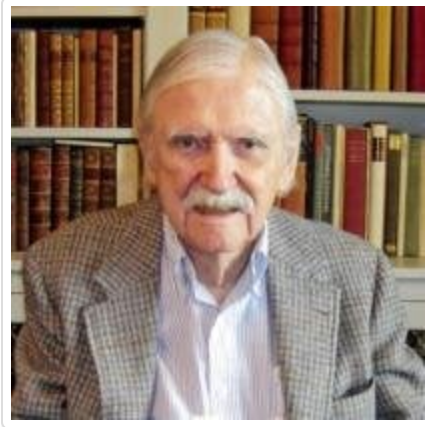




Robert Joseph Hubert Janson-LaPalme

April 10, 1929 - September 1, 2026

Robert “Rob” J.H. Janson-La Palme passed away on September 1, 2026. He was 97 years old.

He was born April 10, 1929, in Brockton, Massachusetts, a city situated between Boston and Providence. He was the oldest of four children born to dry-goods merchant Rene Janson-La Palme and Beatrice Miville Janson-La Palme.

Rob attended local schools in Brockton, graduating from Brockton High School with the Class of 1947. He went on to receive his B.A. in history from Brown University in 1952 and continued his studies for a year at Oxford University, London, with a specialty in British architecture.

Following his time at Oxford, Rob entered the United States Navy as a communications officer aboard the U.S.S. Des Moines, the flagship for the 6th fleet. His job during his service required him to deal with highly classified material and interact with the Navy’s top command at the height of the Cold War. Des Moines was deployed annually to the Mediterranean, where Rob’s passion for art history was stoked by his time spent in ports in France and Italy.

After his formal service with the Navy (he stayed on as a reserve officer), Rob

returned to his formal education, earning his M.F.A. and then his doctorate in art history at Princeton University. He specialized in Italian Renaissance art and took many research trips to Florence, Italy.

His connection to Princeton would last many years. He was a long-time member of the Princeton Department of Art and Archaeology's Governing Council and active in the Princeton Club of the Eastern Shore. The Janson-La Palme Visiting Professorship was endowed in his honor by his mother-in-law, Lillian Bayly Marks.

After Princeton, he taught at Columbia University in New York City, where he shortly discovered that he preferred specialized teaching rather than teaching to beginners. He went on to lead a small art history department at Rochester University for six years, until he was enticed to Washington College in Chestertown, Maryland in 1969.

Washington College had no art history department, and they wanted Rob to set one up. He made his mark quickly with a series of successful exhibitions, including "Charles Willson Peale, Artist from Chestertown" honoring the inauguration of Charles J. Merdinger as the college's new president in 1971. Although he specialized in the Italian Renaissance, he also took a keen interest in American art and architecture and even dabbled in archaeology.

In 1981, he supervised an archaeological dig on the grounds of Washington College to find the foundations of the original college building, erected in 1783 and destroyed in a fire in 1827. Based off of these findings, a scale model of the original college building was able to be constructed. It was through this project that he was also able to locate a 19th-century oil painting depicting Chestertown and the college building. Ultimately, this painting was donated to the college and was featured on the dust jacket of "Historic Houses of Kent County", for which Rob wrote the description.

From there, he continued to give a series of public programs on Chestertown's unique architecture. He was a member of the Victorian Society, whose aim is to preserve Victorian and Edwardian architecture. It was at a seminar for the society that he met his future wife, Dr. Bayly Ellen Marks. The two were married in Chestertown in 1995.

Rob served on Chestertown's Historic District Commission from 1978 to 2001, serving for 16 years as its chairman. He left his mark both on Chestertown and Maryland as a whole, testifying in *Faulkner vs. the Town of Chestertown*, which is still cited in the current printing of Article 66b of the Maryland Code. In 1985, he created the program that placed bronze plaques (designed by him as well) on significant buildings in the town's historic district and also wrote "Chestertown: An Architectural Guide", which is still in print.

In 1980 he founded and was the first vice president of the Maryland Association of Historic District Commissions, which created Maryland's Certified Local Government Program, administered by the Maryland Historical Trust, which sets standards for historic district commissions in the state. Under his stewardship, Chestertown was one of the initial commissions to be granted Certified Local Government status in 1985.

In 2004, following his retirement, he and his wife initiated the "Janson-La Palme Distinguished Lectures in European Art History", a program that lasted for more than a decade and brought major, internationally prominent art historians to Washington College. He ran a ten-session lecture series featuring art historians, gallery directors, and other prominent figures from around the country and abroad, which he proudly claimed was a "high point" of his career.

Robert Janson-La Palme is survived by his wife, Bayly Ellen Marks Janson-La Palme in Chestertown, MD.

A Celebration of Life will be held Saturday October 17, 2026, at 2 pm at Emmanuel Episcopal Church 101 N Cross Street Chestertown, MD 21620

Upcoming Events

Celebration of Life

OCT **17**. 2:00 PM (ET)

Emmanuel Episcopal Church
101 N Cross St
Chestertown, MD 21620-1527
(410) 778-3477