



John C. Fraser Award for Most Improvement in Band

Most Improved

“Practice makes perfect” was often heard by John Fraser’s students, including his own children.

About John C. Fraser

John C. Fraser was raised in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. The eldest of 6 children, he too participated at some level with the family’s successful regional food service business. After high school, John attended Francis Xavier College for two years, but was largely disinterested in the school’s curriculum (no music courses were offered). The summer of that second year, while reading a popular magazine, he noticed an ad for the Ithaca College Conservatory of Music. He discussed his desire to attend the conservatory with his father, who gave him his blessing and a blank check book. Not wanting to use the check book, John worked a couple of jobs on the Ithaca College campus to pay for his own room and board. During summers, he earned his living expenses by playing trumpet with popular Big Bands in New York City. John experienced the NYC music culture as having a high risk to one’s personal health and well-being - he witnessed in some colleagues the lethal effects of drug usage as well as the unfulfilling cycle of uncommitted intimate relationships. John chose a different lifestyle for himself. He graduated from Ithaca in 1927 and became a “music man” in the Seneca Falls area- at first he taught music students in their home and one day a week at area schools, he then convinced the Seneca Falls School District of the value of creating a position for a Band Leader at the school. In 1928, John became the first band and orchestra director at Mynderse Academy. A year later, he successfully advocated for the creation of a music director position that would serve the entire school district. Emily Bryant was hired for the position that year and in 1932 they were married. John became the first Secretary and President of the New York State School Music Association, served the local community as a civic leader, and enjoyed a rich family life as a devoted husband and father of three. He retired in 1962 as the Principal of the Junior High School. In 1967, John lost a difficult battle with Lou Gehrig’s Disease. We honor his life and contributions with this annual award.