

## **Sargent Family Papers, 1857-1909** **MSA 154**

### **Introduction**

The Sargent Family papers consist of the letters of several generations of the descendants of Thomas Sargent (1806-1889), an early settler and farmer in Norwich, Vermont. The letters, found in a farmhouse occupied by three generations of the Sargent family, were a gift to the Vermont Historical Society by Jeffrey Bush whose parents, Professor and Mrs. Douglas Bush, owned the property after the Sargents. The collection is housed in one box and occupies .25 linear feet (ms. acc. no. 96.1).

### **Family History**

Thomas Sargent was born September 16, 1806, in Hill, New Hampshire and died July 8, 1889, in Thetford, Vermont. On December 6, 1827, he married Lydia Cook (May 1, 1804-January 2, 1873), the widow of Francis Cook who had a house built in 1805 which was later to become the Sargent home. Children of Thomas and Lydia Sargent include:

- Harriet S. (b. October 10, 1828) who married George S. Young of Windsor and farmed in Royalton (?);
- George Washington (April 27, 1833-November 13, 1913) who married Lucy Colman of Maine on January 1, 1856. He served in the Civil War in the First Artillery of the Eleventh Vermont Volunteers from 1862 to 1865. Immediately after the war, he moved to New York State where he made machines to print newspapers. He was a carpenter by trade and he died in Malden, Massachusetts. He is buried in Norwich, Vermont;
- Charles Alexander (May 12, 1839-March 16, 1911) served in the Civil War with the Fourth Regiment of the Vermont Volunteer Infantry. He was wounded December 13, 1862, and subsequently lost a leg. He married Lydia Kittridge (July 19, 1844-June 30, 1889) of Strafford on May 1, 1864. He was married a second time on June 19, 1892, to Mrs. Ella F. Kittridge (dates?) and was a farmer in South Walpole, Massachusetts;
- David Pratt (b. February 16, 1841) remained on the family farm. He married Lucy Kilburn (September 11, 1853-October 28, 1872) on March 21, 1871 and Lucy E. Lovejoy (b. June 9, 1840) on June 19, 1873. His children were: Ada (b. May 21, 1872) who attended Goddard Seminary and later married William Parker of Thetford; Mabel R. (b. March 17, 1876); and, George D. (b. February 25, 1881) who was the last of the Sargents to farm the family homestead;
- Solon H. (b. October 3, 1843).

According to information in a letter written by Hazel Cleaver Bush, after George D. Sargent left the farm to run a coal and wood business in nearby Lewiston, his mother or grandmother and a daughter were left in the family home. Bush writes, "It was during their stay that the old lady strewed money, paper or coin, along the road one day" and it

was this incident Bush used as the basis for a short story entitled “Spendthrift”, which she published in the *University of Kansas City Review* (ca. 1930s).

Douglas Bush (1896-1983), a Professor of English at Harvard University and his wife, Hazel Cleaver, purchased the Sargent farm in 1946 from Royal Nemiah, a Professor of Classics at Dartmouth College who had purchased the farm at auction (ca. 1941). The Bushes subsequently sold the farm (year?) to Dr. and Mrs. Steven K. Spencer.

### Scope & Content

The majority of the letters in the collection were written to Thomas Sargent in Norwich between 1863 and 1888 by his children, Charles, Harriet, and George and son-in-law, George S. Young. Many of the letters were written by George Sargent either to his father or to his brother, David, when he was working in New York State and later in Massachusetts (MSA 154, Folders 5 and 7).

Both George and Charles Sargent served in the Civil War. In a March 1864 letter which has been transcribed, George describes camp life near Culpepper, Virginia, and alludes to the upcoming “fighting” in the spring (MSA 154, Folder 7).

Charles was seriously wounded at Fredericksburg in December 1862. In a poignant January 1863 telegram from Washington he informs his parents that he is “not so well” and a hospital worker writes to his parents in May 1863 that Charles is recovering from smallpox while awaiting a wooden leg (MSA 154, Folder 2).

There are a number of letters in the collection for which the writers’ relationship to the Sargent family is unknown (MSA 154, Folders 11-15). These correspondents include: Fatima Gilkey, Mercy and Roswell Spalding, and Emeline Lovejoy.

Information about the Sargent family and their farm that was assembled by the Bushes (MSA 154, Folder 1) includes:

- an undated letter from Hazel C. Bush to the Spencers;
- a copy of Hazel C. Bush’s short story, “Spendthrift” based on Sargent family lore from the *University of Kansas City Review* (ca. 1930s);
- a 1940 printed map of Norwich with hand drawn boundaries of Prof. Royal Nemiah’s farm;
- a photocopy of a deed (undated) of a Thetford woodlot from Frank P. Slack to H. H. Hartshorn;
- typescript of a “record of research made in 1950 by Mildred Cook when she was Town Clerk in Thetford” showing property transfer from Frank P. Slack to David P. Sargent, August 17, 1893.

### Organization

The collection is organized in six series:

- I. Family information
- II. Letters to Thomas Sargent, 1863-1888
- III. Letters to David P. Sargent, 1861-1909
- IV. Letters to Solon H. Sargent, 1867-1871
- V. Letters by unidentified correspondents, 1857-1886
- VI. Miscellaneous

## **Inventory**

### I. Family Information

MSA 154:1 Sargent family history and information about their house and land

### II. Letters to Thomas Sargent, 1863-1888

- 2 From Charles A. Sargent, 1863
- 3 From Harriet and George S. Young, 1864-68
- 4 From Harriet S. Young and David P. Sargent, 1861 & 1868
- 5 From George W. Sargent, 1866-1888
- 6 Miscellaneous, 1866-1874

### III. Letters to David P. Sargent, 1861-1909

- 7 From George W. Sargent, 1861-1869 and transcriptions, March 23, 1864 and May 6, 1866
- 8 From Ada and Mabel Sargent, 1887-1900
- 9 Miscellaneous, 1873-1909

### IV. Letters to Solon H. Sargent, 1867-1871

- 10 From miscellaneous correspondents

### V. Letters written by unidentified correspondents, 1857-1886

- 11 To an unidentified person from Fatima Gilkey, Mercy and Roswell Spalding, ca. 1860
- 12 To Fatima (Gilkey?) from Emeline Lovejoy, 1857-1862
- 13 To Fatima from miscellaneous correspondents, 1886-1887
- 14 To "Aunt" from Isabel (or Isabell), 1877-1882
- 15 Miscellaneous, 1859-1889 and many undated

### VI. Miscellaneous

- 16 Bills, business letter to George W. Sargent, and fragments, 1861-1873

Priscilla Page

September 1996

N.Y. Fairhaven May 6, 1866

Bro David

It was with pleasure that I rec'd a letter from you [?] days ago and was happy to hear from you and to hear that you were well and enjoying life and health and got a good plase to work. I have not heard from home for near 9 months I guess. I suppose they are busy now doing the work. I [?] up to Boston last week but did not see any of the folks there that I was aquainted. I was pretty busy and it took all my time to see to the business of the concern. I don't know how long I may stay here. The company that I work for have but little capital to do with and it is up hill work to do any thing with the business but in hopes to. Am well. I have been building printing presses this winter for printing newspapers. We have 6 done on this floor and now all ready for sale. I have been doing a little with my nail machine this winter and built one machine. Am going to [?] it up this spring and [?] to do what I can with it. I like this plase here verry well and if the business pays may get along for some time. Lucy has gone up to Boston, has been there about a week stopping with her sister. I should like to see you verry much but don't know whether I can get up to Vermont this summer or not. I want to and shall if I can. Write me soon, David, and let me know how all the boys are doing and what Charles and [?] is doing. I like to hear from you often but I have so much to do that I don't get much time to write myself but write often and will try to do better than have done yet afore. I have no real news to write only David, let us live in the fear of the Lord and be prepared to meet him at that great and terrible [?] to gather unto himself those that love and serve him. So I beg of you my brother to live in the fear of this last. So good bye this time and receive this from your ever affectionate brother. Geo W. Sargent

To D. P. Sargent

Camp near Culpepper, Va. March 23, 1864

Dear Bro,

I now take my pen to write you a few lines to let you know how we are getting along. We are still in Camp where we have been for some time and I guess we shall stay a while longer for last night it snowed about 8 inches deep, the most snow that has fallen at any one time since I have been out here. That will keep the roads pretty muddy for some time so that it will be impossible to move the artillery for some time yet. They have been expecting General Grant out here today but he did not come but probably will be here tomorrow. I suppose there will be some fighting going on by the first of April but can't tell as fact as that is a secret. I wish that this war might be settled before there is any more fighting to be done, but alas, it seems that the least of man is wicked above all things but I hope and pray for the best. Let us all do what is right and love and serve our heavenly master and then when we are called from this to another world we can meet our father in peace. I don't have much news to write and we lay still here in camp. We have some picket duty to do. The regiment is out on picket now. They go about six miles to the picket [?] River but they go up on the cars about 4 or 5 miles so it is not quite so bad as it is to walk all the way. Give my love to all the folks and receive this from your Brother, Geo. W. Sargent  
Write Samuel all the news. So good bye for this time.