and women from the Albany area. These gentleman were highly accomplished, interesting, distinctive and bright fellows. RIP
Jim & Catherine Blau

Jim Blau - November 20, 2021 at 01:49 PM



“ It was such an honor and a pleasure to know Norman and he is greatly missed. - Paula Lemire

Paula Lemire - November 19, 2021 at 03:43 PM

JP

“ I will miss you, Mr. Rice !!!!! I will also miss our long talks and your knowledge. My prayers are sent to your loved ones. Rest in peace my friend.
❤️ Jean Prater

Jean Prater - November 17, 2021 at 08:59 PM