

FAMILY SECRETS

Old family correspondence can be so revealing sometimes. Enjoy reading these letters that have been so meticulously preserved over the years. Let me know if anything in particular grabs your attention..

ATTEND THE THREE AUCTIONS OF FRED WEBSTER'S ESTATE

Why not plan to attend one or all three of Fred Webster's estate auctions being held on May 13th, May 20th, and May 27th of this year? You may run into Cousin Rod Ames! To see pictures of everything that's being auctioned off, go to www.jenkinsauctionservice.com.



Thanks to Laura Gilmore, Dixie's daughter, here is most likely the only extant picture of your editor with his father, Earl A. Gardner, eldest son of "The Original Gang of Ten." Dixie was Earl's third wife. This photo was taken at Aunt Nita's house in the early 1980's.

Gardner Newsletter

Volume 26: Issue 102
Spring 2023



Ruth Amy Metcalf

Learn Family Secrets From Old Letters

Over the years, Gardner News has published many letters written by family members belonging to different generations. Reading these letters shows us how we came to be "The Gardners" and sheds insight into how we evolved as family members to become the diverse individuals that we are today.

The newsletter previously published some letters from Earl Lang to his brother and sister-in-law, Grandpa and Grandma Gardner, as he was deployed throughout Europe during World War I. Uncle Clayton and Uncle Adelbert sent letters to their mother, Grandma Gardner, from the field in World War II, which the newsletter also published. In addition, there were some letters shared

Learn Family Secrets from Old Letters (continued)

between the brothers, Earl and Clayton Gardner.

Many of the following letters appearing in this article came from a monthly day planner that Grandma Gardner kept religiously for many years. It came into the possession of Cousin Gloria Parsons who was kind enough to lend it to your editor in order to choose the relevant material to publish. Thanks, also, to Laura Gilmore who sent your editor pictures and some letters that her mother, Dixie, had kept for safekeeping over the years.

All this letter-writing has become a library of treasured items that contribute to the history of the Gardner family, and we hope that you enjoy reading them. Perhaps you may learn something new about the authors of these letters that you never knew before.

Here is a letter from Aunt Ruth to her father, Grandpa Gardner, dated January 7, 1974, thanking him for a financial Christmas gift. Ruth and Henry were living in Rhodes, Michigan at the time. Aunt Ruth gives an account of her husband Henry's mother's death as well as an update on everything her immediate family was up to at the time. This letter was preserved in Grandma Gardner's monthly planner.

"Dear Dad,

Thanks for your note and check! You were right. We did need a little financial help at Christmas, especially this year. We went home to Brooksville and knew Henry's mother was in the hospital with her sugar pretty high, but never expected what happened.

We got into Brooksville at about 7:30 at night and went right to the hospital to see her. She



Laura also sent this picture of me playing the piano at Aunt Nita's house. This picture was taken at the same time as the previous picture.

was in terrific pain as they had done a G.I. test (intestine) on her in the morning, and she reacted pretty unfavorably to it. The next day, Christmas day, Henry and Marge went up for a conference with the doctor and they found out that she had a hiatus hernia of the diaphragm. That explained the nausea she'd had as the food from her stomach would push way up to her throat.

We took her Christmas presents up to her in the afternoon and she knew no one at all. She was in shock and just had a vacant stare that was very depressing.

We went back at night, and it was the same way. She died at 5:00 a.m. the next morning. The funeral was up in Erie on the next Saturday, so we all went to Erie for Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Dick flew up from Texas. I hope everyone will make Dick and his family a matter of special prayer. He can't seem to face anything like death without his alcohol crutch.

Learn Family Secrets from Old Letters (continued)



Ruth and Henry Metcalf

Grandma had been awfully good to all of us, but especially to Dick and Sandi as they were getting started. If only they would become real born-again Christians, things would be so different! I'm praying and believing the Lord is going to bring it about.

Dad was holding up real well when we left. We think he was worried about what was going to happen to mother as she got more feeble. She would hate a nursing home. I was going to stay up there awhile if he needed help, but we decided he was getting along better than any of us.

Ruth Anne was home from college in Greenville, Illinois and went back Thursday. Geri is trying to figure out how she's going to earn \$450 to go to the International Institute in Switzerland this summer. She was the only young person chosen in our zone.

Hope this finds you well and that you had a blessed Christmas.

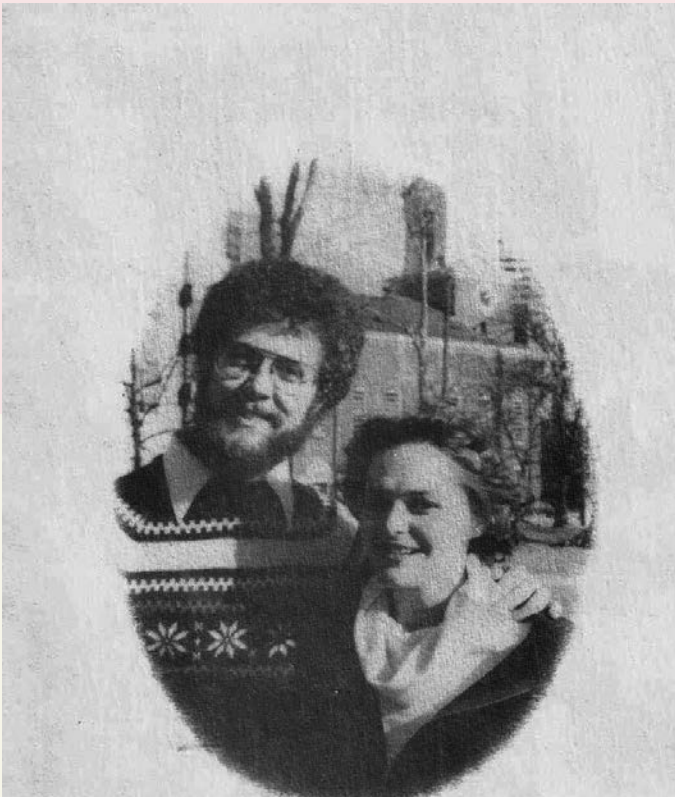
Love, Ruth"

A little bit about the International Institute in Geneva that Cousin Geri was selected to attend.

Ranked among the top ten business schools in Switzerland, the International Institute in Geneva (IIG) is an accredited academic institution specializing in business education.

The Institute offers undergraduate and graduate programs in Business Administration, International Relations, Digital Media, Computer Science and International Trade.

The curriculum features a unique combination of theoretical and practical instruction, with a particular focus on international business practices. The international exchange program offers an opportunity for students to study at renowned universities worldwide.



This picture is a little grainy/blurry, but Grandma Gardner kept this invitation to Geri and Greg Rosser's wedding in her monthly planner all these many years later. Thanks to Gloria Parsons for sharing it.

Learn Family Secrets from Old Letters (continued)

Located in Geneva, Switzerland, at the center of Europe and a hub for international politics and business, the campus is close to the airport and about 5 km from the city center. The IIG has students representing over 60 nationalities **thus providing a truly multicultural setting.**

Christmas Card from Elinor and Dick Cove sent to Earl and Dixie Gardner – Christmas 1982. Elinor and Dick were living at 12 Melrose Parkway in Auburn, New York at the time. During this period, Elinor was enamored with the “Cambridge Diet.” Your editor has included a brief history of this controversial diet plan at the end of her letter.

“Dear Earl and Dixie,

I think our weather can compare favorably to California weather this year – so far, warm – no snow. I am still in the Christmas spirit, though. I love this season – for the real meaning – Jesus Christ.

I have been on a terrific diet for three months. I have lost weight and am

easily maintaining it. And best of all, I feel wonderful and have abundant energy! It is the Cambridge Diet. I am so sold on it; I am selling it. And



Elinor and Dick Cove

every time I send in an order, I think of you, for it comes from Monterey. It works. Dick has lost 15 pounds too. If you would like to know more, let me know.

Have a wonderful Christmas.

Love, Elinor”

A little history about the “Cambridge Diet.”

The Cambridge Diet was initially used and developed in hospital weight loss programs in the 1960s by Alan Howard at Cambridge University, England. Rights to the original Cambridge powder formula in the United States were obtained by Cambridge Direct Sales in 1979, and after improvements for flavor the Cambridge diet was launched as a commercial product in the United States in 1980. Howard created his own, different flavor improvements and launched a commercial UK version of the Cambridge diet in 1984. Since 2005, the UK company that makes the product is Cambridge Nutritional Foods Limited.

The US diet was very popular in the 1980s but was also the subject of some controversy. It came under scrutiny from regulators and health authorities after potential health concerns were raised. Under pressure from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration the calorie intake was raised from 330 kcal/day to 800 kcal/day. In 1985 Cambridge Diet Plan paid a six

figure sum to settle a case brought by the family of a 31 year old woman who had died while following the Cambridge Diet. The FDA stated that eight such deaths were “potentially linked” to the Cambridge Diet. In the early 1980s there were six documented deaths of people following the Cambridge liquid diet.

In 1987 a UK government Health Department report was critical of evidence submitted by Cambridge Nutrition –the working group responsible were

not convinced by claims that the Cambridge Diet achieved protein sparing as well as conventional calorie restricted diets, and were concerned about conservation of lean tissue during dieting.

Christmas card from Jean and Miguel Gonzalo to Earl and Dixie Gardner dated December 13, 1982. Earl and Dixie were living at 16979 Forrest Lane in Watsonville, California at the time.

Learn Family Secrets from Old Letters (continued)

"Dear Dad and Dixie,

Received your cute Christmas card. Yours was the first Christmas card I received this year. I haven't planted the seeds yet, but plan to do so soon.

Dad, what's going on with the organ? For my Christmas gift you can deliver it down here. That's all I want.

Dixie, you're all welcome down here for Christmas or New Years at any time. We're planning on having a little New Years party with some of our friends and some of the work hands. We'll save our Christmas gifts for you until we see each other.

Hope to see you soon.

Love, Jean and Family"

Letter from Nita Ames to her brother, Raymond, dated October 26, 1982. Aunt Beulah made copies of this letter and distributed it to all the other members of the Original Gang of Ten asking for their tacit approval of Grandpa Gardner gifting the old homestead and its surrounding land to Ruth and Henry Metcalf. Compare that spirit of generosity with today's common "circling vultures" tactics when it comes to estate distribution.

"Dear Raymond:

Beulah is making copies of this letter so I can get it out to you all right off.

Last Friday, Papa gave Ruth and Henry a deed to his house. They are the only ones in the family who don't have their own home and he wanted them to have it. He wanted it to stay in the family.

Ruth and Henry were overwhelmed – pleased – and really "teary" about it. This morning, Ruth called and told me Henry said we were such a super family and that he didn't want any hard feelings of any kind; and if any of you objected to them having it, they wouldn't take it. So, I'd

like to hear from you how you feel about it just as soon as possible. Either write to me or call me.

I took Papa to the hospital again. His feet and ankles are all swollen. The doctor hasn't determined the cause yet. He says he's more anemic than last time he was there. He says he can see that Papa is just gradually fading away. If you want to see him, it probably should be in the next few months. I don't expect he'll make it through the winter. Let me know. He's got a good constitution.

Hope to hear from you soon.

Love, Nita."

Here is a letter enclosed in a Christmas card to Earl and Dixie Gardner from Nita Ames – Christmas, 1982. This was a sad time for Aunt Nita as she had to admit her father, Grandpa Gardner, to a nursing home as he was beginning to experience catastrophic health problems. The family also gathered together at Aunt Nita's house to celebrate Aunt Ruth's birthday.

"Dear Earl and Dixie,

First, let me give you Ruth's address: H. Metcalf, Route 22, RFD 1, Whallonsburg, NY 12994.

I appreciate your nice letters, Dixie, but guess I'm slow in answering. Have I talked with you since Papa went to the nursing home? If not, it's the Patenaude Rest Home, Derby, VT 05829.

He had to have round-the-clock nursing care and I just couldn't do it. He's been there a month now. He's pretty confused. He sits in a chair (we had his recliner sent down) all day and can't walk without assistance. We took his TV down, but he can't concentrate long enough to get anything out of it. He doesn't seem to mind being there. He's not interested in anything anyway.

The doctor says he can't believe he's doing as well as he is because he's a terribly sick man.

Learn Family Secrets from Old Letters (continued)

Lyndol doesn't see him every day like I do; and when he goes in, he says he can see that he's failed a lot.

Lois spent from Monday to Thursday with us last week and Ruth and Henry are coming this Tuesday. It will be Ruth's birthday, so we are going to have a party for her with Elizabeth and Homer, Beulah's family, Rod's family and us. Irene hasn't had her baby yet. It will be soon, though. We are anxiously waiting.

Have a nice Christmas.

Love, Nita.

P.S. We are looking forward to meeting Laura. Give her my love.
N."

Plan to attend at least one of the three auctions pertaining to Fred Webster's estate.

How well do you remember the layout of Grandma and Grandpa Gardner's house where they lived together in East Charleston, Vermont for many years? I specifically remember the layout of the kitchen. As you headed toward the back door of the kitchen to go out into the shed, you could see a food freezer on the left installed into the wall.

To the left of that was a staircase that went upstairs to the first one of five bedrooms as well as the hall and the bathroom. However, if you looked to the right before entering the first bedroom, there was a mysterious cut-out in the wall that was actually a door. Much like the brick wall that Harry Potter passed through to get to the King's Cross Station, this strange door was the passageway to Grandpa Gardner's iconic SHED CHAMBER!

This long storage area connecting the barn and the farmhouse was where Grandpa Gardner kept many of his

tools, bog shoes, old farm implements and memorabilia, muskrat traps, and even a bear's head. Many of you have toured this part of the old homestead and have marveled at the "treasures" stored there. Cousin Rod Ames has always been very interested in discovering more about the contents of the shed chamber.



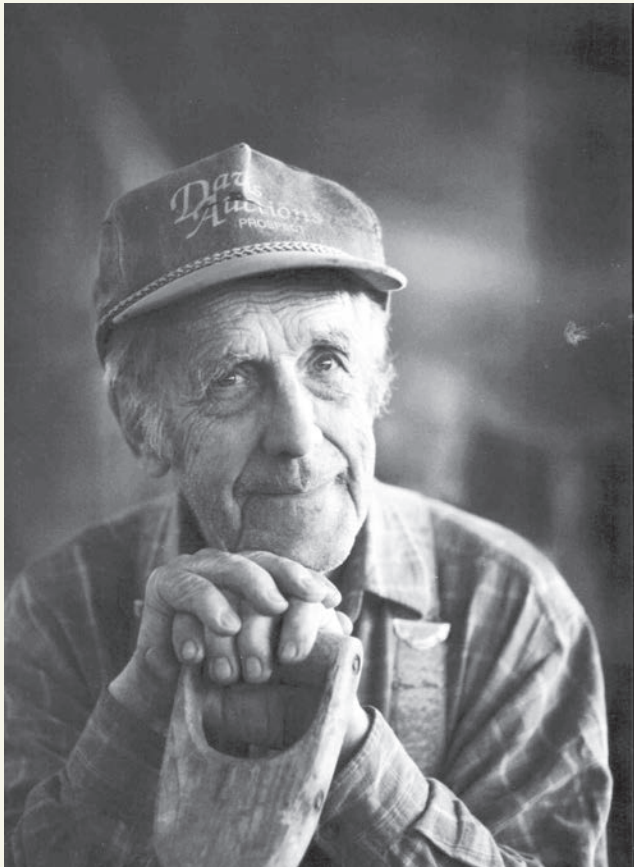
This is a picture of how the Gardner old homestead looks today. The shed chamber (which used to be attached to a barn) was the deeply sloped roof portion of the building

Rod is no slouch at collecting old farm implements either. The barn on his property in Holland is filled with old and rare farming tools and other interesting items that go back to an earlier time when Vermont residents were local farmers living in a rural economy and working the land. Rod's barn also contains lots of new and innovative things too, like a pellet furnace heating system as well as solar panels – not to mention his great car collection.

The king of all collectors, though, was Frederick Webster of Coventry, Vermont who passed away in 2021. In fact, his estate is planning three auctions to be held this May.

Fred Webster Estate Auction (continued)

The first auction will be held on May 13, 2023, and will consist of horse buggies, sleighs, wagons, stagecoaches.



Frederick Webster

The second auction will be held on May 20, 2023, where farming equipment will be auctioned off. The third auction

will be held on May 27, 2023, and is about the many valuable antiques that Fred Webster amassed over the years.

All these auctions are being managed by Jenkins Auction Service LLC and are being held at 433 Webster Road. Orleans, VT. For pictures and full listings visit www.jenkinsauctionservice.com. Since Cousin Rod will be returning from Florida to his home in Vermont on May 17th, he most likely will attend the May 27th auction. Wouldn't it be great if you ran into him there?!

To learn more about Fred Webster, let's begin with his obituary.

"Frederick Henry Webster, 99, of Coventry, Vermont passed away peacefully on January 17, 2021. He was born on February 25, 1921 in Coventry to the late Percy and Hazel (Jackman) Webster. He is survived by his wife Vivian (Henderson) Webster.

Frederick was a graduate of Orleans HS and the University of Vermont, class of 1942. He was a World War II veteran having served in the United States Navy

behind the lines in China during the Japanese occupation. Fred was a teacher at Lake Region Union High School for 20 years. He was a former constable, tax collector and oversaw people who were in financial need in Hinesburg, VT. He was a past president of the Orleans Central VT Teachers Association, former president of Drive O Traffic Association of Vermont and many other positions of responsibility throughout his life, too numerous to mention here.

During his teaching career he taught at Vermont high schools in Hinesburg, Bellows Free Academy in St Albans, Hardwick, Orleans HS, Lake Region Union HS in Orleans, and the Coxsackie-Athens HS in Coxsackie, NY. He was very knowledgeable of the town of Coventry and its settlement, documenting and sharing Vermont rural history. After retiring from teaching, he pursued his passion of collecting historical farm implements.

Fred was a farmer, curator, educator, athlete, builder, craftsman, dancer, storyteller, writer, celebrity on American Pickers, and inducted to Vermont's Agriculture Hall of Fame. He is survived by his wife Vivian. Children Paulette of Georgia, Pamela of Utah, Anna of New York, Valerie (Webster) Nuckols, Daniel of Coventry Vermont and Sharleen of Virginia. His wife's children Deanna

Mandigo of Quebec, Pearl (Mandigo) and Gary Mills of Quebec. And several grandchildren, nieces, and nephews.

He was predeceased by his parents. Sons Frederick Jr. and Peter Webster, daughter Linda (Webster) Vallieres, and George Mandigo of Quebec. Sons-in-law Lucien Blodgett, John Nuckols, and Robert Pettee Jr. Brothers Richard, and Charles. Sisters Bernice (Webster) Moulton, and Alice (Webster) Cook."

Fred Webster Estate Auction (continued)

Here is an interesting article your editor found on the Internet that was written before Fred died that sheds a lot of light on the kind of man Fred Webster was.

"Once in a lifetime, if you're very lucky, you meet someone so unique, so full of life, and so creative that you are left in total awe. Fred Webster of Vermont's Northeast Kingdom is one of those individuals. He is a jolly guy who works hard and thoroughly enjoys what he is doing. He is a retired Vocational Agriculture Teacher who tells great stories about his life, his vocation, his vision and farm history. No one tells them better.

At 93 years old Fred continues to focus on his dream which is to have an information center that shows the progression of farm equipment as it evolved. He has more than 1,500 pieces of farm equipment and other machinery from the past.

He stores his collection in buildings which he started to put up when he turned 65. They were built from old barns that farmers were going to tear down. He has 80,000 square feet of storage space and 300 acres of land to store his treasures.

When Fred was 88, he decided he wanted to start building stagecoaches — so he did. He also started collecting other forms of transportation.

It would seem preserving the history and evolution of farming lies in Fred Webster's hands. Fred and his son, Daniel, have tagged and videotaped every one of the over 1500 items and it's likely they have the largest collection of farm tools in New England.

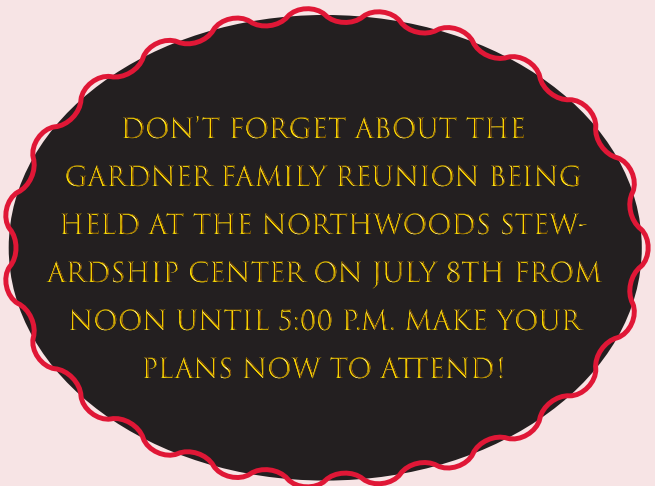
Things were not always easy for Fred. He had eight children which he raised by himself after his wife left him. It was a very difficult time for him, but he managed and learned a lesson that we all should embrace: "Don't rise

above pain, let it be part of your life, let it be part of who you are."

At age 68 Fred was blessed when he met Vivian at a square dance, they fell in love and married less than a year later.

Once upon a time Fred was called "Crazy Fred"! No one calls him that anymore. Today Fred is famous! It's no surprise that the American Pickers came to visit and if you ever find yourself in the Northeast Kingdom you too may be fortunate enough to meet the one and only amazing Fred Webster — a man with a vision."

Attending one or all of these three auctions could be such a learning experience as well as an entertaining family outing for anyone interested in preserving Vermont's history. You can be sure that Cousin Rod Ames is one of those individuals. Perhaps you can join him at the third auction on the 27th.



DON'T FORGET ABOUT THE
GARDNER FAMILY REUNION BEING
HELD AT THE NORTHWOODS STEW-
ARDSHIP CENTER ON JULY 8TH FROM
NOON UNTIL 5:00 P.M. MAKE YOUR
PLANS NOW TO ATTEND!

SEE YOU AGAIN THIS SUMMER!