

The Sarahs:

Sarah Jane Farmer and Sarah Orne Jewett

Women and their families who contributed to the social vitality and intellectual life of their towns and made a difference in the world

Eliot Historical Society

Eliot, Maine

May 13, 2024

PHOTO and LOANED MATERIALS CREDITS

Rick Becker and his Facebook Group "Old Time Remembrances from South Berwick, ME" - Eliot Historical Society - Old Berwick Historical Society - Eliot Baha'i Archives - Rosanne Adams - Janice Cerabona - Becky Whitten Hanson



**MARSHWOOD
GREAT
WORKS
SCHOOL**

APRIL 2024



Sarah Orne Jewett standing in the doorway of her home

**Theodora Sarah Orne Jewett
(September 3, 1849 - June 24, 1909)**

Theodora Sarah Orne Jewett and Sarah Jane Farmer were born 2 years apart. Sarah Orne Jewett in South Berwick in 1849 and Sarah Jane Farmer in Dover, NH in 1847. Meeting later in life, when the Farmer family came to live in Eliot, Maine in 1881, they became great friends. Both Sarahs were friends, also, with many of the same intellectual figures of the time, including John Greenleaf Whittier, Willa Cather, William James, Julia Ward Howe and James and Annie Fields.



Sarah Jane Farmer at her home

**Sarah Jane Farmer
(July 22, 1847 – November 23, 1916)**

Did you know.... that Sarah Jane Farmer and Sarah Orne Jewett were born two years apart? Sarah Farmer was born in Dover, NH in 1847 and Sarah Orne Jewett in South Berwick in 1849. Although they were not childhood playmates they did, as adults, become great friends.



Sarah Orne Jewett Home
South Berwick

Built around 1774, it was a very simple house. The third-floor dormers were added about 1900. Sarah Orne Jewett was born in this house (the Jewett House), her family living with her grandparents. As a child, the family moved to the “Jewett-Eastman House” next door, which her father built in 1854. Sarah moved back to the “Jewett House” in 1887, where she wrote her most memorable book *Country of the Pointed Firs* (1896) and where she spent the last two decades of her life.



“Bittersweet” –Farmer family home
Eliot

Sarah Farmer and her parents returned to Eliot, in 1881, to live in her mother’s childhood home. A local builder added a tower and additional rooms, along with a separate workshop building for Moses, in the back. Their original house burned in 1904 and rebuilt on a much smaller scale.

Parents of Sarah Jane Farmer



Hannah Tobey (Shapleigh) Farmer



Moses Gerrish Farmer

Hannah Tobey Shapleigh Farmer (1823-1891) was from Eliot, Maine and Moses Gerrish Farmer (1820-1893) was from Boscawen, NH.

Hannah was a prominent philanthropist, involving herself with the abolitionist and feminist movements. Their home, in Dover, NH (where daughter Sarah was born) was a way-station on the underground railway. While living in Salem, MA, during the Civil War, she and her daughter would greet the soldiers as they boarded the trains south, giving out gifts. They also raised monies for hospitals in the south and Hannah wrote numerous letters, as well as poems, to soldiers and their families, offering encouragement and support.

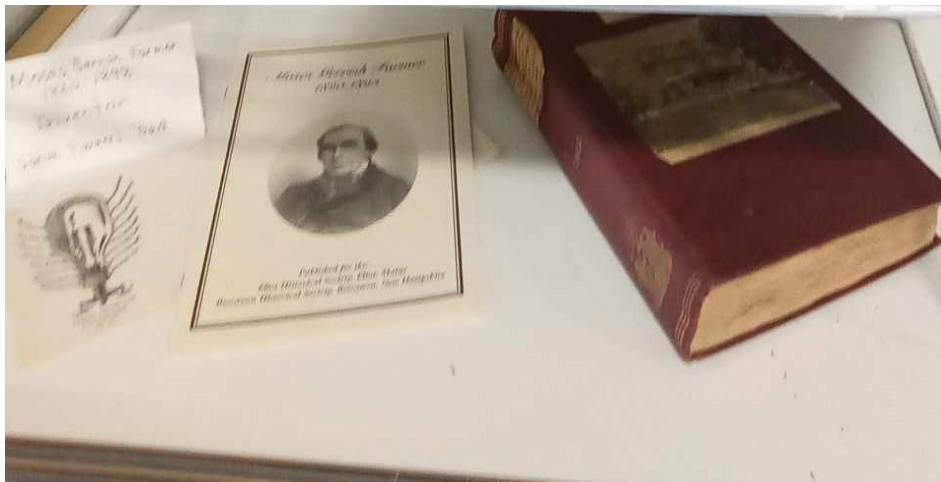
Moses was a noted pioneer electrical inventor with over 130 inventions credited to him, including the fire alarm pull box and first incandescent light. He also served as consultant to the US Navy and to Alexander Graham Bell and Thomas Edison.

Hannah built and founded “Rosemary Cottage” (1888) in Eliot, a summer retreat for unwed mothers and children from the inner city. “Rosemary Cottage” was the first building run by the “Fresh Air Fund”, first organized in Boston, MA. “Rosemary Cottage” closed in 1941. The “Fresh Air Fund” is still in existence.



Moses Gerrish Farmer pioneered the practical application of electricity, using it to drive numerous inventions, including the first electric fire alarm system and the “self-exciting” dynamo.

In 1993, Joseph Frost and Rosanne Adams put together a booklet commemorating the 100th anniversary of Moses Gerrish Farmer’s death. It was reprinted the next year, by the Boscawen Historical Society, adding more information on the Gerrish family in Boscawen, NH.





Dr. Theodore H. Jewett
Father of Sarah Orne Jewett



Moses Gerrish Farmer
Father of Sarah Jane Farmer

Sarah Orne Jewett was the daughter of Dr. Theodore and --- Jewett, and grew up in South Berwick, among the simple rural peoples, and travelled with her father, a doctor, as he cared for them. These associations gave her insight and became the subjects for her writings. As she gained international recognition, as a writer, her home became the town's most celebrated residence, receiving visits prominent intellectual figures of America and Europe.

Sarah Jane Famer's family travelled because of her father's electrical work. They lived in Framingham and Salem, Mass., and Newport, RI. She became her father's assistant and Sarah associated with the literary and scientific peoples of their day, widening her view of the world.



Sarah Orne Jewett's writing desk



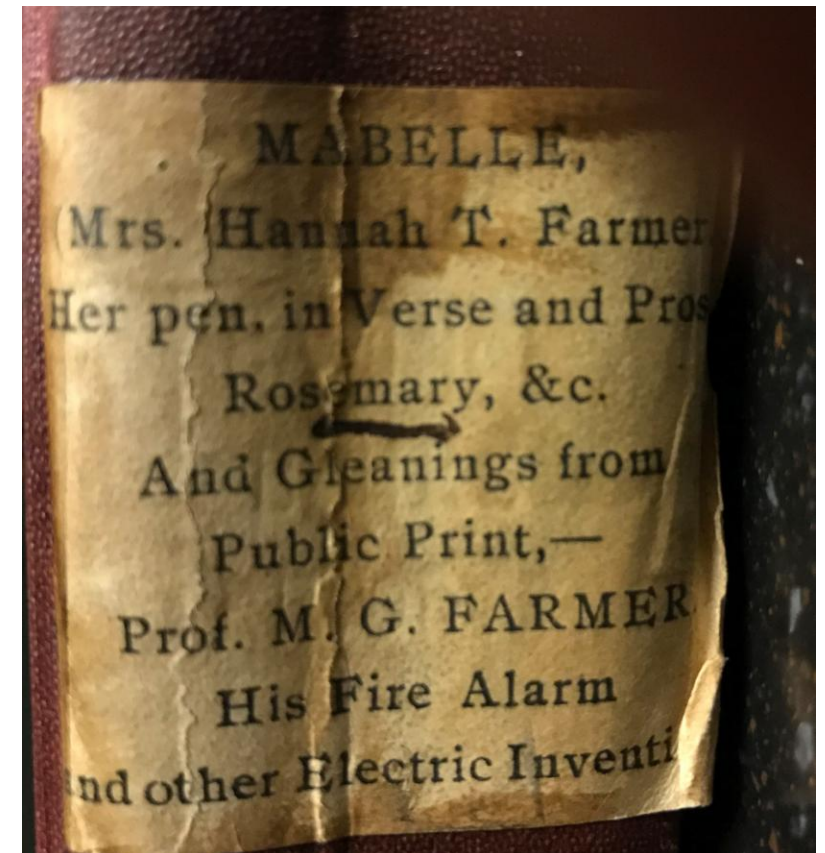
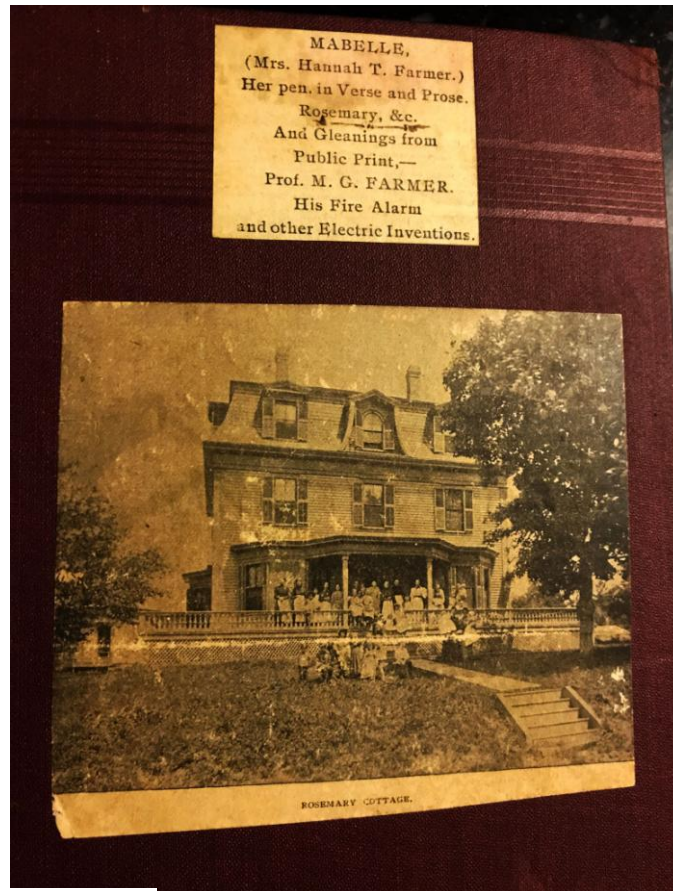
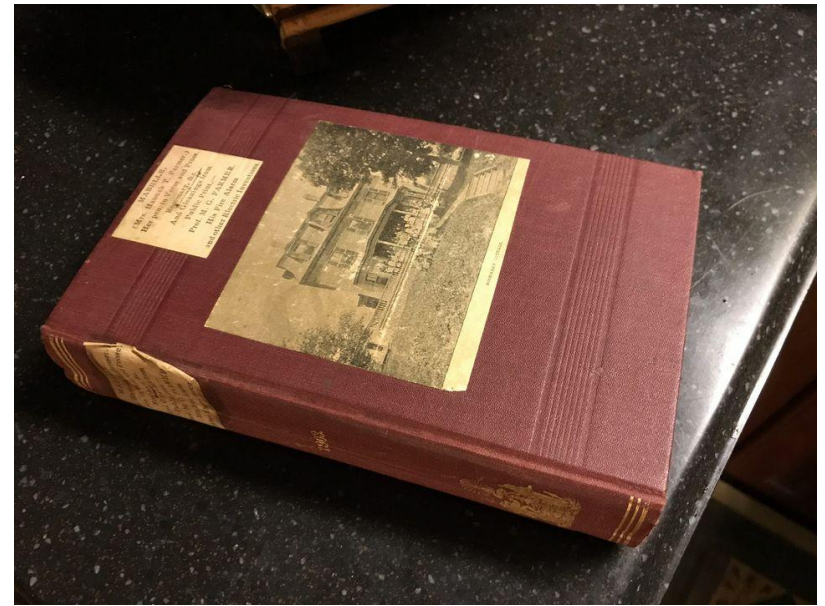
Sarah Orne Jewett

Did you know.... that when Sarah Orne Jewett's stories were first published she used the name "Alice Eliot" or A.C. Eliot"?

Did you know.... that writer Harriet Beecher Stowe's books inspired Sarah Orne Jewett to write about the lives of Maine people?



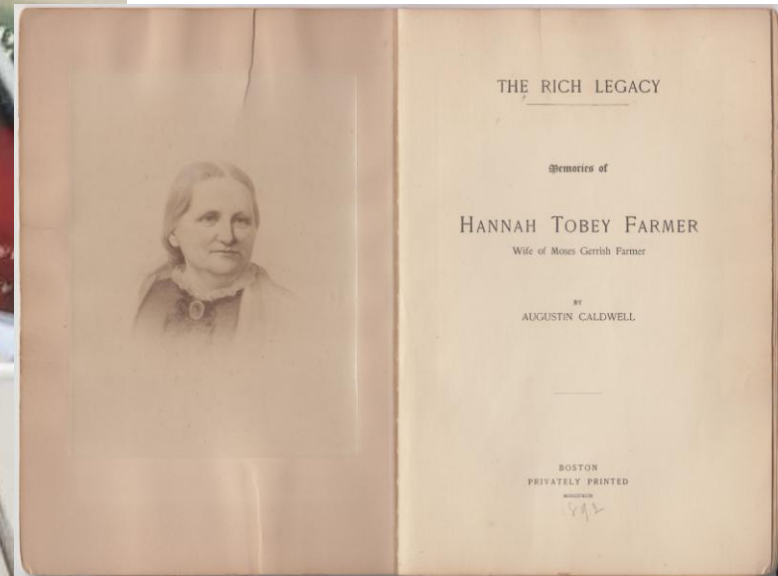
Sarah Orne Jewett's stories were first published under the pen name "Alice Eliot" or "A.C. Eliot". Her first published story (1868) was *Jenny Garrow's Lovers* and her first published book was *Deephaven* (1877) a collection of published sketches of a New England town. You can see here some of her other works – *The Old Town of Berwick*, *A White Heron*, and *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, *The Pearl of Orrs Island*, and *The Tory Lover*.



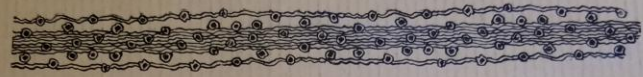
Sarah Farmer's mother, Hannah, was also a prolific writer and, like Sarah Orne Jewett, also published her poetry under a "pen-name" – Mabelle.

Did you know... that Sarah's mother, Hannah Farmer, was a poet? She signed her published poetry with the name "Mabelle".

Hannah Farmer has a book written about her titled "Rosemary for Remembrance – The Rich Legacy"



Did you know.... Hannah Farmer has a book written about her? "The Rich Legacy" Compiled and written, after her death, by her daughter and family friend and printer Augustine Caldwell



The Fete.

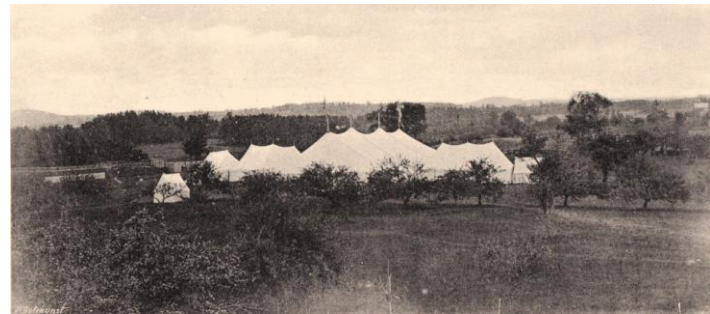
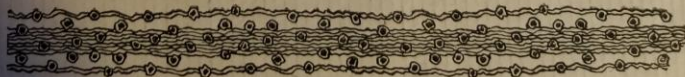
"The sweetbriar blooms on Kittery-side,
And green are Eliot's bowers." —Whittier.



Published by Eliot Library Association.

ELIOT, MAINE, AUGUST 21-22, 1888.

Vol. I. No. 1.



(FOR THE FETE.) A PLEA FOR FRONT YARDS.

I have said more than once what I thought about the disappearance of front yards in our country villages, for as I drive along the familiar roads I find every summer fewer and fewer of the old-fashioned gardens which at one time everybody liked so well.

What has become of the lovely white roses, and blush roses, and the great red conserve roses with their

The wise old soul knew how it would be. Some of the delicate plants missed the shelter of the fence that winter; the winds swept over and the snow drifted deep and the ice lingered late on the polyanthus and daffy roots. The first green shoots that made their appearance in border or climbing vine were nipped off by a tame calf which was allowed to run about the yards where she pleased. When the first weeks of June came and the garden was apt to look its

later years. Instead of being quick to understand the reason for so many strangers coming, and then preserving carefully all the pleasant and alluring features of the town, what happens? Trees are cut down, road-side thickets are grabbed up and left to wither; the old buildings which have interesting associations are left to decay or are spoiled by ignorant remodeling. Then people begin to say, "Oh yes, it used to be a charming place when we went there first, but now it is like any other. It has been spoiled year by year, and the money we have paid for going there has been used in doing away with the very things that pleased us most."

We who live in the beloved old New-England towns here by the sea must remember very often that we are custodians of something that is every year more valuable and interesting to the rest of this great growing country. The elder towns are mothers of the younger, and every year more descendants of the old townfolk will come straying back to find what they may of the early houses, and the old trees, and churches, and burying-grounds.

Let us try to preserve the character of Eliot, and York, and Wells, and Kittery, and the Berwicks, as best we



My neighbor and I have taken down the high fence that used to shut in the

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"Let us try to preserve the character of Eliot, and York, and Wells, and Kittery, and the Berwicks, as best we can, and not try to make them look like newer places not half nor quarter so beautiful as they. Let us keep the pleasant old houses standing, and our grandmothers' front yards blooming, and teach the old associations and legends to all newcomers just as long as we can."

SARAH ORNE JEWETT

grandmother, naturally, when the young folks confronted her with their improvement. "How can you do that? no use to say that it is the fashion, and so excuse ourselves for pulling overseers of the poor; we send money — the prophet's staff. But

The Eliot Library Association, under the leadership of Sarah Farmer, held a series of Mid-Summer Fetes to raise money for a public library. Her friend Sarah Orne Jewett wrote a piece for her friend, "A Plea for Front Yards" which first appeared in *The Fete* (v. 1, no. 1) of August 21-22, 1888, published by the Eliot Library Association of Eliot, Maine.

Members of the Eliot Library Association meet every July and August.

Location - First Congregational Church, McPherson Hall, 1981 State Rd. - 7 PM.

Programs feature Eliot and area history, are FREE and carried live on ZOOM. Refreshments are served.

Annual picnic is held August 12 @ 5 PM. Eliot Boat Basin. Bring your dinner, items for the grill, and come join us!

ADOPT A CEMETERY PROGRAM
Taking Care of Eliot's Cemeteries

We serve as an information resource for the care of cemeteries and a facilitator for the community helping pair individuals, families and groups interested in helping care for some of Eliot's old family cemeteries.
Call Rosanne at 207-752-0114

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Did you know... that Sarah Orne Jewett wrote a piece of prose for her friend Sarah Jane Farmer's Mid-Summer Fete program (1888) - "A Plea for Front Yards". These Fetes were held, by the Eliot Library Association, to raise funds for a public library for Eliot.

"Let us try to preserve the character of Eliot, and York, and Wells, and Kittery, and the Berwicks, as best we can, and not try to make them look like newer places not half nor quarter so beautiful as they. Let us keep the pleasant old houses standing, and our grandmothers' front yards blooming, and teach the old associations and legends to all newcomers just as long as we can."

SARAH ORNE JEWETT

Eliot's library was realized, in 1907, when Dr. John S.H. Fogg contributed the lands and an endowment, in memory of his father William Fogg, to build a library for the townspeople. Sarah's portrait hangs in the Library.

DEDICATION
OF THE
William Fogg Library,
ELIOT, MAINE,
MAY 21, 1907.



The Fete
by Eliot Library Association
MAINE AUGUST 21-22, 1888.

A PLEA FOR FRONT YARDS
SARAH ORNE JEWETT

"I have said more than once what I thought about the disappearance of front yards in country villages, for as I drive along the familiar roads I find every summer fewer and fewer the old-fashioned fences which at one time everyone liked so well. What has become of the low white fences, and the tall blue larkspurs and white mallows? Where are the snowberry bushes gone, and the persistent cinnamon roses? In many a front-door garden where there used to grow these things, there is nothing left now but a much-browsed lilac-bush and a maple or two.

Nobody can tell exactly how it all began, but somebody who liked town life better than country life must have come to his old home some summer and said, "It is the fashion, what is the use of having stone copings about the house-lots. There are no cattle about the street there, and we can leave our bits of ground open. My neighbor and I have taken down the fence that used to shut in the side windows of both our houses and it is a great deal pleasanter. We must pull down the old front fence here and make the place look like other people's."

Perhaps the grandmother, who loved the front garden better than anybody, was away that day and was treated to the sight of a fancied improvement when she came home at night. To be sure, the old fence was leaning, and some of the pickets were off or loose, but it only needed an hour's work or a new post to make them strong again. The gate and the gate-lengths beside it were of a pretty criss-cross pattern of wood-work, and the gate-stopped by wooden balls, plain and square built as it was, a touch of the old-fashioned use. It gave the front door, plain and square built as it was, a touch of the old-fashioned flowers were all the prettier for being shut away from too easy view.

"I look all outdoors to me," said the grandmother, ruefully, "and while the young folks said that it was an improvement. "How can you keep it up of fashion now," she said, "and to the



Sarah Orne Jewett was involved in a building also named for Fogg (but no relation found to Eliot's William Fogg). Here is our "Did you know" speaking about this.



Did you know... that Sarah Orne Jewett graduated from Berwick Academy in 1865 and helped to fund and design the Fogg Memorial Building there? It was built in 1894 and her friend Sarah Wyman Whitman, a Boston artist, who had designed the covers for Sarah's books, created the stained-glass windows for the building. Sarah's own commission is in memory of the Civil War - a dove over a wreath - and is the central window on the street-side second floor. The building was built with a grant from the estate of William Hayes Fogg, a Berwick native who made his fortune in the China trade.

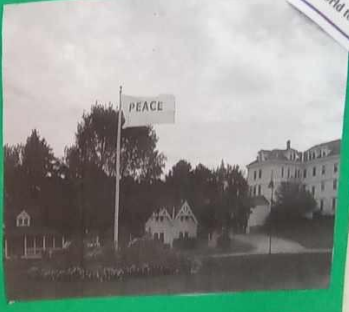
MISS FARMER ONLY WOMAN TO SEE RUSSO-JAP TREATY SIGNED



Did you know.... that every year, beginning when Green Acre first opened in July of 1894, a Peace Flag is raised just as it was, on that first day, by Sarah Jane Farmer?

Did you know.... that Sarah Jane Farmer was the only woman to witness the signing of the Russo Japanese Peace Treaty at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, in 1895. The only woman and all those men!

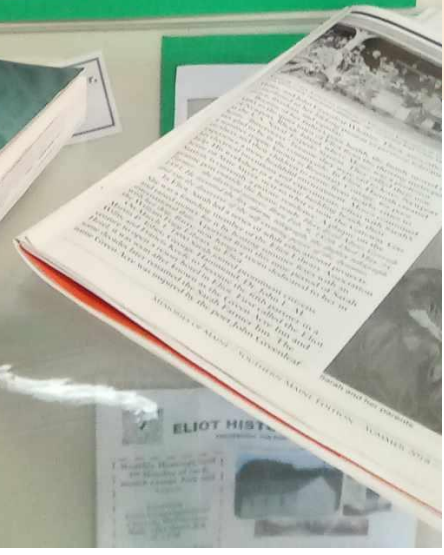
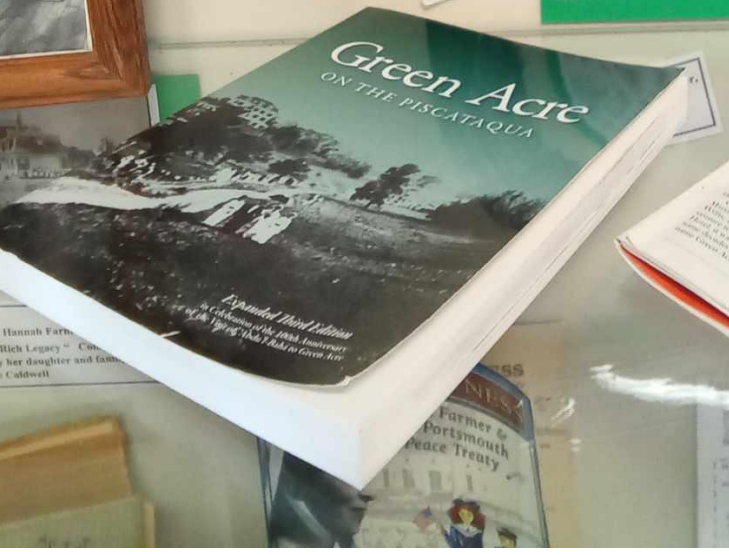
In 1894 at the dedication of the conferences, Sarah raised the first known peace flag—a 36-foot long banner with the word PEACE in green letters against a white background, flying on an 85-foot flagpole made from two ships' masts. Green Acre could be reached by boat, carriage, or bicycle (until the electric trolley and automobile made it more accessible).



While the Sarah Orne Jewett was working on the building of the Fogg Memorial Building in South Berwick in 1894, Sarah Jane Farmer was beginning a new venture on the grounds of the Eliot Hotel Company (of which she was an investor). “The Green Acre Conferences” brought the leading thinkers, poets, writers, artists and philosophers of the day to share their knowledge with guests. The lectures were always free, by donation only.

Every year, on opening day, Sarah raised a PEACE flag. The first known peace flag in the world, so raised. It was 36 feet long, green lettering on white background and hung on a ship’s mast that was 85 feet tall. For many years the original mast was stored in the barn of teacher Mildred Obrey.

Even today, now Green Acre: a Baha’i Center of Learning is known throughout the world and several successive editions of a book chronicling its history have been written.

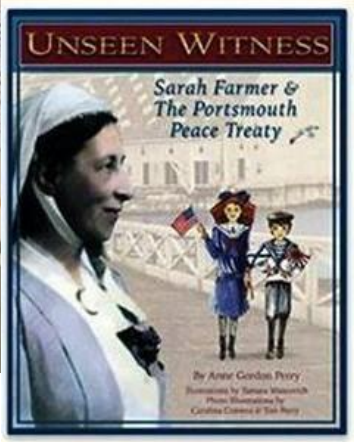


Did you know.... that Sarah Jane Farmer joined with four prominent men in Eliot to erect the Eliot Hotel (now the Sarah Jane Farmer Inn), in 1890? Later, in 1894, she started lectures bringing people from all over the world to Eliot!





Did you know.... that Sarah Jane Farmer was the only woman to witness the signing of the Russo Japanese Peace Treaty at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, in 1905. The only woman and all those men!



Sarah Jane Farmer witnessed the signing of the Russo-Japanese Peace Treaty, in 1905, at the Shipyard. Anne Perry has written a book about this event – “Unseen Witness”



In 1990 the Friends of the South Berwick Library made the pattern for a doll depicting Sarah Orne Jewett, as a fundraiser. Perhaps by the time our next display on the two Sarahs is up there will be a complimenting doll for Sarah Jane Farmer. Until then we have a corn husk doll, made by Jan Cerabona, to honor her!

