

Interviewee: Doris Maeck
Interviewer: Oda Hubbard
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Doris Maeck is a link between two one of Shelburne's oldest families – the Maecks and the Tracys. The Maeck and Tracy families have produced countless community activists, war veterans from the Revolutionary War to World War II and some of Shelburne's finest personalities.

Topics discussed: Maeck Family, Tracy Family, Webb Family

Doris Ruth Wehrle Maeck was born in Lynn, MA in 1915. Doris spent most of her life in a Spear Street House and Farm that was built in 1801 or 1805. The Maecks are one of the first families that settled in Shelburne. They watched the Battle of Plattsburgh from barn roof. Doris Maeck has a post and beam from that barn incorporated in her home, South Forty, in Shelburne

Frederick Maeck was a young boy at the time of the battle of Ticonderoga. He was with his father who was a physician in Burgoyne's army. They later moved to Williamstown, MA where the father built a house which is still standing. Frederick Maeck then moved to Shelburne and built the house on Spear Street.

Doris married John Van Sicklen Maeck in 1939. They lived at Fort Dix, later in Burlington. In the 1960s, they moved to Shelburne. John never worked on the family farm. He "loved the land, had some sheep and now the tree farm business." John V.S. Maeck went to Edmunds High School. He boarded in town. He then went to the UVM School of Medicine and practiced in Burlington.

John's Parents were B. Harris Maeck and Hannah Tracy (Hannah Edgerton Tracy). They built their home on Route 7 in 1915. They married in 1912. Hannah was the only child in 13 of her parents who did not go to college. B. Harris Maeck was in World War One but he was not abroad during the conflict. While he lived in Shelburne, he ran a grocery business in the village. Charlotte, the sister of B. Harris Maeck, married Henry Warren Tracy. John Maeck, brother B.H. Maeck, went to live in Battle Creek Michigan. Doris' family was annoyed that she voted Democrat during WW II.



Figure 1 The Tracy and Maeck Family Go To War

Hannah Edgerton Tracy's parents, Julius C. and Mary Edgerton Tracy, lived in the Tracy home at the corner of Marsett Road and Rout 7. Julius's father, Lee, built the house. Julius C. and Mary Edgerton Tracy met a meeting in a Revival meeting tent near the Methodist Church where she played the piano. Julius was the minister.

Hannah Tracy Maeck's brother, Charles Lee Tracy, was a musician in NYC. He lived at Carnegie Hall and studied in NYC. He came every summer to Shelburne bringing many musicians and dancers who stayed at the Tracy house. Among others, the pianist, Kenneth Haig and his daughter in law, the ballerina Marina Svetlova. During the summer, he led the UVM's music department. Hannah Maeck had a studio built at the back of the house for him to retire to. He did not live to use it.

John Jay Tracy, another brother, was a great reader and gardener. He never married. He lived with his sister after her husband's death. He had a vegetable business where it is now Tracy Lane.

The Maecks and the Tracys in the early part of the 20th Century socialized with several of the other well-to-do farm families in Shelburne – Stoddard and Fletcher. Not with the Webbs or Burlington families. The Methodist Church was important to these two families – as was local politics. The town was dry and alcohol was frowned upon. There was little connection between the Tracy family and the Webb family. The Webbs were laughed at by the townspeople for their ideas on farming and building "English Style" cottages for their farm help. Not until after WWII, with the generation of Elizabeth and Derrick Webb and John and Doris Maeck was there a real friendship and socializing.

Walter Maeck ran the Spear Street farm until his retirement in 1963. "Walter let the place run down". He was a "loner". He "had a rather large amount of cash on hand". He did not do that much investing though he always talked about it. He was "stingy". He was a beekeeper. The farm had been successful. The farmhouse was modernized in c. 1870. The family owned a Steinway piano.

The family has never been able to trace the origin of the Maeck's family name.