

A biography of
Lois Elliott Hersey
written by her granddaughter
Caroline Shirley Woodward



Lois Elliott
High School Yearbook 1923

Lois Elliott Hersey called many places home. Born in Boston in 1904, her parents were originally from Patten, Maine, and she often traveled there to see relatives. Later in her childhood the family moved to Montreal, Quebec, and she spent her teen years there. She lived briefly with a relative in Brunswick, Maine in order to graduate from Brunswick High School in 1923. After that she headed to South Hadley, Massachusetts, where she studied at Mount Holyoke College and received an undergraduate degree in 1927. After Mount Holyoke, she returned to Boston to study interior design at the Vesper George School of Art. At this point, education complete, she headed back to Montreal to start a career. She began to search for work as an interior designer.

Between graduate school and marriage, Lois was employed at Ogilvy department store in Montreal. At first she was a salesgirl in the china department but was soon promoted to do “detective work” for a Mrs. Carlisle at Ogilvy. Apparently she was sent to competing stores to collect information about the fashion trends and price points in other stores and report back to the Ogilvy buyers. After her post-grad studies were complete, Lois returned to her family’s home in Montreal. During this time she was encouraged by her aunt, the suffragist cartoonist Lou Rogers, to pursue work in Montreal as an interior design writer for local newspapers. Lou advised Lois to pursue this avenue regardless of compensation, and promised that if she accomplished this goal that Lou would introduce her to New York publishers.

Whether Lois paid any heed to this advice is unknown, but it was also during that time that she met and fell in love with Brad Hersey. Brad was a young, single, successful businessman who

had recently established the Hersey Paper Lining Co. in Boston with his brother Thayer Hersey. The brothers came from a Patten, ME family and had moved away to NYC to research the business aspect of the logging enterprise that had dominated the economy of their hometown for their entire lives. After learning how paper manufacturing was done, the brothers moved to Boston to establish their own business venture. The company produced many paper products, from scrapbooks to construction membrane paper, and their business was booming. Brad and Lois were actually distant cousins and met in Patten when they were both there visiting their respective families. When Brad proposed marriage to Lois, the lure of family life won out over the lure of a career as a designer/columnist. They were married in October 1931 at the Elliott family home in Montreal. It was a double-Lois ceremony as her best friend, Lois Bradley, was simultaneously married to William Ross.

Both couples settled in Winchester, MA where they wasted no time in starting families. Elliott Hersey was their first born, followed by Althea, Alison, and Stephanie. The Hersey Paper Lining Company was doing quite well at the time, and they were able to purchase the Powderhorn Farm in New Boston to use as their family's weekend getaway. During their children's school years, the family would travel from Winchester to New Boston just about every weekend to enjoy country life at the farm. Lois was a Girl Scout troop leader in Winchester, and she established a tradition of the Winchester Girl Scouts traveling to Europe. When Brad and Lois brought the first group over to Europe by boat, they were planning to travel the continent by bicycle. In order to get the girls accustomed to traveling long distances, she had the troop travel 60 miles from Winchester to Powderhorn Farm by bicycle. There were also many Boy Scout expeditions to Powderhorn. The girls would stay in the outbuildings at the farm, while the Boy Scouts would set up camp in the grove behind the barn.



Clockwise around Brad are Elliott, Althea, Stephanie, Alison, and Lois

The family, with the help of caretaker Henry Friedrich, kept horses at the farm and would often host friends. Over the years the farm housed multiple Girl Scout and Boy Scout troops, ski teams, many casual friend groups, the USA field hockey team, and the USA lacrosse team. (Third child, Alison, was a member of the USA Field Hockey team and the captain of the USA lacrosse team.) After the children were grown and flown and the paper company was dissolved they made Powderhorn their full-time retirement home and became active members of New Boston society.

At some point along the way, Brad and Lois were also able to purchase Great Meadows Farm. After years of being run as a “gentleman’s farm” managed by Henry Friedrich, this became the family home of Elliott Hersey as he married his Winchester High School sweetheart, Linda Bartlett, and established a dairy farm that their five daughters grew up working on. The girls spent time at both Powderhorn and Great Meadows during their childhoods.



Lois with her movie camera

Throughout those years, Lois was known in the family to be an avid photographer and filmmaker, often directing the action by requesting (sometimes demanding) that her family go through the motions of whatever activity they were engaged in multiple times so that she could get the shot *just* the way she wanted to. Lois had a film editing room set up on the first floor of Powderhorn Farm and spent endless hours splicing reels, creating titles, and cataloguing the footage she had created. In addition to the moving pictures, Lois was a devoted still photographer and would create annual photo albums for all of her children as Christmas gifts.

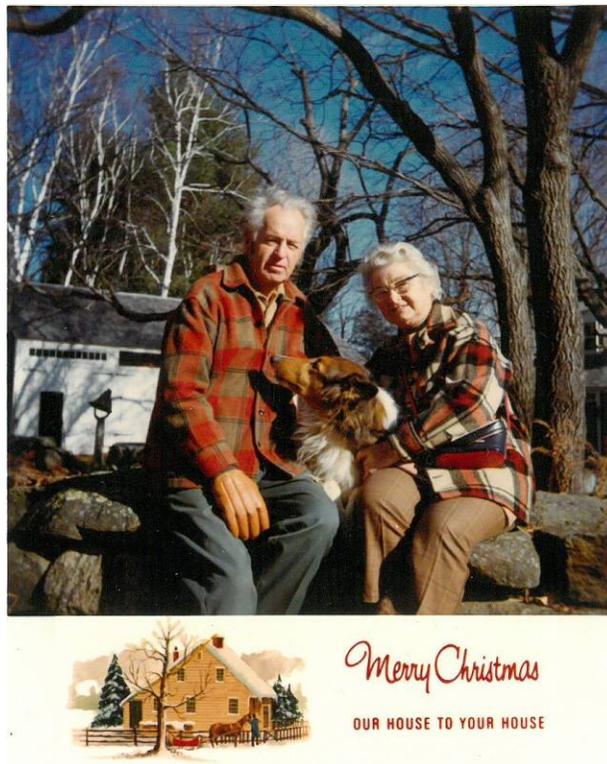
Brad and Lois remained at Powderhorn throughout their retirement. Lois was inspired to finally put her interior design education to work through detailed restoration of several 18th-century houses beginning with Powderhorn Farm, followed by Great Meadows Farm, and finally the

Wheeler house in Weare. Following these restorations Lois began a project of building new homes for sale on the lands that they owned adjacent to Great Meadows. These would have the design and construction of a colonial-era farmhouse but included modern amenities such as central air and vacuuming. The plan was to sell these homes one by one as she created them.

Brad died in 1976 when the first home was almost finished. Faced with new circumstances Lois decided to sell Powderhorn and move into the house on Poor Farm Road. It was the only house she brought to completion.

Lois clearly enjoyed recording her life in film and we are lucky and grateful for her work.

-- *Caroline Woodward 2021*



Brad & Lois at Powderhorn Farm – 1974