

Interviewee: Jim St. George
Interviewer: David Webster
Date: April 4, 2002

Jim St. George grew up in Shelburne Farms where his father worked on the farm.

Topics Discussed: Shelburne Farms, the Shelburne Farms' cottages, Shelburne schools and teachers, Saint Catherine's Church, Father Cain, Father McDonough, Reverend Lynnwood Smith, the Ticonderoga, Eutie Thomas, Herman Dederer, LH Palmer's Store, Tracy and Maeck Store, local farms and roads, Winter, Burlington, World War II, the Craft School, Shelburne Families, life at home,

David Webster: What is your full name?

Jim St. George: James Joseph St. George.

DW: You were born in Shelburne?

JS: Yes.

DW: When was that?

JS: October 23, 1937

DW: Where were you born?

JS: I was born in a hospital...probably Bishop DeGoesbriand in Burlington.

DW: Who were your parents?

JS: Earnest Alexander St. George and Ellen Margaret Early.

DW: Were both your parents from here?

JS: My mother was from here and my father was born in Charlotte. Perhaps my mother was born in Charlotte too.

DW: Where did your parents go to school?

JS: My father went to school in Charlotte. My mother went to school in Shelburne and then to St. Mary's.

DW: What did your father do for a living?

JS: He worked at Shelburne Farms for sixty-five years.

DW: Are you an only child?

JS: Yes.

DW: Where did your grandmother live?

JS: My grandmother lived right next door (on Spear Street).

DW: Did she come here at a later date?

JS: They lived in Charlotte and they worked on Southern Acres for J.W. Webb, Sr. They purchased this properties in the 1930s.

DW: What was your first home in Shelburne?

JS: My first in Shelburne, I think I recall mother saying, is where Laura Fisher lives now. It was a rental. Then we moved to one of the four cottages over at Shelburne Farms. I think it was the second one on the right. Then I moved over to what used to be the boarding house at Shelburne Farms.

DW: Do you remember living there?

JS: I vaguely remember moving to the big house at Shelburne Farms – the boarding house. All I remember about the cottages was that they grew watermelons one year and they had huge watermelons. That is all I can remember.

DW: Was there a time when you did not live in Shelburne?

JS: When I graduated from high school in 1955, I went to college in Boston. I was there from 1955 and 1957. And then I came back and lived there until 1960 when I went into the Navy. I came back in 1962 and lived there until 1963 when I was married. Moved back here in 1966.

DW: Whose land was this?

JS: It belonged to my grandmother.

DW: What was it like growing up on Shelburne Farms? Neighbors?

JS: I had no neighbors. The closest neighbor was Tower who was the office manager. There were no children – pretty isolated. There were lots of places that you were not supposed to be.

DW: Such as?

JS: Down at the barn. In those days you were supposed to be out of sight if you were a child. Quiet and out of sight.

DW: Did you do anything on the farms yourself?

JS: Never did. I never worked on the farms. I mowed Dave Tower's lawn.

DW: What did your dad do?

JS: He was hired on as a teamster. He drove teams. Then he worked in the dairy barn and did regular farm work.

DW: Do you remember him driving the teams?

JS: Yeah.

DW: How late do you think they were using teams?

JS: I can remember when I was in probably seven or eighth grade, maybe freshman in high school, that they had a team....two horses...Black Beauty and...almost like the story book...I can't think of the other horse. They would take a team, hook it up to a wagon and go to my other grandfather St. Georges in the village and plow that big piece where he used to raise potatoes. Take the horses down, plow it and go back to the farm.

DW: Do you remember sugaring?

JS: They didn't. My father and Oliver Burritt used to sugar for themselves. Shelburne Farms did not sugar.

DW: Where did they sugar? There or elsewhere?

JS: There, in back of the house. On Lone Tree Hill. I guess they are sugaring there now.

DW: Where did your grandfather live?

JS: Do you remember where Gervia's store was?

DW: Yes.

JS: He owned that land that is referred to as Viens Development. That whole piece of land belonged to the St. Georges.

DW: Where was the house?

JS: the house is still there...with the yellow barn. The Gervia's Store , which was fixed over and turned into apartments— just to the west of that.

DW: The house was sold a number of times in the last few years. How was the house heated?

JS: Wood. We cooked with wood. Heated with wood. It wasn't very warm. Then we got a coal furnace – I don't remember when we got that. Then, we got an electric stove probably when I was in high school. It was terribly warm in the kitchen

DW: Did you have a summer kitchen?

JS: No. We heated the hot water off of the wood stove. We had what you called a hot water front for the stove. I can remember when we went to Burlington, which was a big event, and in the wintertime, you came back and if that fire gone out, you had no hot water until you got that fire going again. That would circulate into a little holding tank.

DW: You had a bathroom in the place?

JS: We had a bathroom. In our first places, up at the cottages, there was an outhouse.

DW: How were the typical evenings spent at home?

JS: Listening to the radio, eating popcorn and we had a huge kitchen table, and just playing on the kitchen table when I was a kid.

DW: What do you eat?

JS: We had a lot of meat and we had a lot of potatoes.

DW: Did your mother can?

JS: Oh yeah. She had a large garden.

DW: Where was the garden located?

JS: It was right to the side of the house. Terrible soil. Very shaley.

DW: What were winters like over at the farms?

JS: It was pretty isolated because...they took care of their own roads like they do now... they roads were plowed....they had a huge snowplow that was made by a blacksmith. They put a tractor crawler in and hook it all four corners. It had a deep rout and it had wings. It was very slow. My father used to run the wings on it. He would stand on the back and raise and lower the wings. They might be gone for eight to ten hours. They

had big fur coats they put on. It was very brutal and it was so slow. You might be isolated in there for a day or so if the couldn't get the roads open.

DW: Did you look forward to school?

JS: No, I didn't like that much school. I had to wait in front of the barn for the bus. Russ Little drove the bus. We had to wait in front of the barn. In the wintertime, he would come in and go down to the big house and pick up the kids down there.

DW: Boisverts

JS: Yes. And when I was very little, there were the Pattersons. They had Shirley Patterson going to school. And then they would come up and sometimes the road across from pasture there to the barn would be so drifted. They would not come across. They would go back out the way they came and I could not see over there because the wind would be blowing. I would wait and wait and there would be no school bus. I did not go to school that day. I remember that he had a bus that was in real terrible shape and the clutch was bad and he would not come to a complete stop because we would have to jump off if the clutch was gone. Do you think we could do that today?

DW: I don't think so.

JS: There was a period of time that they would not come on. Johnny Boisvert used to take us to school – they had a pick up truck that they made like a covered wagon hoop covered with canvas and we would ride in the back of the pick up truck. He would take us to school and pick us up. Russell Little had a hearse. It was an old hearse that they converted to a school bus with benches on the side. Where the doors opened in the back there was a big stuffed chair sitting there. That was the prized chair. We rode in that thing for a school bus.

DW: So you to the Shelburne School and you went there grades 1 through 12. There was no kindergarten?

JS: There was no kindergarten. Boys entered from the north side of the building and girls from the south side. The bathrooms were corresponding. You came in from the Noonan side and, of course, that addition was not there. You went upstairs, the first grade room was on the left and if you went downstairs, the boy's room and the janitor's room were down below. On the other side was the teacher's room and the girls bathroom. You could not enter from the other side – you were not supposed to.

DW: Who was your first grade teacher?

JS: Miss Franklin was my first grade teacher.

DW: What other teachers?

JS: Miss Franklin was my first grade and second grade teacher. Mrs. Muzzy was my third and fourth grade teacher. The famous Mary Noonan was the fifth and sixth grade teachers. We had several teachers for seventh and eight grade. Mrs. Horsford was the principal then, I believe. She taught some of the classes. Mrs. Mackenzie from Hinesburg taught. I think Mrs. Patterson taught too.

DW: I had her.

JS: Around that period of time, they built the addition on to where the high school moved into. When I first started, the high school occupied the upstairs. The lower grades were downstairs and the gymnasium was upstairs in the old part. Mr. McGee, he was the principal. He moved over to the office in the new section.

DW: The gymnasium was upstairs in the old part?

JS: Yep. If you came in from the Noonan's side...it worked the same way on both sides...you went up one flight of stairs to the first level and then you would just turn and go up another flight of stairs to the second level. The rooms on the roadside were the two classrooms and the gymnasium was on the left side and the science rooms were on the left side too.

DW: It must have been a fairly small gym.

JS: Yeah it was small. I can remember going to basketball and watching the high school play basketball. It was really...the only place to sit was on stage. Flat against the wall. When they were practicing basketball sometimes and you were in the lower rooms, you could hear the basketball go thump...thump...thump. It would be a headache.

DW: In high school, there were probably only two teams?

JS: It was not hard to get on a team. When we started there were twenty-two or twenty-three students in my freshman class and eight of us graduated. The drop out rate was pretty bad.

DW: Why do you think that was?

JS: Well, some of the girls got pregnant and a lot of the boys just dropped out and went into the service.

DW: Sally Martel talked about a similar rate of a lot of people starting and not a lot of them finishing.¹

¹ See Sally Martel Interview

JS: When we went from the eighth grade to the freshman, we had a big class...one of the biggest. But only eight of us graduated.

DW: What sports did you play?

JS: Basketball, baseball and soccer.

DW: What kind of classes did you take?

JS: It was pretty standard. You had Algebra I and II. You had American history. I could take Latin...I think Mr. Mcgee taught Latin...if you wanted to take it. He taught physics, math, and geometry. Then you had Social studies. Your mother taught Home Economics. Had her for study hall...she had study hall too. Civics.

DW: What were social activities were at school?

JS: The seniors always ran the little candy store. We had an old Victrola box. You know the stand up Victrola Boxes? It was emptied out. It had shelves in there and it had candy in there. The seniors would get to run that every year to raise money for the senior trip which always went to New York City when we graduated. That was the noon hour social. Then we had dances on Fridays sometimes. I played trumpet in the band myself – George Sennett and Carl Lozon and Larry Sennett, Joyce Barnes. Janet Boyer – she played piano incredible. There was not that much social activity.

DW: Dances were few and far between?

JS: Yep.

DW: How about away games?

JS: They had away games. It was used to be with parents – four people in a car. We did not take a school bus. Not very often.

DW: Who did you play?

JS: We played in New Haven. Beaman's Academy in New Haven. We would play Jericho. We would play Hinesburg. We did not play Vergennes. Charlotte did not have any. The kids from Charlotte came to Shelburne. That was about it.

DW: How about the class trip to New York City?

JS: We stayed at the Knickerbocker hotel.

DW: Just the eight of you?

JS: I don't even think the whole eight went, to tell you the truth, John McGee went – he was the chaperone. Can't remember who else?

DW: Take the train?

JS: Drove. Two cars.

DW: How about field trips during the year?

JS: No

DW: Where did you go to church?

JS: I went to Saint Catherine's. During that period of time, they used to have religious education in the school. They had them on a Friday afternoon. The ministers each would have room. They did that until the Reverend Brushet, I believe, the Methodist Minister did not want to do it and he sort of put a stop to it.



Photo 1 St. Catherine's Church and Parish House, 1908

DW: I remember kids living early for catechism so it was not held in school.

JS: They used to hold it in school because I remember Mr. Smith in the room. Father Cain was the priest here then. I do not know what year they stopped. Then we used go over to Saint Catherine's Hall or to the Rectory. I remember Good Friday. That was the day you could get out of school and go to church.

DW: Father Cain. Who had the Great Dane?

JS: He did.

DW: I remember my mother saying when she first came here, the great Dane pretty much had the run of the village. It would come into the house. It was a great dog.

JS: During church services, the dog would wander into the church. During the summer time, the doors were open and the dog would wander up to the altar and pride himself.

DW: Who was after Father Cain?

JS: After Father Cain was Father McDonough.

DW: He had the red convertible.

JS: He had the red convertible. He was a chaplain for the Rutland Railroad. He was a licensed engineer. He would get on the train here in Shelburne and have one the altar boys drive his car to Rutland. He was a real railroad man. He had a cruiser, a cabin cruiser, that he rented and then he bought one. He used take us out on the lake. He took us to Montreal too. He had to buy a chalice or something for the church so he took all the altar boys to Montreal on the train. We went to a small factory where they were making chalices and various church objects.

DW: My recollection is that they were both part of the community and not just the church. Was that true in later years?

JS: In later years...Father McDonough was there all the time that I was altar boy. I think they had some priests who was not as much part of the community. Like Morency – I don't think he was a community man. He drove me To Charlotte. There was Father Harvey. Remember him? He was a character. He used to run bingos for the church if we were hurting for funds. He should have been a solicitor for some magazine. He would go every place and just skewer merchants. He would just ask him. "I need something for this – can you give it to me?" He was older. I guess you can say that he was involved with the community as anyone.

DW: When was he there?

JS: He was there, I think briefly, after Father McDonough. Father Murtaugh was there first because he was the one that married me. I think it was Father Murtaugh and then Father Harvey.

DW: How about the others. You mentioned Don Brushet. Do you remember Lynwood Smith?

JS: We had him in craft school. I remember Don Brushet. I remember him about the controversy.

DW: In what grade did you start going to the craft school?

JS: I say third or fourth. That started pretty early.

DW: Did you do that through high school?

JS: Yes. We had an afternoon class and then you could go at night. For ten cents an hour, you could use the facility. We did not have nice lumber to work or anything. We knew how to do things because Reverend Smith was a real good teacher. We were pretty good. I used to watch these grown men come down from Burlington – they paid more – probably fifty sixty cents an hour. They had this beautiful lumber and they would just butcher it. Cherry, Maple Oak.

DW: What sort of things were you doing over there?

JS: We made a lot of bowls. I made some tables. Cabinets, shelves. Before we could do anything. We had to learn how to use a “High Back Saw”. It was a little saw. A stiff saw. You could not use any power tools until you got a little more proficient. You had to take your square and then scribe it. Where you were going to cut, you had to take your jack knife and cut a little groove where you were going to cut. You had to be good at sharpening tools too. It was good.

DW: It probably gave you some lifelong skills.

JS: It is probably the most important thing, besides my basic studies, is that I learned so much about woodworking and really enjoyed it. That is where I got my start.

DW: Did you use your skills at home?

JS: Yes. I was useful at home because my father was not just that handy at building things. We did not have any tools or anything but I had everything to work with there. I think the craft school did a lot for me. A meat shop used to be there. It was pretty rough little building. There was a little bathroom tucked right into the side. The pottery shed was pretty bad. Then they taught mechanical drawing at the bowling alley. That was heated with a woodstove. I don't think there was a pottery shed?

DW: That was the late 1940s. Mrs. Webb gave the money to build the pottery shed.

JS: We were never involved with pottery.

DW: A lot of the girls did pottery

JS: They did lot of weaving. I think I would taken pottery if I had a chance at it.

DW: Were you a scout?

JS: I was a scout.

DW: I heard from somebody, that at one point, Catholic kids were not scouts.

JS: I don't know that. I was a scout from the time it started. Maybe they had their own something.

DW: They were not allowed. This might have been in the 1930s.

JS: We were not allowed to go to any Methodist weddings or funerals or anything like that. We were not supposed to go into the Methodist church or Episcopal Church. It was kind of sill.

DW: When did that loosen up?

JS: Probably in the late 1950s and 1960s. It was pretty segregated. High school was. Even to the fact why should not be dating her because she was not Catholic. I married a non-Catholic. I broke all the rules.

DW: You mentioned that going to Burlington was a pretty big deal?

JS: It was a pretty big deal because the roads...Route 7 was pretty desolate...there was not a lot of building there---just farms. In the wintertime, it could be quite an experience. I have seen times where you had to drive off the road, through field, because the road would be so drifted. We always had chains on the tires. I remember coming home one Saturday. It used to be called the red iron Bridge – it is the fishing access. We got stuck really bad – shoveling and shoveling.

DW: You would not go around the bay – you would go to the village.

JS: We were coming around the bay – that was a mistake. It would also drift really bad by the Bicknell's house. Where the middle school is and that little bridge – Turtle Creek. The Bicknells house was east of that bridge. It would drift really bad through there. The thought was if you could make it down past the fishing access area, because just that small area would be bad, you had a pretty good shot the rest of the way because the woods shielded from the drifting. I can remember as a kid, during the war, you could not buy tires. My father would have to stop and change the tires two or three times on the way to Burlington because the tire would blow out. He would have to patch it.

DW: So you were born in 1937, so you remember a lot of World War II?

JS: I can remember looking at the paper – I could not read very well but you would see pictures of ships that were sunk.. It made a big impression on me. I remember the blackouts at night. You had to black out all your windows and turn off all your lights off and no fires.

DW: Were you aware of what was going on at the shipyard?

JS: Yes.

DW: Did you ever go out there to see the PT Boats?



Photo 1 PT Boats, Shelburne Shipyard 1940

JS: I went out there one night. They were sub chasers. There were a lot of lights there at night. They were really illuminated. Of course, I used to work down at the shipyard when I was in high school. I was mowing lawns, sweeping floors...when they were building admiral barges.



Photo 2 PT Boats, Shelburne Shipyard, 1940

DW: Admiral barges?

JS: They are fancy little barges for officers. They were carried on a boat. They were 30 feet long. Like a little cruiser...cabin cruiser...but military style. They are fancy. They made them for a few years. They used to have to bring them by trailer truck so that they could put them on flat beds at the railroad.

DW: That was in the 1950s?

JS: Probably 1954, 1955. At least that was when I worked down there.

DW: What did you do when you went to Burlington?

JS: Primarily shopped.. Clothes..groceries. My mother and grandmother. My grandmother was one the best window shoppers going. My father and I would sit in the car for three or four hours while they did Church Street.

DW: How about shopping here in town?

JS: They used to favorite L.H. Palmer's store for some reason.

DW: I also think the Webbs did a lot of business at the Palmers.

JS: We used to go there and I remember old Dixon's Barber Shop.

DW: That is where I got my first haircut.

JS: That was a place where we were not supposed to go too because he was a Jehovah's Witness and he was always trying to preach Jehovah's Witness to you. So we stayed away from his barbershop.

DW: There were not too many other options.

JS: We used to go to Paul's Barbershop on Cherry Street in Burlington.

DW: Did you do any business at Tracy & Maeck's?

JS: Yeah. Of course, in the daytime we could not go shopping because my dad worked. At night, Tracy's would be closed and Palmers was open.

DW: When you went into Palmer's store, what was it like?

JS: Oh, it was really cluttered. Typical general store. What I remember most is as a boy scout, he was selling the store. I think he sold it to Mullis and Mullis was going to live upstairs. They hired the boy scouts and they had John Clark's truck and Paul Holden was the scoutmaster. We cleaned out the upstairs of that store for an x number of dollars. If I had only been a little bit older – the antiques, memorabilia and advertising and all that stuff. There was a fortune that went to the dump. I was just too young. I knew I shouldn't have been going because there was nothing that I could do about it. It was all this nice tin wear. Boxes of tin advertising signs. And buttons. Racks of buttons. And patterns for making clothes. It all went to the dump.

DW: Did people try to shop at both places?

JS: Oh yeah.

DW: Was there one that you would go for certain things?

JS: No. Whatever was open was convenient.

DW: Did Palmer sell meat?

JS: I don't think he sold meat. But, when I was little, I remember we used to buy meat at the meat market. Elmer Smiths. In later years, they always bought meat at Doenges and Towles. We did a lot of shopping there.

DW: Did you go to the movies?

JS: On Saturday afternoon, if my father did not have to work...he had every other Saturday afternoon or something like that off. He used to take me to the movies in Burlington. That was a big deal. The Strong or the Majestic which was a big theater.

DW: Where was the Majestic located?

JS: There is a filling station there now. On the corner of South Winooski avenue and Bank street. The Strong Theater was there and the State Theater.

DW: Was there any difference between the village and the Falls?

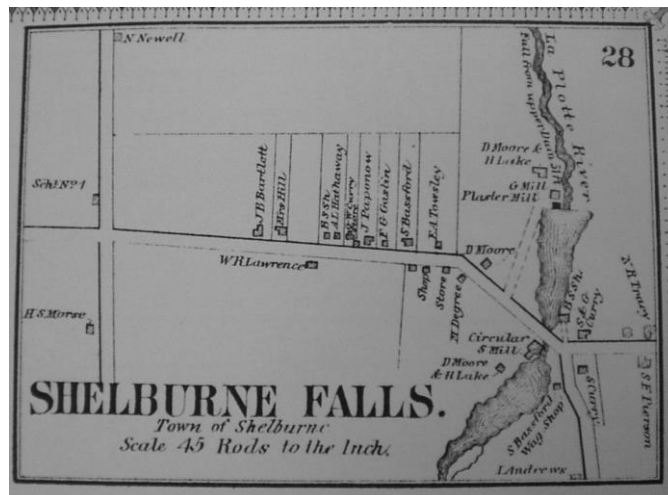


Figure 1 Shelburne Falls

JS: No.

DW: There was not as much commerce in the Falls in later years.

JS: Walter Ball was still sawing logs when I was a kid.

DW: Who were the large families?

JS: Large families or wealthy families?

DW: Large families.

JS: The O'Brien family was a large family.¹ There were some very poor families on Bay Road that were large families. The Mausseys, West. They were very poor and they had a lot of kids. Senesac was a big family.

DW: Were they out by.

JS: Hinesburg. Right on the line.

DW: Who were the town leaders?

JS: The Clarks were town leaders.² The Tracys and Maecks were always involved with town business.³ I don't know whether Ruth Morrow's father and mother...he taught down at the craft school too...Irish.⁴ The Webbs, of course, were leaders.

DW: Do you think there was a connection between the Webbs and the rest of the town?

JS: No. What the Webbs wanted is pretty much what they got back then. And the Bostwicks.

DW: There was not a lot of mixing?

JS: I don't believe so.

DW: Who were some memorable personalities in Shelburne?

JS: There was old Paul Dumas. He lived down by the railroad tracks where Roberta Coleman lived. He lived down there. I think he worked on the railroad when he was younger. There was Tom Gleason. He lived over where the post office used to be where the Texaco is. He lived up over that. He was a character?

DW: What made him a character?

JS: He used to drink a lot.

¹ See George and Pauline O'Brien Interview

² See Sally Martel Interview

³ See Doris Maeck Interview

⁴ See Ruth Irish Morrow Interview

DW: Same with Mr. Dumas?

JS: He was just different. He was a little old man. Herman Dederer, who was the Poor master, used to take care of him. He couldn't see. I used to work at the post office and I remember he came in one day and he said "Boy, It is really dark out today." It was bright, bright sunny out. He could not see and he was crossing Route 7. Today, he would probably been struck down. He would come in and get his mail...juts a little man. When I was an altar boy, Father McDonough was getting new mattresses. He said "Why don't take these mattresses down and see if Paul wants them?" We loaded them into a Plymouth car and took them down. Paul was home and we asked he wanted these mattresses. He said "Oh yes boys." He had two rooms – a bedroom and a kitchen. The frying pan was on the stove and the cats were eating out of the frying pan. He said: "Just bring them right in here." So we brought these mattresses in and there was his bed and he had two mattresses on the bed. He said "Stack them on there. I will just climb in between them." And then he offered us a piece of pie. No thank you. Mr. Dederer took good care of him.

DW: When you were growing up, was there still a Poor Farm?

JS: I don't think there was a poor farm in Shelburne. I think they probably asked for help. And then I think there was a budget for the Overseer of the Poor and he would take Paul and get him his clothes for him, and take him to the doctors. Eutie Thomas had that job before Mr. Dederer. Mr. Dederer was probably a little more zealous than Eutie. Characters?

DW: John Tracy?

JS: He was a character. But just an intellectual character. He liked to listen to himself. He used to come to school and play the piano. He would show up and do that. Of course we had the other characters. We had Tony and Norman Mears. They stuck Tony in the first grade with us.

DW: He was in his 30s at that point.

JS: Yeah. They tried to teach him to read and write I guess. Oh yeah, and there was the kids. Walter Fenwick. Remember him? He was a different story. He was a little out of control. They put him off on one side with a three-sided screen thing. They put it around his desk to keep him separate and he would always burst out screaming and throw the thing over the top. I can't remember how long he lasted. I don't remember him going to school for a great period of time. He was a problem.

DW: Who was your family doctor?

JS: Doctor Norton to begin with and then Doctor Crane in Charlotte.

DW: Did Doctor Norton make house calls?

JS: Yeah, he came to when I had the measles. The stairs going upstairs in my house were very steep and narrow. He had big feet and my father was scared that he was going to fall over backwards going up those stairs. He was a large man...tall..big guy.

DW: Did you explore a lot of natural areas as a kid?

JS: I used to go out on the farms and into the woods. I had a dog and we go up into the woods. Lone Tree Hill and that area.

DW: What do remember of the moving of the Ticonderoga?



Photo 3 Moving of the Ticonderoga (Courtesy of UVM Special Collections)

JS: I remember that very vividly because when they were moving that they were going to cross Harbor Road and Turtle Creek was thawing really bad. They worked really late and they got it across the road that night. The next day, it was a flood area. If they had not got it across the road, it probably would have drawn over. We used to sit in the high school rooms and we could look out and watch them build the horseshoe barns. I think Wes Fisher was there with his pick up truck and there was a big railroad beam on it.

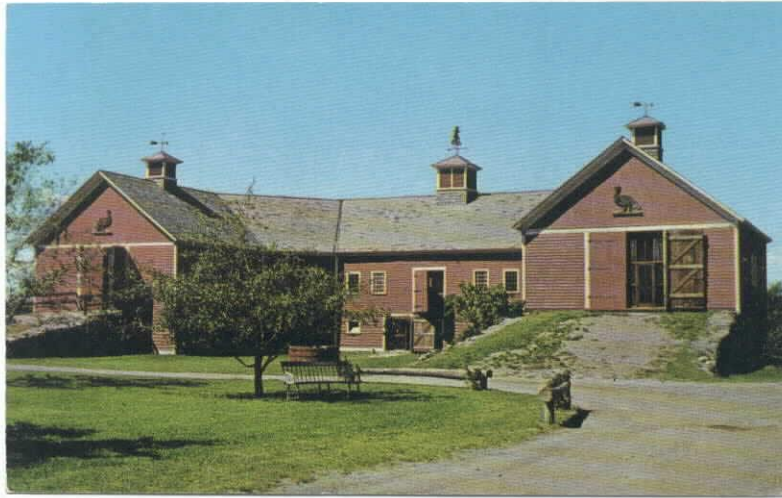


Photo 4 Horseshoe Barn, Shelburne Museum

DW: Did you go to the Museum at school?

JS: We never did. I never been a big supporter of the museum. Maybe there was not enough of it. I don't know. I have gone there. There is some nice stuff there.

DW: What do you remember of the Fire Department?

JS: I remember George Noonan, the fire chief. A lot the guys at Shelburne Farms who worked there were members of the Fire Department. The Webbs would let them go. Of course, they rang the siren. I remember a different amount of rings for each direction – east, south, north, west. So you which way to go and often times they would go there in that direction to find the fire instead of reporting down at the fire station. I don't know how they arranged that. You must remember the fire drills – they would blow the sirens at the school. At noon.

DW: Were people from all ages members of the Fire Department?

JS: I don't think they had had the younger people so much as they did later on.

DW: Did Shelburne have celebrations?

JS: I think it is becoming more so than it was.

DW: Were you around for the Bicentennial Celebration?

JS: No, I was in New Hampshire at my wife's parents place. I missed that. But they didn't have any Halloween or parades. Halloween was the time when everyone went down and got the Gadhues.

DW: Who were some of the large farming families?

JS: John Clark. Of course, the Webbs had all that farmland. Lester Thompson was considered a good farmer. The O'Briens.¹ The Senesacs. Tink Strong in town but that was not really a big farm. The farms up on Shelburne Road then had been farm but they were not actively farming. Fayette was not doing anything. Mr. Farrell there was pretty active with his apple orchards.

DW: At that point, did you considered it to be a farming community?

JS: It was a farming community but small. My grandfather had three cows.

DW: Over at the Falls?

JS: Yes. He had three cows in the barn. He was a house painter and he also sold milk. In the morning, he would do the village and the afternoon, he would do the Falls. He did that. He would make butter and sold that.

DW: Enough for a small operation. This would have been raw milk?

JS: Raw milk. He sold potatoes.

DW: And painted

JS: He was a busy man. He worked all the time. In fact, he fell off a roof when he was in his seventies. It was Harold Adams house. He had a ladder up on the porch roof. It was really hot and he didn't know it, but the ladder was slipping on the tarpaper. He fell off the roof. He did not break anything but he always had high blood pressure after that.

DW: Going back to World war II. Do you have any other memories of that period?

JS: I remember collecting meat fat and taking to the chain store where they collect it to send off. I guess they used it to make gunpowder or some war product. We saved all of our tin cans, crush them and bring them back to the stores. We used to pick milkweed. They made life jackets. I remember picking that stuff and picking grocery bags. They would weigh it in. You brought that to school and you would get a little badge to put on your arm if you picked so many pounds or such a weight of it.

DW: You got one.

¹ See Jim and Pauline O'Brien interview

JS: I got one.. It was awful stuff to pick because the pods got so sticky. I remember waiting in line to buy sugar with my mother for her coffee. Women were going nuts because they got separated and they almost got trampled. They would have had so much coffee and everybody was standing in line. When it opened up the lines to do it, they wanted their coffee.

DW: Did living on a farm make is easier?

JS: You were much better off because you always had meat. They would give you a half a side of cow. You always got that. And then you had your garden. Everybody had gardens. Everybody had a problem getting sugar. Sugar was pretty dear. It was like toys. You could not buy good toys. Everything was made of paper. There were no toys that were available. I remember I got a saw. It was just stamped out of tin. The handle was pressed paper. I was so frustrated. You just couldn't get good stuff.

DW: How long after the war did it take for things to get back to normal?

JS: Probably a couple of years after before. They were trying to make cars right after. The foodstuff came right back.

DW: If you were born in 1937, you did not live through the Depression. Do you have any memories talking about it?

JS: I have memories of people talking about it. I guess that anybody working for the Webs felt that they were fortunate because they always got paid. They didn't get paid a lot. There were a lot of people who worked on farms who did not get paid. I guess I wasn't affected by the depression as far as being deprived. Because they got paid and had a place to live.

DW: What inventions/developments have really changed people's lives?

JS: TV. I remember that we did not have TV until I was in high school. I remember where the Cathedral High School used to be there was a TV store with TVs in the window. In the wintertime, everyone standing out in the cold watching these terribly snowy pictures on the TV and Dave Towers, who used to be the office manager, he had the first TV I ever saw. He invited me up – I used to mow his lawn – he invite me up to watch a baseball game. Tiny TV and he had to put the shades down and you could just barely make out what was going on the TV. That changed your activity at night – you watched TV and you stopped reading.

DW: Stopped listening to the radio.

JS: Stopped listening to the radio. To an extent. I listened to the radio a lot.

DW: What have been the big changes in Shelburne?

JS: The services people expect and got to have - We didn't even think about. That is a big change. The general attitude is "organize this, organize that." We did things by ourselves. There was no "organize" anything.

DW: How about social organization?

JS: It is probably more. People just stayed to themselves. They were working on these small farms or they worked for a farmer. They did not get together that much – it was not easy. Now everybody has 2 or 3 cars. We had one car and it was an old car. We did not use it much. We did not drive off just to drive someplace. There was always a purpose that you had to drive for. We didn't go for a pin or down to the store for a soda

DW: Where did your love from cars come from?

JS: When I was a kid, I was always fascinated with cars. I used to cut out pictures of cars and put them into a scrapbook. I used to buy Time Magazine just to cut the pictures of Cadillacs out. They always had the best picture ads in Time Magazine. I always had a thing for cars. Maybe because we never had a nice car.

DW: Getting involved with mechanics was natural

JS: It was natural. I have natural mechanical aptitude. The woodworking...I have to back to the Craft School. If they had a mechanical course, it would have been great. Perhaps I should have gone into Industrial arts instead of regular high school.

DW: You mentioned farmers who did not get paid. What kind of hours did the farmers work?

JS: They worked awful hours. My father would have to go to work at 5:30-6:00 in the morning. If they were not working in the dairy, I think they went to work at 7:00. He worked until 5. In the summertime, you worked as long as you could hay it until 9:00 at night. If you worked in the dairy, you went in earlier and then you came home and you had a couple of hours break in the middle of the day and then went back.. Then you just worked until the sun came down.

DW: Did they have enough people working on the farms?

JS: Normally they did. In the summertime, they would get guys to do the hay.

DW: Was there much socialization amongst the people who worked on the farms?

JS: Yea, but they were so damned tired so there was not much socializing.

DW: Did the Webbs have a picnic?

JS: They had a picnic in the summertime and a Christmas Party. The big thing in the summertime as to go to the big house and there was a big party. Derrick Webb would have a Christmas Party down at his house. They would call up and ask what size a shirt you might take, because they would give you a gift. I can also remember when they were doing that damn fox hunting at Southern Acres with those little hounds and horses running all over your lawn and over you garden like it was nothing. They did not care where They would come down through and let the dogs go.

DW: The attitude was “ If we do any damage, we will right a check.”

JS: Oh no. We were on their land. It was their house. The attitude was “You are out of luck.”

DW: Was that their attitude when they were off the farm?

JS: I don't know. I have a couple of little spoons. They would ask to go across their land. Then they would have a party for everybody and they would give out a spoon. I have a couple of those someplace. You probably remember the fence that went around all the property. It had big sections that were hinged so they could pop it down so the horses only had to jump a couple of feet instead of four feet. There were big sections – probably ten or fifteen feet wide that the guys would go out and unhook them. They were so hinged so that you could jump over easy. They did not have much respect for your gardens or lawn.. It was like they were possessed. It used to really bug me. It would drive me nuts. Then the young kids. Sam Webb – the guy my age – he and his cousins would ride around in an open convertible with shotguns and they would shoot pigeons out of the clock barn.