

The Legend of Woodbury House



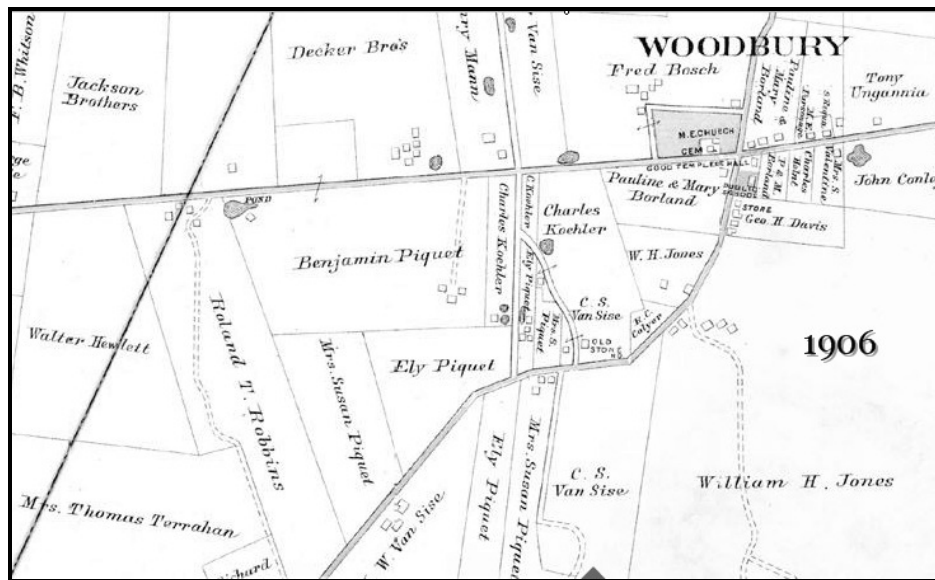
by Tom Montalbano

INTRODUCTION

In the decades that have elapsed since the passing of its last private owner, ***Woodbury House*** (most commonly known as “The Tinker Mansion”) has become somewhat of an enigma to Syosset-Woodbury residents. Although scores of locals regularly visit the surrounding Syosset-Woodbury Community Park, and some have even had the opportunity to gaze inside, few know the history of this awe-inspiring structure and the people who once lived here.

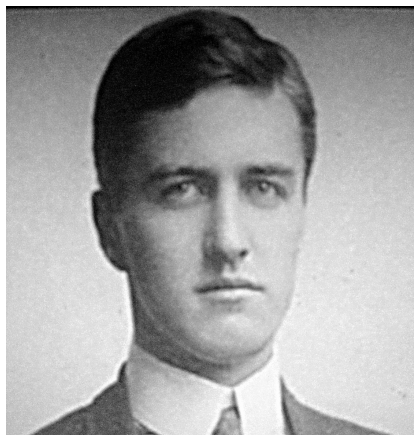
From Dairy Land to Fairy Tale Land

The Beginnings of Woodbury House



The nearly 250 acres that comprised Woodbury House in its heyday initially belonged to the well-respected Piquet and Robbins farming families, who had the foresight to know when the time was right to cash in on Long Island's looming Gold Coast Era.

Woodbury, which had earned a reputation as Long Island's "Dairy Country" by the late 1800's, had become one of the island's most desirable addresses by the 1910's. Early in the decade, Victor Morowitz, acclaimed New York City attorney, built a massive estate at the corner of today's Jericho Turnpike and Southwoods Road (future home of Andrew and Ailsa Mellon Bruce and current location of the Town of Oyster Bay Golf Course). Soon, Manhattan's elite were clamoring for property in the Woodbury area on which to build palatial summer homes and sprawling year-round estates.

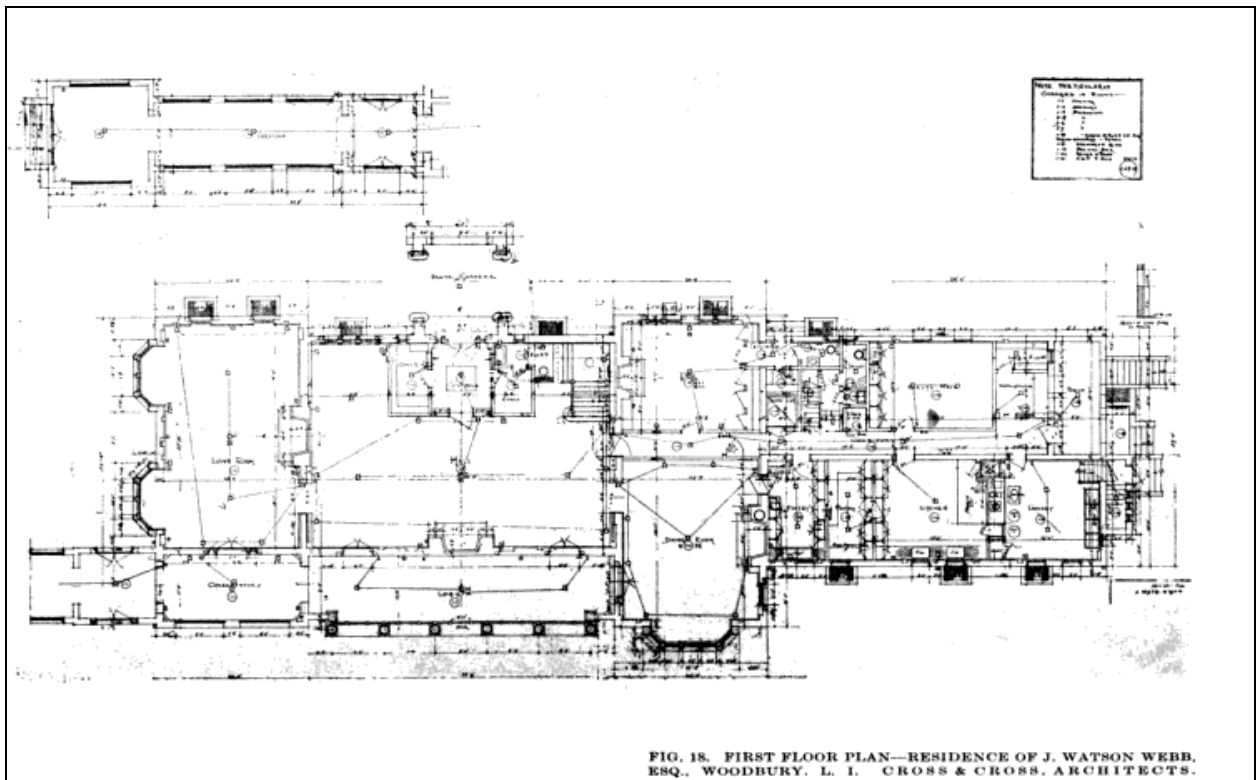


One such speculator was 30-year-old **James Watson Webb**. Born in 1884, Webb was a great grandson of railroad tycoon Cornelius Vanderbilt and an heir to the enormous Vanderbilt fortune. After graduating Yale University, Webb interned in the family's railroad empire for one year before deciding the business was not to his liking. Returning to New York in 1908, he joined the firm of Marsh and McLennan, Manhattan's world-renowned insurance brokerage. That same year, he also joined the Meadowbrook Polo Club and began a successful career as an international polo champion.

In 1910, Webb married childhood sweetheart Electra Havemeyer, an heiress to the fortune of American Sugar Refining, a monopoly larger than Standard Oil at the time. Upon her first visit to *Shelburne*, Webb's father's estate on Vermont's Lake Champlain, Electra became smitten with estate life and soon convinced her new husband to build a similar home on Long Island.

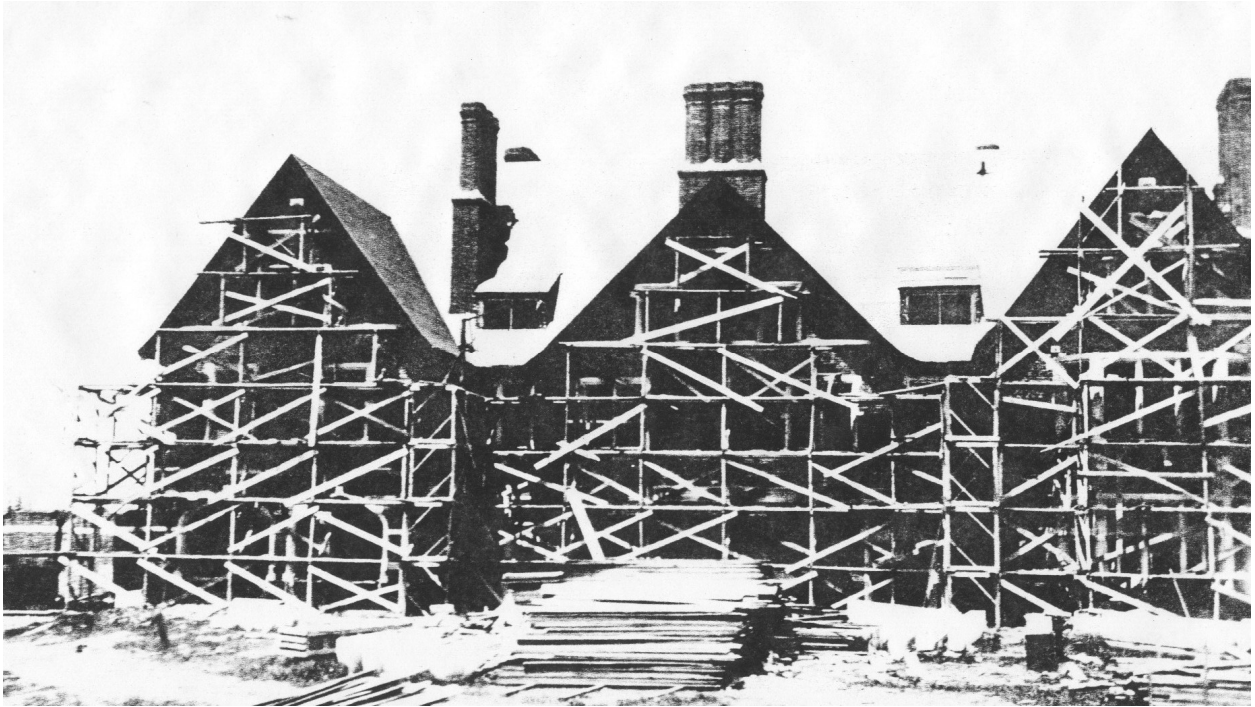


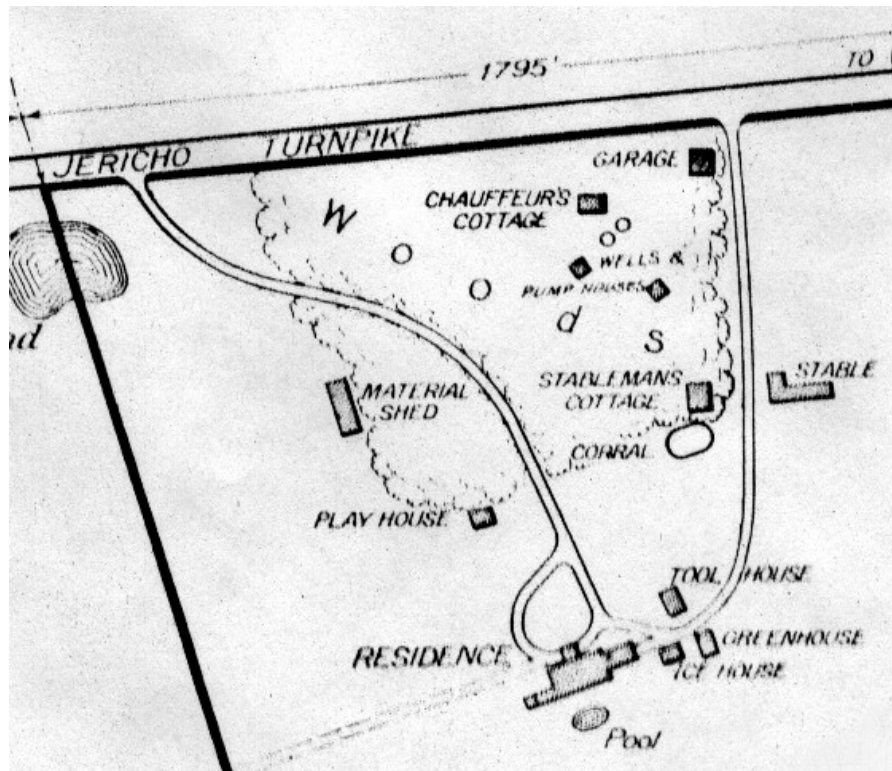
In the summer of 1913, Webb purchased three Woodbury, NY farms - a total of 222 acres - and commissioned Cross & Cross, prominent New York City Architects, to design a 40-room mansion on the property.



Completed in early 1914, "Woodbury House," built in English-style architecture at a cost of approximately \$300,000, featured thirteen master-sized bedrooms, thirteen baths, an enclosed rear porch, a reflecting pool, and a stone upper balcony, as well as indoor toilets, a luxury reserved exclusively for the privileged. Immediately adjacent to the residence were a green house and an ice house, in which chunks of ice cut from the Webb's private pond could be preserved with salt hay throughout the summer.

Building Woodbury House: Summer, 1913





“Woodbury House,” Syosset, Long Island

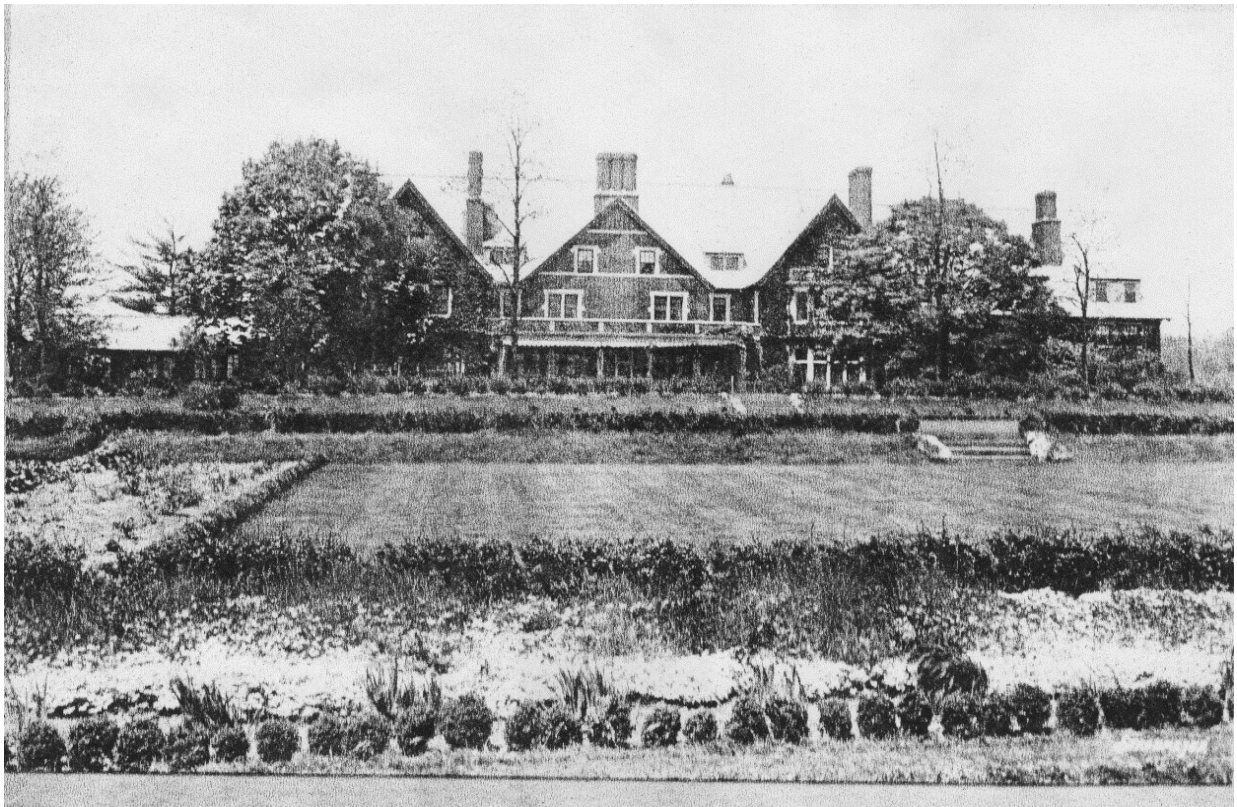
“WOODBURY HOUSE,” the beautiful country estate which J. Watson Webb has developed on the Jericho and Hicksville Turnpikes, Syosset, Long Island, is in the centre of the Meadow Brook hunting country and in a section where are located the country places of many leading men in the business and financial world including Hon. Ogden L. Mills, James A. Burden, Robert E. Tod, Judge Elbert H. Gary, Victor Morawetz, H. Rogers Winthrop, Otto H. Kahn and Hon. Henry L. Stimson.

The residence is a modern fireproof country house of early English design with interior by Tiffany Studios. On the first floor are the entrance hall (fifty feet long), large living room or library, dining room and den, all with open fire places, and also a one hundred foot glass or screen enclosed porch. On the first floor are also the kitchen, servants' dining room, pantry, laundry and pressing room. On the second floor are seven master's bedrooms with open fireplaces and baths connecting with each room; also a large porch and sleeping porch. On the third floor are six more master's bedrooms with baths. The servants' rooms number sixteen, with baths. There is also a luggage elevator.

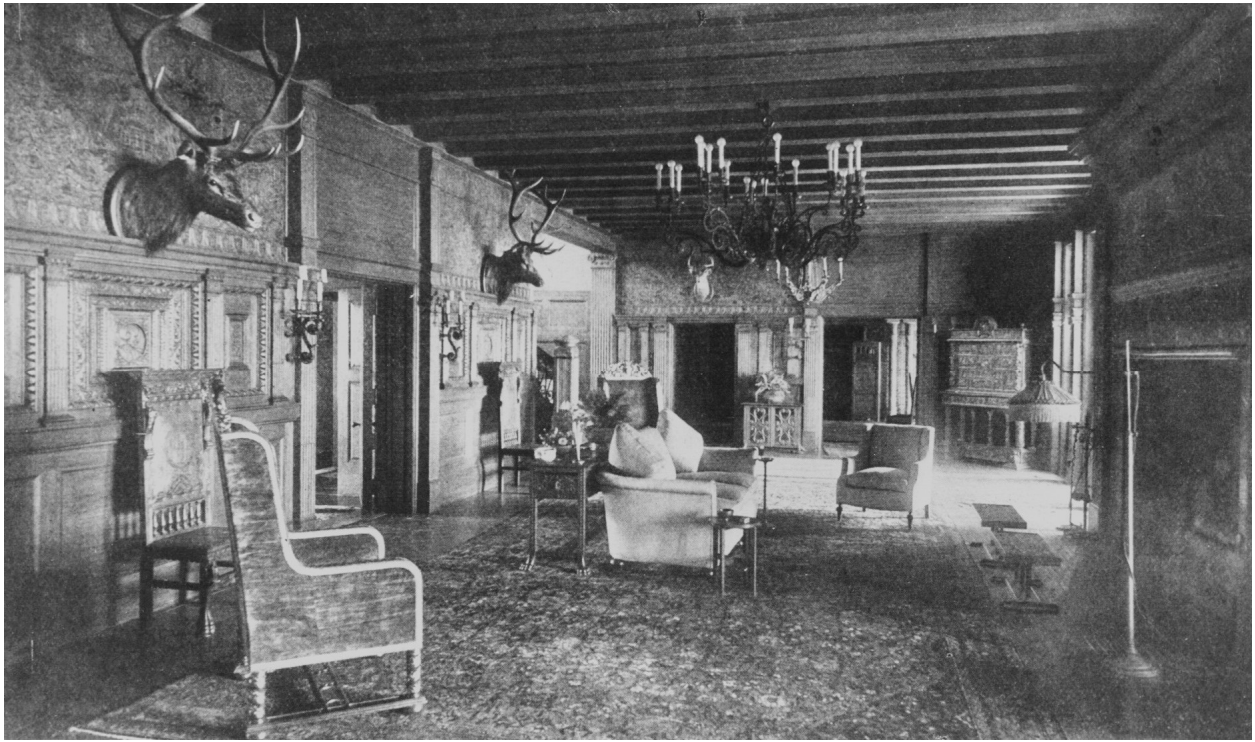
The other buildings consist of brick stable with stalls for seventeen horses, and rooms and bath overhead, stableman's cottage, concrete garage, chauffeur's cottage, tool house, material shed, ice house, greenhouse and children's playhouse. There is also a swimming pool sixty feet long and a lawn tennis court. The water system is first-class, with two tanks of 20,000 gallons and 30,000 gallons capacities, two interchangeable pumps (gas and electric), and excellent water pressure. Fire protection includes full fire equipment, hydrants, hose, tools, etc. The grounds consist of about seventy-four especially attractive acres, laid out in expensive lawns, gardens, woodlands, terraces and shrubberies, and include one-half of the large pond on the Jericho Turnpike near the main entrance.



The front entrance to Woodbury House

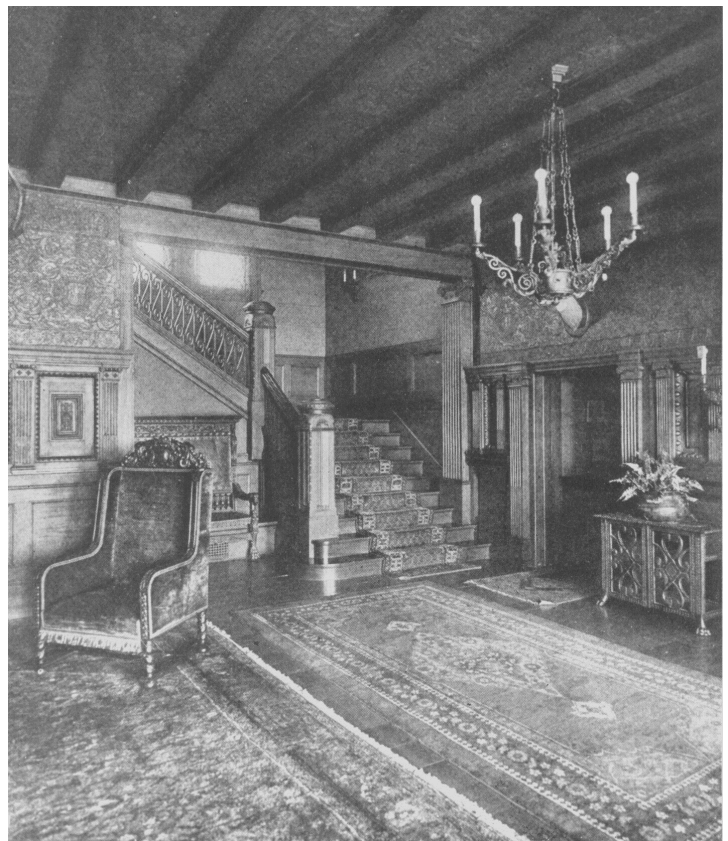


Rear view of Woodbury House



Ornate woodwork, including an entry door reputed to have been imported from the castle of King Louis XIV of France, highlighted the interior of Woodbury House, which was meticulously decorated by Electra Havemeyer Webb, an avid American craft art collector since her teenage years.

Although Cross & Cross were officially credited as the home's architects, Louisine Havemeyer and Lila Vanderbilt, the mothers of Mr. & Mrs. J. Watson Webb, had significant influence over the design and décor of Woodbury House. The home's design was essentially a combination of the finest features of *Shelburne* (the Vanderbilt home) and *Hilltop* (the Havemeyer home). The enormous wealth of both families enabled them to import historical treasures from all over the world and to hire the finest craftsmen to incorporate them into the young couple's brand new home.

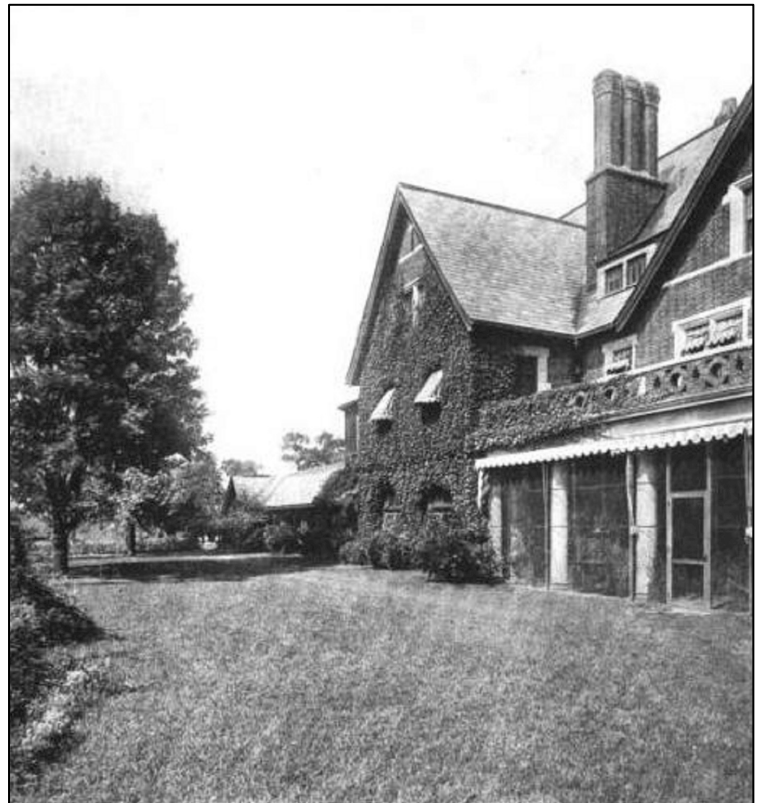


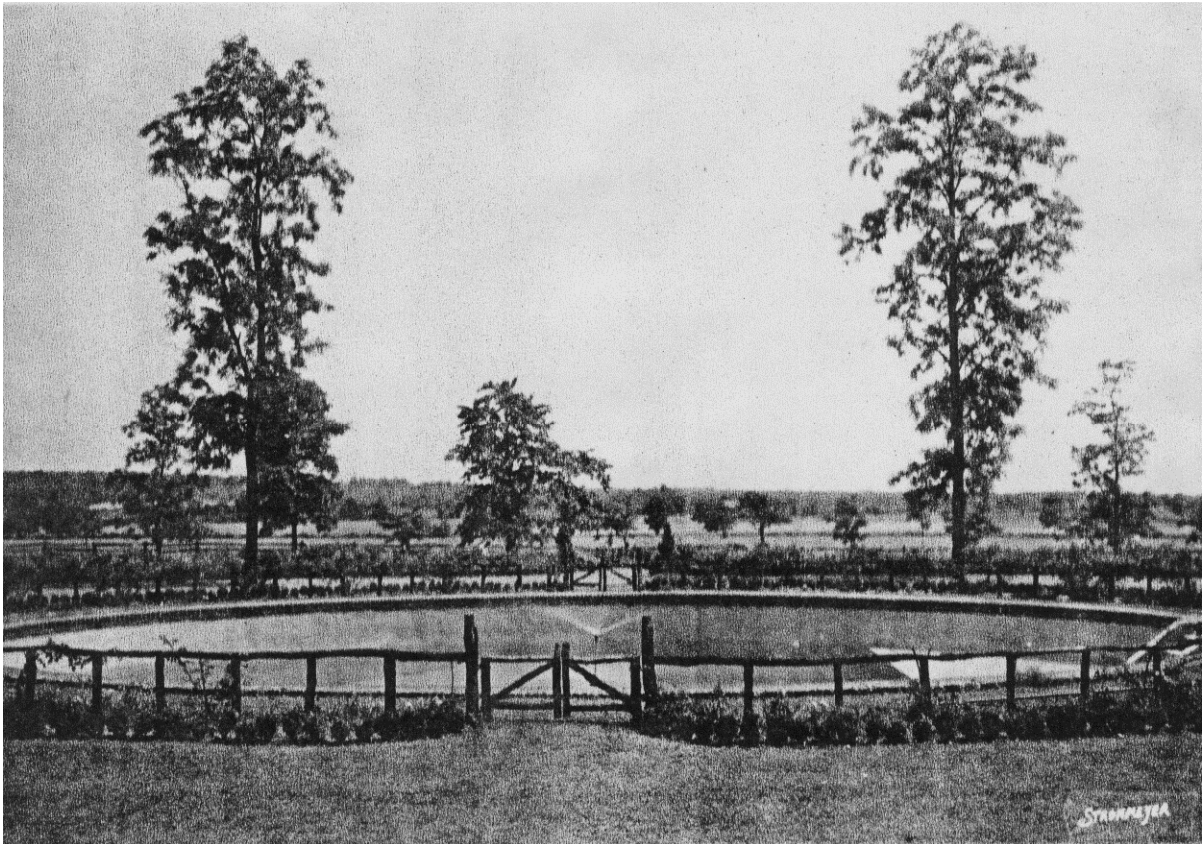


The Webbs imported their dining room, shown above, from a royal villa originally built in the 16th Century for King Charles V of Spain. This included the carved wooden ceiling and tiled fireplace.

From the mansion's stone balcony, Mr. & Mrs. Webb spent many hours admiring their massive gardens and more than 200 acres of brilliantly landscaped grounds – as well as the homes of prominent neighbors that included Senator (later U.S. Secretary of the Treasury) Ogden Mills, investment banker, Otto Kahn, and celebrated architect, Phillip Goodwin.

Here, they regularly entertained world-class polo stars, politicians, and other notable figures – and also hosted several socialite weddings.





Reflecting pool, as seen from the mansion's rear patio



Adjacent to the mansion, the Webbs maintained several acres as a hog, sheep, dairy, and poultry farm to avoid a substantial tax levied on estate property by the newly-formed Nassau County. The photo above shows the farm-keeper's cottage (left) and the barn (right, with sheep grazing on the lawn that is now part of the Syosset-Woodbury Community Pool).

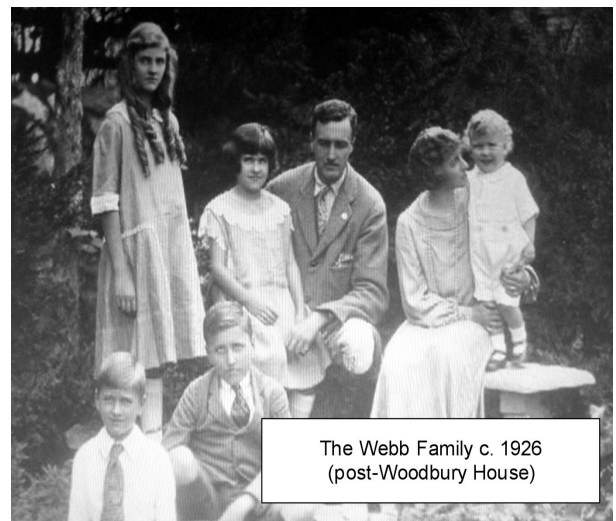


The Webbs converted this former farmhouse, located on the site of the Syosset-Woodbury Community Park's present-day handball and basketball courts, into a home for their farm-keeper, William West, a former Shelburne worker whom they had imported from Vermont.

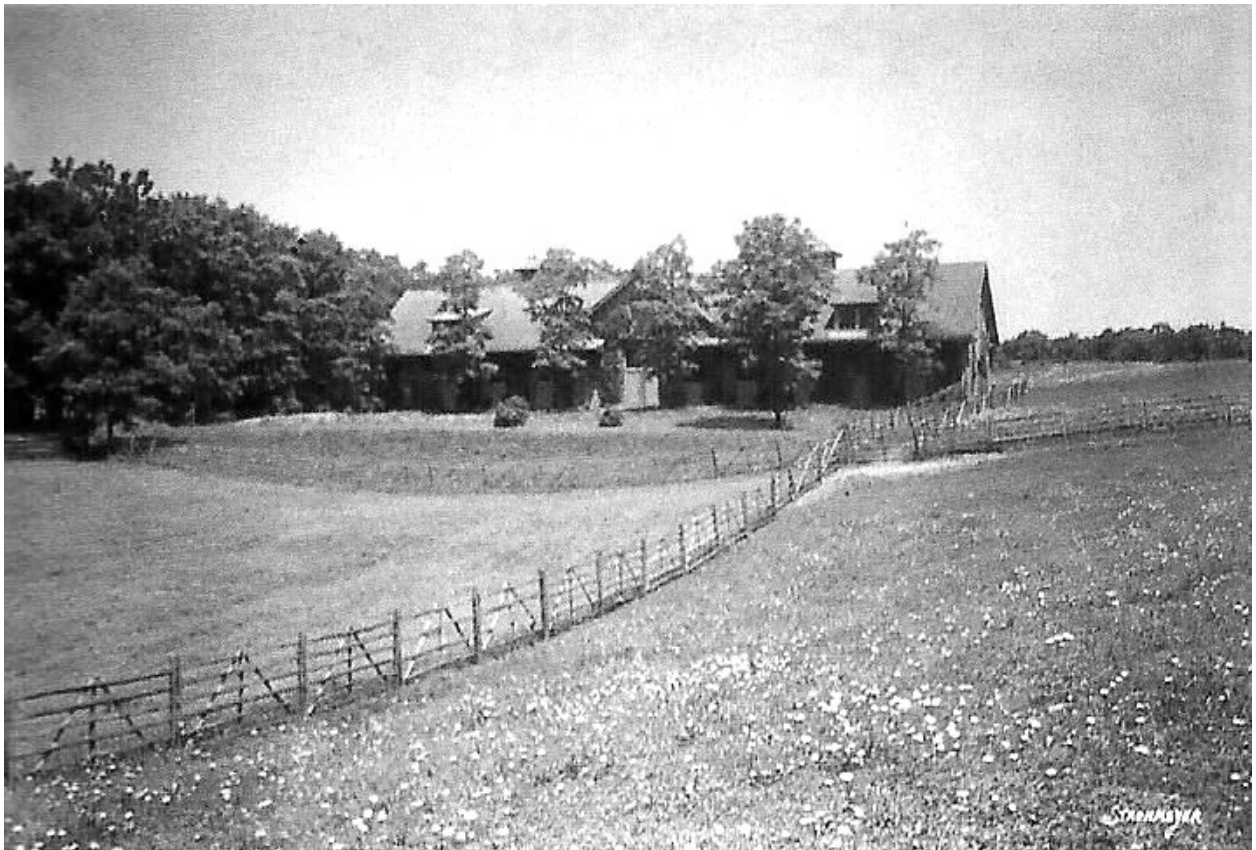


The photo above shows an open field just west of the mansion (roughly the site of today's Nassau County Police headquarters) where Webb, Sr. likely exercised his horses and practiced his polo skills.

Other notable features of the spacious grounds at Woodbury House were a large duck pond and a deep hollow (now a picnic area) where the Webb's four children undoubtedly spent many hours romping. James Watson Webb, Jr. (1916-2000) later recalled that leaving Woodbury House at four years old was a traumatic experience for him and his siblings.



The Webb Family c. 1926
(post-Woodbury House)



Webb sheltered his prized polo horses in this large stable, a short distance from the main house. A stable master, who lived inside the building, made sure there was always an ample supply of hay piled to the rafters on the second floor. Today, the groundskeepers for the Syosset-Woodbury Community Park use the stable to store maintenance equipment.



Polo pony corral behind stable. Front of mansion in background. Deep hollow (now a picnic area) between the mansion and the corral.

However spectacular Woodbury House may have been, the Webbs spent less and less time there as the years progressed. In 1917, during James' brief stint in the US Army, Electra lived primarily at the couple's Vermont retreat, *Southern Acres*. By the time Captain James Watson Webb returned from Camp Meade, MD, Woodbury House had become no more than an occasional weekend getaway.

It came as no surprise, then, to the Woodbury elite when, in April of 1920, the Webbs put Woodbury House up for auction. Unfortunately, with so much affordable land available all over Long Island, selling off the property was no easy task. Ultimately, the Webbs decided to keep a portion of the property (including the farm)

and put the remaining 74 acres up for auction. On October 22, 1921, the lot, including the mansion and all its furnishings, was sold to Edward Richmond Tinker, Chairman of Chase Securities, who outbid roughly half a dozen other potential buyers.

To Auction Webb Estate at Syosset.

Woodbury House, the country estate of J. Watson Webb at Syosset, Long Island, will be sold at auction on Saturday, October 22, at 3 o'clock on the premises.

The property consists of the residence, garage, stables, and outbuildings on seventy-four improved acres in the centre of the Meadowbrook hunting country. Arthur C. Sheridan will be the auctioneer. William J. Roome & Co., are the agents for the property.

J. WATSON WEBB HOME SOLD

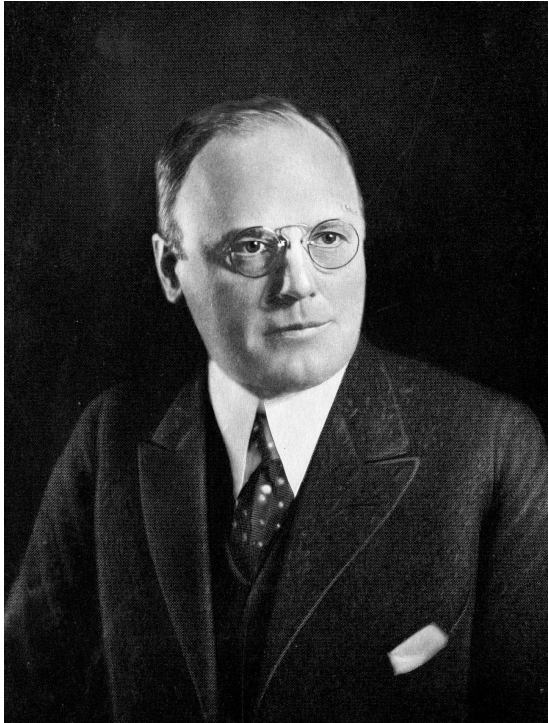
House, Furnishings and Grounds of Polo Player Bring \$162,000.

SYOSSET, L. I., Oct. 22.—The house and grounds of J. Watson Webb, well-known polo player, with the furnishings, were sold at auction here this afternoon for \$162,000.

After selling Woodbury House, the Webbs built a smaller home in Westbury but spent most of their time in Vermont, where James quickly rose to the position of State Legislator. Electra ultimately donated her Woodbury House art collection to the museums at Vermont's *Shelburne Farms*.

J. Watson Webb went on to win the International Polo Cup at Meadowbrook in 1921, 1924, and 1927. He also won the U.S. Open six times and the Senior and Junior Championships twice each. After retiring from competitive polo in 1929, he was named chairman of the United States Polo Association. Webb passed away in 1960 and, in 1991, was posthumously inducted into the Polo Hall of Fame.

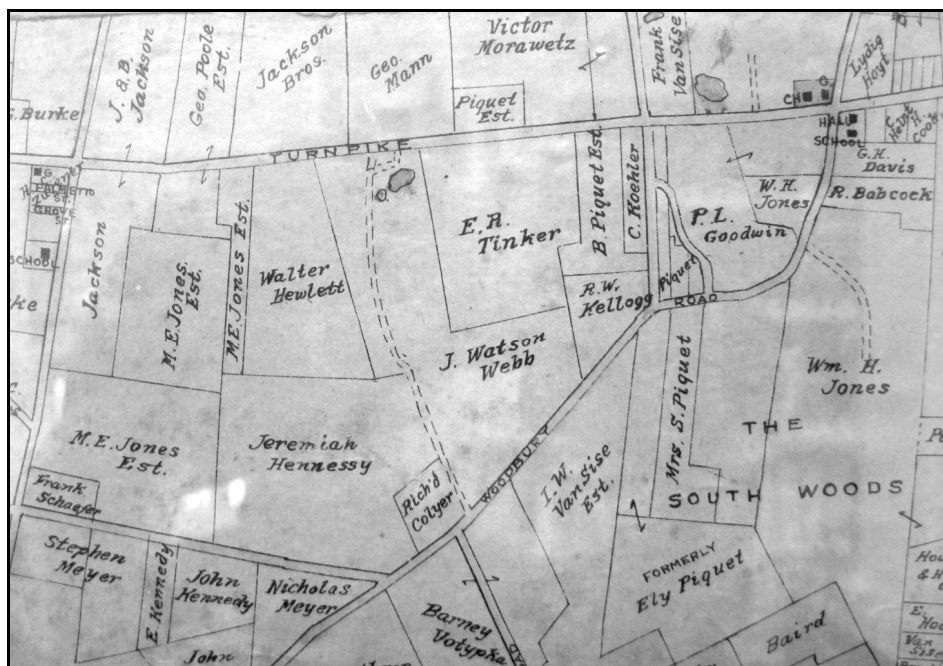
The Tinkers Come To Woodbury



Born in 1878 at North Adams, Massachusetts, Edward Richmond Tinker was the grandson and namesake of the founder of the Republican party of his home state. Tinker's privileged background eventually led to a position as Vice President of the Chase National Bank, a position he held until 1920, when he was appointed President of Chase Securities.

Marie Solace, Tinker's wife, was the daughter of Irving Bachellar, a well-known novelist of the day.

In the early 1920's, like many of their New York City socialite friends and acquaintances, the Tinkers began looking eastward for land on which to build a summer retreat. In the fall of 1921, Edward attended an auction in Woodbury and walked away with roughly half of J. Watson Webb's entire estate for \$162,000.



This 1923 map shows the division of property after ER Tinker purchased the initial 74 acres of Woodbury House.

CHASE SECURITIES CORPORATION	
61 Broadway	
June 30, 1922	
CAPITAL STOCK (200,000 shares no par value)	\$10,000,000
SURPLUS AND PROFITS	3,089,000
OFFICERS	
ALBERT H. WIGGIN	
<i>Chairman of the Board of Directors</i>	
EDWARD R. TINKER	
<i>President</i>	
<i>Vice-Presidents</i>	
HALSTEAD G. FREEMAN	DUNCAN A. HOLMES
ROBERT L. CLARKSON	

A skilled financier by the time he reached his early forties, Edward Tinker had amassed his personal fortune by turning countless troubled corporations into profitable ones. One highlight of his career was his involvement in arranging financing for the fledgling Chrysler Motor Company in 1924. This may have been the financial catalyst that enabled him to purchase the remaining 147 acres of the Webb estate, which included a cottage, two tenant houses, and several barns, in October of 1925.

Shortly thereafter, Tinker's General Farms & Realty Corporation put the additional land to work as a poultry farm that quickly gained prominence all over Long Island.

GENERAL FARMS AND REALTY CORP.

OFFERS

POULTRY PRODUCTS

FRESH EGGS BROILERS BABY CHICKS

DAIRY PRODUCTS

GRADE "A" MILK CREAM

DELIVERED IN

SYOSSET, OYSTER BAY, COLD SPRING HARBOR,

HUNTINGTON AND HICKSVILLE

BY "PRIVATE ESTATE - MILK ROUTE"

EASTER SPECIALTY:

LIMITED NUMBER OF BABY LAMBS

SALES OFFICE:

Jericho Turnpike Phone: Syosset 609

SYOSSET GAME FARM

DAY OLD
PHEASANT CHICKS, MALLARD DUCKLINGS
ORDER NOW

GENERAL FARMS AND REALTY CORP.
Jericho Turnpike Phone Syosset 609

Initially called "Syosset Game Farm," *Woodbury Farms* employed several dozen workers and offered residents of Syosset, Woodbury, and surrounding areas fresh-killed turkeys, pheasants, and chickens, as well as eggs and milk. Many of the birds raised on the farm were housed in cages on the mansion's stone balcony, which Tinker had converted into a coop.

Although a 1931 Time Magazine profile of Mr. Tinker implied that he had an aversion to shooting birds, a popular tradition at Woodbury Farms was its annual Thanksgiving Turkey Shoot, during which locals were invited to "hunt" and kill their own turkeys. Afterwards, farmhands suspended the birds on a line that ran across these trees, on the south end of the large stable.



The groundskeeper at Woodbury House for the majority of the years Tinker and his wife owned the estate was Alfred Boccafola, who left school in 1925 during the Great Depression to help support his struggling Italian-American family. Boccafola, who was only 14 at the time, worked on the estate until Tinker passed away in 1959, raising his family in the house previously occupied by the Webb family's groundskeeper.

1930's & 40's

Ads for Woodbury Farms

FOR FOOD

Why Buy Birds of Uncertain Age when
Delicious, Tender Spring Hatches

**TURKEYS
PHEASANTS
MALLARD DUCKS
CAPONS**

are available at

SYOSSET GAME FARM
WOODBURY FARMS & REALTY CORP.
Syosset, L. I. Phone: Syosset 609

WOODBURY FARMS
offers

**DELICIOUS MILK-FED SPRING
TURKEYS**
40c. a pound

Delivered by Private Estate Milk Route
Syosset, L. I. Phone Syosset 609

Why Drink Milk Several Days Old?
PRIVATE ESTATE MILK ROUTE
delivers

Grade A Milk and Cream
From milkings of previous night or same morning

Strictly Fresh Eggs
Turkeys Ducks Capons
Killed on Order

WOODBURY FARMS
Syosset, L. I. Phone: Syosset 609

WOODBURY FARMS
OFFERS
ITS OWN PRODUCTS

BROILERS	MALLARD DUCKS
SOUP FOWL	WHITE PEKIN DUCKS
ROASTERS	MUSCOVY DUCKS

KILLED ON ORDER
STRICTLY FRESH EGGS
45c and 50c dozen
DAY OLD BIRDS

RHODE ISLAND RED CHICKS	PHEASANT CHICKS
WHITE LEGHORN CHICKS	TURKEY POULTS
GOSLINGS	

Baby Lambs and Suckling Pigs — A Specialty
Grade A Milk and Cream from T. B. Certified Herd
Family Baskets of Assorted Vegetables Put Up On Order
Delivered by Private Estate Milk Route

Syosset, L. I. Phone 609


WOODBURY FARMS
offers
ITS OWN PRODUCTS

AUTUMN SPECIALTIES
SUCKLING PIGS - YOUNG GOATS
KILLED ON ORDER

GRADE A MILK AND CREAM
From T. B. certified herd.

STRICTLY FRESH EGGS

DELIVERED BY PRIVATE ESTATE MILK ROUTE
Syosset, L. I. Tel. Syosset 609



**FRESH KILLED
DRY PICKED
MILK FED
TURKEYS**

RAISED ON OUR FARM
POULTRY - PHEASANTS - DUCKS - GEES
PLACE YOUR ORDER EARLY FOR THE HOLIDAYS

**WHEN MILK IS PURE PASTEURIZATION
IS NOT NECESSARY**
WOODBURY FARMS OFFERS SPECIAL A RAW MILK
AT 17c PER QUART

WOODBURY FARMS
Syosset, L. I. Tel. Syosset 609

WOODBURY FARMS

OFFERS ITS OWN PRODUCTS

DAY OLD
CHICKS — TURKEY POULTS
MALLARD & WHITE PEKIN DUCKLINGS
TOULOUSE & WHITE CHINA GOSLINGS
PHEASANT, DUCK AND TURKEY HATCHING EGGS

**WHEN MILK IS PURE
PASTEURIZATION IS NOT NECESSARY**
WOODBURY FARMS OFFERS SPECIAL A RAW MILK
AT 17c PER QUART

WOODBURY FARMS

Syosset, L. I.

Tel. Syosset 609

FOR SALE

A FEW SURPLUS YOUNG COWS RAISED
ON OUR FARM

They are from our APPROVED & ACCREDITED
HERD which has been regularly tested for
Tuberculosis, Bang's Disease and
Mastitis

WOODBURY FARMS

Syosset, N. Y.

Tel. Syosset 609

WOODBURY FARMS

THANKSGIVING SUGGESTIONS



LONG ISLAND
MILK FED
DRY PICKED



TURKEYS

ORDER EARLY

CAPONS - ROASTERS - BROILERS - FOWL - FRYERS
GESE - GUINEAS - PHEASANTS

SMALL ROASTING PIGS - FAT HOGS

When Milk is Pure, Pasteurization is not necessary. Woodbury
Farms offers Special "A" Raw Milk at 18c per Quart

WOODBURY FARMS

SYOSSET, LONG ISLAND

Telephone Syosset 808

WOODBURY FARMS

OFFERS

SPECIAL A RAW MILK

At 17c Per Quart

The following are extracts from a table prepared by the Bureau of Milk
Sanitation of the State of New York:

<u>Animal Tests Required:</u>	<u>Grade A Pasteurized</u>	<u>"SPECIAL A" RAW</u>
Tuberculin Test	Not Required	ONCE EVERY YEAR
Bang's Disease Test	Not Required	*EVERY THREE MONTHS
Physical Examination— (Mastitis)	Once every year	ONCE EVERY 3 MONTHS
Milk Bacteria Count— as delivered	Not over 10,000	NOT OVER 10,000
Milk counts to be made	Every 3 months	EVERY MONTH
Delivery Time Limit	None	36 HOURS

*If herd has received State Department of Agriculture & Markets "APPROVED" status, once every 6
months. WOODBURY FARMS HERD IS AN "APPROVED" HERD.

In both grades the Sanitary Code also contains provisions covering the necessary precautions for the health and cleanliness
of the milk handlers and for the proper equipment of the dairy.

Thus the law insures that both "SPECIAL A" RAW and pasteurized milk are clean milk—in the first case by requiring that
the milk be produced from healthy cows, regularly tested and inspected; in the second case by requiring the milk to be artificially
treated by pasteurization, also under careful regulation and inspection.

In large communities like New York City because of the above strict require-
ments it would probably be impossible to supply enough SPECIAL A RAW MILK
to fill the demand, but when one comes to the country, why not avail yourself of
the opportunity to have this delicious RAW MILK?

Note that SPECIAL A RAW MILK must be produced from healthy cows
and must be delivered to you within 36 hours.

WOODBURY FARMS

Syosset, N. Y.

Telephone Syosset 609

WOODBURY FARMS

SYOSSET, N. Y.

Announces that for the convenience of its patrons its Sales Office on Jericho Turnpike will be open each day from 9 A. M. to 7:30 P. M.

"Special A" Raw Milk and Cream, Chocolate Drink, Eggs and Poultry

will be available at the Road Stand and orders will be received there for the other products of the Farm, which at this time of the year include Day Old and Started Chicks, Turkey Poults, Young Geese, Ducks and Pheasants; Pheasants and Pheasant Eggs for eating; Chicken, Duck, Geese, Turkey and Pheasant Eggs for Hatching; also Pigs, Sheep & Goats.

WE ALSO RENT SHEEP FOR KEEP- ING LAWNS TRIMMED

ORDERS MAY ALSO BE LEFT AT THE SALES OFFICE FOR REGULAR DELIVERY BY WOODBURY FARMS' MILK ROUTE OF SPECIAL "A" RAW MILK AND CREAM, CHOCOLATE DRINK, EGGS & POULTRY.

WOODBURY FARMS

SYOSSET, N. Y.

Tel. Syosset 609

Always enterprising, Tinker made purchasing fresh-killed fowl simple in the 1940's by opening a "drive-by" road stand on Jericho Turnpike, near the entrance to today's community park. During WWII, while the United States was rationing gasoline, Woodbury Farms also rented sheep to replace homeowners' lawn mowers.

By the time he was ready to retire, Edward Tinker held directorships in 68 corporations, including Chrysler Motors, General Foods, and the Sinclair Oil Company. He rounded out his career as the Principal Stockholder of the Hat Corporation of America, from which he finally retired in 1955. Four years later, while vacationing in Florida, Edward Tinker passed away at the age of 80.

A few months after her husband's death, Marie Tinker placed all Woodbury House employees on notice and put the majority of the farm equipment up for auction. Shortly thereafter, she put Woodbury House and its contents (plus the surrounding land) up for sale.

TRACTORS, CARS AND TRUCKS, CATTLE, SHEEP
FARM TOOLS, INCUBATORS, POULTRY
AND DAIRY EQUIPMENT.

AT AUCTION

Saturday, June 13, 1959 - 10 A.M.

at WOODBURY FARMS also known as the TINKER
Estate on Jericho Tpke. at

SYOSSET, N. Y.

TRUCKS AND JEEP, CARS, TRACTOR, POWER MOWERS,
GARDEN TOOLS, FURNISHINGS, PAINTINGS AND
BRIC-A-BRAC

AT AUCTION

SATURDAY, AUGUST 25th, 1962 - 10 A.M.

At the TINKER ESTATE KNOWN AS WOODBURY FARMS
on Jericho Tpke., Just east of the Oyster Bay to Wantagh
Expressway Overpass at Jericho, L.I., N.Y.

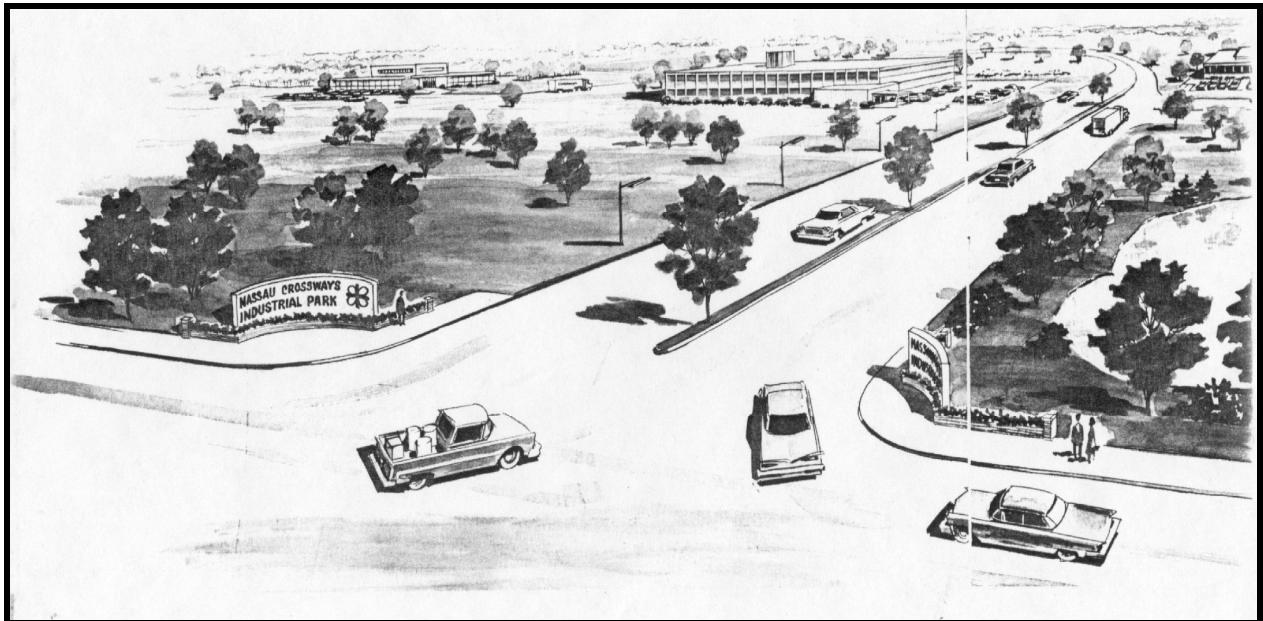
DeSoto Station Wagon - Dodge Sedan - Dodge 1-Ton Rack
Truck - Willys Jeep - Dodge Pickup - Open 2-Wheel Trailer -
Oliver Tractor 45, with Snow Plow - McCulloch Chain Saw -
Locke Power Mower - New Idea Hay Mower - Bean Sprayer
and Duster - Lot of Aluminum Irrigation Pipe - Aluminum
and Wood Ladders - Farm Trailers - Road Scraper - Pruning
Saws and Poles - Lawn Mowers and Sprinklers - Garden Hose -
Blade Sharpener - and large quantity of Garden Equipment
and Supplies. Also Furniture as follows: - 3 Mahogany
Settees - Large Inlaid Drum Table - 4 Chaise Lounges - 3
Mahogany Chests of Drawers - 2 large Oil Paintings - 2
Fine Open Work Door Bookcases - 4 upholstered Settees -
2 Serpentine 3-Drawer Chests - Sev. Sconces - Fireplace
Andirons, Screens and Tools - Fine Mah. Scroll Top Book-
case - Butlers and other Folding Tables - Dining Table with
12 chairs - Inlaid Martha Washington Table, R.C.A. Television
- 20 Small Tables - 7 single Beds - 10 Chests of Drawers -
3 Folding and Other Mirrors - 5 Vanities - Inlaid Sideboard -
8 Upholstered Chairs - Lot of Pictures - Several Rugs and
Runners - Spinning Wheel - Umbrella Stand - Royal Crown
and Spode China - Lot Misc. Glassware - Lot Painted Furni-
ture - Large Decorative Urns - Floor and Table Lamps -
Columbia Record Player - 2 Caloric Gas Ranges - G.E. Range -
Copeland 1/2 H.P. Refrigerator Unit - Camellias in Pots and
many other items. These furnishings are from the main
residence on the Tinker Estate.

ALBERT CHESHIRE SONS - Auctioneers
Oyster Bay, N.Y. WA 2-5010 - Also OR 1-1155 - OR 1-4361

A New Suburban Oasis

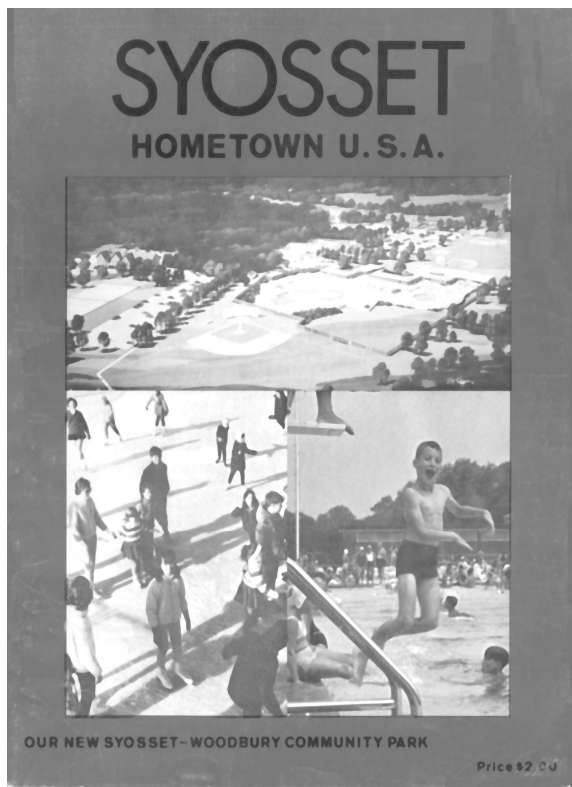


By the end of the 1950's, Long Island's population had grown dramatically and the region had become a highly desirable locale for manufacturing and other industries. Seeing this as a golden opportunity, prominent Long Island real estate developer, Gilbert Tilles, purchased the entire Tinker property in early 1962 and immediately set out to construct a 137-acre industrial park - Nassau County's largest at the time - to be called "Crossways."



Early artist's rendering of Crossways Industrial Park

Long-time residents, already disturbed by the furious pace of commercial and residential growth in the Syosset-Woodbury area, vehemently opposed Tilles' proposal, which would rezone one of the few remaining large, open spaces in the area for industrial use. To ensure approval by the Town of Oyster Bay, Tilles agreed to donate 46 acres for construction of a state-of-the-art community park, which had long been the vision of Town of Oyster Bay Councilman, Judge Edward J. Poulous.



On Memorial Day weekend, 1964, the Town of Oyster Bay treated residents to a sneak preview of the new \$2.5 million Syosset-Woodbury Community Park, which featured a giant “T” shaped swimming pool (in honor of Mr. Tilles) with a capacity of 800 swimmers, as well as facilities for tennis, handball, volleyball, baseball, bocci, shuffleboard, and horse shoe pitching. The park also incorporated a futuristic playground and an ultramodern ice skating/roller rink, which officially opened later the same year. *Woodbury House*, which had been converted into a community center, also opened its doors that weekend for chess, billiards, and dancing. The Town of Oyster Bay officially dedicated the park the following summer.

In addition to the acreage donated to the Town of Oyster Bay, Tilles agreed to gift ten acres to the Syosset Central School District to be put aside for the future Harry B. Thompson Jr. High School and a small parcel to Nassau County for the construction of a new 2nd Precinct Police headquarters.

Always a patron of the arts (The Tilles Center at CW Post is named after him), Tilles leased a large sheep barn adjacent to what had become known as “Tinker’s Pond” to William Hunt, a local summer theater producer. Hunt converted the barn into the *Tinker’s Pond Theater*, which opened its doors in June of 1963. This 550-seat theater-in-the-round, located on the grounds of what is now 7550 Jericho Turnpike, presented live performances featuring internationally-known actors and actresses.



UA Cinema 150



Although Hunt had taken a 20-year lease on the property, the Tinker's Pond Theater lasted only a few seasons. In 1969, the Tilles company razed the barn and constructed a 12,000-square-foot United Artists Movie Theater. The 1100-seat *Syosset United Artists Cinema 150*, which thrived until 2001, was one of Long Island's largest cinemas of the era, and one of the last panoramic theaters left on Long Island when most had converted to multiplexes.



"Tinkers Pond," where local hunters once fired freely at wild turkeys and estate workers collected frogs to fry up their legs for dinner. With these days long gone, all the creatures here seem a little more relaxed!



Sadly, by the end of the 1980's, the cost of maintaining Woodbury House had become so prohibitive that the Town of Oyster Bay had to make the difficult decision to retire the building as a community center. In 1991, the Town cleared a patch of land adjacent to the mansion and built a new, modern building for use as a pre-school, meeting hall, and senior activity center. Subsequently, Woodbury House was converted into a carpentry shop and a storage facility for various local athletic clubs.

Several remnants of the mansion's glory days can still be found if one knows where to look; however, for the most part, the magic of Woodbury House has been lost among the factories and highways that surround it. At the very least, though, this impressive assembly of century-old brick and mortar still casts an enchanting shadow over one of Syosset-Woodbury's most prized outdoor retreats.



Acknowledgments:

*The information in this mini-history was culled primarily from historic newspapers, including **The Long Islander**, **The Syosset Advance**, and **The New York Times**. Special thanks to the **Suffolk County Library System**, the **Syosset Public Library**, and the **New York Times Online Archive** for providing access to these valuable resources.*

*Early photos of Woodbury House are from **James Watson Webb, Jr.** (1916-2000) and were provided courtesy of John E. Hammond, Town of Oyster Bay Historian.*

*James Watson Webb photo from the **US Polo Hall of Fame** website
Electra Havemeyer Webb photo from the **Vermont Historical Society** website*

*Edward Tinker photograph courtesy of **The Hotchkiss School Archives***

*Recollections of life on the estate during the Tinker years courtesy of **Joyce Boccafola Michels***

*Gilbert Tilles photo from the **Jamaica High School Alumni** web site*

Additional photos by Tom Montalbano

Special thanks to the Syosset Fire Department volunteers, who, in 1931, skillfully extinguished four consecutive fires set by an arson on the property of Woodbury House and Woodbury Farms. The SFD's prompt response to each blaze ensured that the mansion and other historical buildings would survive for many generations of Syosset-Woodbury residents to enjoy.

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THE property consists of 222 acres with a frontage of one-half mile on the Jericho Turnpike and one-third of a mile on Hicksville Turnpike and adjoins the estates of Ogden Mills, H. Rogers Wistthrop and Otto H. Kahn. The residence is a modern fireproof country house of early picturesque English design, much of the woodwork, paneling, and interior decorations having been imported. There is a large well proportioned hall, 50 feet long, living room, dining room, den, and porch 110 feet long, enclosed in glass. There are 13 masters' bedrooms with open fireplaces and baths connecting with each room. Large upstairs porch, also sleeping porch, 16 servants' rooms, large kitchen, 2 kitchen store-rooms, servants' hall, laundry and pressing room.

The outbuildings are complete and include stable with 32 boxes and 2 standing stalls, carriage room, tack room, etc., with rooms for four men upstairs. Bootmaker's cottage adjoining. Garage for four cars and chauffeur's cottage. Farm barn with room for 4 work horses and 24 cow stalls, 6 very large box stalls, feed room, milk room and two silos. Another large barn with stable and pens for live stock. Large 196' x 27' shed for farm implements, and other smaller buildings. Superintendent's cottage, two-family boarding house with 4 single men's rooms. Another tenant cottage, ice house, greenhouse, playhouse, outdoor swimming pool and tennis courts.

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