

# Eliot's Town Hall



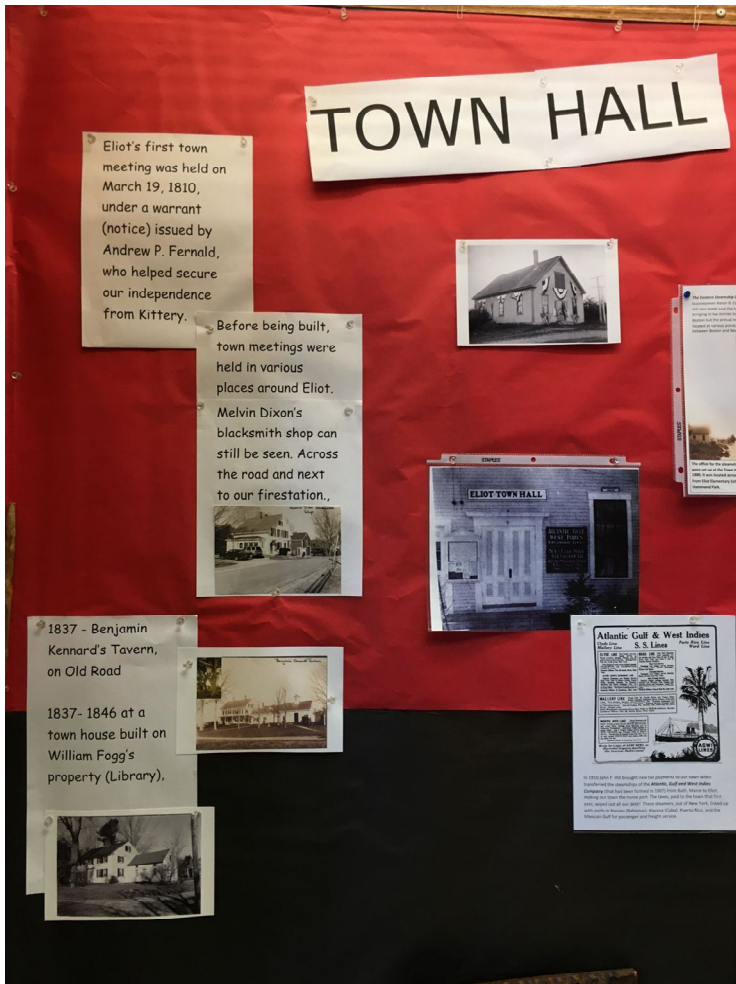
# INTRODUCTION

In February of 2019 the Eliot Historical Society was provided the use of the display case at Eliot Elementary School , on a permanent basis, to showcase Eliot History. These are changed out every 3 months. We've come to realize that we might want to use these displays, or a portion thereof, in other ways and are presently working with the Middle School and providing displays to them as well.

Our most recent display, at the Elementary School, focused on the use of the "Old" Town Hall as a gym for the former Eliot High School and the subsequent High School buildings.

This slide presentation highlights that display and the information it contained.

We are making history every day and hope this presentation will make you think of your memories of place and events in Eliot and you'll share those with us.



Eliot, Maine was part of the town of Kittery until 1810 when it was incorporated as a separate town. At the time this area was part of Massachusetts Bay Colony. Maine became a state in 1820. The earliest town meetings and selectmen meetings for Kittery were most probably in individuals homes, and later taverns and churches, until towns built a “town house”.



Only males, age 21 and over and having an annual income of three pounds and an estate worth 60 pounds were allowed to vote. In 1818 the annual income was \$10 and the estate value \$200. To begin the meeting a moderator was chosen, followed by an opening prayer and then various acts to prevent “profane cursing and swearing, and to prevent riots and tumultuous assemblies were read.

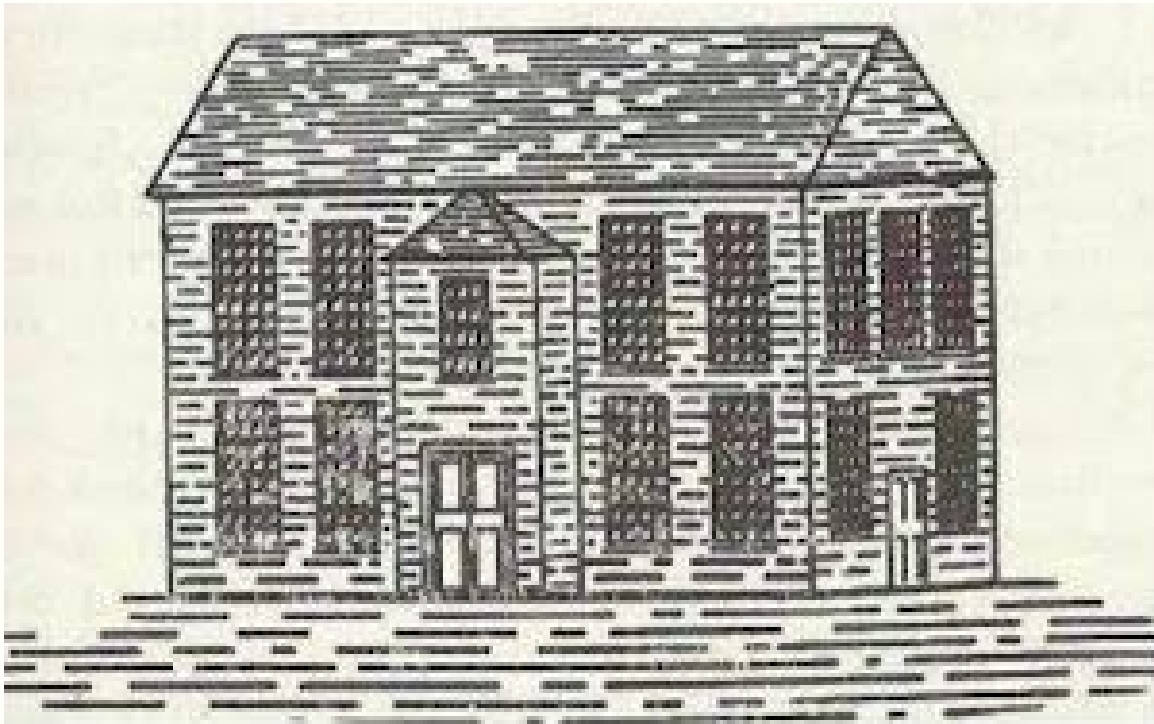
Eliot’s first town meeting was held on March 19, 1810, under a warrant (notice) issued by Andrew P. Fernald, who had helped to secure our independence from Kittery. The meeting was held at the Second Meetinghouse, the same place where our separation from Kittery began. That first meeting did not finish its work until June!



For more information – “History of the Incorporation” (with related documents) by Eric Christian, under “History” at [eliothistoricalsociety.org](http://eliothistoricalsociety.org)

1810 - 1836 - at the Congregational Meeting House (end Old Road).

Meetings were held here from 1810-1836.



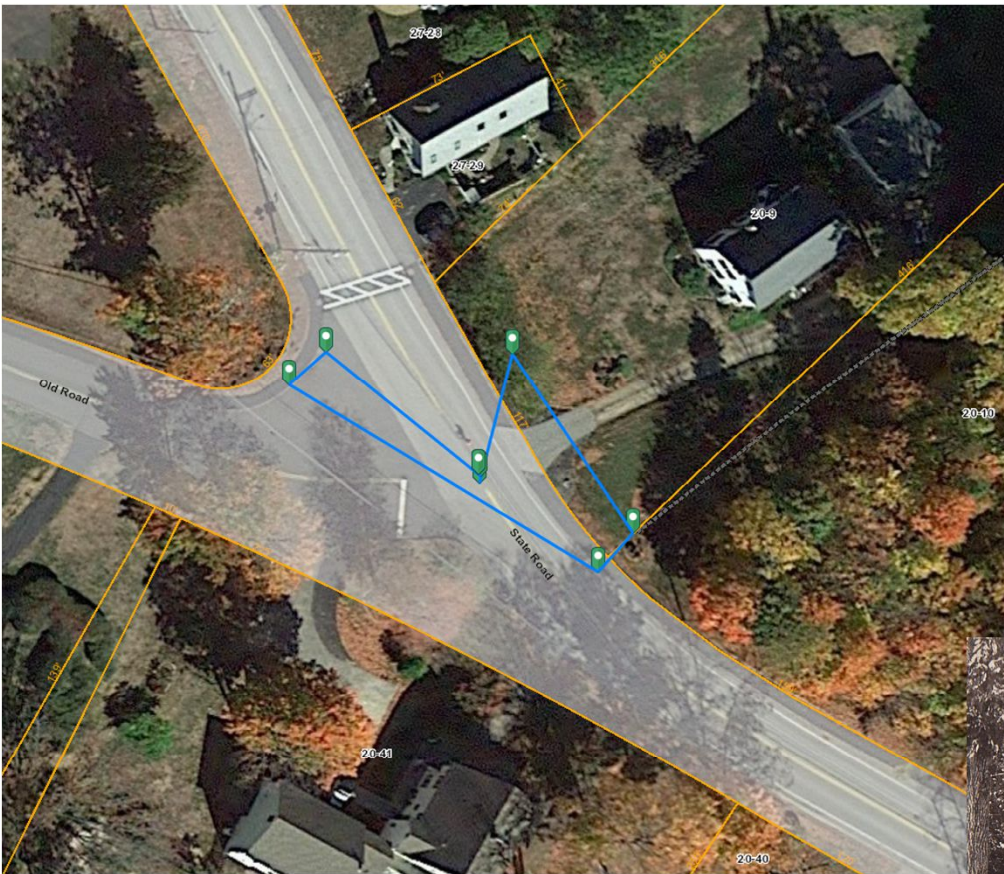
Second Meeting House at Crams Corner

At the annual meeting there would be a drawing of Jurors, after which the meeting adjourned for an hour or two; then the town officers were chosen by ballot and then the meeting adjourned to some future date to hear the report of a committee of three chosen to settle with the Treasurer. There were often several adjournments of the Annual Meeting. There may also have been several meetings for voting each year, in addition to the annual town meeting – voting for representatives to the court, state and federal elections, and other business of the town



In 1837 our meetings were held at Benjamin Kennard's Tavern, on Old Road. Today this is the home of "The Pinetree Institute" (206 Old Road).





In 1838, William Fogg gave to the town a piece of his property on which to place a town house, for the use of the town as long as they wished. Our meetings were held at this building, until it burned down, in 1846. Research shows it to have been located in the front yard of the property at 1394 State Road, possibly where, in 1910, the trolley tracks were located (lower right in bottom picture).

The small building was the waiting station for the electric trolley

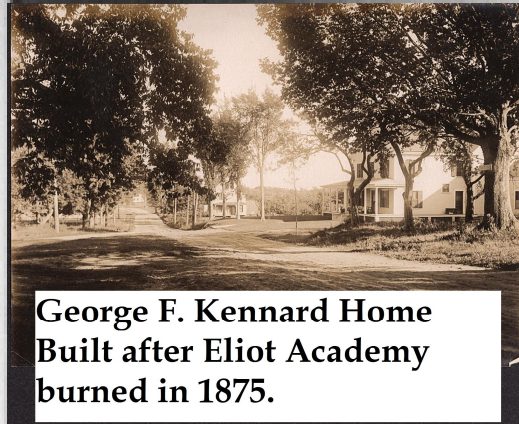


## 1847 - 1875 at Eliot Academy

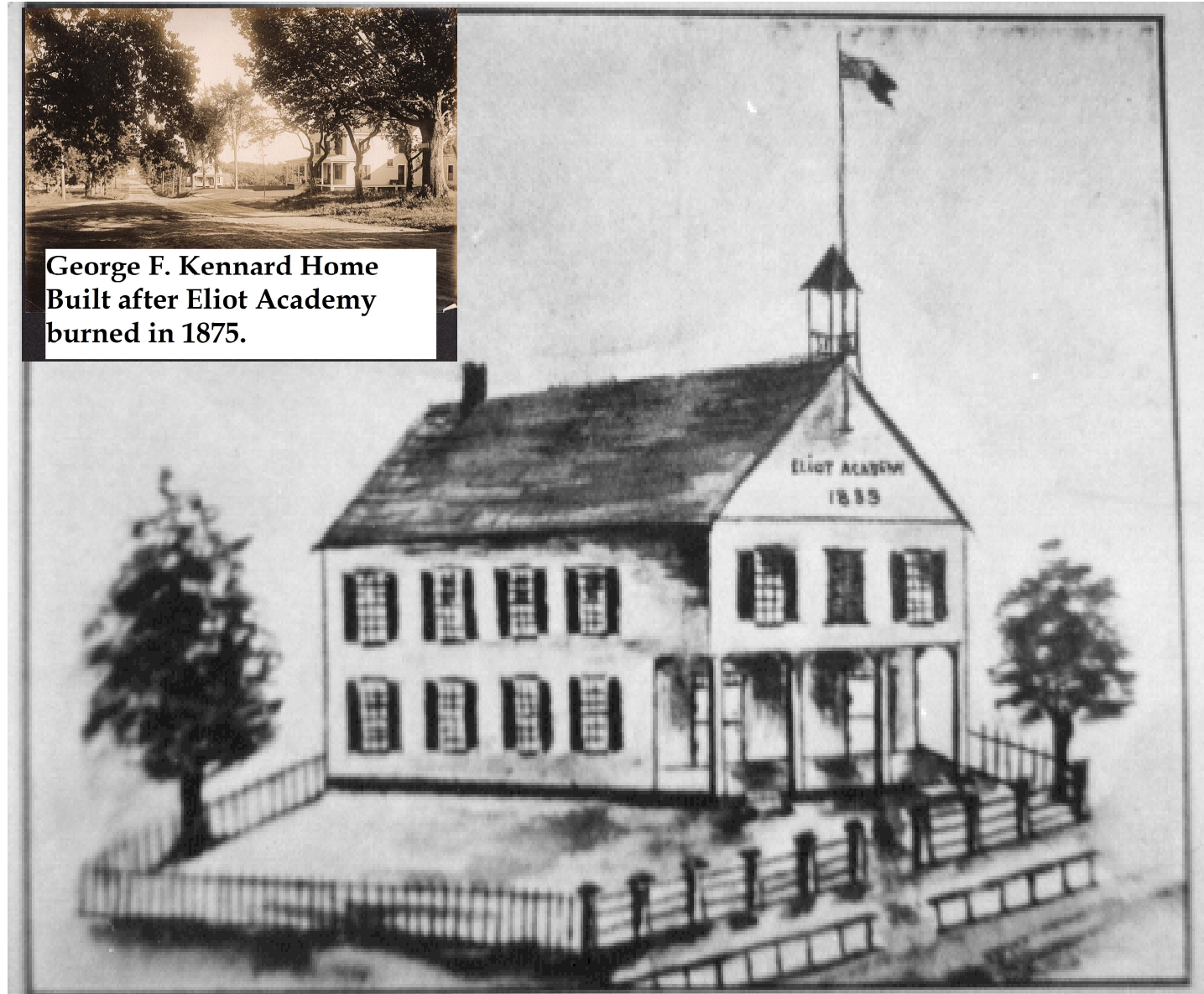
In the fall of 1847 we needed a new meeting place and they moved to the Eliot Academy, located at the intersection of Old Road and State Road. The site is marked with a plaque.

We met here from 1847-1875 when the Academy was destroyed by fire.

A home was later built here by George F. Kennard. Today, it is the home at 1389 State Road.



**George F. Kennard Home  
Built after Eliot Academy  
burned in 1875.**





Eliot Academy  
burned down in  
December of  
1875. The next  
year (1876),  
meetings were  
held in the barns  
of Jeremiah  
Libbey, John F.  
Kennard and  
George  
Ireland...

The home of  
Jeremiah Libbey sat  
out by the road (now  
State Road). It was  
moved further down  
Old Libbey Lane and  
is today the house at  
5 Old Libbey Lane.  
The barn is no longer  
standing



This is the home of George Ireland. The barn, where town meetings were held, is to the left, out of view. Located at the intersection of State Road and Depot Road (1651 State Road). Known as Mole Hill Farm and today Sturgeon Creek Farm.



In April of 1876, citizens found themselves gathered in the road, in front of the blacksmith shop of William Shapleigh (his home shown on the right), near the intersection of State and Old Roads, down from the Library going toward the Congregational Church,



Evidently people found it was better to be inside and so the September election (1876) was held in Melvin Dixon's blacksmith shop. This became the location for all our town meetings up until the summer of 1880, when a Town Hall was built. Today (2022) located next to the Police Department, the building is used by the Eliot Community Services Department for storage. The house, shown here, was taken down several years ago.

In 1880, the town voted to build a permanent Town Hall. Oliver Dixon sold the town a piece of his land, in May of 1880, for \$100. It was a lot of land 70' by 80' and bordered Oliver's land and that of Saunders Leibman.



In 1880 the town paid Albert Shapleigh and his son George to construct the building. They cut the granite for the foundation in South Berwick. It was brought, by boat, to their home at Sandy Hill and then to the site by ox or horse cart.



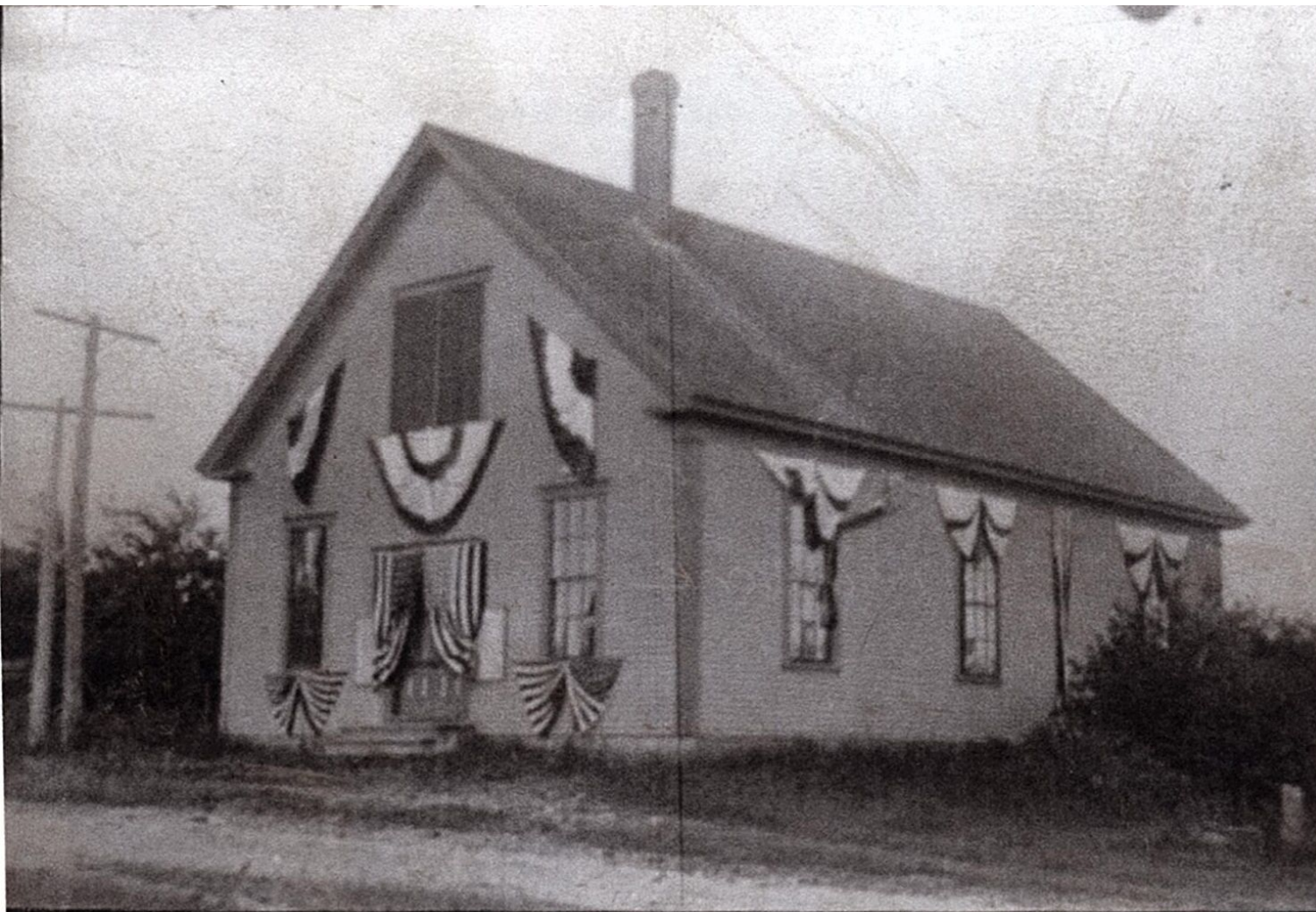
*Bridge over Stacy's creek.*



The old Town Hall was a wooden, single story building, with wooden floors and ceiling open to the rafters.

You entered through double doors at the center, into one large room.

On each side, in the front, was a small corner room - Selectmen's Office on the right, and a coat room, on the left.

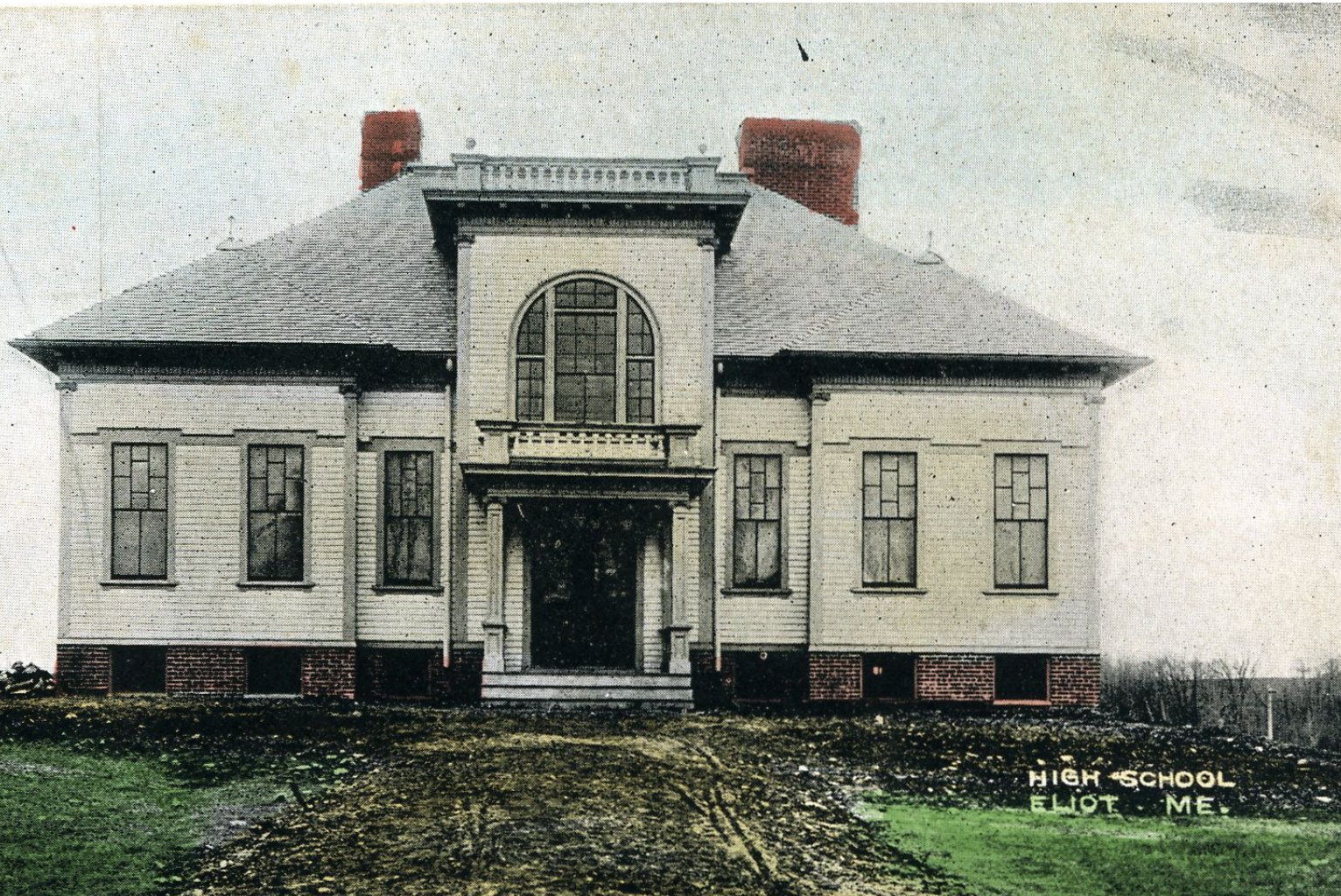


As early as 1874 there were attempts to establish a Free High School. Classes were held in private homes until 1888 when the citizens voted money for a Free High School and the Selectmen agreed to allow the use of the Town Hall. The one large room contained a platform at the rear where the teacher's desk sat. There was a large wood stove to provide heat. James K.P. Rogers was the first teacher and the first class had 34 students.

It didn't go too well and was only in session on and off until 1901 when Aaron B. Cole took over.

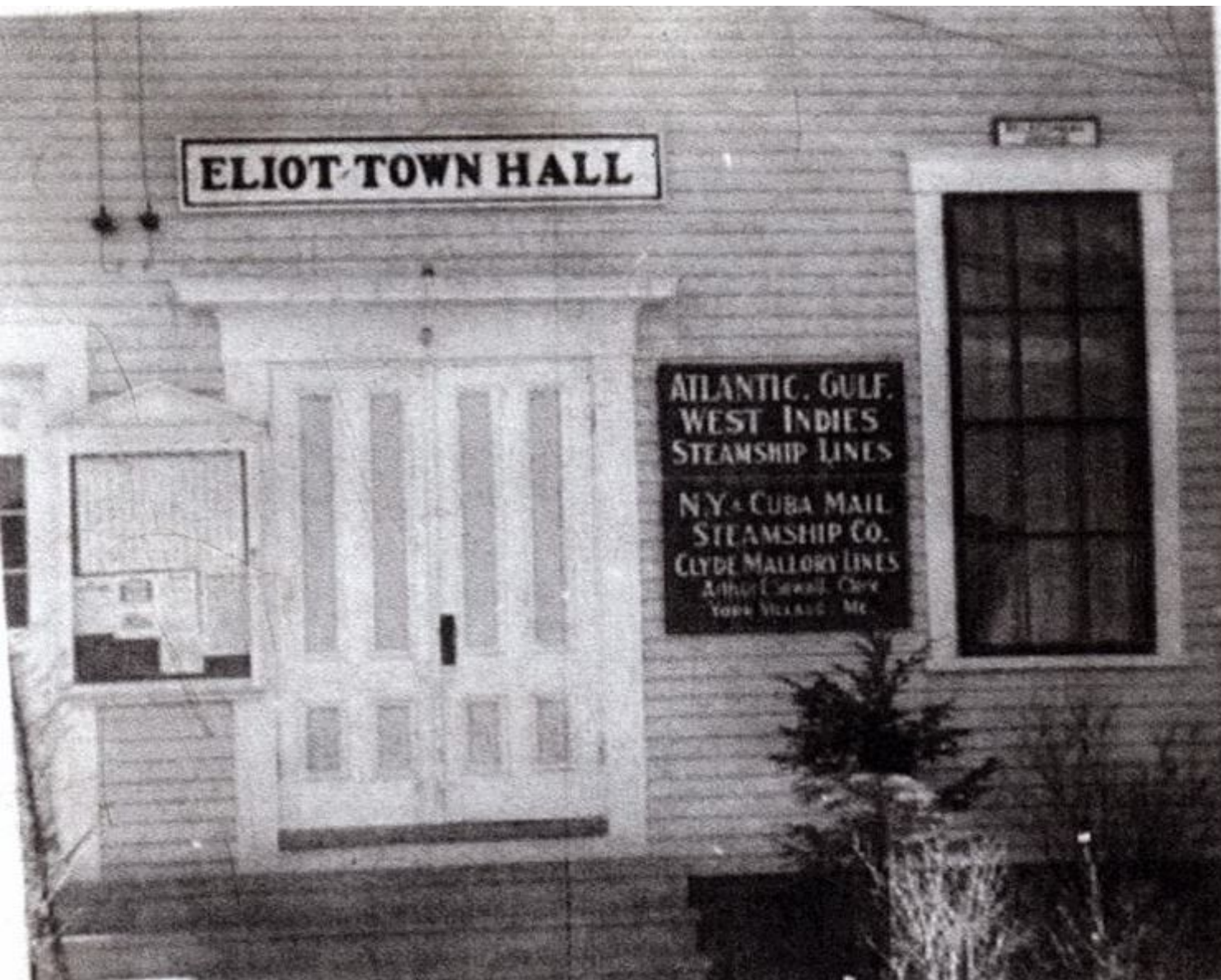
The first class to graduate from the High School, here, was in 1904. There were three graduates – Winnifred Dixon, Jeanie Moulton and Winnifred Fernald. All read essays and Fred Newton was principal and teacher.

In 1906 the classes moved to a newly built High School building, located just behind where the present Town Hall is.



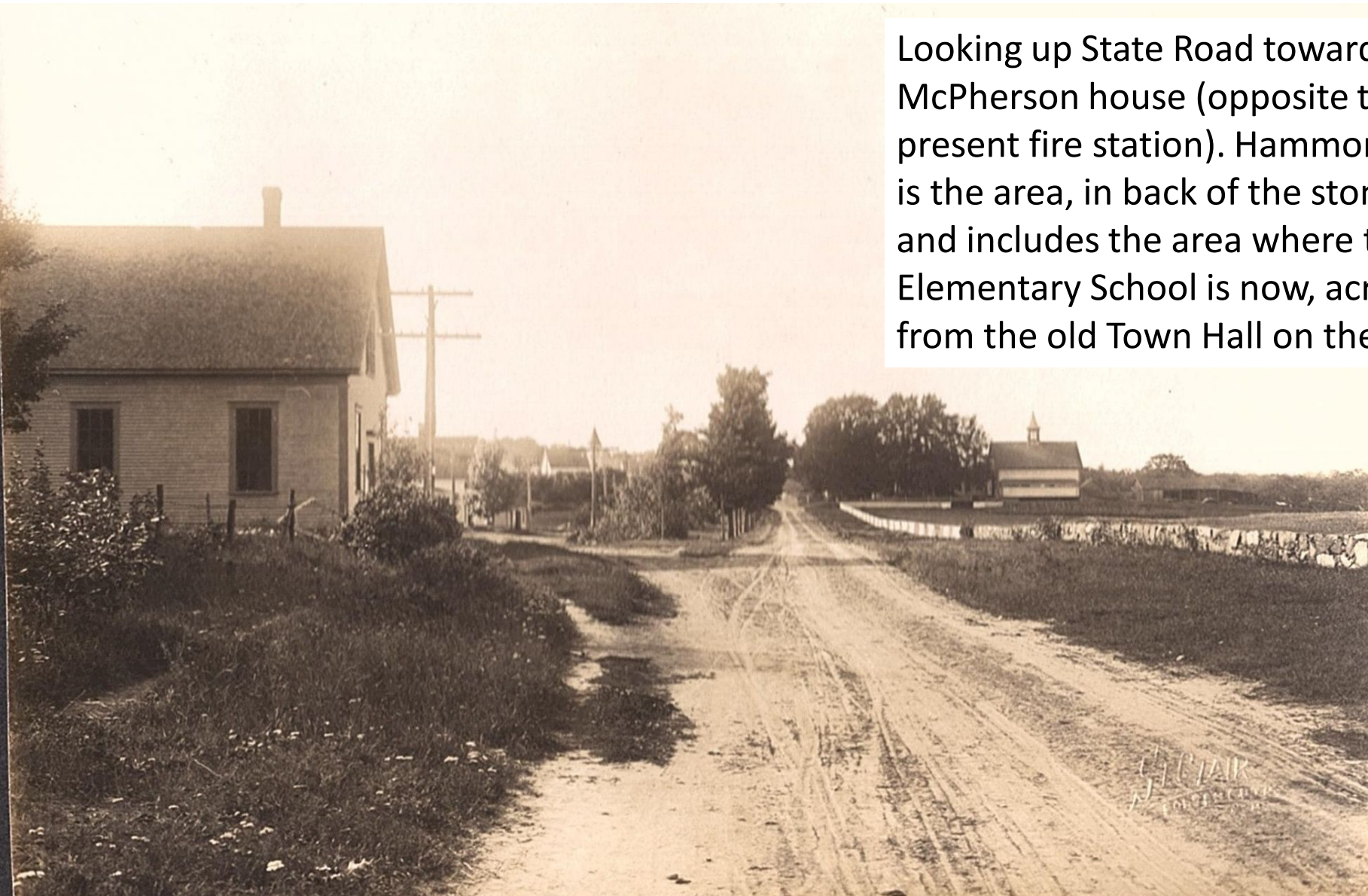
When a new high school was built, in 1940, this old High School became the Central School and, much later, the Eliot Town Hall. It was torn down in 1987 and the present town hall built.





The Old Town Hall continued to be used for meetings and was also the offices of the Atlantic, Gulf, West Indies Steamship Lines due to the work of Gov. John F. Hill who had the corporate offices moved to Eliot, bringing added revenue to the town. c. 1911-1922

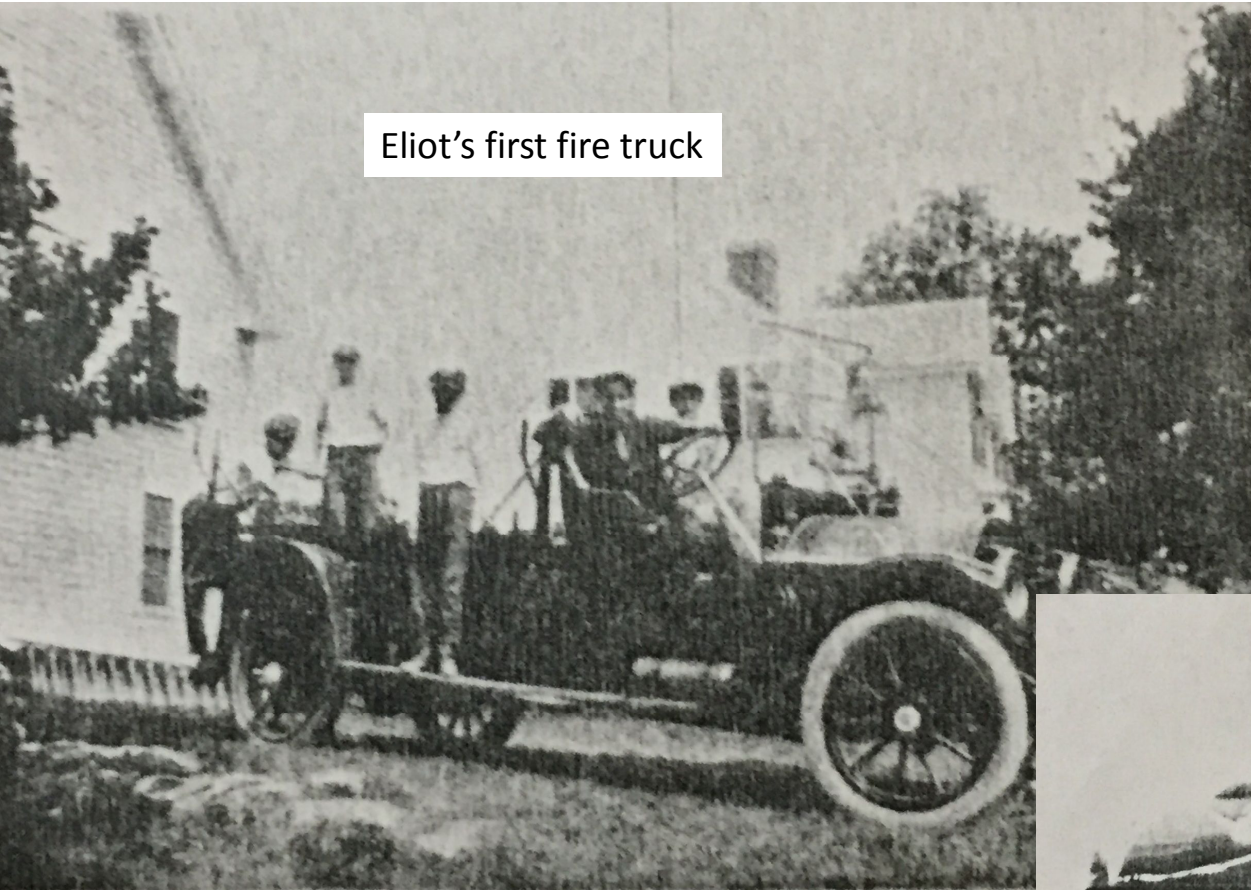
Looking up State Road toward Orland McPherson house (opposite the present fire station). Hammond Field is the area, in back of the stone wall, and includes the area where the Eliot Elementary School is now, across from the old Town Hall on the left.



In this picture, to the far left, of what is now the Eliot Meet Market, you can see the corner of the Town Hall building. Donald Webber Jr. writes that in 1916 a 13'x 37' room was built inside (left side toward the back) to house one of its firetrucks. That may have been when the side door, that you see, was put in.



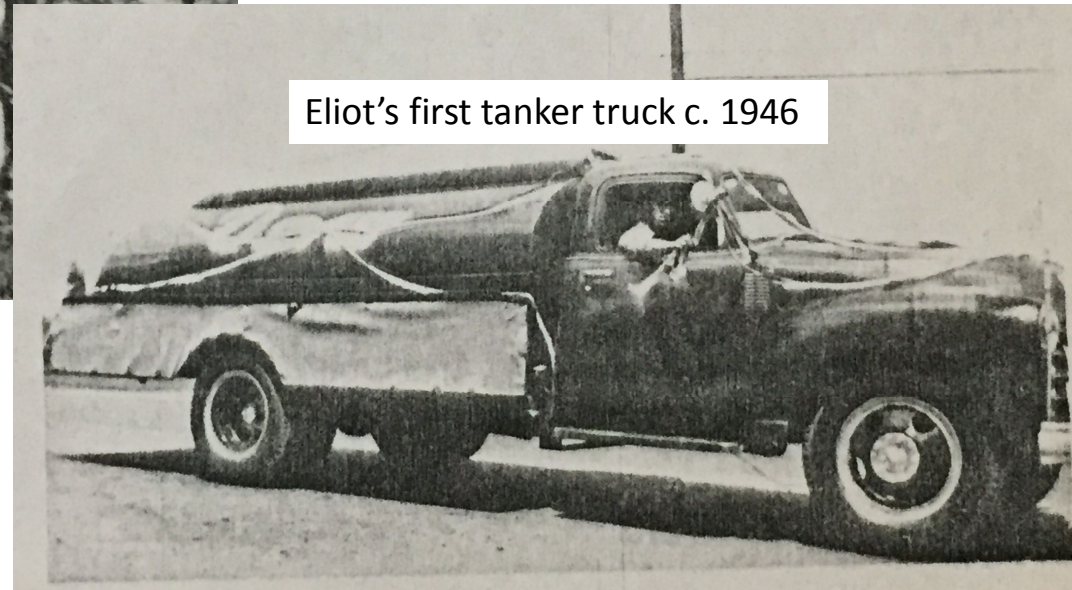
Eliot's first fire truck



The town had approved the purchase of two fire trucks in 1915. The early fire trucks were refitted cars and trucks, not the large, long vehicles they are today. One was housed at the fire station at Cross St. and the other at the Town Hall. The cost to build the room was \$165. The town provided the lumber.

In 1934 the section of the Town Hall that housed the fire engine was dismantled.

Eliot's first tanker truck c. 1946



Wednesday, January 27, 1925, a plane crashed into the building. The pilot, Barney Oldfield, encountering heavy fog, lost his bearings. By the time he got to George E. Hammond's field, his was out of gas. He glided across Hammond Field, barely missing a stone wall and crashed into the corner of the Town Hall. He pierced the Selectman's office and sent a 300 pound safe across the room. Wood, plaster and glass sprayed in all directions. The crash shook the ground, and could be heard for miles around.



Students at the high school, 300 yards away, heard the crash and despite a stern warning from their teacher, Carleton Staples jumped out of his classroom window and ran over to get a closer look. Oldfield was not injured but his plane's propeller was splintered and the radiator cracked.



The Army Air Service was called and daredevil aviator, Jimmy Doolittle flew in from Boston the next day, formulated a plan of repair, returned to Boston to order parts which were delivered and repairs were completed just as the sun was going down. On Friday, at 4 pm, a crowd gathered to watch Oldfield depart.



Our schools were always looking for a place for students to practice and play basketball. In 1923, High School basketball teams were holding their practice in the John F. Hill Grange Hall on State Road.

Front: Ruth Libbey (Staples), Helen Hodgdon, Sarah Manson (Lothrop), Mabel Littlefield (Wilson)  
Back: Arlene Leavitt, Eunice Cole (Shapleigh), Coach Edna Raitt Fernald, Edith Littlefield (McKenzie), Vivian LaPointe



Following the building of a new High School, in 1940, there was frequent mention at town meetings and advocated strongly by the High School students, the need for a gym for the students.

In 1948, the old Town Hall was converted into a gym.



### Our Gym

There is something in town which proves  
That the men in Eliot can use tools.  
They started with what used to be the town hall,  
And ended up with a gym that suits us all.  
Now you can't build a chimney in an hour or two  
Because of bricks it takes quite a few.  
And to tear out partitions and put up the lights  
I'm telling you now it took many nights.  
Boards and plaster were scattered around,  
Nails and tools all over the ground.  
Now a hole had to be dug for the furnace, you know,  
And maybe you don't think the dirt came up slow!  
But, with a grunt here, and a smile there,  
The sand started flying everywhere.  
I could go on telling you of these little things,  
But it would last longer than when "Margaret sings".

Lucian Burbank '48

Class of '48 student Lucian Burbank wrote a poem about it for the High School yearbook. "Margaret sings" may well refer to Margaret Truman the daughter of the President of the United States, Harry S. Truman.

Sadly, the gym could only be used for practice because it was not a regulation size. We would rent the gymnasium at Traip Academy, in Kittery, for their competition games. Some of those early basketball teams who practiced in the Town Hall.....



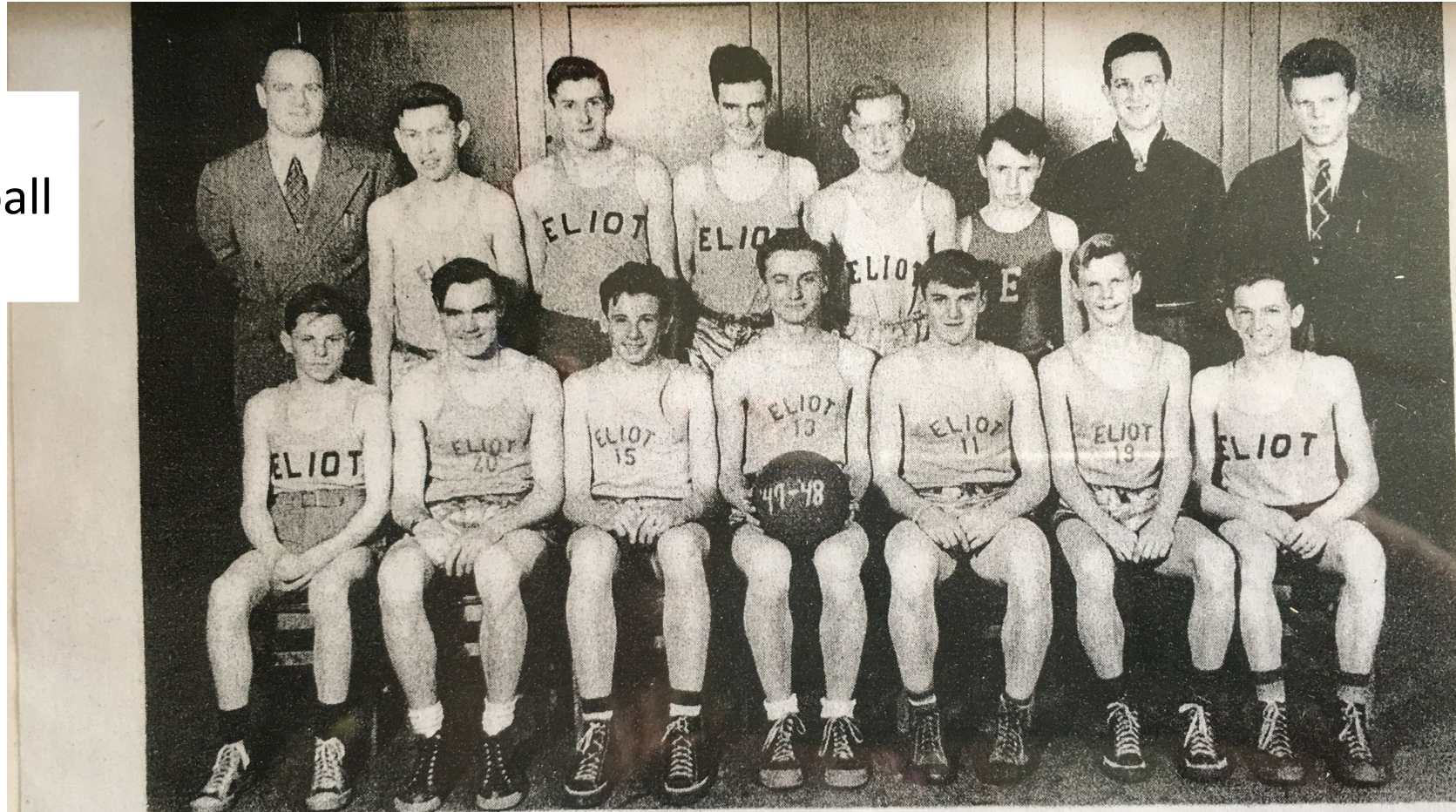
**1. WILBER MORIN, HORACE SPINNEY, ROBERT SYLVESTER, BERNARD FERNALD, VERNON SEARLES, FRANCIS MOLLEUR.**  
**2. DONALD GERRY, LUCIAN BURBANK, GEORGE AUSTIN, DELBERT MCMAHAN, MERRITT SHAPLEIGH**

1947-8  
Girls  
Basket  
ball  
Team



**1. E PIERCE, B. LAPOINTE, P. MACE, N. BRANNEN, N. HAWKINS, B. HINDS, D. PLAISTED. 2. MISS SHULTZ, B. MACE, L. BURBANK, G. FERNALD, R. SPINNEY, M. EVERSON, MISS BURGESS. 3. B. ROGERS, L. SPINNEY, G. MITCHELL, V. DINNING, M. HOYT, M. BRANNEN**

1947-8  
Boys Basketball  
Team



1. K.LAPOINTE, C. BURBANK, R. DAY, A FERNALD, R. SPRINGER, K. BARRETT, O. MCPHERSON

2. MR. CRORY, A. COLSON, R. MCKENNEY, H. FURBISH, C. CLARK, P. FOURNIER, P. DEROY, MR. GREGORY



1940's Cheerleaders

# PICTURES OF THE NEWS OF THE WEEK

Five Snappy Cheerleaders Show You How It's Done —  
The Eliot High School Way — Siss, Boom, Bah!

IT LOOKS LIKE A LITTLE RED SCHOOLHOUSE THAT'S PRODUCED MANY A DISTINGUISHED CITIZEN AND PRAISEWORTHY SCHOLAR, AND IT LIVES UP TO JUST THAT. ELIOT HIGH SCHOOL, LOCATED ON THE KITTELY-DOVER ROAD, GOT AN OVERHAULING IN 1940. NOW IT ROASTS 11 ROOMS, TWO OFFICES AND A STUDY HALL AND IT IS SAID TO HAVE THE LARGEST WINDOW SPACE OF ANY SCHOOL ITS SIZE IN THIS REGION. IT OFFERS ITS STUDENTS COLLEGE, COMMERCIAL, AND GENERAL CURRICULUMS. MOST OF THE GRADUATES HEAD STRAIGHT FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF MAINE IN ORONO, WHERE THEY HAVE BRIGHTENED THE DEANS' HONOR ROLL COUNTLESS TIMES. THERE'S ONLY ONE THING ELIOT HIGH HASN'T GOT, ACCORDING TO THE STUDENTS, AND THEY'D ALL LIKE TO HAVE IT — A GYM!



LEADERS ALL

WITHOUT THEM THE WORLD WOULDN'T GET ALONG AND neither one Eliot High get along without these ambitious and hard working cheerleaders. Class officers and club officers picked about include: Freda Allen, Elaine Ellis, Edith Cole, Louise Allen, Adrienne Cole, Beverly Anderson, Betty Davis, Barbara Murray, Irene Vinton, Jean Dean, Ruth Lee, Paul Harris, Walter Morris, John Murphy, John Dunlap, Francis Walker, James Schaefer, Clayton Hark, Albert Hildner.

GRID HEROES

ELIOT FOOTBALLERS ARE A hard fighting team. They are led by Coach Howard S. Stedman. First row, left to right, the Eliot cheer is: William Stedman, John Harris, Robert Perry, Ralph Anderson, William Morris, John Murphy, John Dunlap, Freda Allen, Elaine Ellis, Edith Cole, Louise Allen, Adrienne Cole, Beverly Anderson, Betty Davis, Barbara Murray, Irene Vinton, Jean Dean, Ruth Lee, Paul Harris, Walter Morris, John Murphy, John Dunlap, Francis Walker, James Schaefer, Clayton Hark, Albert Hildner.



Almost Undeatable — BUT NOT QUITE THE ELIOT HIGH RUNNERS. Whipped through a season unsearched until they got Tink. The runner shown above was, left to right, Jacob Brubaker, Edward Farrell, Raymond Knight, Walter Karkin, David Savaris, Robert Stedman, Frederick Spaulding. In one both row one, left to right, John Dunlap, Ray Pison, Vernon Savaris, David Pison and Harold R. Miller, coach.

They Cheer The Boys To Victory — CHEERLEADERS JEAN FOSS, JOYCE STADIG, Shirley Morgridge, Lena Morin, Wynne Machado. For their "yell" duty, they don red or white gabardine pleated skirts and white or red sweaters, accented by Eliot in felt script.

Something New Added — AND IT'S AN ACTIVE STUDENT COUNCIL. It gets its on advisory body to Principal Howard S. Stedman, who is giving his first year as head of the Eliot high school. Right now the student council is busy engaged in sponsoring the new thing between classes program, for which it has just appointed members. Members are, from left: Frederick Spaulding, Jean Rodgers, Jean Dunlap, Jean Pison, Bruce Tarron, William Morris and John Murphy. Standing in the back row are John Dunlap, Francis Walker, Elaine Ellis and James Schaefer.

1942 — Eliot's new High School was featured in *The Portsmouth Herald* newspaper. Cheerleaders in the center picture are Shirley Morgridge, Lena Morin, Wynne Machado. They wore maroon red or white gabardine pleated skirts and white or maroon sweaters with "Eliot" in felt script.

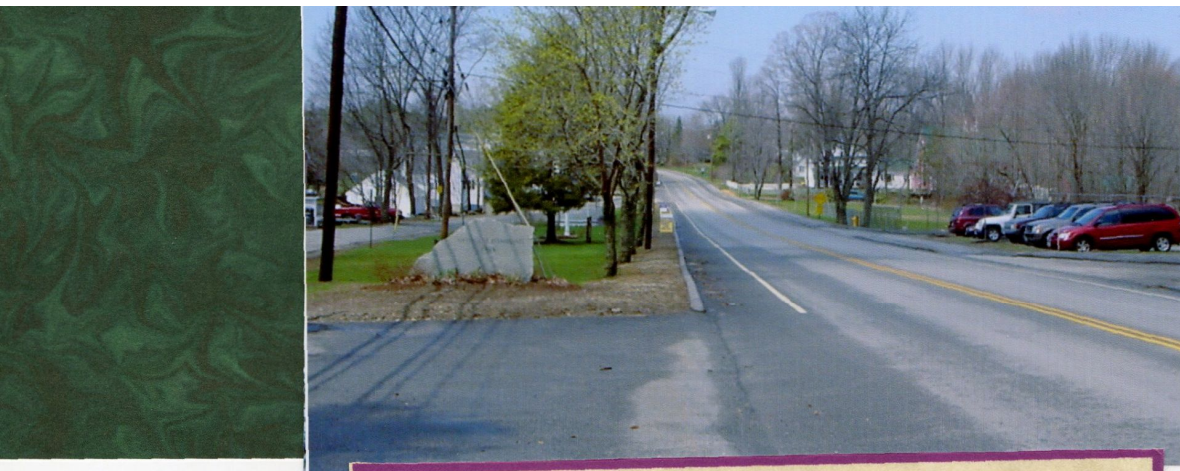


In January of 1950, as the 7th and 8th grade girls were at basketball practice when a fire broke out in the rear of the building. The woodburning furnace, that had been installed under the back of the building, overheated. The floor burst into flames, forcing the 27 girls and their instructor to flee the building.

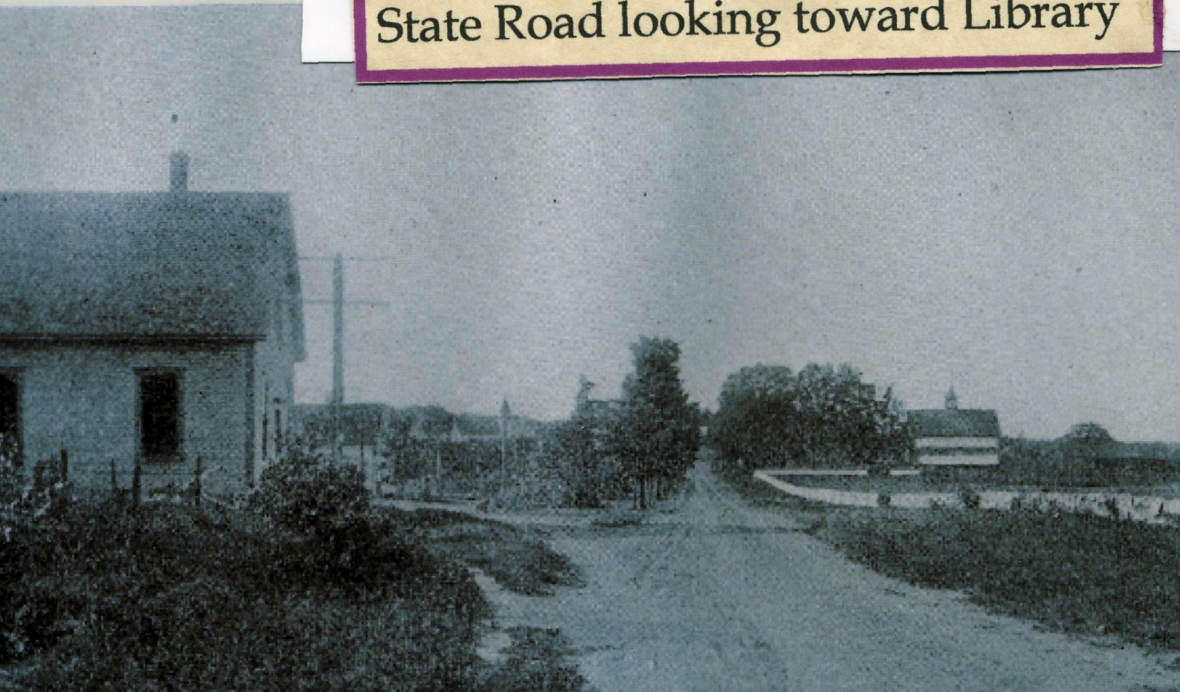


Here you can see the edge of the old Town Hall building (on the right) which was across the street from the High School. c. 1952





State Road looking toward Library



In these pictures you can see what State Road looked like in the early 1900's, before the High School was built across the street (bottom picture) and as it is now.

The Town Hall (bottom picture) was directly across from the flagpole at the Elementary School. Location not shown in the top picture.



View of its location today



Telephone pole for reference

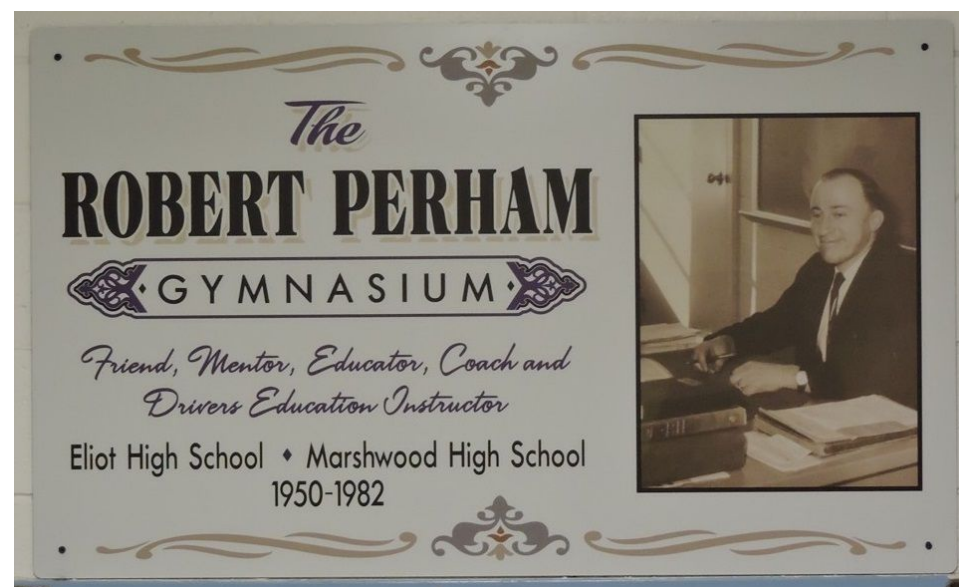


Victor Staples, c. 1960 standing outside the building. The center double doors had been removed and a door moved to the left side of the building.

Over the years the building was used as a meeting place for various groups and inside events. When our school district was formed, in 1966, the land and building were sold and the old Town Hall taken down.

In 1956, following years of practice games at the John F. Hill Grange Hall and travelling to other towns for home games, the high school athletes finally had a place of their own. This was no doubt due to, in part, by the great coaching of Robert Perham which brought new pride to the community. He led the girls basketball team to winning league championships 11 years in a row and their accomplishments became known throughout New England. With 13 years of coaching the girls basketball team he then took over as the boys' varsity coach. The first game, in the new gymnasium, was played in January of 1957 when the boys won against N. Berwick. The game was attended by over 500 people.

Robert Perham was honored, in 2021, with the naming of the gymnasium at Eliot Elementary School the "*Robert Perham Gymnasium*".



Eliot High  
School  
athletic  
sweater and  
jacket

