

## **Aunt Irene and Aunt Viola**

by Sarah (Rockenbach) Belcher, 1982.

"My Grandma Sarah Rockenbach died 19 years before I arrived. My Mother asked Grandpa George Rockenbach what shall we name this one? He said, "you have no Sarah. Why not name her after Grandma Sarah?"

Aunt Irene and Aunt Viola took the place of Grandma Sarah.

Aunt Irene was the one who brought in the bacon. She worked as Town Clerk in Deerfield. She drove the 1954 Chevrolet. She kept all the ancestors alive in our hearts. She kept all the many, many nieces and nephews in front of us.

They had a two story old house next to the railroad tracks in Deerfield.

Aunt Irene told us about the Otts, who went to California in the gold rush. Jacob (a cousin) never came back. He contacted yellow fever and was buried at sea.

Irene kept the family together as no one else did. Every Christmas and on Grandpa's birthday (Groundhog Day 1841), she and Viola would contact Mom and Dad and they would go to Deerfield for the day.

Aunt Irene and Viola gave every niece and nephew a wedding gift and a gift when babies arrived. Our wedding gift was two pillows made from a goose down feather bed in the attic. The goose down mattress was made by Grandma Sarah, when they lived on Saunders Road and had their family.

Irene compiled the family tree. She wrote to a cousin in France for years.

We loved to visit their house in Deerfield. The first thing we'd do was run upstairs and use the bathroom, then sneak up in the attic to look at old trunks etc.

Aunt Viola was short and cute and loving. She had a dowager hump. Must be hereditary, I have one. As she grew old, the hump became very large and she stooped over in her wheelchair, until she became a little curl of loving humanity.

Aunt Viola did the cooking, cleaning and caring for eleven cats. She waited on Grandpa George, did the washing and kept the family intact by making their home a fun place to go to.

We'd go for lunch and a visit, then run across the vacant lot to see Aunt Ella Plagge, but she never gave us cookies.

Every Christmas was time to renew on old European custom. Using a tulip cookie pattern that Grandma Sarah's parents brought from Alsace, she made a big tulip sugar cookie and gave it to my Dad. If Dad didn't get there, they mailed it to him. We still make tulip cookies for Christmas breakfast and add an orange and a candy cane. Suck the juice through the candy cane (a Catlow, English custom). This later custom, of oranges and candy canes, was brought here by Grandpa Joseph Catlow's parents from Burnley, England."