

Recollections: Sargent's descendent comes of age in Graniteville

BY JUNE W. KENNEDY
SPECIAL TO THE EAGLE

After viewing Chet Cook's photos of his home, the old C.G. Sargent house in Graniteville which appeared in the June 11 *Westford Eagle*, I recalled an interview I'd had with Sargent's great granddaughter, Vivian Sargent Smith back in 1974. Her keen memories brought life to this old homestead and to her own, which was next door. I'd like to share them with you.

Growing up in Graniteville

Vivian Sargent Smith
(Born 1906)

In my childhood days in Graniteville during the teens (1914-1918), we made our own fun. We didn't have a lot of toys and things as the children do today — just a few dolls. I often played in the woods back of the house. We often used acorns for cups and saucers, leaves for dishes, and we carved little baskets out of horse chestnuts. There were some great quarries up in back of us; we used to climb all over the ledges. We picked lots of wild strawberries, blueberries and wildflowers, and knew a great many of the flowers and trees by name. I think we lived a little closer to nature than we have time for today.

Always, just before May Basket time and Valentine-making time, we'd go over to Mr. Wall's, the wallpaperer in our village, and beg him to give us his old paper books. Sometimes for fun, we'd make ice cream sodas out of soap by whipping it up with straws and then coloring it with Dennison's colored paper.

Fortunately we didn't drink it!

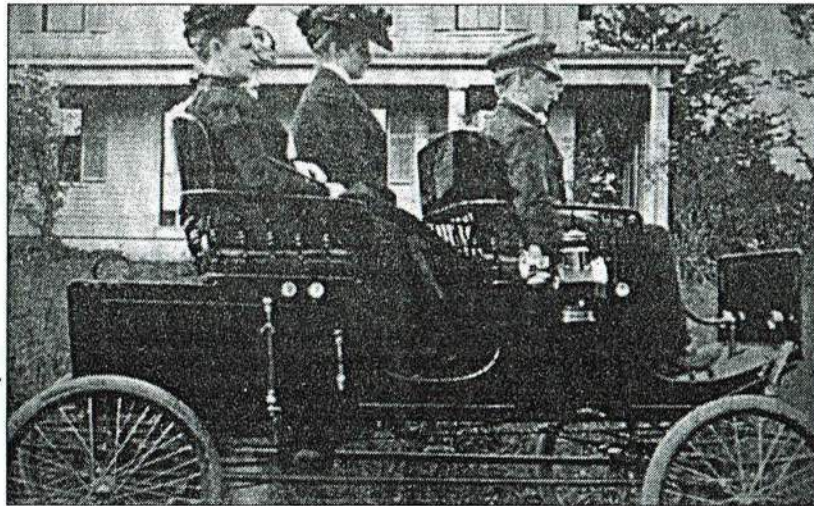


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Frederick G. Sargent's first car was a 1902 Stanley made in Newton. He was co-founder of C.G. Sargent Corporation, later C.G. Sargent's Sons Corp.

During the First World War, I remember a lot of the school children got together and held a bazaar on my grandmother's front porch. I presume the mothers did most of the work. They made pies and cakes and all kinds of goodies. But we contributed a great deal. We were learning to knit and made knit washcloths for the soldiers. I expect they were pretty shabby looking things, but we were quite proud of them. They dressed us up in nurse's costumes

and we stood behind the tables to help sell the things. It was quite an event for us.

As far as chores, I really didn't have very many, which was too bad. I do remember bringing in wood from the shed for the stove. We burned a wood stove which was nice and cozy. In the early days when I was very tiny, we probably didn't have running water because I vaguely recall some round pasteboard tubs that my mother told about bringing

into the kitchen, filling with heated water for the Saturday night bath — which was taken in turn by each family member right in front of the toasty warm stove.

We had a windmill in the back yard. When the wind blew, we had plenty of water. That was before we had town water. My mother told of filling buckets from a watering trough down at the foot of the hill and bringing it up to the house to wash clothes when the wind wasn't blowing. The only thing I remember about the trough was that it was a great hangout for me. I'd sit there by the hour waiting for a horse and buggy to come along and then watch the horse drink the water and talk to all the men as they went by. I don't think my family was too happy about that, but I did it.

I remember there was a little store at the foot of our hill. Once a month, when it came time to pay the bill, I would love to go because when we did the man would give us a whole bag full of candy. That

was the reward for paying the bill.

We did a lot of skating in those days. Practically every winter we skated on the Graniteville Mill Pond — except when we were cautioned about the current. Another place was the Blacksmith Pond over near the Graniteville Foundry. Still another spot for skating was up near the Catholic Church at the other end of town. That was fun because you could go up a little brook and wind around. We loved that. We did a lot of sliding too. They were happy days!