Minutes of the

Eliot Historical Society Meeting

McPherson Hall, First Congregational Church

December 8, 2025

Vice-President, Paul Johnson opened the meeting at 6:35 PM, welcoming those present.

Present 19, including 3 new members.

OPENING ANNOUNCEMENTS/REPORTS

- Refreshment Sign-Up sheet for 2026 was passed around.
- Jan Cerabona reported on the school displays and thanked John Richardson who volunteered to do a display at the Great Works School, in January. The display at Eliot Elementary will cover the 1966 to present history of Eliot Elementary School, showing some of the activities there, as well. Paul Johnson reported that the town employees offered to do a "holiday" display at the Town Hall and people are encouraged to stop in and take a look. Julie will be putting together a US 250th themed display, in the spring.
- Paul Johnson has submitted a request for funds from the Town, for the 2026 budget.
- The Congregational Church has left fudge for people to purchase tonight, for a donation.
- Jan announced that some of the 3rd grade classes at Eliot Elementary will again be making "ornaments" for the wildlife tree (birds) and plan to also come decorate the tree and have some hot chocolate and popcorn that day. This will happen in the next few weeks.

ANNUAL MEETING

- Paul Johnson asked the opinion of the group as to whether to hold a meeting in January or February, considering these are often harsh months and we sometimes have to cancel because of storms/weather. After discussion, a MOTION made, 2nd and VOTE to not have a meeting this coming January and February.
- Paul Johnson asked for anyone who would like to take on the duties of any of the officers. Having no one come present, it was AGREED to continue with the present officers. Note: Paul will take on the duties (again) as acting President, with the help of the other officers and board of directors.
- Donald Webber, who took the place of a resignation on the Board of Directors, agreed to take on a regular term of 3 years. Paul thanked him for stepping forward.
- Treasurer, Kathy Runey read the 4th Quarter Report and the Annual Report. MOTION made, 2nd, and VOTE to ACCEPT the reports.
- Rosanne asked if we might put back the $4000 that was taken from the building fund to make up a previous shortfall. MOTION made to transfer $12,000 from the checking to the building fund, 2nd and VOTE to authorize the Treasurer to make the transfer.

PROGRAM – SHOW & TELL

The remainder of our time was spent in sharing with others things which had story and meaning, leading to some informative and lively discussions. **Tom O'Leary** talked about the **"Eliot Centennial" book** and the great information it contains about Eliot's history. It was noted that EHS has reproductions of this publication for sale. Tom also shared that he has a number of collections that perhaps he can talk about at another time. These include a **pewter collection** from the 17 and 1800s and **hand painted tin tole items**. **Jan Cerabona** brought in a **picture album belonging to her mother**. Although most of the pictures were unidentified, there were some interesting dance programs and dance cards. Among other things was a TOPS card (precursor to the Weight Watchers

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Progam) which stood for "Take Off Pounds Sensibly". **Sylvia Moynahan** was able to speak about the organization, as her mother belonged to it. Jan's family grew up in New Bedford, MA. Her father was the youngest of 8 with 7 older sisters. When he got married he was determined to leave the area; took a job at the Navy Yard, and served in the Navy. Jan showed a **picture of her, hand-painted by a Japanese painter**, who had colorized the original. A miniature version of the original her mother had put in an old square picture flash cube. Her **bronzed baby shoe** was also shown. **Skip Devito** from "Sturgeon Creek Farm", that features a 200 plus year old house, at one time belonging to the Rowe family, where part of their brickyards were located, talked about the farm, established as "Sturgeon Creek" around 1850; the wagon with the printing "Sturgeon Creek" on it, and old metal stencils that appear to have been used on wooden boxes (probably apples) when sent to the Boston markets. The names of the old Boston companies were on them. The barn was built in 4 stages, and the old 1700s map of Eliot shows the barn and a small house, which he surmises could have been slave quarters. The present house foundation shows the great age of the house. Skip brought in a huge **Oxen Neck Yoke** that he is planning to restore. **Bud Moynahan** added that in Victor Staples book about Eliot, he goes into detail about how they shore an oxen, lifting it up with chains and straps by use of pulleys. **Bob Curry,** a newcomer to Eliot added that in Nova Scotia "horn yokes" were used rather than neck yokes. Further discussion brought out that in the area by the present Sturgeon Creek Bridge, where Skip's home is located, was a tidal mill, which may be linked to what looks like a "roadway" in that area. **Bud Moynihan** continued with a discussion about the railroad and the path it took from Portsmouth, through Kittery and Eliot. When he was 9 years old he saw a train hit a car, which made a life-long impression on him; there was an at-grade crossing at Bolt Hill and the crossing over the railroad track at Beech Road was a high and steep one. Going too fast could send you over the side! It was asked if anyone knows where the train cars of the B&M Railroad are now. **Sally Hartford** presented a number of items that illustrated how talents and interests are handed down through the generations to her children and grandson. Her grandson Julian's great-great grandmother Mary (Hanson) Griffin was born on a farm in Barrington, NH in 1870 and gifted her husband Herbert Griffin a **bible**, when they married, that was printed in the 1860's. It contained a verse with instruction as to how to have and preserve an upright character. Sally noted that Julian, of course, wouldn't be able to read it because it was in cursive, something they don't teach in school now! Mary kept a **birthday book** which was given to Lillian, her daughter, who married Gordon Hartford, the father of Sally's late husband Francis. Lillian only had an 8th grade education. She had to go to work, when her husband left and she had to support her family, by herself. Her son and Sally's husband Fran became an industrial arts teacher **(pictures of him and his class)**, taught adult education programs; young people how to make canoes and how to build homes. In the summer he would take students to Sebago Lake and teach them how to canoe and water safety. **Kathy Runey** shared items from her father's "Ball Collection".Kathy came from the mid-west. After her father retired in 1985 he started a "ball" collection. He had a good sense of humor and thought it would be fun to say to people, "Come on over and see my balls". She shared some of the most interesting pieces – made of ceramic, wood, styrofoam, glass, some with sea chells and some other fun ones, along with some rocks that he collected. **Maureen Holderith**, bought the old Shapleigh house on River Road, that previously belonged to the Ogilvie family. Lydia Ogilvie was a member of our society and what would be her last visit to Eliot, the Historical Society feted her at our meeting as we celebrated her birthday. When Maureen was in the midst of restoring the house, the attic boards were lifted and she discovered an old child's shoe. This shoe, as was the custom, could fit either left or right foot.

Following the "show and tell", refreshments were presented and people were invited, while they visited, to help with some bird "ornaments" for the #8 Schoolhouse's wildlife tree.

NEXT MEETING March 9, 2026 at McPherson Hall, First Congregational Church, 6:30PM.

Meeting closed, after refreshments, at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Rosanne M. Adams - Fisher, Secretary