

Job mix changes over the years

by Gordon B. Seavey

W S F D - W h a t

Westford folk did for a living a century ago is a far cry from the job mix of today. The contrast is a case of high tech versus agriculture.

Check the occupations of your neighbors along the street today and you are certain to find a wide variance as to how people today make a living.

Eighty years ago the selectmen sent a list of persons to "fill the jury box," or in other words persons who might be called to serve on various juries. This was the era of men only.

Of the 27 names designated, more than 60% stated their occupation as farming. There may or may not have been some fruit growers among those selected for Westford was well known for its berries as well as apples. The word 'farming' meant in those days big barns and much livestock. It also meant a lot of acreage, hayfields and woodlands, the latter to keep the home fires burning in winter as well as fueling the kitchen range all year round and the parlor stove in winter.

Old timers in town may recall some of these farms, although many now have been gobbled up by developers. Here is a list of 16 farmers who were named: Charles A. Blodgett, who found it tough growing on Millstone Hill where Groton and Tyngsboro join Westford; Asa B. M. Eastman who has a small farm on Leland Street; Elbert H. Flagg who owned one of the most productive farms, lying in the Beaver Brook region and now laid out in house lots; J. Willard Fletcher of Stony Brook Farm at the Depot whose grandson just disposed of

his dairy herd and land for more home development.

Another farmer was Edward Gould, whose daughter Bernice Picking still carries on some farming; David Greig opposite Fairview Cemetery, now taken over by the Hicks conglomerate; George A. Kimball near the Littleton, Westford line whose big barn long ago was turned into an ice cream emporium. Frank Hildreth, Nelson L. Prescott, Henry E. Shorey, Walter Whidden and John Wilson were well known farmers, also. All gone!

The balance of remaining potential jurors, 11, shows various occupations that make up the other 40% in the list. Joseph Bannister and George Q. Gilson were machinists, Frank L. Furbush and Walter Beebe were carpenters, Hugh Daly, a wool sorter, John M. Fletcher, as did his father, ran the country store at The Common. Ebenezer Prescott, a stone cutter probably making grantie street blocks for Lowell and Lawrence; John P. Wright, a comic who was always called upon to be toastmaster at any and all functions, and a law clerk in Boston; Frank Healy was a teamster, probably driving for J.A. Healy, local undertaker as well as being in the hauling business.

Selectmen at the time, who chose the names, were Oscar Spalding, himself a farmer, Wesley O. Hawkes, and Alec Fisher, also a farmer.

Gordon Seavey, a native of Westford, is the retired publisher of the Belmont Citizen.)