John Harris Sargent

(March 7, 1814-October 20, 1893)

Buried at (Unknown)

Father: Levi Sargent (1777-1862)

Mother: Roseamont B. Harris (1782-1866)

Married: Julia Jackson Hull on June 6, 1857 (died April 18, 1907)

Children: none

(ancestry.com)

John H. Sargent has been, and is, so intimately connected with the construction and management of some of the most important public improvements of the city, and notably so with the sewerage system and water works management, that it is eminently proper he should be noticed here as a representative man in the department of City Improvements. Mr. Sargent was born March 7, 1814, at Carthage, near Rochester, New York. His parents were but recent emigrants from New Hampshire, and when he was but three years old they removed again toward the land of the setting sun, taking up their residence in what is now the city of Monroe, Michigan, but which was then known as River Raisin. In that place they remained but a year, at the end of which time they removed to Cleveland. Levi Sargent, the father of the subject of this sketch, was by trade a blacksmith, and was at one time a partner in that business with Abraham Hickox, then, and long after, familiarly known to every one in the neighborhood as "Uncle
Abram." He soon removed to the west side of the river, and thence to Brooklyn, where he built him one of the first houses erected on that side, on top of the hill. Hard knocks upon the anvil could barely enable him to support his family, so the boy, at the age of nine, was sent to the Granite State, where for ten years he enjoyed, during the Winter months, the advantages of a New England district school, and worked and delved among the rocks upon a farm the remainder of the year. At the age of nineteen, with a freedom suit of satin, and barely money enough to bring him home, he returned to Cleveland. Here, after supporting himself, he devoted all his leisure time to the study of mathematics, for which he had a predilection. Subsequently he spent some time at the Norwich University, Vermont, at an engineering and semi-military school, under the management of Captain Patridge.

When the subject of railroads began to agitate the public mind, and the project of a railroad along the south shore of Lake Erie was resolved upon, Mr. Sargent was appointed resident engineer upon the Ohio Railroad, which position he held until the final collapse of that somewhat precarious enterprise, in 1843. Sandusky City had already taken the lead in Ohio in the matter of railroads, having a locomotive road in operation to Tiffin, and horse road to Monroeville. Upon the reconstruction and extension of this last road Mr. Sargent was appointed resident engineer, and while there, seeing the advantages that Sandusky was likely to gain over Cleveland by her railways, at the solicitation of J. W. Gray, he sent a communication to the Plain Dealer, illustrating the same with a map, urging the construction of a railroad from Cleveland to Columbus and Cincinnati. He also advocated the project in the Railroad Journal, but that paper discouraged the matter, as it was likely to be too much of a competing line with the Sandusky road already begun. But the agitation continued until the preliminary surveys were made, the greater part of them
under Mr. Sargent's immediate charge. When the project hung fire for a time, Mr. Sargent, in company with Philo Scovill, spent two seasons among the copper mines of Lake Superior. When the Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati railroad was begun in good earnest, he was called upon once more and located the line upon which it was built. Mr. Sargent remained upon the road until opened to Wellington, when he went upon the Michigan Southern and Northern Indiana railroad, where, for nearly five years, he was engaged in extending and reconstructing that road, and in locating and building its branches.

Since 1855, most of his time has been spent in Cleveland, in engineering and works of public utility. While city civil engineer he strongly advocated, though for the time unsuccessfully, the introduction of the Nicholson pavement, and introduced and established the present system of sewerage, a work, the importance of which to the health and comfort of the citizens, cannot be overestimated.

Mr. Sargent has been chosen one of the commissioners for enlarging and extending the water works so as to meet the altered circumstances and enlarged demands of the city.

In politics Mr. Sargent is, and has always been, a Democrat, but never allows party prejudices to sway him, and is in no sense a professed politician. The honesty of his convictions and his uprightness of conduct have won for him the respect and friendship of men of all parties, who have confidence in his never permitting party considerations to interfere with his honest endeavor to serve the public interests to the best of his ability, whenever placed in a position to do so. During the rebellion he was zealous and untiring in his support of the government, and aiding, by all the means in his power, to crush out the rebellion. (Cleveland Past and Present, Its Representative Men, Comprising Biographical Sketches of
The Rocky River Railroad Company received a charter on February 20 to operate a dummy line from Bridge Street, just west of Waverly Avenue, the city limits, to the east bank of Rocky River (Lakewood), a recreation spot. Daniel P. Rhodes, Elias Simms, Ezra Nicholson, John H. Sargent, and other promoted the project, and the first run was made on September 1, 1868. The abbreviated train consisted of a small, brass-trimmed locomotive trailing one car, and it whistled and puffed through orchards and gardens on 5.33 miles of narrow-gauge road at twenty miles an hour, carrying outing parties and serving the West Side communities. In 1869 the Cliff House opened near the river bank, greatly increasing the popularity and revenue of the line. The Nickel Plate purchased the dummy road in 1891 for its right-of-way. (page 341)

One of first financial institutions on the Wet Side was the Peoples Savings & Loan Association, organized in March and capitalized at $100,000. Early presidents succeeding Daniel P. Rhodes were John H. Sargent, Hiram, Barrett, and R. R. Rhodes. (page 354)

The first Board of Park commissioners, created on August 22, consisted of Fr. Azariah Everett, president; Oscar A. Childs and John H. Sargent. Prior to this time, the Council control public ground and granted small sums to committees for specific park improvements. (Cleveland: The Making of a City,1950, page 379)

In 1818, Reuben Wood, who afterward became governor of Ohio, and Orlando Cutter, who brought with him a stock of goods valued at twenty thousand dollars, a very large amount for that time, and Samuel Cowles, settled here. The Cowles family has indelibly impressed itself upon the community. Levi Sargent brought his
family to Cleveland in 1818. His son John H. Sargent, became one of the foremost men in railroad building and other extensive engineering works in Ohio. John was a lad when he came to Cleveland.

*(History of Cleveland, Vol. 1, 1910, page 105)*

The Village was laid out by John H. Sargent, a civil engineer with the railroad. Mr. Sargent also helped found Stryker and Wauseon.

What Mr. Sargent and others who were privy to a proposed rail route would often do was to purchase pieces of land about every ten miles and survey town lots next to the rail route. This made the new town just far enough away from other towns to make a good location for purposes of other manufactured goods by rail to markets in larger cities.

Bryan was the only town in Williams County on the proposed rail route. Mr. Sargent helped locate Edgerton, Stryker, and Wauseon. They, therefore, can be considered true railroad towns. *(History of Edgerton, Ohio)*

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John Harris Sargent was born in Carthage, New York, March 1814. His parents had shortly before left New Hampshire. Sargent was of pure New England descent and could number among his ancestors very substantial early settlers, including that finest of American ancestry, John Brewster of the Mayflower. When John and his parents moved to Monroe, Michigan, then the River Raisin. At the end of a year they moved to Cleveland as their permanent home, where his father, Levi Sargent, went into partnership with Uncle Abram Hickox of famous creamory. He soon built "upon the hill" on the West Side from nine to nineteen Mr. Sargent lived in New England with his grandfather, Mr. Harris, having such
schooling as New England then afforded. He had a taste for mathematics, and afterward spent some time at the engineering and military school of Capt. Patridge at Norwich, Vermont. Mr. Sargent was fond of reminiscence, and his interesting recollections of early Cleveland and the changes while he was East, will be found in the publications of this Society, No. I, pages 74-83, and No. 6, pages 11-16. Mr. Sargent, although a quiet and sedate gentleman, was withal social, kind and generous, and he always manifested an active interest in the public welfare. He was a man of rare and accurate intelligence, and his early engineering education gave direction to his earnest efforts for the good of the city in which he lived. When railroads first began to be talked about, he was earnest that they should be built in Northern Ohio. He was resident engineer of the Ohio Railroad, but not in its direction, until in the early forties. Sandusky had the first live railroad in the State, and Mr. Sargent was appointed resident engineer of that road at Sandusky.

While there, through the columns of the Plain Dealer in Cleveland, he urged the construction of a railroad from Cleveland to Columbus and Cincinnati, illustrating it with maps. He urged it elsewhere until the preliminary surveys were made. There were two competing lines of survey, the western being under charge of Mr. Sargent. This was the successful route, and he remained in charge until the road was located and built as far as Wellington. He was then (1849) engaged for five years upon the Michigan Southern and Northern Indiana Railroad, in various responsible positions, locating and constructing its line and branches. An entertaining account of his experience with the various railroads is to be found in a paper written by Mr. Sargent for the Western Reserve Historical Society, and shortly to be published by it. It is also substantially printed in the Journal of the Association of Engineering Societies for September, 1887. After 1855 he was engaged in his home of
the City of Cleveland, in engineering and in dealing in real estate. He continued from that time until his death to be largely interested in the city and in its growth and prosperity. He had previously, under Ohio City, been an Engineer upon the "Ship Channel Improvement," one, which he would have said, as of others, "been too soon." Elected to the city council of Cleveland, he was appointed Sewerage Engineer in 1863, and for two years following he was the City Civil Engineer. He was further one of the Commissioners for enlarging and extending the water works system of the city. His services in these various ways were of great value. He was a man of excellent, practical judgment and scientific acquirement, and one of the most disinterested of men in his public service. He was broad, liberal and progressive in his views, and led in what was useful. In his article on railroads he exclaims: "Fare " well, my first love, the Ohio Railroad, as was my late love — a " purified river and an outside harbor. The ghost of the first has " arisen in its glory. So may it be with the last."

Although Mr. Sargent had no children of his own, he was always interested in schools, libraries or other institutions of an educational or literary kind. He was, from the beginning of this Society in 1880, one of its Executive Committee, and later a Vice President as well. He was from the first active in the Western Reserve Historical Society, and for awhile one of its Trustees. His relation ceased upon his continued absence abroad, but he was at his death a Vice President of that Society.

He was a valued member and contributor to the Club of Civil Engineers, and to its magazine published in New York city, and to the publications of the Western Reserve Historical Society. His papers to the last, consisting of a paper upon the harbor of Cleveland, one on Prehistoric Mining on Lake Superior, and one on the history of the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railroad — the last containing some touches of his experience in its construction. The writer has occasion to know that years
and years ago he thought much and wisely upon the subject of institutions for public instruction, he having a wise plan to which he expected to be a most generous contributor for a library and meeting rooms for the benefit of the employed, plans which are now largely covered by the Young Men's Christian Association, the public libraries and other societies. Mr. Sargent died in Cleveland on the 20th day of October, 1893. (Annuals of the Early Setters Association of Cuyahoga County, 1894, page 299).

John H. Sargent, son of Levi and Rosamond B. Harris Sargent, was born in Carthage, N.Y., March 7, 1814, and died in Cleveland, Ohio, October 20, 1893. In 1817, his parents removed to Monroe, Mich., and in 1818, to Cleveland. In 1823, he went to live with his grandparents in New Hampshire and prepared for college in the schools of that State. In 1836, he entered the University remaining two years. He the returned to Ohio, where he became prominent as a civil engineer. He was prominent in advocating the construction of railroads in his State; was resident engineer during 1840 and 1841 on the construction of the Old Ohio Railroad, which was being built on piles, between Cleveland and Manhattan. He advocated the construction of a railroad from Cleveland to Columbus and Cincinnati, making a map of the route. He located this road and was engineer in charge of constructing the portions from Cleveland to Wellington, in 1849; was engineer in charge of constructing the Michigan Southern and Northern Indiana R.R., and its branch lines, 1849-55, from Toledo, Ohio to Chicago, Ill. In 1855, he returned to Cleveland and in 1857 was elected city engineer, which position he held two years; was appointed sewerage engineer of the city in
1863, and during 1864 and 1865 served as city engineer; was a member of the Waterworks Board in 1869.

He engaged in the real estate and insurance business in Cleveland, 1866-93. He was interest in various business enterprises; assisted in organizing the People’s Saving Bank of Cleveland, in 1871. He was a man of excellent practical judgement and scientific acquirements. He was a the Early Settlers Association of Ohio, serving for some time as vice-president; was also an active member of the Western Reserve Historical Society, serving for some time as a trustee; was member and contributor to the Civil Engineers club of Cleveland. He was married June 6, 1857, to Mrs. Julia A. Hall, who died April 18, 1907. (Norwich University, 1819, 1911: Her History, 1911, page 310)