

To me ,at my age , I was aware of the Webbs mostly as vignettes. When Dr. Webb's private car was parked on the railroad siding , the store could expect some Webb grocery business. I remember seeing the full English hunt clatter through the village – people would be impressed with that even today. At Easter a wagon with a canvas top would go by our house on the way to the Episcopal church across the street to fill it with flowers . If my parents resented the Webbs, they never showed it. I think my mother probably liked them less than my father- she mentioned more than once that her father had the Maecks who were buried in the town cemetery on Shelburne Farms disinterred and re-buried in the present town cemetery. I do remember as a boy resenting Harry Webb calling the store to ask me and my cousins to come over to play hockey on his pond. It seemed like a kind of summons and I never went. There was some feeling, I remember when Dunbar Bostwick who married a Webb, bought his big farm on the lake. He later was instrumental in building the new town water works and it was considered quite a democratic event when he, my father and the Catholic priest all served on the water board together. By that time I think the Webbs were more sensitive to the feelings of village people and their own fortunes were not as potent. That would have been about 1939 or so.

In writing this I realize that my only real window into life on the Webb estate was through caddying. Otherwise I wouldn't have seen any of the family- they had no reason to show up in the village. The reason I knew Dunbar Bostwick was that I worked with my uncle, John, haying on shares . One summer we hayed on Dunbar's land and he showed up one day and worked with us for short while.

Now that I think back on it I always had the idea that it was a little bit of a trespass to drive through the Webb gates. I remember always thinking I might be challenged. The excuse was always to be that we were visiting the cemetery which we had a right to do.

The obvious impact of the Webbs on Shelburne was that they were the major employer . The employees were not only for the household staff , but for the horse stables and the big farming operation. They also were major tax payers. As I look back, there was no reason to challenge the family- they weren't mine or factory owners and they did give an annual party for the farmers whose land they hunted on and paid for a new town hall after the old one burned down.

We village boys would get the word that caddies were requested, I think through a phone call to the general store, Tracy and Maeck. (My father, Henry, and my uncle, Harris who was my mother's brother were partners) The Webbs would call when they had company, which was common in the summer.

We would either ride bicycles or get a ride, I'm not sure which and show up at the rear of the big house. A call would come down for a number of us and we would go to the first tee at the front of the house. There were golf bag lockers just inside the front door and the players would bring them out and they would be assigned. We just learned what was expected of us as we went along. I remember being asked once where the ball went and when I said I didn't know, being ~~told~~ *(Surprised that)* that was part of my job.

I remember best Watson Webb Sr. who smoked a pipe and was always looking for tees others had not picked up. He also hated to lose balls and would spend too much time looking for them. His wife, Electra, was pleasant and so was Watson Jr. Seward, his brother, was quite different-sportier. His daughter, Frederica, I thought to be very glamorous. Jakie, her brother, was crude..

I was in my early teens at this time, perhaps fourteen or so. Other caddies were my cousin, Bill Maeck, cousin, Ted Jones, Bryson Thompson and I can't seem to remember others. Bill and I really loved the game and would sneak on to play a few holes always scared to death we would be found out.

We were paid fifty cents a round and if we were lucky, we go out once in the morning and once after lunch. We were very conscious right away of the importance of tipping.

We were pretty much in awe of people who had so much money. It was such a different world. The butler, whose name slips my mind, was the true head man and our ultimate boss. He would send his man down to fetch us or if we were unlucky, to say they were all going to play tennis. The uncertain ty of going out was the worst part.



Woodgate was the butler's name. He was well known as the man who was totally in charge of the Big House. I'm pretty sure I remember seeing him a few times, always in a tuxedo, an imposing figure to a young boy in a small town. The Webbs brought to the estate a number of employees from England who were experienced in working for people in the Webb's social class. The employees who took care of the horses and ran the fox hunt and the domestics were knowledgeable and I'm sure properly deferential. There were numerous locals who were employed in the farming operations, especially in the summertime.

I definitely heard the story about the land agent more than once from my mother. I don't know if she actually ever presented it as fact. It does make sense that a buyer would try to get the best price that way. Of course the story could have been invented by members of the families who were sorry the land was sold. I'm sure that the cash looked awfully attractive to farmers who never saw very much of it.

One other little tidbit: I understood from my father that Dr. Webb was appalled by the quality of the horses on the farms in Shelburne and attempted to get the farmers to improve their stock, with his leadership. The farmers didn't take kindly to his efforts and they never came to anything. I would be quite sure that this would have been their reaction to such a thing from a hifalutin Yorker. You probably know that the Webbs gave a big dinner party, with a generous punch bowl every year for the farmers whose land they traversed fox hunting. The townspeople, or at least some of them, were also invited. It was held in the basement of the town hall, itself a gift to the town from the Webbs.