

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Eugene Henry Webb

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Webb, Eugene Henry, 1918-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Eugene Henry Webb,
<b>Dates:</b>	December 2, 2004
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2004
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:43:47).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Real estate broker Eugene Henry Webb (1918 - 2021) is the owner of Webb & Brooker, one of the most successful real estate management brokerage firms in Harlem. He also helped to found Carver Federal Savings and Loan Bank and Freedom National Bank. Webb was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 2, 2004, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2004_244
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Eugene Henry Webb was born in Red Level, Alabama on November 24, 1918. After graduating from Parker High School in Birmingham, Alabama, Webb later attended Columbia University in New York City, where he studied real estate appraisal. He also attended Pohs Institute and Miles College.

After high school, Webb worked as a dining car waiter on the Seaboard Rail Road and the New York Coastal Railroad. In 1941, he joined the U.S. Navy, serving for two years during World War II. After his honorable discharge, Webb moved to Harlem, and began attending school. After attending Columbia University, he went to work in the real estate industry, and in 1968, opened his own brokerage, Webb & Brooker, Inc. Today, after almost forty years, Webb & Brooker is one of the most successful real estate management brokerage firms in Harlem.

Webb has been active in the Harlem community for decades, having been a part of the group that helped to found both Carver Federal Savings and Loan Bank and Freedom National Bank. He later served as chairman of the executive board of Freedom National Bank. He has been a member of the Real Estate Board of New York for twenty years, and a member of the Columbia Society of Real Estate Appraisers for almost four decades. He is also a former member of the board of trustees of Cambridge College and Stillman College, and has received honorary doctorates from Miles College and the New York Podiatric College of Medicine.

Webb has two children, and in 1999, married attorney Danna Wood Webb.

Webb passed away on April 4, 2021.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Eugene Henry Webb was conducted by Larry Crowe on December 2, 2004, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Real estate broker Eugene Henry Webb (1918 - 2021) is the owner of Webb & Brooker, one of the most successful real estate management brokerage firms in Harlem. He also helped to found Carver Federal Savings and Loan Bank and Freedom National Bank.

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# Restrictions

## Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

## Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

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# Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

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# Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

## Persons:

Webb, Eugene Henry, 1918-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Webb, Eugene Henry, 1918---Interviews

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# Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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# Occupations:

Real Estate Broker

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

BusinessMakers

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## Administrative Information

### Custodial History

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

### Preferred Citation

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Eugene Henry Webb, December 2, 2004. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

### Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

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## Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Eugene Henry Webb, Section A2004\_244\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:15 ?

Eugene Henry Webb was born on November 24, 1918 in Red Level, Alabama to Docia Foster Webb and Eddie Webb. His maternal great-grandmother told stories about slavery, but he could not see the difference between that and the fierce segregation of the time. After attending Snow Hill Normal and Industrial Institute in Snow Hill, Alabama, his mother worked as a cook in a café. Webb never knew his father, and he and his two brothers were raised exclusively by their mother. The poor residents of the Sandy Bottom neighborhood in Ensley, Alabama took coal from the passing freight trains to heat their homes, and Webb was once caught by the police for doing so. He and his brothers sold newspapers

and worked as caddies to keep the family afloat. They attended the First Baptist Church of Ensley frequently, and besides its minister, Reverend C.H. Taylor, they had almost no male role models. Webb did not care for Council Elementary School in nearby Birmingham, but his mother urged him to attend.

Video Oral History Interview with Eugene Henry Webb, Section A2004\_244\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:44 ?

Eugene Henry Webb attended A. H. Parker High School. He shined shoes, worked at a café after school, and knew no African American professionals. After a year at Miles College, he impregnated and married a young woman and left school to work in the steel mills. Following a friend's advice, he moved to California to seek better paying jobs. As a waiter at a hotel and on railroad dining cars, Webb saw how the wealthy lived. He joined the U.S. Navy in 1940, trained at Hampton Institute in Virginia and at Naval Station Great Lakes in North Chicago, Illinois and was deployed to the Marshall Islands for most of World War II. After he was discharged in New York City, he divorced his first wife. A friend suggested he earn his real estate license, and Webb did so by attending Pohs Institute of Insurance and Real Estate. Webb helped found the Carver Federal Savings and Loan Association. Daniel Burrows, father-in-law of HistoryMaker David N. Dinkins, recommended him for the board of United Mutual Life Insurance Company.

Video Oral History Interview with Eugene Henry Webb, Section A2004\_244\_001\_003, TRT: 0:31:10 ?

Eugene Henry Webb and George Brooker founded Webb & Brooker, Inc. in 1968. Webb explains how the racism of white banks and brokers enabled him to develop his business in Harlem. Webb's involvement on the boards of Freedom National Bank and the Federal National Mortgage Association brought recognition to his firm. Daniel Burrows, father-in-law of HistoryMaker David N. Dinkins, helped Webb secure a spot on the board of the United Mutual Life Insurance Company. Webb & Brooker, Inc. was hired by the State of New York in the 1970s to manage properties seized for the redevelopment of Times Square. Reflecting on the increasing gentrification in Harlem, Webb predicts the displacement of poor African Americans. He describes how successful African Americans move into rich neighborhoods instead of spending wealth in their home communities. Webb also shares his hopes and concerns for the African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with Eugene Henry Webb, Section A2004\_244\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:32 ?

Eugene Henry Webb allowed the embassy of Chad to occupy one of his properties rent free for one year when the embassy was evicted from its former location. Rather than relocating Webb & Brooker, Inc., he chose to keep the office located in Harlem, New York. Webb gave back to his community by adopting a Harlem school and arranging a field trip for students to visit the office of his friend, former U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance. Webb used his connections at Fannie Mae to encourage the company to advertise with Black Enterprise. He prided himself on prioritizing his employees as head of Webb & Brooker, Inc. Webb shares his hopes and concerns for the African American community and for American politics. He reflects upon the importance of preserving history. He recalls the community opposition he faced when he tried to turn Harlem's historic Dunbar Apartments into a co-op and his regret that he was unable to do so.

Video Oral History Interview with Eugene Henry Webb, Section A2004\_244\_001\_005, TRT: 0:28:25 ?

Eugene Henry Webb married Danna Wood Webb in 1999, and they had two daughters. Webb recounts his proudest moments, which include receiving an honorary degree from Miles College and helping to mentor young people who later became successful in their careers. Webb served as a trustee of Stillman College in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. By organizing African American businessmen to finance the program, Webb saved Gil Noble's TV show 'Like It Is' from cancellation. Webb describes the pictures of influential African Americans that decorate his office and prominent African Americans, like Dr. Barbara Hatton and HistoryMaker Thomas W. Cole, who have been interviewed on 'Tony Brown's Journal.' Webb reflects on U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Robert C. Weaver's influence. He also describes his legacy and how he hopes to be remembered, and offers advice to young people aspiring to a career in business.

Video Oral History Interview with Eugene Henry Webb, Section A2004\_244\_001\_006, TRT: 0:12:41 ?

Eugene Henry Webb narrates his photographs.