

# ELIOT HISTORICAL SOCIETY OCTOBER 2024 NEWSLETTER

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## Monthly Meetings are held at 7:00 PM.

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

Zoom link:

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



## President's Prattle

by Tracey Graffam-Dickson

In the shade of the trees, the autumn chill brings with it the sweet scent of fallen leaves. This is what I think of when I think of Maine in October, pulling on that favorite

sweater, biting into a fresh crisp apple and sipping some delicious warm cider. I love this time of year as do so many who choose to live here in Maine. It might be the most perfect season of all. All the senses are alive and inspired by the earthly scents and the vibrant colors; we are truly embraced by the season.

It also seems to me to be the busiest time of year – with families sending kids back to school, sports filling up the weekend schedules and the workday grows ever more frantic with renewed energy after the summer break. For our farming community here in Eliot that couldn't be more true! With the final harvesting of vegetables, the deliveries of produce and the increased demand of the farm stand, not to mention the ongoing tending of the animals, the to-do lists seem to double while the daylight hours seem to diminish by the minute. But I love this too – the intensity of it and the feeling of purpose that it brings!

### UPCOMING MEETINGS

OCTOBER 14<sup>th</sup> – Video “Farming 101” – a tribute to farms along Goodwin/Wilson Road (Route 101) by publisher Peter Randall.

NOVEMBER 11<sup>th</sup> – Veteran’s Day. Program to be announced.

DECEMBER 9<sup>th</sup> – Annual Meeting to elect officers, followed by our annual “Show and Tell” program and Holiday party. You are invited to bring something you find interesting to share during the program” as well as “goodies” for the refreshment table.

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Address: PO BOX 3, Eliot, ME 03903

Website:

[www.eliothistoricalsociety.org](http://www.eliothistoricalsociety.org)

Phone: 752-0174 (Rosanne)

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**Edward Jones**

11 Sanborn Lane, Eliot, ME

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With the season's activities in mind, we kicked off this month's programming with a renewed look at the history of gardening in New England and the value that it can bring to our lives and the benefits that it can have on our communities and

environment. In partnership with the Eliot Garden Club, nearly 50 attendees enjoyed a wonderful presentation led by well-known, local author and longtime

Eliot resident, John Forti. John shared some wonderful images and content from his recently published book, "The Heirloom Gardener: Traditional Plants and Skills for the Modern World".

His presentation brought together the inspiring history of heirloom preservation, garden craft and homestead lifeways



with details and images from the town of Eliot's own garden and landscape history. It was a wonderful collaboration that struck both the hearts of local



gardeners and the interest of local historians. We hope this program will be one of many more collaborations in the future. For more information about John Forti and his book, you can check out his website

([www.jforti.com](http://www.jforti.com)) or his Facebook page (The Heirloom Gardener – John Forti).

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Over the months ahead, we will continue to offer more programming on Eliot's Farming History while also learning more about today's local farms. We hope you'll join us and if you have the opportunity, check out the wonderful display at the Eliot Elementary School which captures pictures, articles and artifacts from three well know local farms – the Back Fields Farm, the Raitt Homestead & Farm

Museum and the Bondgarden Farm. Many thanks to Jan Cerabona and Rosanne Adams-Fisher for putting together this amazing display of some of Eliot's most important history and to continue in helping our students "Learn from the past and Educate for the Future". ~ Tracey

## IN MEMORIAM

**Robert W. Fisher**  
**1931 - 2024**

Our Society lost another active and supportive member and Eliot's citizens a champion with the passing of Robert W. Fisher, on August 2<sup>nd</sup>. Many probably are not aware, but when the town turned over the #8 Schoolhouse to us, in 1996, we asked at a Select Board meeting for help in establishing updated electricity at the building. Bob was at that meeting and immediately stood up and said he'd be glad to do it at no charge. This was just what Bob did, all his life – seeing a need and responding. As owner of his own electrical company, Bob, over the years did countless work for the town, organizations, and individuals, at no charge. He was always looking out for the best interest of the people of the town and was instrumental in the establishment of the town's zoning ordinances. He served on the Budget Committee, School Board, and Charter Commissions. Bob never missed a town meeting and was always speaking up on behalf of others too shy to do it themselves, and on issues that he felt were important to the town. He will be missed by many.



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Our September/October displays at Eliot

Elementary School and Marshwood Great Works School focus on "Farms". At Eliot Elementary School we took a look at the farms of Eliot, featuring "Back Fields Farm", "Bondgarden Farm" and the "Raitt Homestead Farmstead Museum". All three have interesting histories and today are thriving enterprises.



*BACK FIELDS FARM*, owned and operated by **Jay and Michele Meyer**, is an organic farm, under conservation easement. They are a licensed maple syrup producer, tapping the sugar bush on their 38 acres and the 150 year old sugar maples that line Odiorne Lane. Soap and cheese are made from goat milk. Under Connie and Silas Weeks, BFF grew vegetables, berries, and flowers for sale at a farm stand here and at the Portsmouth Farmers Market. Pumpkins are grown for a fundraiser for the local food pantry, held each October. This year the date is Sunday, October 6th 11-2. You can pick up pumpkins, foods, and baked goods for a donation. All proceeds to benefit Footprints Food Pantry Community Support Fund.



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*BONDGARDEN FARM*, run by **Paul and Helen Goransson**, is located on the properties of the historical Bartlett homesteads (Nathan & Sylvester Bartlett). It is a small farming operation that has been growing for over 30 years and is heavily involved in land conservation and historical preservation. They produce grass-fed beef, hay, pork, and eggs.



*RAITT HOMESTEAD FARM MUSEUM* is located on 33 acres acquired from 3rd

generation Gerald Raitt. A non-profit, the organization is dedicated to preserving farming history, with exhibits and hosting of the yearly Eliot Antique Tractor and Engine Show, in July.



**I**n the Great Works School display “Showing the Past - Highlighting the Future”, Eliot’s three farms are again featured, along with pictures of some of South Berwick’s most well-known farms of the past and present. Included is also a piece about “town pounds” and what they were and where in each town

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they were located. Once again we thank **Old Berwick Historical Society** and **Rick Becker** and his Facebook page for pictures and information for the display.



**I**f you're looking for a gift for the history lover on your list, or for yourself we have a number of publications on town and local area history, as well as postcards, commemorative plates, history CD's, children's games and collectables for purchase and/or donation. Please give Jan a call to have them brought to a meeting or to arrange another time to pickup: 207-450-6874.



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## ***Historical Societies Seacoast Leadership Summit Meeting***

The first "Historical Societies Seacoast Leadership Summit" was held on September 18th at the recently restored Wood Island Life Saving Station off Kittery Point, Maine. This was the first meeting of Officers and Board members of Seacoast-area historical societies. The NH town historical societies of Hampton Falls, Hampton, Rye, Greenland, and Portsmouth were represented, as well as the Eliot Historical Society represented by Board Member, Eric Christian. Before the business meeting commenced, participants were given a tour of the wonderfully restored US Life Saving Station. These coastal life saving stations preceded, and were eventually



replaced by, the US Coast Guard. They scanned the waters for ships and boats in distress and launched rescue boats from the rail systems over the rocky sea walls. Their original motto was "You have to go out, but you don't have to come back."

The goals of the summit were for everyone to introduce themselves and their organizations to each other as well as to define next steps in coming up with ways in which the collective organizations can find common ground and collaboration to tackle some of the common challenges. The summit was led by Andy Stecher, the President of the Rye Historical Society.



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A major theme that was identified in this first summit was the challenge of limited or scarce financial resources and ways to maintain and grow community support. The action items from this meeting were to distribute a survey among all the organizations to help plan future meetings and collaboration efforts. Another item is to invite additional nearby historical societies as well as indigenous organizations to future gatherings. The final action item involves developing ideas for collaborative fundraising focusing on grant applications which may apply to larger geographic or population bases rather than just individual societies.

The next meeting will be sometime in January in Hampton, NH with a goal of quarterly meetings. Any officer or Board Member is welcome to attend but they do ask that each society limits it to two representatives.



This summer **Paul Johnson** helped bring to completion the installation of a much needed heat pump at the #8 Schoolhouse. The ability to provide cooling in the summer as well as heat into the fall will allow us to offer the public a nicer summer experience and to use the building well into the fall months.



Halloween at the #8  
Schoolhouse

**October 26**  
**11-3 pm**

Stop in for some  
fun and treats!  
Special gift to the first  
25 children



**Come join us for our  
FIRST fall event  
at the schoolhouse!**

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## Speaking of Cemeteries



On September 18<sup>th</sup> the **Herrin family and youth group from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints**, joined us for a day of service in cleaning up the Shapleigh and Hanscom Cemeteries at the former home of

Moses Gerrish Farmer. Here are buried Moses, wife Hannah, her parents Richard and Olive Shapleigh, Hannah's siblings,



her son Clarence and members of the related Hanscom family. They were joined by **Jan Cerabona, Frankie**

**Thomas and Rosanne Adams.** Shortly after the group picture was taken, as it became dark, Jared Simms brought in a spot



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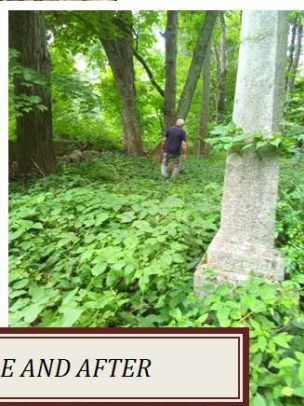
light so the work could be completed. It not only involved picking up the limbs that had fallen, but

extensive work to rid the area of invasive bittersweet vines (revealing two lovely granite



staircases), fill in holes (fox and/or woodchuck), and sawing the trees that had fallen down across the path into the cemetery. They did a fantastic job! We thank them for providing their yearly

manpower to help us and look forward to having them come again in the spring!



BEFORE AND AFTER

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On December 14, 2024 at 12:00 pm, *Wreaths Across America* will be at Eliot, Maine ~ Mount Pleasant/Brooks Cemetery to Remember and Honor our veterans through the laying of Remembrance wreaths on the graves of our country's fallen heroes and the act of saying the name of each and every veteran aloud. This will take place after the ceremony.

Please help lay wreaths at as many graves as possible by going to the *Wreaths Across America Website* [www.wreathscrossamerica.org](http://www.wreathscrossamerica.org) and clicking the red "Sponsor" button. The cost is \$17 for each wreath. The location designation is **MEMTPL - Eliot, Maine ~ Mount Pleasant/Brooks Cemetery**



If you would like to volunteer to participate in the wreath-laying ceremony, please click the "Volunteer" button next to the cemetery name below, and don't forget to click the "Invite" button to invite your friends and family to join you.

Thank you so much for supporting Eliot, Maine ~ Mount Pleasant/Brooks Cemetery and *Wreaths Across America*!



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