

Finding My Grandfather
at the
Castine Golf Club

My grandfather, Howard Parker Lowell, was born in Mendocino City, California in 1870, the youngest child of George R. and Phebe Lowell. His older brother, Harry, age 5, was born in Maine; his older sister Alice, age 3, was born in California. Great-grandfather, George Lowell, was employed in a sawmill.¹ One can conclude from this information that the family moved from Maine to California between 1865 and 1867.

Grandfather's mother, Phebe, died in 1873, leaving George a single parent with three children. By 1880, all were back in Maine with my grandfather and his brother living with aunt and uncle Eliphalet and Emma Lowell and grandmother Sarah Lowell in Penobscot; father George and daughter Alice were living in Ellsworth where he worked as a mill hand.²

In August 1894, my grandfather married Eva Mae Bridges of Swans Island, where he was employed as a stonecutter. Given that their first son, my Uncle George, was born in February 1895, it appears that grandmother, born in 1878, was pregnant at the time of their marriage. A second son, Chauncey, my father, was born in 1899.

In both the 1900 and 1910 censuses, the family was living in North Castine; Grandfather's occupation was listed as a farm laborer (1900) and farm manager (1910). The 1920 census listed his occupation as a "Golf Course Caretaker" and renting on upper Main Street in Castine. He receives mention in the 1997 book on the golf course's first hundred years,³ but aside from these facts, I had little sense of my grandfather as a person, as he died sixteen years before my birth in 1945.⁴

In early 2023, this changed. The Castine Historical Society received a donation of records from the Castine Golf Club. Among these documents were three folders of correspondence maintained by Louis V. Hubbard who served as Club Treasurer throughout the 1920s. Among these letters were several between Hubbard and my grandfather on the day-to-day operations of the Club and maintenance of the course.

Louis V. Hubbard was the "glue" who guided the Club and its finances during a time when the Club purchased land to expand its footprint to its current size and engaged famed golf course

¹ 1870 Federal Census for Mendocino City California.

² 1880 Federal Census for Penobscot and Ellsworth Maine.

³ James Elliott Lindsley, *Breaking a Hundred: A Centennial History of the Castine Golf Course*. Castine: The Castine Golf Club, 1997.

⁴ My grandmother died in 1953; both are buried in the family plot in the Castine Cemetery, as are my mother and father. Great-grandparents George and Phebe's tombstones are in the Hillside Cemetery in Penobscot.

designer Willie Park to plan a new course⁵ Hubbard was continually trying to balance the Club's needs [and members wants] against the small membership who underwrote the operations, and his correspondence files from 1920-1921; 1926; and 1929 document these funding challenges, his time and commitment to the Club, and his personal diligence and "political savvy" on issues and challenges the Club faced. One member wrote that Hubbard was such a wonderful treasurer, that he would vote at the next meeting to elect Hubbard "treasurer for life."⁶

Hubbard serves as an example of the "summer folks" who were crucial members of the Castine Golf Course and to its survival, He lived in Montclair NJ, and had an office in New York City. Hubbard was president of the Taft-Pierce Company of Woonsocket RI, a manufacturer of tools, dies, and engineering instruments, and auditor of the General Electric Company in Schenectady, NY. Additionally, he was senior vice president and a director of the First National Bank of Upper Montclair, NJ, and of the Watchung Title and Mortgage Guarantee Company. A lawyer, he was a partner in the firm of Noble, Jackson and Hubbard.⁷

Hubbard's correspondence also alludes to many of the issues of the 1920s, both local and national, including a reference to the Red Scare of the immediate post WWI period, anti-semitism, the tensions between town folk and summer folk, and the tensions between the more well todo, both locals and visitors, and the less well-off in Castine.

For example, a concern found in these letters between Hubbard and Club members was the quality of services for summer visitors the Acadian Hotel offered, and whether members should recommend friends stay there. In 1921, when Will Walker was running the Acadian as a "genuine hotel," one Club leader opined that "Judging from past experience he [Walker] has as much idea of running a good hotel as a goose has about running a motor car, so I have my doubts of the satisfaction his guests will have.⁸ Five years later the same person continued to express his concern, "I hope I shall not get stung in having recommended the Arcadian Hotel to several people. ..."⁹

A second 1926 letter and response, show a common attitude toward Jews in the 1920s and references the Acadian Hotel. In a postscript to a note to Hubbard about the Club's short season and enclosing her dues check, Georgia L. Wilson of New York writes, "How do you feel about the Jews who seem to be getting a start in Castine, is not the owner of the Acadia [sic] of that persuasion?"¹⁰ Responding to Mrs. Wilson on April 8, 1926, Hubbard opines, "As to Jews,

⁵ Under Park's direction, my grandfather translated the plans to build the new golf course into the actual course.

⁶ William E. Minkell to Louis V. Hubbard, March 22, 1921. In fact, Hubbard did remain "treasurer for life," still serving in that capacity when he died in September 1929. Minkell was Dean of the Law School at the University of Pennsylvania and the first president of the Castine Golf Club, serving from 1916 until 1921.

⁷ New York Times Obituary, September 27, 1929.

⁸ Bertrand J. Clerque to L.V. Hubbard, April 22, 1921. Clerque was the second president of the Club, serving from 1921 until 1925.

⁹ Bertrand Clerque to L.V. Hubbard, June 9, 1926.

¹⁰ Georgia J. Wilson to L.V. Hubbard, April 6, 1926. Wilson was the wife of J. Howard Wilson, founder in 1921 of the Wilson Museum.

I should surely be very sorry to see them in Castine and I can't see why they would want to come there. The Proprietor of the Arcadian is not a Jew and tries his best to keep Jews away."¹¹

Two issues consume large portions of the Hubbard correspondence in the early 1920s, and are examples of financial tensions in this expanding endeavor: purchasing additional land from the Perkins sisters to provide for an expanded course; and reducing the wages for workers at the course.

Brothers Federick and Bertrand Clerque were key donors to the purchase of land from the Perkins sisters to round out the property for the new golf course. Unfortunately for the Club, the Clerque wealth was in Canadian funds, and there is a significant back-and-forth between the Clerques and Hubbard on transferring monies from Canada to the United States and the costs incurred because of the fluctuating exchange rate between the currencies, the Canadian dollar being 10%-15% less in value than the American dollar. Also involved in these land transactions was Castine attorney Arthur W. Patterson who represented the Golf Club on legal matters.¹²

In 1921, the Town authorized wages of \$3.50 per day for laborers, as it had for 1920. In 1920 the Club also paid \$3.50 per day, and Grandfather proposed to pay this daily wage again for the new year. Board members, however, suggested that conditions had changed since 1920, there was a surplus of men seeking work, and the Club should seek to employ laborers for \$2.50 a day. The tensions involved go beyond the specific amount of proposed compensation, bringing to the surface perceptions and attitudes held by both locals and summer visitors. These expressions of the tensions between local and summer folks are not unique to Castine and the 1920s, but were widely held [at least behind closed doors]. There is much to unpack here.

B.J. Clerque's letter to Hubbard, while lauding Grandfather as "well fitted for his job by reason of his long experience. . . [and] is an absolutely honest and reliable man whom I think we would find it exceedingly difficult to replace . . ." suggests several of these tensions:

With regard to the question of ordinary labor, I consider the situation is entirely different. Mr. Lowell's statement to me . . . that over 40 men had already applied to him for laborers jobs, to my mind very clearly indicates the local situation. I do not believe there should be the slightest difficulty in obtaining all the labor required at the golf links at not to exceed \$3.00 per day for 9 hours work at the outside. Personally, I should be inclined to hold out for only \$2.75 for 9 hours work. Just so long as the men down there consider we are easy marks, just so long will they continue to do as they have in the past. I do not believe you will find any of the local people who are paying \$3.50 per day or even \$3.00 per day, but just as soon as the Golf Club or any of the non-resident tax payers require labor, you will find these men will insist upon a higher rate. As an example of their attitude toward non-resident tax payers I might instance that last year one of the local men, who is apparently an incipient Bolshevik, came to the man who looks after my property for me and most vehemently urged him to refuse to run the lawn mower over my

¹¹ L.V. Hubbard to Mrs. G.J. Wilson, April 8, 1926.

¹² Patterson is author of the young adults book, *Redcoats at Castine*, first published January 1, 1938.

lawns unless I pay him extra wages for it over and above his monthly pay I am not arguing this matter from the standpoint of endeavoring to beat a man down, as I fully appreciate the high cost of living and am anxious that any man who is employed by me shall receive a proper wage, but when it gets down to the plain standpoint that they are perfectly willing to work for townspeople at a certain price but refuse to do so for people who only live there in the summer simply from the point of view that they can hold them up, then I seriously object. A scrutiny of the town annual report will show that the non-resident tax payers supply exactly 50% of the money required to run the town, and I think there is no possible doubt that the expenditures made by the summer people during the season amount to considerably more than all the expenditures made by the natives during the whole year, and I think that some of the people in Castine realized that the only way the town continues in existence is by favor of the non-resident tax payers. It is true that during the summer Lowell requires one or two reliable men to see that the greens are kept in proper condition but it seems to me the majority of the work is solely ordinary labor which does not require any high grade intelligence.¹³

There is no indication in these letter files of what the final daily wage paid was for laborers hired in 1921.¹⁴

There is a gap in the files for the Hubbard correspondence from 1921-22 until 1926. Concerns of inadequate finances and expanding expenses still dominate.

In 1922 the Club had agreed to bond itself for \$30,000 to pay for the new golf course. It was a decision that ensured that the Willy Park's course would be constructed, but which would cause continuing financial headaches for the officers and directors throughout the 1920's.¹⁵ A January letter from B.J. Clerque to Hubbard, which Hubbard forwarded to Farnsworth, summarized the financial condition, including that there was a \$2,100 deficit in 1925. "We are unfortunate in having the majority of our Club membership composed of people who really are unable to pay the price which the facilities offered by the Castine Golf Club are worth, . . . It may be as Parsons¹⁶ has frequently intimated 'We have bitten off more than we can chew' and that Castine neither desires nor can afford a reasonably good Golf Course."¹⁷ However, Clerque remained optimistic based on the number of increased visitors in the 1925 season.¹⁸

Farnsworth is not so optimistic and again indicates tensions with the local labor force. "Frankly I think the worthy unemployed of Castine are feeding out of the club trough, but I don't know how to help it. Looks like the worthy treasurer would have to borrow some more funds to run till we begin to get more income."¹⁹

¹³ B.J. Clerque to L.V. Hubbard, no date, but responding to Hubbard's letter of May 3, 1921.

¹⁴ In 1926 Grandfather was paid \$4 per day and other workman \$3.50 per day. L.V. Hubbard to George J. Farnsworth, June 15, 1926.

¹⁵ Lindsay. *Breaking a Hundred*. P. 28.

¹⁶ Francis Parsons was Club Vice President in the 1920s.

¹⁷ L.V. Hubbard to G.J. Farnsworth including copy of letter from D.J. Clerque to Hubbard, January 8 (?), 1926.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ G.J. Farnsworth to L.V. Hubbard, May 13, 1926.

In June, Hubbard approached F.H. Clerque for “your check this week for the amount you wish to pay.”²⁰ Hubbard notes, “Your Treasurer is getting into trouble because he is short of funds with which to run the Club Just now our expenses are heaviest and money is most needed.”²¹ The next day Hubbard wrote to B.J. Clerque, “This is a hard time for money and we will have to borrow more unless some of the members come across. The interest on our bonds while not large makes it a rather hard struggle to get by with so few members.”²²

On June 15th Hubbard noted that all bills were paid and there was a bank balance of \$121.23.²³ This optimistic situation did not last. A final note to my grandfather just before Christmas explained how Hubbard was trying to balance the accounts that showed more outgo than income. “Hooper²⁴ and Grindle have not been paid because I am out of money. They will have to wait until bills for dues go out and we get in some money. Last year (1926) was a very expensive one and has left us more in debt than ever.”²⁵

The tone of the 1926 correspondence about my grandfather’s work performance is more negative, and his letters also reflect this tension. There appears to be an “issue” that happened in 1925, for which there is no documentation in these files. It also appears that the Club had initiated more stringent controls over the approval of expenditures. Finally, there is an indication that Grandfather had a health issue; a January 7, 1926 letter has a passing mention of radium treatments.²⁶

Club president George F. Farnsworth underscored these tensions: “Am glad to receive your letters week to week with statement of expenditures made by Lowell but it is certainly discouraging the way he is spending money and frankly I do not know how to stop it except to fire him and that does not seem feasible at this time.”²⁷ A former Club president, B.J. Clerque, wrote, “It seems to me that if the golf course is not in good shape this year it will pretty definitely prove that Howard Lowell does not know how to handle the work.”²⁸ His conclusion: If the golf course was not in good shape, “definite action should be taken to secure a man who can make the grass grow.”²⁹

²⁰ L.V. Hubbard to F.H. Clerque, June 2, 1926.

²¹ Ibid.

²² L.V. Hubbard to B.J. Clerque, June 3, 1926.

²³ L.V. Hubbard to George J. Farnsworth, June 15, 1926.

²⁴ William H. Hooper was a Club director who lived full-time in Castine. The Centennial History of the Castine Golf Club, *Breaking a Hundred* has Hooper owning a livery stable. The 1930 Federal Census lists his occupation as a merchant in the fuel business. Hooper holds a note for ca. \$438.70 for the Club’s purchase of a lawn tractor. L.V. Hubbard from William Hooper, October 12, 1926.

²⁵ L.V. Hubbard to H.P. Lowell, December 22, 1926.

²⁶ G.J. Farnsworth to H.P. Lowell, January 7, 1926.

²⁷ G.J. Farnsworth to L.V. Hubbard, June 3, 1926. Farnsworth was the Club’s third president. A resident of Chicago, he was president of three lumber firms, the Oconto company of Oconto, Wisconsin, the Bay de Noquet company of Nahma, Michigan, and the Michigan Dimension company of Manistique. He was also treasurer and a director of the Lumberman’s Mutual Casualty company of Chicago.

²⁸ B.J. Clerque to L.V. Hubbard, June 9, 1926.

²⁹ Ibid.

After spending two days at the Club, B.J. Clerque again wrote to Hubbard that he was exceedingly disappointed with the conditions of the putting greens.³⁰ After stating that he did not consider himself capable of judging the present poor condition of the greens, he went on to opine that it was a problem of exceedingly poor soil.³¹ Clerque ends this lengthy letter, "As you know, Castine is a great place for rumors, and I was informed that Howard Lowell has been offered a job in connection with a new golf course. . . and therefore does not care whether he holds his present job or not. I do not know whether or not there is any truth to this statement."³²

The frustration was a two-way street. On a "Monday morning" Grandfather wrote to Hubbard: "After an hour of looking for Mr. Hooper to get his signature he would not O.K. the bill as he said he knew nothing about it and also last weeks account. Now if you do not think me capable of sending a weekly report for three men it is time for you to get someone that you can trust. Would like to hear from you at once."³³

Separately Hooper writes to Hubbard a scathing indictment of grandfather's honesty:

I can not O.K. this bill for I saw Mr. Lowell and G.M. Perkins with his team making . . . way to Lowell's new camp near the Porter place on October 2nd, and I know they had worked there some days before. Yesterday I saw G.M. Perkins team standing along side of the road at the Golf [Course] and Perkins raking leaves which was a useless thing to do consider the team standing on pay doing nothing. These are some of the reasons why Castine people do not feel like giving money to the Golf Club they have seen Lowell take so much of it for himself. I can not see why the tractor does not do the work that Lowell is hiring G.M. Perkins to do, but I and others know the reason.

Now I do not want to take the blunt of all this but the Golf Club members or a great many of them know that this kind of work has been going on for years and has taken a lot of Golf Club money, so I had rather you leave my name out of this at present until there is some change.³⁴

Four days later Hooper again wrote to Hubbard, "Howard Lowell came yesterday morning with some bills to O.K. but as I had not been asked to look after him I did not know whether they were O.K. or not so did not sign them, he suggested that I sign a number of blank bills ahead O.K. so that he could use them without seeing me. I told him I was not doing business that way."³⁵

The next day Hubbard wrote to Grandfather inviting him to respond to Hooper's allegations:

³⁰ B.J. Clerque to L.V. Hubbard, June 22, 1926.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid. There is no mention in any of my grandfather's correspondence about an offer.

³³ H.P. Lowell to L.V. Hubbard, undated.

³⁴ W.H. Hooper to L.V. Hubbard, October 8, 1926.

³⁵ W.H. Hooper to L.V. Hubbard, October 12, 1926.

As far as I am concerned, I have no objections to paying the labor bills, but when I as Treasurer, am instructed by the Board, to have all of your bills passed by a member of the greens committee and in the absence of other members, to have them O.K.'d by Mr. Hooper, what am I to do? It certainly is not my job to assume all the responsibility and I will not do it.

From what I can learn the present trouble is due to the work supposedly done by G.M. Perkins and the charges are rather serious.

Statements are made, first that Perkins was working for you in making a new drive way at your camp near the Porter place during the week ending October 2nd. Second, that a few days ago Perkins was seen on the road near the links, raking leaves and his team doing nothing. Third, that the tractor could do the work that Perkins has been doing and there was no need to have him on the job. Fourth, that the Golf Club money is being wasted in this case and that there are reasons for it.

In view of this situation, whether the statements are true or not, you can readily see the awkward position in which I am placed.

You know all the talk and trouble that was a year ago. I thought this was settled but it seems to have come up again.³⁶

I am sending herewith checks for the men, as they should be paid, but am not sending your checks or those of Mr. Perkins, until this matter is cleared up.

I feel that you should write me fully and let me know what your reply is to the charges that have been made. I am not passing any judgement at all, simply waiting to get at the facts.³⁷

On October 16, Hubbard wrote to George Farnsworth, "I wonder if you noticed that all of Hooper's kicks are against teams and wood, in both of which Hooper is interested. While I don't think Lowell is any angel, I wonder if Hooper has any larger wings than Howard. Hooper's position rather disgusts me. I surely thought it was clearly understood that Hooper 'had been asked to look after him,' didn't you?"³⁸

Farnsworth replied to Hubbard the next day:

It looks as though we have considerable of a muddle in Castine. While I did not definitely say anything possibly to Hooper about looking after Lowell, I assume inasmuch as he was retained on the Greens Committee that the former procedure would continue and that he was willing to do it. I am, therefore, surprised at the position he has taken. If Hooper's charges are true, we can do nothing short of firing Lowell. Hooper is a member of the club and the Greens Committee and we cannot afford to discredit him and if it can

³⁶ There is no information about the 1925 "talk and trouble" in these files.

³⁷ L.V. Hubbard to H.P. Lowell, October 13, 1926.

³⁸ L.V. Hubbard to George J. Farnsworth, October 14, 1926.

be proved that Lowell is not being honest with the club, he should be fired. I do think though in any event we will have to let Lowell clean up the fall work as no one else down there knows what should be done. Will wait in this matter to hear what answer you get from Lowell and will ask you to send me a copy of it. Frankly, I am pretty much disgusted with Lowell.³⁹

On October 16th, Grandfather responded to Mr. Hubbard and the charges that Hooper had raised. This letter greatly increased my understanding of my grandfather as a person.

I will answer your letter received Friday. I find in looking over my book and also Perkins bill of the week of October 2 that I am in error for one days work that he did for me at my camp. I am very sorry for this mistake as it looks bad for me. There is no one either man or team that has any pull with me at the club. I hire men and teams that will do the best service. I hope and believe that you do not think me guilty of trying to steal a days work from the party that I am depending upon for my living. Perkins worked at my camp one day of the week of October 2, and two days of the following week for which I have paid him. I feel well acquainted with the financial standing of the Club and what time I am here will work for their interest and not squander their money.

Mr. Hooper as director here has never been over the course since the day Liscomb was here from Bar Harbor. This afternoon I took the car and got him to come up and look over the situation and he frankly admits that the work done with teams could not be done with the tractor. He thought it could until he saw the difference. I do not think Hooper should report what he thought without first looking over the situation. It is not playing fair to me.

Perkins team possibly stood in the street ten or fifteen minutes while we were getting ready to harrow the putting green. Hooper happened to drive by at that time. Mr. Hooper I think is a fair minded business man generally But what one thinks and what one knows are very much different. After Hooper looked over the place he will write you a very much different report if you write him. I fully appreciate your standing in the business and am very glad to explain anything that seems blind to you at any time.⁴⁰

Closing this chapter, Hubbard wrote to George Farnsworth, "It looks to me as though Hooper had to back water a little even though he did get one error on Lowell. I guess things will work along more smoothly now, at least I hope so. I agree with your thinking that we have got to carry along with Lowell for another year at least."⁴¹ On November 14 Farnsworth noted "Apparently Lowell is getting on nicely with the work on the course."⁴²

³⁹ G.J. Farnsworth to L.V. Hubbard, October 18, 1926.

⁴⁰ H.P. Lowell to L.V. Hubbard, October 16, 1926.

⁴¹ L.V. Hubbard to George J. Farnsworth, October 25, 1926.

⁴² G.J. Farnsworth to L.V. Hubbard, November 14, 1926.

No further correspondence is found in the files for 1927 and 1928; It resumes in January 1929 and begins the final months of Grandfather's life, describing the cancer that was suggested in 1926 correspondence noting a radium treatment.⁴³

In these letters we can learn about attitudes people had about cancer, the long-term relation between Grandfather and the Club, and the tension between being ill and the need to work as there were no social safety nets in the 1920s. We also can see how denial of an illness being terminal affects a person's attitudes, although it is impossible to separate Grandfather's denial of the severity of his illness and his need to assure Club officials, all managing from a distance, that he can still do the work so that he still has an income and a place for him and my grandmother to live.⁴⁴

Arthur Patterson, the attorney who represented the Golf Club, apprised Hubbard in early January that "Howard Lowell is not very well. He has to go to Bangor frequently for radium treatments. However, he told me the other day he thought he was getting better and he is planning, apparently about the work next year at the club. Howard has had a hard time this fall, and I trust that he will get better soon."⁴⁵

Patterson, a full-time Castine resident, was not an officer of the Club at this time as he was its legal counsel, and followed with another letter suggesting that the Club should do something to help grandfather financially with his medical bills.⁴⁶

Howard Lowell is not any better, and is in Bangor now for treatment. I should imagine that he is rather hard pushed financially, as this sickness has been a big expense to him. He is trying hard to get back in shape for next season's work. Howard has worked for the golf club a long time, and it would be very nice if its members, or a few of them, could contribute some little fund as a present from the club. I think it would be an extremely nice thing to do, if someone would only take it in hand; and I should imagine that, just about this time, such a present would work very nicely for him, and be highly appreciated.⁴⁷

On receiving a copy of Patterson's latest letter from Hubbard, George Farnsworth responded to Hubbard about asking "the members to chip in ten or fifteen dollars a piece to help him [Grandfather] through." In this same letter he noted that Grandfather is in bad shape and does not think he will be able to handle the work in the upcoming season. "His trouble has hung on, as you know, and is apparently getting worse." Almost as an afterthought, he wrote that although someone else could be hired to do the work, "The house proposition is another thing, however."⁴⁸

⁴³ G.J. Farnsworth to H.P. Lowell, January 7, 1926.

⁴⁴ Throughout the 1920s my grandparents lived at the Golf Club in the same building that members used for parties, teas, and similar events.

⁴⁵ Arthur W. Patterson to L.V. Hubbard, January 14, 1929.

⁴⁶ Patterson will become a Club director in 1938.

⁴⁷ Arthur W. Patterson to L.V. Hubbard, n.d., but before February 21, 1929.

⁴⁸ George Farnsworth to L.V. Hubbard, February 21, 1929.

In March Farnsworth wrote to Hubbard again after receiving a copy of a letter sent to Hubbard by my grandmother inferring that Grandfather is in very bad shape. "Considering his physical condition and the inevitable result of that on his mental condition seems to prohibit our using him in his old capacity at least."⁴⁹

On March 23 Grandfather wrote to Hubbard focusing on his work for the season. "I have always started the season on April 1st on the links but there was nothing said about it in the fall. The season is ready now and I should advise starting with the season I am getting along very well am doing some work but if I am not able to do a good days work on the start I will oversee the work and pay a man out of my wages until I can do it myself."⁵⁰

On March 26 Grandfather again wrote Hubbard with thanks for the Club's check from the "Golf Club Friends."⁵¹ He noted, "We really have had a long hard expensive winter but think everything will work out all right now. I am feeling very much better and am working some it will take quite a while to get my strength back."⁵² In another letter from the file, Hubbard noted that Grandmother had written him that she felt "sure that Howard will be on the job."⁵³ In an April 3 letter, Hubbard confirmed that Grandfather should start the work, and that his suggestion of "overseeing and having someone in your place will be all right."⁵⁴

George Farnsworth, who was "pretty much disgusted with Lowell" in 1926, struck a more understanding tone after receiving Grandfather's letter to Hubbard.⁵⁵ "Judging from these [letters] he is better and on the job but obviously with his condition as it is he is going to be a badly worried man with his thoughts largely on himself. It cannot be otherwise."⁵⁶

A new concern was raised in May. "A letter was received from Arthur Connor⁵⁷.....stated that Lowell was in very bad shape, also that the trouble he has been having in his mouth was showing now badly on his face. If this is true it is going to be questionable whether it will be safe or wise to keep the Lowells in the house. I think it would be well to write to Dr. Babcock and get his opinion on Lowell's condition and prospects. Also the contagious angle of his trouble."⁵⁸

⁴⁹ George J. Farnsworth to L.V. Hubbard, March 11, 1929.

⁵⁰ H.P. Lowell to L.V. Hubbard, March 23, 1929.

⁵¹ The Club sent a check for "at least \$100." L.V. Hubbard to Mrs. Chester E. Tenney, March 18, 1929. \$100 is equivalent to \$1,200 in today's dollars. Documented contributors include Mrs. Tenney; George Farnsworth; Godfrey M. Brinkley; Frederick A. Pierce; and Mary Russell.

⁵² H.P. Lowell to L.V. Hubbard, March 26, 1929.

⁵³ L.V. Hubbard to Mrs. Chester E. Tenney, March 18, 1929.

⁵⁴ L.V. Hubbard to H.P. Lowell, April 3, 1929.

⁵⁵ G.J. Farnsworth to L.V. Hubbard, October 18, 1926.

⁵⁶ George J. Farnsworth to L.V. Hubbard, April 24, 1929.

⁵⁷ Arthur Connor was a Castine resident living on Green Street. The 1930 Federal census lists his occupation as caretaker in the summer home industry.

⁵⁸ G.J. Farnsworth to L.V. Hubbard, May 10, 1929.

Hubbard followed up on this advice, and received an “absolutely confidential” reply from Dr. Babcock as he was not the physician in charge of his [Grandfather’s] case.⁵⁹ Babcock wrote:

His own courage, hope and welfare with his good and faithful wife depends on how this is handled. He believes he will recover, his wife believes it.

It is cancer. He will probably die within a few months - and I believe any little property etc. that he may have owned will entirely be used up.

Personally I do not believe that such a case should be in the club house of that kind. Many people are extremely frightened, very sensitive and suspicious of all such things and I believe that many people would not care to use the dishes etc. if Howard touched any of these. They often think that such contacts would be very probable.

I do not consider it in any way contagious – of course we are ignorant of its method of transmission and some day it may prove most contagious etc.

The best way in my humble opinion would be for him to live off at his own camp or in some other house and let him work until he just has to give up. It would floor him entirely if he lost his entire job.⁶⁰

In responding, Hubbard agreed with Babcock’s ideas and noted that he had asked Mr. [Frederick] Pierce to look into the situation. “I [Hubbard] also said that if people had a suspicion even of the trouble being cancer that I did not think Lowell should be in the Club House.”⁶¹

Pierce responded on May 24 noting that Hubbard’s letter has taken him by surprise as he assumed the club officers knew of Grandfather’s condition.⁶² “Lowell has fought bravely and still keeps a bold face to the enemy, but I can’t help think that he doesn’t know what he has. All the radium [sic.] treatments this winter could be for only one thing. Of course he is badly disfigured and bandaged, and it would seem to me that you are perfectly right as to the impossibility of his continuing to live in the Club house, because of members’ objections.”⁶³

⁵⁹Dr. Harold S. Babcock came to Castine in 1917 to set up a general practice soon after my other grandfather, Dr. George Parsons, had left Castine. Babcock remained a physician in Castine for more than forty years. In addition to his many other contributions, he founded the Castine Community Hospital in 1928.

⁶⁰ H.S. Babcock to L.V. Hubbard, May ?, 1929

⁶¹ L.V. Hubbard to H.S. Babcock, May 22, 1929.

⁶² They did by this time.

⁶³ Frederick Pierce to L.V. Hubbard, May 26, 1929. Pierce was president of the Club from 1937 to 1941 and again in 1946. His WWI draft card lists his occupation as an “organizational expert and author.” Pierce died in Castine on Christmas Day, 1963.

Pierce then asked to be excused from the task of notifying Grandfather that he must move from the Club House, citing two reasons. First, Pierce and Grandfather had a period when the relationship between them was not cordial. “When I first came here, Lowell was very cordial, but suddenly, about a month after, he became very surly. This progressed until during the next year he was scarcely civil. . . , an attitude of apparent hatred. Since I have become active on the Greens Committee he has kept a civil demeanor, and we have been able to cooperate.”⁶⁴ Pierce’s second reason was that he does not wish things to be unpleasant for his wife as they are presently living in Castine and will be doing so for at least another six months. “I do not want the hostile feeling which would follow Lowell’s personalized resentment – he has been popular in Castine, and the town would largely accept his version of the matter, which would probably be that I had been the instigator of his ousting.”⁶⁵

Pierce concluded his letter, “My own view is that it should be handled by mail, by an officer of the House committee, and put on the basis that there is objection on the part of many members, particularly ladies to have sickness in the club during the season. This is certainly reasonable enough, regardless of the nature of the disease.”⁶⁶

Grandfather also wrote to Hubbard on May 26:

I have been rather poorly the last week. Went to Hospital for examination yesterday, and got no encouragement whatever from the Dr. She says she has done all she can do.

I am making plans to go to Boston next week as the last resort. I am fighting abasses [sic.] on out side of my face. The last time tissue were tested were perfectly free from cancerous germs. Having another test this week.

Under existing conditions we feel that it would be best for all concerned for us to resign here at the Club for the summer season at least. While the Dr. is afraid of cancer she has failed to find many germs this far. But to be fair to the Club + members we think it would be the wisest thing to do. As the speech of the people might make it very uncomfortable.

We are very, very sorry to give such short notice, but we only got it yesterday. We will stay and carry on the work, everything just as we would otherwise, until you arrive or until our places are filled. I feel very bad to leave the course, as it is in the best shape it has been since I have been here.

I have tried to make good, and I think I have, and I feel if you + I could carry this on together we could make it self supporting and satisfactory to all Club members in another season.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

While I am not sick in bed I am not able to do a days work. Perhaps this fall I may be able to take up the work again if the Club sees fit to have me.

I am writing you because I think you understand the situation fully and you can work it out with the Club. I have four good men who understand the work fully but really they should have a leader and if I can help in any way I will be very glad to do so.

Should you decide to have the right kind of a Pro for the summer months, I think with the crew we have the work would go on satisfactory.

I haven't made any plans as yet to what I shall do or where I shall go and won't until I return from Boston. I think I shall be handy in case you would want anything from me.

We are very sorry to make this change, but feel it is much better for all concerned for Mrs. Lowell and I both have enjoyed the work and appreciate what the members and our golf friends have done for us.⁶⁷

In letters that crossed in the mail, Hubbard had written to my grandmother on May 27:

I dislike to write this letter but in justice to you and the golf club and with the kindest feelings I must do it.

Various reports are coming to me about Howard's condition and they are of such a nature that I feel it would be unwise for him to live in the Club House during the summer. I know that there will be many objections to his staying there even though he would have nothing to do with any of your work. The ladies particularly, would not like to have sickness of any kind in the house or around the kitchen and I don't know as if I would blame them. We want him to take care of the course as long as he can and will do everything to help him. We also want you to continue in the care of the house. Some arrangement will, however, have to be worked out so that Howard does not eat or sleep in the Club House.

..⁶⁸

The next day, after receiving Grandfather's resignation letter and after writing to Grandmother with suggestions on another way forward, Hubbard again wrote to Grandfather:

I am sorry for you and I know how hard things must be for you both.

I appreciate your feeling about resigning but if some other plan can be worked, along the lines suggested in my letter of yesterday it may be best for all concerned.

In the first place, I presume that you both need the money, as your expenses must have been very heavy and in the second place the club needs your wife to run the house and your advice regarding the links if you cannot do a days work.

⁶⁷ H.P. Lowell to L.V. Hubbard, May 26, 1929.

⁶⁸ L.V. Hubbard to Mrs. H.P. Lowell, May 27, 1929

If you can arrange it so as not to live in the house, as I suggested, Mrs. Lowell could run things there and carry on during the season. This would give her a home and the salary that goes with it.

With you, some arrangement could be made, so you could supervise the work if you are able to be around and you would have someone to take your place as a real worker along the lines you suggested some time ago.⁶⁹ This would give you some compensation and keep your mind busy at least.

I believe that you have tried to make good and personally I want to do everything I can to help you and Mrs. Lowell get through the summer. If any change has to be made, I don't see how we can do much until some of us are on the ground.⁷⁰

Grandfather responded to Mr. Hubbard on May 31. "As to supervising the work here at the Club - don't think I could do the Club justice as I am not feeling so well. and of course if Mrs. Lowell takes care of me it would be absolutely impossible for her to attend to the House in any way. We won't neglect anything until some one comes to look after it. If we are unable to do it our selves we will get some one to do our part. Awful sorry but this seems the only way out to all concerned."⁷¹

The final letter in the 1929 file concerning Grandfather is from L.V. Hubbard to my grandmother:

I was greatly shocked to receive your telegram late yesterday telling me that Howard had passed away. Of course I knew he was in bad shape but did not look for his end to come so quickly.

. . . .

The Castine Golf Club without Howard will never be the same. He has been with us for so many years and did so much work to make the course a big success. I think he left it believing it was better than ever this year and that must have been a joy to him.

We all will miss him, and I especially. Naturally I do not know what your future plans will be but I hope you can carry on in the house this summer.⁷²

My grandfather, Howard Parker Lowell, had died at 9:00am the previous day, June 3, 1929.

Louis V. Hubbard did not long outlive Grandfather. He died unexpectedly on September 26, 1929 at his home in New Jersey. Hubbard was 63.⁷³

⁶⁹ See letter, H.P. Lowell to L.V. Hubbard, March 23, 1929.

⁷⁰ L.V. Hubbard to H.P. Lowell, May 28, 1929.

⁷¹ H.P. Lowell to L.V. Hubbard, May 31, 1929.

⁷² L.V. Hubbard to Mrs. H.P. Lowell, June 4, 1929.

⁷³ L.V. Hubbard Obituary, New York Times, September 27, 1929.

Thanks to these surviving records from the Castine Golf Club, now at the Castine Historical Society, I did indeed “find” my grandfather, putting as they say “flesh to the bones.” He no longer is just a gravesite in the Castine Cemetery where we put out flowers every Memorial Day; he is a person who lived, had feelings, made mistakes, had successes, and left an imprint on his community, his family, and, although I never knew him, I believe also on me, my values, and how I’ve lived my life.

Postscript.

The “Lowell Camp” was the site of my physical attachment to Castine until I graduated from the University of Maine in 1967. As a child I would spend summers there with my parents, Chauncey and Delia, and my uncle and aunt, George and Rhoda Lowell. In college, it served as a brief spring or fall escape from Orono and studies.

Our neighbors were Molly Dewson and Polly Porter, friends of Eleanor Roosevelt and active participants in FDR’s 1932 and 1936 campaigns.⁷⁴ In the 1950s I often accompanied members of my family as we walked Ethel Leach, a long-time domestic at Moss Acre, down the “Porter drive” on her return “home” after an evening visit at the camp.

My Uncle George sold the property in the early 1970s.⁷⁴ The new owners demolished the camp. The sole evidence remaining on the ground that the “Lowell Camp” existed are two large stone flower beds that defined the entrance to the driveway, “across from the Porter drive.”⁷⁵ These were probably built during October 1926 when Grandfather engaged the Perkins team to assist with the driveway work, [and mistakenly billed the Club for one of the three days Perkins was so engaged].

My grandmother, Eva Lowell, outlived Grandfather by nearly a quarter century, dying in May 1953 in Rockland where she lived with us and was my primary caretaker until her death.

Castine Historical Society has a letter that Molly Dewson wrote to her “niece and nephew” after attending my grandmother’s internment, May 24, 1953. “I have just come back from the internment of Mrs. Lowell whom you know worked for us . . . and who had a summer home opposite the entrance to Moss Acre. She was Mrs. Leach’s best friend. Polly and I liked her very much. She was fine in every way.”

What better tribute than to be thought of as “fine in every way.”

⁷⁴ Susan Ware. *Partner and I: Molly Dewson, Feminism, and New Deal Politics*. Yale University Press, 1987.