

## Monthly Meeting ~ March 13

7:00 PM: In person and by ZOOM @ McPherson Hall, First Congregational Church, 1361 State Rd.

QUARTERLY MEETING. Short Program: "Looking toward the Future - Comprehensive Plan and Eliot Historical Society Goals". Presentation on the Historical Society's involvement in updating Eliot's Comprehensive Plan and discussion by members about our forward-looking goals for the Society. Facilitated by Rosanne Adams and Tracey-Graffam Dixon

Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89970965186?pwd=b0JaVFgyOFRnNW11WjRLZFVSRDNLdz09>



### President's Prattle

by Tracey Graffam-Dickson

March 2023

Happy Spring? Well...though the calendar tells us that the Spring Equinox is just a few weeks away, the view out my window would say otherwise! The good news is the days are getting longer and the sun is getting warmer, melting the snow, and clearing our sidewalks and roads around town.

Fortunately, we dodged the snowstorms and have been able to hold our monthly meetings in person over these past few months. At our February meeting, we greatly enjoyed learning about the collaboration with Eliot Elementary School, where Jan shared pictures of the wonderfully informative displays on the various topics and historical artifacts and sites throughout Eliot that she and Rosanne have put together over the past year. We also learned about the new display that will be established at the Marshwood Great Works School in South Berwick, in partnership with Old Berwick Historical Society, expanding on this important outreach program for the students in our community. As new displays are planned, Jan and Rosanne will keep us posted on what items they are looking for and any help they may need. If you would like to assist or have something of interest to include, just let them know! They'd love your support.

As we continue to plan and prioritize our time and our resources, we would like your input and ideas. To that end, we have developed a short survey of questions, attached to our monthly newsletter mailing. We will provide time at the beginning of our business meeting in March for attendees to review and write up their thoughts and will share the feedback prior to closing the evening's meeting. With this information and the information received from the Town Survey conducted in January & February of this year, we will work to update our Goals & Priorities for the months and year ahead, particularly as it pertains to community collaborations, initiatives & program development.

In addition to conducting the survey at our March meeting, we will be discussing the status of the Eliot Comprehensive Plan and the work that is underway to update the Inventory of Historic and Archeological sites. Rosanne and Eric have been working closely with the Town Planner to update this important document for our community, this is no small effort, as much work has been gathered and identified since the previous update back in 2009. We look forward to this discussion and sharing with you 2023 Comprehensive Plan once it is available. If you would like more information about this effort, please let us know. As always, we look forward to hearing from you and looking forward to seeing you all at our meeting in March!

Sincerely,

Tracey

## **The Number 8 Schoolhouse Museum**

will be opening at the end of May (Memorial Day) and the plan is to be open each Saturday June through September. Looking for people interested in joining a two-member TEAM. The more teams we have the “lighter the load” so that each would only have to be at the school once a month or less. Teams would greet people, point out a few things in the school and answer questions. We provide instruction and schoolhouse “materials” to make it a very, comfortable and easy experience. If you would like to join Jan and Rosanne and keep this wonderful teaching tool and Historical Society building open, please call Jan at 207-450-6874.



Did you miss our meeting? Our monthly programs are recorded and are available through our website

<https://eliothistoricalsociety.org/current-programs/>

Check the links included with each program description as some will link to the YouTube channel.

Jan made a really interesting find when she went to the Town Hall to pick up some one-room schoolhouse pictures for an upcoming display. In the box were two pictures, both taken at the same location. One showed a group of students, with names written on the back and the notation "31 Seniors" and the other appeared to be a group of soldiers. They were posing on the steps of a building with the inscription on it "Eliot High School 1676-18". It certainly wasn't like any high school that we had in Eliot, so, with only the names on the back to go on we started a



search of those names. Finding that most came from the Boston area during the 1860s a search revealed that it was "The Eliot School", located in Jamaica Plain, Boston. The school has a really interesting history. In 1676, a group of local residents donated corn and land to support a school. Today, it is one of a small group of colonial-era schools that have survived. It was established at the end of King Philip's War, in 1689, when Rev. John Eliot (not the John Eliot, from Newcastle, who is thought to be the one for whom our town was named) gave 75 acres of lands, part of the traditional lands of the Massachusetts people. He gave it with the stipulation that the school educate Native Americans and Africans as well as colonial children, although there is no historical evidence to suggest that the trustees of the school adhered to his plan. For 200 years it was a grammar school and beginning in the late 19th century it turned increasingly to arts instruction. By the late 1800s it had left the public school system and had added manual arts and vocational education, including



instruction in wood carving, sewing, carpentry, basketry, home economics and even plumbing, as it adapted with the times, and entered the 20th century. Training was offered for schoolteachers and adults and classes for children after school time. Today, the Eliot School, offers classes to people of all ages in fine and applied arts. It is a mystery as to why it was stored with the others, but seems that someone must have seen "Eliot High School" and thought it was ours

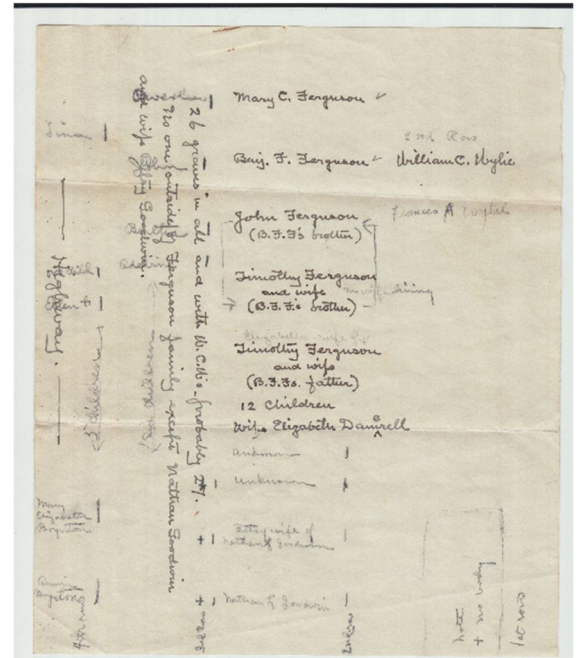


## Ferguson - Wylie - Gerrish Family

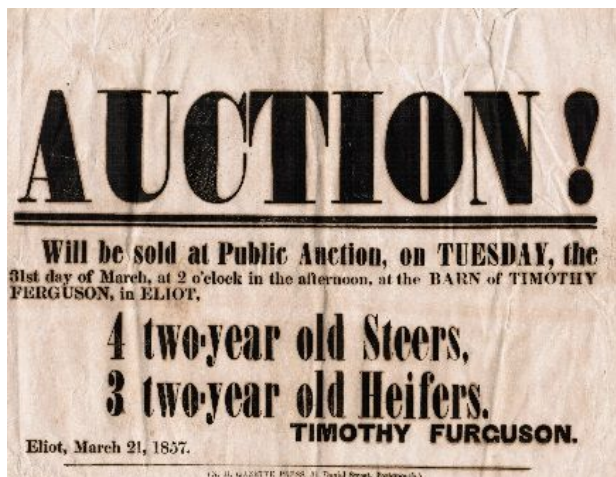
Editor note: This continuing series explores the Ferguson, Wylie, Gerrish family through further research, using the papers brought to us by Warren Walkup. If you have corrections or more information please contact us so that we can gain a more accurate understanding of this family and their lands.

The cemetery that the Walkups had come to see was that of **Benjamin F. Ferguson** (1807-1863), whose grandfather, Timothy, was a brother to Nathan Ferguson. Benjamin was born in Eliot (then Kittery), to Timothy (1776-1844) and Elizabeth (Demerell) Ferguson. His grandparents Timothy and Sarah (Paul) Ferguson married in 1775, and his great-grand parents were Stephen Ferguson (1746-1802) and Shuah Bartlett, the daughter of Nathan and Sarah (Shapleigh) Bartlett.

Timothy (1776-1844), and several members of his family and that of his son Benjamin F. (1807-1863) are buried in the cemetery south of that of Stephen and Nathan Ferguson. The cemetery is located on the other side of the road and opposite the house that, in 1872, was owned by Sarah L. Ferguson, the widow of Benjamin's son John H. Ferguson (1834-1862). In the papers is a drawing of the cemetery and those buried there, at the time.



Hand drawn map of the Timothy/Benjamin Ferguson Cemetery

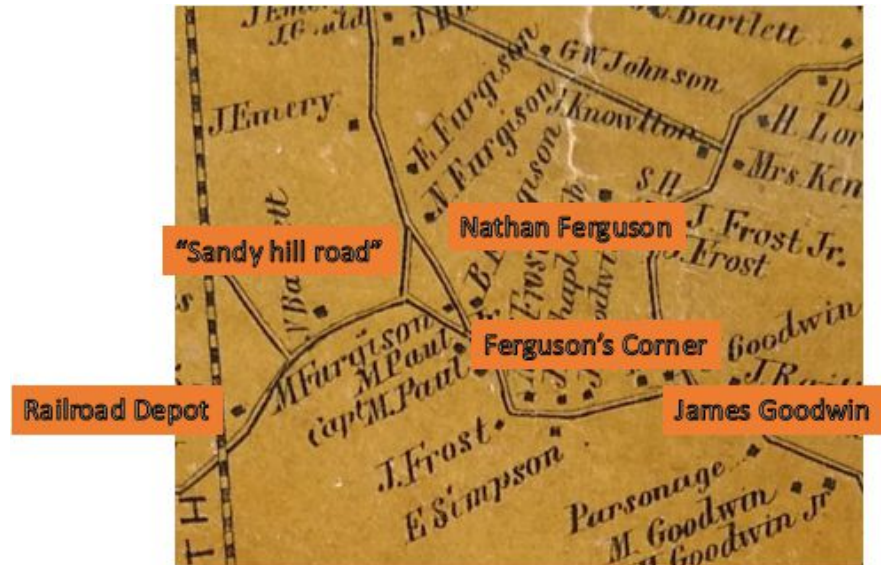


In 1779, Timothy Ferguson (wife Sarah Paul) and his brother Reuben divided up 70 acres that they jointly held "lying at a place called the Great Hill near Sturgeon Creek in Kittery... and is the land whereon Timothy now dwells" with Timothy taking 35 acres on the east side of Goodwin Road. This is the same land that grandson Benjamin (1807-1863) would later inherit from his father and make his home. Although the house is now replaced by another, the location is shown on an 1856 map of Eliot.

The insurance policy from *The Eliot and Kittery Mutual Fire Ins. Company*, dated 1858, shows the house was insured for \$300 and the barn for \$75, at a cost of \$22.50 for a six-year period. Benjamin Ferguson (1806-1863) was a farmer, ship carpenter, and also served as Surveyor of Highways during the 1842-58 period. He had charge of the road described as "beginning at the mouth of the road near the dwelling of James Goodwin, then to the RR depot; also, the road from Ferguson's corner to the mouth of the road near the dwelling house of Nathan Ferguson". This

would correspond to the stretch from Brixham Road, down Goodwin Road, to Depot Road and then on to the Depot (now intersection with 236), as well as the stretch of Goodwin road from Rosemary Corner (where Benjamin lived) to the old road that goes by the family cemetery - also known as Sandy Hill Road.

In June of 1842 he exercised his authority and gave notice to neighbor Francis Frost to “remove your fence on the old line, where your property abuts the highway beginning at land of Timothy Ferguson, from thence southerly to the dwelling house of Capt. Moses Paul. “*I request to have the road fenced out 49 ½ feet in width. If this is not complied with and fenced out within four days from this date, I shall have you indicted [sic] before the Grand Jury.*” ...**To be continued**



**I**n the last newsletter we told you about an inquiry concerning George Rogers, and mentioned the home at 215 Main Street. Earlier, last year we had an inquiry from the owner of that house. He told us about a brick cistern that was located under the stone patio off the back door to the house and the 3-season porch. He was preparing to work on the property and, was destined to be covered over in a few weeks. He wondered if the Historical Society might have some information about it. My husband, Bob Fisher, and I went over to have a



look and had a very nice visit. The circular opening, about 1 ½ feet high, and 3 feet in diameter, above the patio floor was covered with a broken wooden top. The interior, below-ground elongated oval vault was lined with brickwork. It was unclear if it was as old as the house (1819). The outer brickwork was quite crumbly but that within the tank looked like new. As reported before, the house is on land that once belonged to Joseph Hammond who deeded to







Timothy Spinney, the builder of the house. Because of the house's location near the Piscataqua and site of the old Rogers brickyard it is thought that the bricks for it were made locally.

The top of the vault was domed and appeared to be made of some kind of metal - lead? tin? There was a pipe coming from the house and another pipe, on the other side, heading off from the patio area. They appear to be

connected with a metal pipe that is partly above the level of the water (where a snake was sitting when we arrived).

Knowing very little about these things, Bob and I took some pictures and then reached out to Tad Baker. Tad said that it would not be unusual for cisterns in the early 1800s to be made from brick and that it would hold up quite well under the water so, looking at the pictures, he would believe it was original to the house.

Talking later with Paul Johnson, he said he had a very similar cistern at his 1835 house in Eliot (Constructor Fernald House). It was at the back of the house and he had installed a patio over it. The brick cylinder stuck up about 1 ½ feet and it was domed as well, with a concrete disk that covered the opening, rather than the wooden cover and it too was lined with bricks. He had heard of others in the town, so if anyone knows of any please let us know!

## **AREA NEWS and EVENTS**

The Acton-Shapleigh Historical Society has begun their in-person meetings and even more importantly, for those of us who don't wish to travel to night meetings, has videotaped their programs and put on YouTube. I had written, previously, about their program ***The Ghost of Shapleigh Plains*** and the video is now up. You can follow this link -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=frxrqLTfw0Y&list=PLhTTABB8okShDixkL00VcO7V3QqZKnjR6>

Intro - Several Maine towns hold mysterious and ghoulish legends and lore. Shapleigh's tale goes back over 200 years. It involves a pastor, an innkeeper, a belated young man and a ghost, and has been passed down orally for so long that times, names and locations have been convoluted. Steve Huntress, born and raised in Shapleigh is the presenter.

## March 22



### Eliot Comprehensive Plan UPDATE

Public Input Session  
Wednesday, March 22, 2023  
Regatta Room @ Eliot Commons

Join us for either or both sessions:

Community Visioning Session  
Drop in anytime between  
3:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

Comprehensive Plan  
Committee Meeting  
6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.  
Public welcome

Bring your ideas for Eliot's future, meet your  
neighbors, & enjoy light refreshments.  
For more info, [www.eliotmaine.org/planning-department](http://www.eliotmaine.org/planning-department)



**March 24 – South Berwick/Eliot  
Rotary 12<sup>th</sup> annual GEO QUIZ** 6p at  
Marshwood Great Works School. Prize raffles,  
refreshments and audience participation prizes!  
This year's event will raise money for the Eben  
Ezer School in Milot, Haiti which Rotary has  
supported since 2008.

**March 27 – Citizen Option  
Meeting/Public Hearing.** 6pm Eliot  
Elementary School Gymnasium



**April 1 – Charity Egg  
Hunt at Sandy Hill Farm!** Rain date of Sunday, April 2nd! An event  
for all ages where you can have fun but also give back to your local community.  
All proceeds will be donated to a variety of local charities.

The cost is \$10 for each PARTICIPATING CHILD. If you are NOT participating in the egg hunt, please DO NOT buy a ticket. We want to stress this because we won't be able to refund your ticket if you do so. So please double check when buying tickets! Please visit [sandyhillmaine.com](http://sandyhillmaine.com) for tickets. Start times are every 15 minutes from 9am to 5pm. Please arrive 10 minutes prior to your selected time slot and plan on a duration of 45 minutes from your start time.



## **A**n airfield on State Road??!!!

*Portsmouth Herald*, September 29, 1918. "It is rumored the Harding farm has been purchased by Mrs. Schophlocker (sic), who purchased the Jasper Shapleigh farm a year ago. That the Harding buildings will be converted into a club house and the large field adjoining will eventually become a landing field for airplanes".

It is actually not hard to believe that Lorol Schopflocher would have such a plan. She was a world traveler. She was the first woman to fly from England to India (1926), the first Western woman to cross the Hamad Desert between Damascus and Baghdad (early 1920s). She traveled on the *Hindenburg* twice; her passage on the ill-fated voyage on the *Hindenburg* was cancelled.

The Harding property was originally the homestead of William Augustus Shapleigh (1683 State Road) and was later sold by Mrs. Evelyn (Lorol) Schopflocher to Batchelder, reserving 27 acres of pasture on the Ely side of Rt.103.

