

Marson Cleaves Sargent and Grace 'Peter' Charlotte Tompkins Sargent Biographies

MARSTON CLEAVES SARGENT



Marston Cleaves Sargent was born in Somerville, Massachusetts on April 2, 1906. The son of Oscar Groves and Nannee May Sargent, he received an A.B. from Harvard in 1929 before attending the California Institute of Technology and receiving a Ph.D. in plant physiology and biophysics in 1934. He married Grace "Peter" Charlotte Tompkins April 8, 1933, and they adopted two children, Jean Anne and Harry "Tom" Tompkins.

Marston Sargent served as an assistant biologist at the California Institute of Technology from 1934 to 1937 before moving to the Scripps Institution of Oceanography. He began work there as an assistant biochemist and later became an instructor in oceanography between the years 1937 and 1942. He was called to active duty in

the U.S. Navy from 1942 to 1946, during which time he was assigned to the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations and the Navy's Bureau of Ships. He rose to the rank of lieutenant commander in the Naval Reserve.

After the war, Sargent returned to S.I.O. where he held the position of assistant professor until 1951. He then went on to the U.S. Naval Electronics Laboratory where he was an oceanographer and Head of Training. In 1955 Sargent moved to the Office of Naval Research in Pasadena where he worked until 1958. He returned to Pasadena in 1960 after two years in the Office of Naval Research, London and remained until 1970. After leaving the Office of Naval Research, Sargent was coordinator of the California Cooperative Oceanic Fisheries Investigations until 1974. He conducted research with the Marine Life Research Group until 1980 when he retired. He died at the age of 80 on August 28, 1986 in San Diego following a stroke.

Marston Sargent was an inventor. During the 1960's his major work included the development of the Bathythermograph Data Reduction System, which was a device for the rapid digitization of records compiled by a bathythermograph. This device made it easy for researchers to quickly record large quantities of data on ocean conditions. Sargent published papers on the process of photosynthesis and growth of several kinds of freshwater and marine algae, growth of coral, and the distribution of phytoplankton. While in the Navy, Sargent worked primarily on oceanographic conditions and their affect on underwater sound.

GRACE "PETER" CHARLOTTE TOMPKINS SARGENT



Grace Charlotte Tompkins Sargent, daughter of Florence and Harry James Tompkins, was born July 2, 1909 in the Sierras of California.

Grace spent her youth growing up in the Sierras, gaining a respect for nature that later influenced her to take an active role in environmental issues. Her father, Harry James Tompkins was one of the first rangers in the new U.S. Forest Service under Gifford Pinchot. Harry James Tompkins was born June 1, 1867 in Troy, New York. He worked in the family knitting mill in Troy until age 19 when the damp indoor conditions caused him to become ill and forced him to go to Colorado to recover. Upon his return to Troy he became ill once again and sought a career outdoors. After a brief stint with a timber company in North Carolina he returned to New York and enrolled in the new State College of Forestry at Cornell University. From Cornell he joined the Bureau of Forestry as a student assistant. His first fieldwork was in Arkansas after which he went to Washington D.C. to work under Gifford Pinchot. He was involved in the effort to create new national forests and is credited with simplifying this process, providing easier land preservation. In 1907 Gifford Pinchot sent Harry Tompkins to the new Sierra North National Forest to work as the technical assistant to Supervisor Charles H. Shinn. Tompkins was married on October 25, 1905 to Florence Holbrook Johnson, who accompanied him to their new home in the mountain town of Northfork. Here they had two children, Jean Irving and Grace Charlotte. In 1910 Tompkins was assigned to the project of recording the levels of all the streams in the Sierras. After 1912, he was transferred to the office of the U.S. Forest Service in San Francisco where he remained for four years. In 1916 he transferred to the Los Angeles headquarters where he was once again in charge of measuring the

streams and setting up stream gages. He was to spend the rest of his life in the mountains of California and his city home in Pasadena. Harry Tompkins died on November 22, 1949 in Pasadena at age 82.

During her youth, a group of friends gave Grace Charlotte Tompkins the nickname "Peter" which she used the rest of her life. Peter Tompkins attended grade school in Pasadena with Roger Revelle. They were selected to take part in the Terman Study of gifted students. In 1931 she graduated from Stanford University with a degree in English. She developed her skills as an author by writing continuously on various subjects. Her books *Sierra North* and *Nature's Child* were both drawn from her youth and the early days of the U.S. Forest Service. *The Sea Acorn* (1979) gives a description of her experiences at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography. She also wrote many short stories and articles. She was an active member of the League of Womens Voters and participated in the campaign for open space in San Diego County. Two canyons in the city of Clairemont have been set aside as parks and wildlife preserves as a result of Sargent's efforts. Grace "Peter" Sargent died at the age of 82 on February 8, 1992 in Santa Ana, California.