

ELIOT HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2024

Monthly Meeting: December 9th 7:00 PM: In person and by ZOOM @ McPherson Hall, First Congregational Church, 1361 State Rd. This is our Annual Business Meeting and Party. We will have our election of Officers, followed by a party. You are invited to contribute to the pot-luck refreshments.

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89970965186?pwd=b0JaVFgyOFRnNW11WjRlZlZlVSRDNLdz09>



President's Prattle

by Tracey Graffam-Dickson

Well, we weren't quite sure if winter would arrive this year. Across the state of Maine, many towns experienced record high temperatures during the month of November.

However, right on time, Thanksgiving arrived and with it the cold wind, rain and for the western and northern towns of Maine, a heavy blanket of wet snow, bringing down trees, power lines and cutting off electricity, heat, lights and for many running water.

What an impact these power outages have on our lives, livelihood and our economy; especially with our dependency on the internet. How much has changed in the past

100 years – in heating homes, lighting, transportation and communication. I think most days we take this for granted – until the dreaded winter storms arrive. I often romanticize about the days when life was a bit simpler and one would read by candlelight, find warmth by a wood fire and travel by horse-drawn carriage. But then I remind myself of how hard life was with all the work and time needed to prepare for the long Maine winters, with the cutting of wood, preparing and storing food and maintaining the horses, carriages, tools and so many other things. And, yet through it all, Mainers persevered and found joy – especially during the treasured holidays bringing families together from afar. I do appreciate all the conveniences and with it the security that modern life brings, but I will admit that I look forward a good snowstorm in hopes of bringing back the simple joys of life and sitting by the fire, experiencing the beauty of candlelight and spending time together “unplugged” and cut-off from the demands that come from an ever-connected world.



In thinking about the simple joys that the winter season can bring, I wanted share that in December, EHS looks forward to celebrating the Annual Holiday “Show and Tell” gathering and hopes you will join in. This is a chance for you to participate (in person or via Zoom) and share something from your collection, or a special memory or item that is dear to you. Unfortunately, this year, I will not be able to attend, so I thought I would share a special childhood memory of the season. It is a favorite song, that my sister and I would sing, while riding in the backseat of the car, as my parents drove along the winding roads of Western Maine that lead us to our grandparents’ house for our annual Thanksgiving gathering. With my father being the oldest of ten children, we often had over fifty family members gathered, including many cousins our age.

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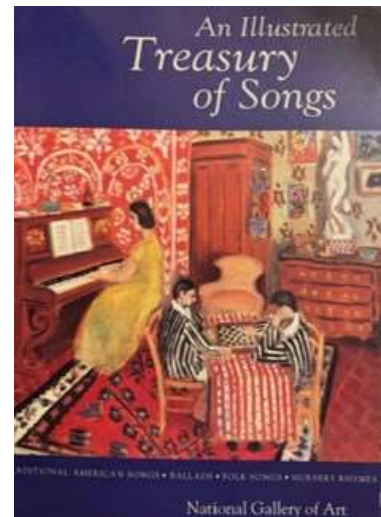
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Thanksgiving for our family, always meant lots of food, lots of fun and games; this made for many wonderful childhood memories. The song I wanted to share is based on a poem which was originally published in 1844 in the publication called *Flowers for Children* and is known as “The New-England Boy’s Song about Thanksgiving Day” written by Lydia Maria Child, who was a novelist, journalist, teacher and poet. I am sure you will recognize the lyrics and starts like this... “Over the river, and through the wood, To Grandfather’s house we go; the horse knows the way to carry the sleigh through the white and drifted snow”.



I have included pictures of the song book we continue to bring out and sing together. I hope this memory might bring back some special childhood memories for you as well. To listen to a wonderful version of the poem and song with Christmas Bells and all, Google the song title “Over the River and Through the Wood” and “The Tabernacle Choir”. It’s a lively festive version that I think you will enjoy.



Before I wrap up, I would just like to thank all of you who made this year so special for the Eliot Historical Society. Although I will be closing out my term as president, I look forward to staying involved over the months ahead, assisting with new program plans, helping with outreach, and fundraising when I can. If you’re interested in becoming more involved, please let us know, we would love to hear from you. Until then, may you find the simple joys of winter and be surrounded by warmth and love of family and dear friends. Happy Holidays and Best Wishes for 2025!

Tracey

The Great Works School display was installed in November. For these displays we take a look at history in both our towns (Eliot & South Berwick). We took a look at **The Brickyards of Eliot & the Mills of South Berwick.**



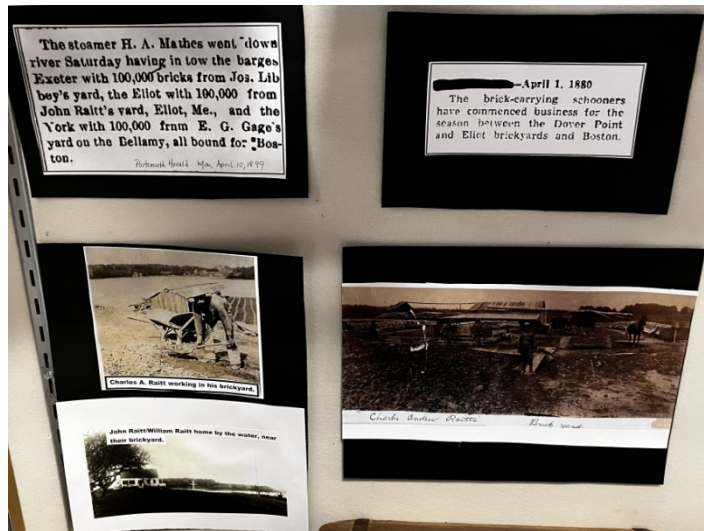
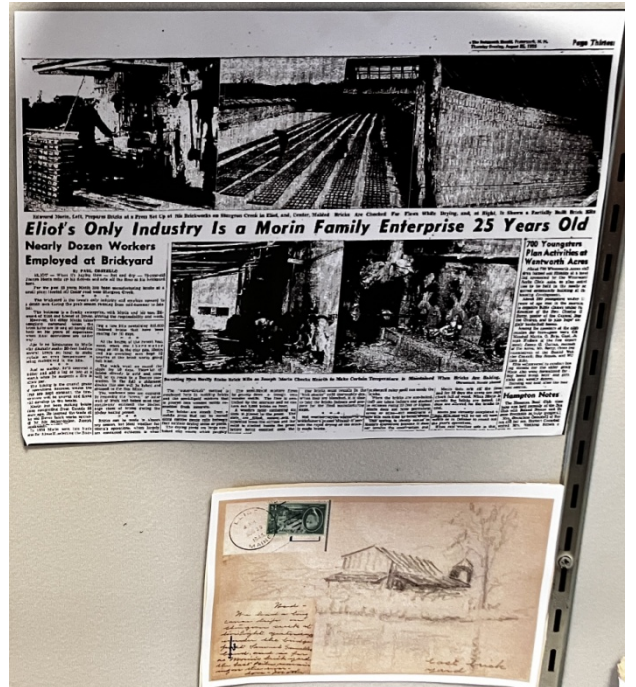
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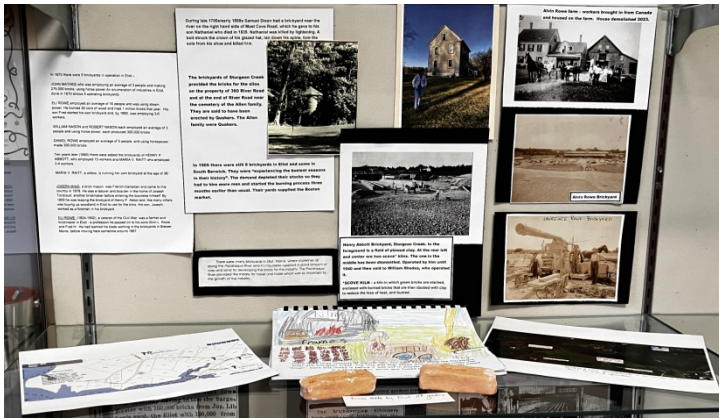
Featured are the Eliot brickyards of Dixon, Rogers, Rowe, Abbott, Morin and earlier brickyards on Sturgeon Creek and those off Tidy Road, down by the Piscataqua.



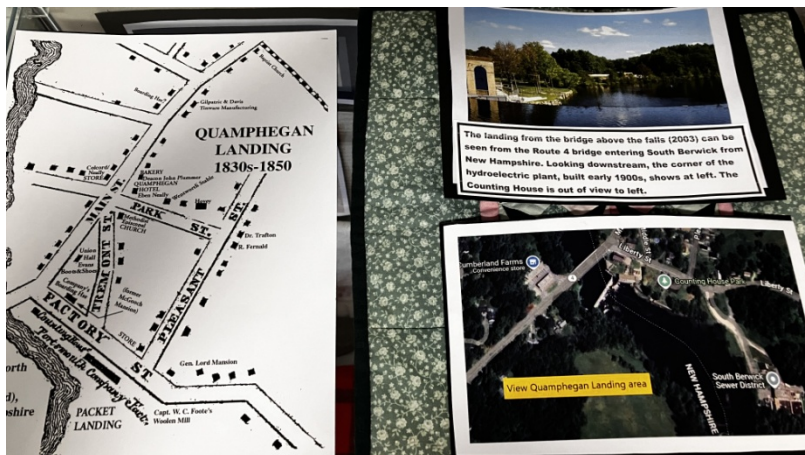
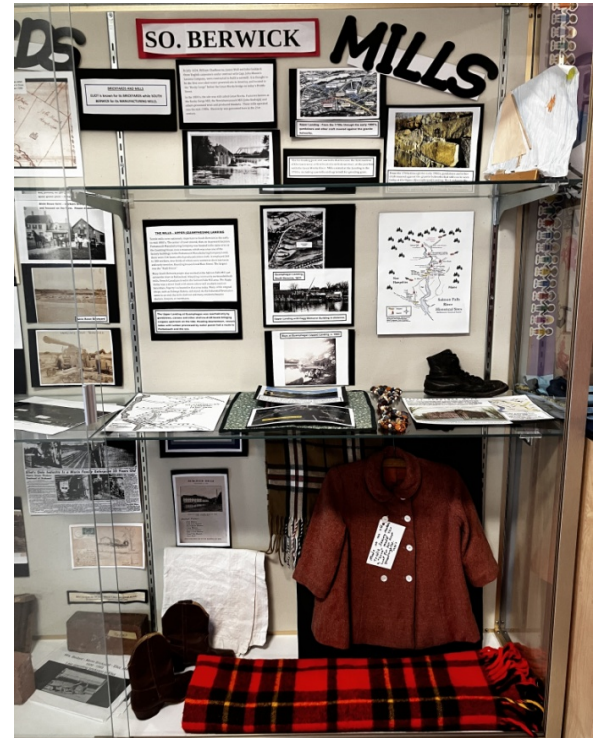
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For South Berwick, the early Great Works Mill and those of Rocky Gorge, Burleigh (Newichawannock), and Portsmouth Manufacturing Company at the Upper (Quamphegan) Landing are highlighted, along with the Cummings Factory on Norton Street.



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Again, a special thank you to *Old Berwick Historical Society*, Rick Becker and his Facebook group *Old Time Remembrances from South Berwick, Maine*.

The Eliot Historical Society is working with the Eliot Elementary School 3rd graders to decorate the #8 Schoolhouse for the Holiday Season. Rosanne and Jan with support from Julie have decorated the front of the schoolhouse and the third graders are making treats for the wildlife that will be on a tree in front of the 🏠 by December 14th. Make sure you put the #8 🏠 on your driving route of holiday decorations. Drive up Greenwood Street from Main St. in the evening and see if you notice our special addition.



In case you haven't yet heard, our long time friend and extraordinary teacher, **Ann Shapleigh-Shisler** is now the new principal of Eliot Elementary School! Her relationship with the Eliot Historical Society has spanned almost 30 years, beginning with consulting with her on the Eliot History Unit for 2nd grade! We wish her all the best and look forward to continuing to work with her in her new role. Congratulations Ann!

Jan Cerabona and Ann aboard the gundalow



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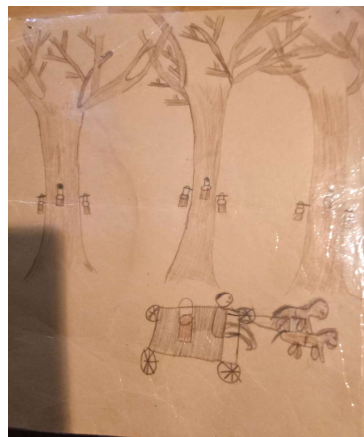
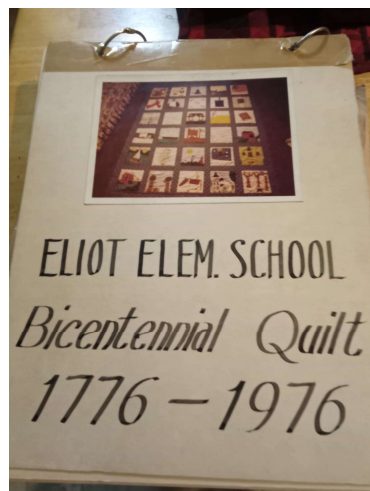
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Eric Christian recently represented Eliot Historical Society at the “Wood Island Summit, 2024”. The group hopes that by gathering together historical societies on the seacoast (Maine and New Hampshire) that they will be able to collaborate and support one another as we all struggle with such things as expanding our membership, funding programs, and caring for our collections. The plan is to meet 4 times a year and they are presently drawing up a survey.



Can you believe that in 2026 our nation will celebrate its 250th birthday??!! How quickly 50 years flies by. At Eliot Elementary School, in 1976, they made a special Bicentennial Quilt. The students all drew pictures and then one picture was

chosen from each class to be on the quilt. Adults then made the pictures into quilt squares. The picture shown here was made by Jan Cerabona’s daughter, Teri, and then Jan made the quilt square. **What did you do, back in 1976, to celebrate the 200th and what could WE do to celebrate the 250th?** We are looking forward to hearing your ideas ☺



HAPPY HOLIDAYS!
SEE YOU IN 2025

