

2013-J5630

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION mourning the death of Henry Merrill Roenke, Jr., distinguished citizen and devoted member of his community

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to pay tribute to citizens of the State of New York whose lifework and civic endeavor served to enhance the quality of life in their communities and the great State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Henry Merrill Roenke, Jr. of Geneva, New York died on March 28, 2014, at the age of 98; and

WHEREAS, Born on March 16, 1916, in Geneva, New York, Henry Merrill Roenke, Jr. leaves behind an amazing legacy in the hometown he loved; he devoted much of his life to preserving the history and historic buildings of Geneva; and

WHEREAS, The son of the late Pauline Young and Henry Merrill Roenke, Sr., Henry Merrill Roenke, Jr. graduated from Geneva High School in 1934, earned a bachelor's degree from Hobart College in 1938, and received a master's degree in retailing from New York University one year later; in 1983, he received an Honorary Doctorate of Human Letters degree from Hobart College; and

WHEREAS, From 1940 to 1966, Henry Merrill Roenke, Jr. served his country as a member of the United States Navy, serving in the Oceanographic Service; he was stationed in the North Atlantic and South Pacific during World War II, and later retired as a Commander of the United States Naval Reserves; and

WHEREAS, During the war, Henry Merrill Roenke, Jr. earned numerous accolades for his exceptional service, including the American Defense Ribbon with an "A", Atlantic Theater Ribbon, Pacific Theater Ribbon with 4 bronze stars, Naval Reserve Ribbon, and the World War II Victory Ribbon; and

WHEREAS, Henry Merrill Roenke, Jr.'s livelihood came from being co-manager of the popular J.W. Smith Dry Goods Store, eventually becoming a co-owner before they closed; and

WHEREAS, The preservation of Geneva's architectural treasures can be credited to Henry Merrill Roenke, Jr. for his work to preserve and promote Geneva's architecturally significant buildings; and

WHEREAS, A pillar in his community, Henry Merrill Roenke, Jr.'s passion was historic preservation, particularly the restoration of old houses; his crowning achievement was the restoration of the Rose Hill Mansion building in the Seneca County, Town of Fayette; Rose Hill Mansion, built in 1837, is on the National Register of Historic Places; and

WHEREAS, Eventually, Henry Merrill Roenke, Jr. became the Rose Hill Administrator of the Geneva Historical Society from 1967 until he retired in 2003, and was chairman of the Fund for Historic Geneva; and

WHEREAS, In addition, Henry Merrill Roenke, Jr. was involved in saving an 1815 home, the Ludlow House, from demolition, moving it to another site, was involved in the purchase and restoration of two historic row houses which were endangered by a high rise, and assisted in the restoration of a porch on the historic Blackwell House at Hobart College; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, Henry Merrill Roenke, Jr. directed building projects on the Hobart and William Smith campus, and was a consultant for the college's fine arts collection; he was also instrumental in securing the gift of the Prouty-Chew House to the Geneva Historical Society and supervising its transformation to the society's museum and headquarters; and

WHEREAS, A man of many accomplishments, Henry Merrill Roenke, Jr.'s historic preservation efforts earned him mention in the Congressional Record on August 14, 1974; and

WHEREAS, Henry Merrill Roenke, Jr.'s list of civic involvement was extensive; he was a member and former treasurer of the Geneva Rotary

Club, served on the advisory board of the Salvation Army, was a trustee of the former Geneva Savings Bank, served as past chairman of the Heart Fund and the Polio Drive, was a former member of the Geneva Human Rights Commission, and was active with St. Peter's Episcopal Church, where he served as a senior warden, and was a Geneva City Councilman from 1960 to 1964, just to name a few; and

WHEREAS, In addition, Henry Merrill Roenke, Jr. was a member of the Seneca Yacht Club and Geneva Masonic Lodge, and served on the boards of the Geneva Family YMCA, and Ontario County Historical Society; and

WHEREAS, Henry Merrill Roenke, Jr. was the recipient of numerous awards and honors, including the National Trust Award for Preservation in Washington, D.C., Hobart College Outstanding Citizen Award, Geneva Chamber of Commerce Citizen of the Year Award, Hobart College Alumni Award, and the Ellis Award by the Ontario Historical Society in Canandaigua; and

WHEREAS, Henry Merrill Roenke, Jr. distinguished himself in his profession and by his sincere dedication and substantial contribution to the welfare of his community; and

WHEREAS, Henry Merrill Roenke, Jr.'s commitment to excellence, and his spirit of humanity, carried over into all fields of enterprise, including charitable and civic endeavors; and

WHEREAS, Predeceased by his wife, Marion, and brother, Gardner J., Henry Merrill Roenke, Jr. is survived by his three children, Henry (Lois), Kathleen, and Karl, and his six grandchildren, Laura, Henry M., IV, William I., Jessica, Keith, and Michael, as well as seven great-grandchildren, Joseph, Emma, Natalie, Claire, Henry V., Jack, and Peter, all of whom feel privileged to have been a part of his life and rejoice in his achievements; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit, imbued with a sense of compassion, Henry Merrill Roenke, Jr. leaves behind a legacy which will long endure the passage of time and will remain as a comforting memory to all he served and befriended; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the death of Henry Merrill Roenke, Jr., distinguished citizen and devoted member of his community; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Henry Merrill Roenke, Jr.

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