

**THENDARA TO NEW YORK CITY COMMUTE DIDN'T STOP
GRANDE
8/8/95**

I remember Sam Grande. I first met him at Brussels Garage back in 1959.

Our meetings were sporadic and for a long time I only knew him as an interesting person to visit with and as Larry Gaudin's father-in-law.

These circumstances continued on until many years after Sam's death in 1979. Since my retirement, I have taken time to reflect back on the things I particularly enjoyed and now miss. One of those things is my encounters with Sam.

My curiosity prompted me to approach Sam's daughter, Loretta Gaudin, to learn more about this interesting character.

I learned that Sam's wife, Catherine, made up the other half of an ideal equation.

They both came to this country from Italy when they were six months old. They started married life in Utica, where Sam worked for the railroad.

In 1927, he was "bumped" from his job there to Thendara. He worked with Louie Fischetti as a "car knocker" until the 30s, when he was laid off and worked for a couple of years with the C.C.C.

In the late 30s he regained his job with the railroad, but was transferred to New York City.

Two years after arriving in Thendara, they started building a home directly across from Brussels Garage. Sam did much of the work himself, including digging the cellar by hand.

The home still stands today as a monument to his good work. A common thread existed to that of many other homes erected in that era. Moses Cohen offered assistance in the form of money and materials. It is worth noting that it was tendered and formalized with a handshake – a tribute to the character and integrity of both men.

When Sam was out of work with the railroad, to make ends meet they started a "spaghetti house" in their home. Many of the patrons were down-and-out lumberjacks and others with little income. They had bigger appetites than pocketbooks, which were answered with "Sit right down, Cate's in the kitchen cooking, you'll eat." No need to ask how long the business lasted.

One of the things that makes this story interesting is what happened after Sam went back to work and was transferred to New York City: He tried in vain to get Catherine to move the family there. She was adamant about not leaving their home and risking yet another move. Sam commuted from the late 30s until his retirement in 1965, after 50 years of service, a remarkable feat which would be difficult to duplicate even in this day and age.

Sam had a good sense of humor and was a good neighbor. Red Perkins and some of his cronies stole Sam's chickens and invited Sam to a "chickaree" at Art DeMore's home in Thendara. When the party was over, Sam laughed as hard as everyone else when he learned where the chickens came from.

He further presented evidence that he was as fallible as everyone else by losing his entire paycheck in a crap game. He only did it once and Catherine, of course, never let him forget it.

Sam Grande was a good man who marched through life with a purpose and a commitment sadly lacking in many today. I am sure these qualities were why I was drawn to visit and pass the time with him whenever I had an opportunity.