

J. Francis Kellogg House

Avon is home to eight properties listed on The National Register of Historic Places: the Five Arch Bridge, Avon Inn, Avon Free Library, Barber-Mulligan Farm, First Methodist Episcopal Church, First Presbyterian Church of Avon, Opera Block and the J. Francis Kellogg house. The Register is administered by the National Park Service, and is responsible for identifying significant cultural and architectural sites and buildings throughout the country that play a part in American history at a local or national level. This newsletter series has focused on each of the listed Avon properties, using their respective nomination forms as the main resource of information. The information for each property can be found on the AP&HS website at www.avonpreservation.org/buildings.

This issue will focus on the J. Francis Kellogg house, which can be found at 255 Genesee Street. It was listed on the National Register in 2003 for the architectural style and the famous architect responsible for the design. The present owners are Deborah and Paul Drozdziel, who are well known for providing a favorite local summer gathering spot, Sprinkles Ice Cream, located in the renovated knitting mill (built in 1922) at 184 Spring Street, just around the corner from their magnificent home.



J. Francis Kellogg home, photograph provided by Wikipedia

The National Register form is filled with detailed information about the exterior construction, interior design, architect, and the owner, offering the reader a clear understanding of the significance of this structure. In the case of the J. Francis Kellogg house, the well-known and respected architect, Claude Bragdon, designed this 1908 period property, resulting in "an outstanding example of early 20th century residential architecture in the village of Avon that combines the Colonial Revival style and the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement." It is a two and a half story, square, frame residence situated on a double-wide lot, surrounded by middle and upper class late 19th and 20th century homes. It has a flat-topped hipped roof with dormers, and a port-cochere on north side. The west (back) side has a two story porch, the second floor being a sleeping porch providing healthy fresh air, which aligned with the health consciousness of that time. The exterior is clad with cedar shingles of alternating eight and four inch exposed widths. The front entrance porch showcases four doric columns flanked by a decorative wood railing, which is topped with an iron railing. This patterned element is repeated on the other porches of the house.

The interior is noted for its "high degree of craftsmanship and the use of top-quality materials", featuring built-in bookcases with leaded glass doors, paneled wainscoting, and a decorative plaster ceiling. Original light fixtures have been retained as well as the dumb waiter, which operates between the full basement and the second story. It has been said that the windows on the street side of the house have 1/4" plate glass to help reduce any sound of the road. All of the others have 1/8" float glass which is typical for most house windows.

When the house was built, the village of Avon population was increasing, so that by 1910 there were 2053 residents. Commissioned by the owner, J. Francis Kellogg, a local banker and businessman., the house was an example of "high degree of sophistication compared to other new residences at the time".

The Kelloggs were early Avon settlers, coming from Connecticut in 1811. J. Francis' father farmed in Caledonia, and his mother was a Hogmire decendant in South Avon. J. Francis was born in 1871, going to local grade schools. He studied business at the Rochester Business University. In 1892, at 21 years old, he became an assistant cashier at the State Bank of Avon (now the offices of the Town of Avon), and continued in the position until the bank closed in 1931. He married Kate Washburn of Maine and they had 5 children.

J. Francis bought the property for his new home in 1908. He hired Claude Bragdon to design the building, and construction started the same year.

The Kelloggs lived in the home for only 10 years. In 1918 they moved to a more modest house on Lacy Street, likely due to financial strain. He established an insurance and real estate office, was a member of the Masonic order and the Central Presbyterian Church of Avon. He died at home in 1942, his obituary not stating his status in the community.

The architect, Claude Bragdon, was born in Ohio in 1866, settled as a young man in Rochester in 1884 and subsequently trained as an architect through the apprenticeship system. He partnered with several architects and in 1896 built the Colonial Revival front addition to the Livingston County Courthouse in Geneseo. Several of Bragdon's major commissions have been also recognized in Rochester: the First Universalist Church built in 1908, Rochester's New York Central Railroad Station in 1913, which has been since demolished, the Rochester Chamber of Congress, the Bevier Building of the Rochester Mechanics Institute, and nearly 50 residences and public buildings in the region. Bragdon designed two other homes in Avon: a Dutch Colonial located on High Acres which was built in 1898, but burned in 1934 due to a chimney fire. He also contributed to the large yellow home known as "Fair Acres" at 104 East Main Street for which he designed a new main entrance and added a second story to the east wing.

The National Register application respectively describes Claude Bragdon:

"Bragdon was a multi-talented designer with wide-ranging interests in philosophy, eastern religions and culture, and mathematical theory, which led to his becoming a theosophist, lecturer, writer, and stage designer, as well as an architect of broad scope. His residential designs have an organic complexity in massing, an imaginative control of space and light, a totality of design that often included the entire property and furnishings, and fine workmanship."

Avon is fortunate to have such a treasure as the J. Francis Kellogg house in our village.

~Clara Mulligan, Trustee, 2018