

The Sebring Brothers

When someone mentions the name Sebring in Gardner, the first person that the many of us think of is Leonard, "Lem", Sebring. There were actually two Sebring boys that attended school in Gardner, both graduating in 1916. Leonard had a younger brother named Harold, whose nickname was Tom.

Leonard was one of Gardner's most interesting characters from his return to Gardner in the late 1930's until his death in May, 1978. Leonard had a career in Hollywood, California, as an animator for Walt Disney Studios from 1932 until 1937, and with MGM from 1937 until he returned to Gardner in 1941. He often told stories about working on the motion picture *Snow White*, and quite a number of animated "shorts." Leonard liked to relate to friends that he had grown tired of the "blackouts" in the Los Angeles, prior to World War II, and felt the need to return to the peace and safety of home. After his return from Hollywood, Leonard continued to "entertain" the citizens of Gardner, and he also was the caregiver for his mother, Anna Sebring Eaton, as she was dying from cancer. He continued to use his artistic skills, including creating artwork used to advertise products from Gardner's own Cramer Chemical Company. One of his more unusual and amazing abilities was the cutting of player piano rolls. Many of Gardner's citizens are familiar with the "Snow White" house at 116 W. Main Street. The house was the residence of Leonard's mother.



Leonard at his piano

Leonard had the house remodeled, after his mother's death, to resemble *Snow White's* cottage. When Gardner was preparing for the bicentennial of the U.S., Leonard designed a plate for the city of Gardner. He was recognized as Gardner's "Citizen of the Year" in 1976.

Leonard's brother, Harold, "Tom", had a distinguished law career in Florida.

After graduating from Gardner High School in 1916, Tom served in World War I and was awarded medals by the governments of both the U.S. and France.

Tom went to college at Kansas State Agricultural College (now K-State), graduating in 1923. While at K-State, Tom was freshmen class president, senior class vice-president, and was a letterman in football, track and boxing. Tom eventually started working on his graduate degree at the University of Florida. While a graduate student, he became head coach of the University of Florida football team, as well as head coach of the boxing and track teams. He received his law degree from the University of Florida in 1928.

After receiving his degree and passing the Florida bar, Tom practiced law in Miami and Jacksonville. He was appointed a judge of the eighth judicial circuit in 1933, and served in that capacity until 1943. Tom left his position as circuit judge to become a judge on the Florida Supreme Court. He served on the Florida Supreme Court from 1943 until 1955, and was chief justice from 1951 until 1953. During his tenure on the Florida Supreme Court, Judge Sebring was appointed by President Harry S Truman to preside at the "Doctors Trials" at the Nazi War Crime Tribunals in Nuremberg, Germany.

Duty called Judge Sebring again, after he left the Florida Supreme Court. In 1955 he became the Dean of the Stetson University College of law, a position he held until his death in July, 1968.



Tom Sebring