

WILLIAM F. ELLIOTT FARMHOUSE
2621 Woolley Road
Oswego
Kendall County
Illinois

HABS No. IL-1275

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED AND INTERPRETIVE DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
601 Riverfront Drive
Omaha, NE 68102

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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HABS No. IL-1275

Location: 2621 Woolley Road, Oswego, Illinois, 60543

The William F. Elliott Farmhouse is located at latitude: 41.672380, longitude: -88.311251. The coordinate represents the main entrance at the south face of the building. The coordinate was obtained on September 4, 2021, utilizing Google Earth Pro software (WGS84) and the accuracy is estimated at +/- 3 meters. The William F. Elliott Farmhouse location has no restriction on its release to the public.

Present Owner/Occupant: Turnstone Group

Present Use: Residential

Significance: The Elliott Farmhouse was originally built and inhabited in 1876 by the Elliott family, who were early settlers in the Oswego area. The farmhouse is a fine example of rural Midwestern residential architecture in the late nineteenth-century. The building's ornamental bracketed cornice, canted bay window with decorative columns, and arched crowns above sets of tall rectangular windows are indicative of the regional vernacular Italianate form, adapted for a rural setting.

The Elliott Farmhouse is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C due to the relatively high integrity of its Italianate design and its association to regional national architecture trends taking place during its period of significance, from 1876 to roughly 1885.

Historians: Scott Utter, Katherine Pohl, Kesha Patel, and Annabelle Grish, Fall 2021

Project Information: This documentation project was prepared pursuant to Illinois Historic Resources Preservation Act (20 ILCS 3420) and its rules (17 IAC 4180) to address Stipulation I. MITIGATION of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) Regarding Demolition of the Existing William F. Elliott Farmhouse at 2621 Woolley Road, Oswego, Illinois, signed March 29, 2021.

The property owner, Turnstone Group, plans to redevelop the property and surrounding farmland on both sides of Woolley Road into a housing subdivision.

The William F. Elliott Farmhouse recordation project was executed during the Summer and Fall of 2021 by AltusWorks, Inc., and Dirk Matthews Photography. Key personnel included Scott Utter, project

manager and historian, Ellen Stoner, quality control, Katherine Pohl, historian, Kesha Patel, historian, Annabelle Grish, historian, and Dirk Matthews, photographer.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: 1876.
2. Architect: Unknown
3. Original owners, occupants, uses: The residence was originally built for Mr. William F. Elliott and Mrs. Sarah K. Elliott (née Andrews) and their four children.
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Unknown
5. Original plans and construction: No records found
6. Alterations and additions: Small alterations have been made to modernize the house including installation of plumbing and window replacement. The north wing of the house is also a possible early addition.

B. Historical Context

The Village of Oswego is in Kendall County, about 50 miles southwest of downtown Chicago at the confluence of Waubonsie Creek and the Fox River. The area was known as a preferred river crossing for Native Americans and later for colonial settlers who began arriving in the 1830s.¹ The first settlers in what would eventually become Oswego were William Smith Wilson and his family in 1833. In 1835, two newly arrived businessmen laid out the village of Oswego on land then still officially owned by the local Potawatomi, Ottawa, and Chippewa tribes. A year later, the U.S. government forced out the local indigenous population and began surveying land along the Fox River. The land was sold to settlers by the government at the price of \$1.25 per acre in 1842. The new settlers named the town Oswego after the city in New York that many of them had come from. The area was also known locally as the German Settlement because so many German immigrant families had settled there. In 1870, a train station was established in Oswego that provided connection to the city of Chicago.

William F. Elliott was born on December 17, 1830 in Hillsboro, Ohio, and came to Oswego in 1854. He became a member of the local Presbyterian church and served as deacon, trustee, and elder. He was recognized as one of the most progressive and enterprising citizens of his locality and a great supporter of education.² His wife, Sarah K. Andrews was born on February 28, 1831, in Bath, Ohio, and came to Oswego in 1852. For several years she was a highly lauded teacher.

¹ Roger Matile, "History," Village of Oswego, Illinois, n.d. <https://www.oswegoil.org/residents/about-oswego/history>.

² "Obituary of William F. Elliott," *Kendall County Record*, Jan. 28, 1914.

She married William Elliott on October 16, 1859. The Elliott family built a large farmhouse at 2621 Woolley Road during the summer of 1876. During its construction, the local newspaper touted the farmhouse's large size, sustainability, and modern improvements.³

William and Sarah Elliott had three daughters and one son. One daughter, Belle, and Sarah died at their Oswego farmhouse in 1893 and 1906 respectively. After the death of his wife, William Elliott moved to Udell, Iowa, where he died in 1914.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General statement

1. Architectural character: The Elliott Farmhouse is a fine example of rural Midwestern residential architecture in the late nineteenth-century. Its relatively minimalistic Italianate farmhouse style is reminiscent of brick cottages that were frequently built during this period in nearby developing Chicago. The regional form of simplified Italianate homes is evident in this building's ornamental bracketed cornice, canted one-story bay window with decorative columns, and arched crowns above sets of tall rectangular windows.
2. Condition of fabric: The house is in fair condition. It appears structurally sound although there is notable deterioration to portions of the exterior wood siding and ornamentation. The outbuildings on the property are in poor to fair condition.

B. Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: The Elliott Farmhouse is a two-story house with a raised crawl space. It is constructed in an asymmetrical cross floor plan; as such, when viewed facing square to each wall, a projecting central mass appears flanked by recessed wings on either side. The dimensions are 65' x 37'-2".
2. Foundations: The house appears to have an elevated foundation consisting of a crawl space vented to the outside, with an exterior of rough-cut limestone masonry. Footings and crawl space were not viewed.
3. Walls: The exterior walls are clad with horizontal wood drop siding that has been painted white.
4. Structural system, framing: Wood framing
5. Porches, stoops
 - a. A wood porch provides access to the west entry door with wood steps leading up to it. The roof of the porch is supported with decorative wood columns. Above the columns is a band with decorative wood corbels and dentils.
 - b. A small concrete stoop provides access to the south entry with concrete stairs leading up to it. Above this is a small portico roof.

³ "Oswego News," *Kendall County Record*, July 27, 1876.

6. Chimney: The house has a single chimney composed of brick masonry that is in approximately the center of the roof.

7. Openings
 - a. Doorways and doors: The house has three external doorways that are each accessed by stairs. The original main entrance is located on the southern façade, it is a doorway with a decorative arched crown over a painted wood door with square glass panes. There are two additional entrances on the western side of the house. One The southernmost doorway enters directly into the house, it is unadorned and has an aluminum storm door and two paneled wood exterior door with a large glass pane on the upper half and what appears to be the original metal doorknob and backplate. The other doorway on this side enters the enclosed porch, it is unadorned with only an aluminum storm door.

 - b. Windows: The window openings on the house are mostly tall rectangular double-hung windows with wood decorative arched crowns and shallow exterior sills. On the northern, eastern, and western sides some windows are aluminum and vinyl/fiberglass replacements with an anachronistic squat, rectangular shape. Two of the original wood windows (one each on the eastern and western sides) have been closed over with wood shutters. The enclosed porch addition has three wood ribbon windows that are unique to the rest of the house. The exterior foundation wall has small horizontal sliding windows that appear to be vinyl.

Notably, the western side of the first floor features a one-story canted bay window with decorative spiral columns, scroll corbels, and dentils along the cornice.

8. Roof
 - a. Shape, covering: The roof is low-pitched and covered with shingles that appear to be asphalt/composite material.

 - b. Cornice, eaves: A bracketed cornice runs the entire perimeter of the roof with the exception of the northern section (possible addition). The open eaves are wider on each of the five gables, and narrower along the wings of the house.

9. Detail of alterations and additions: Original construction plans and/or historic records could not be found. However, analysis of the Elliott Farmhouse by architectural historians showed two sections that are suspected additions, as well as portions that have likely undergone substantial alteration.
 - a. Bathrooms: Both bathrooms in the house are later alterations. Floorplans show that each bathroom was likely constructed by walling off a portion of a once larger room: the dining room on the first floor and a bedroom on the second

floor. The precisely stacked positioning of the two bathrooms facilitated ease of installation of the necessary plumbing.

- b. Northern section: On the far north end, there is a section that appears incongruous with the rest of the building. This section is two stories but its eaves are notably lower and do not have the same bracketed cornice present on the cornice on the rest of the house. The interior of this section consists of a kitchen on the first floor and a family room on the second floor. The family room is only accessible via a staircase from the kitchen and a doorway in the second floor bathroom. The family room has a coved ceiling, unlike all other rooms on the second floor.

Throughout all sides on the exterior of the northern section, the windows do not have decorative crowns, do not follow the pairing or symmetrical arrangement of the rest of the house's windows, and some are obvious alterations as they are an anachronistic, squat shape, and made of aluminum and/or vinyl/fiberglass. The exterior wood siding and limestone footing do appear to be of the same or very similar materials and design as the rest of the house.

The current tenant reports that historically, farmhands lived in this northern section and were not allowed access to the rest of the house. This detail was unable to be validated with historical research, but may be supported by how this section comprises only the kitchen and a large room that could have served as sleeping/living quarters, as well as the unusual configuration of only being accessible on the second floor through an additional door in the bathroom rather than a hallway.

Given the above details, this northern section is suspected to be an addition that was completed shortly after the original construction, but it remains possible that it is original to the house and significantly altered.

- c. Enclosed porch: There is an enclosed porch attached to the northern portion that is also incongruous to the rest of the building. The porch is raised, with a cement staircase leading up to a front entry. It is located on the west wall, directly next to a raised open-air porch and entryway assumed to be original to the building. The enclosed porch's eaves are lower than that of the porch directly next to it and do not have the same decorative elements. The exterior siding is mostly narrow vertical wood slats that are not present anywhere else on the house. There is one large window and three smaller ribbon windows, all made of wood but of a different shape than those on the rest of the house.

The interior of the enclosed porch has coved ceilings, unlike other rooms on the first floor. There is a doorway and one tall rectangular window on the wall shared with the kitchen that appears identical to many of those on the house's exterior. The interior porch walls that are shared with the house are clad with horizontal wood drop siding that matches the house's exterior. Given the above details, the enclosed porch is almost certainly a later addition to the house.

- d. Alterations: There have been many alterations to the Elliott Farmhouse throughout its nearly 150 years as a residence. Alterations are listed below by exterior side:
- i. Southern side: Portions of the wood siding are missing. A first floor window is missing its decorative arched crown. The portico may have previously been supported by a column which is no longer present. Based on the age of materials, some windows and doors appear to have been replaced or otherwise altered.
 - ii. Western and Northern sides: The enclosed porch and northern section appear to be additions. Windows in the northern section of the building show no evidence of ever having been ornamented. Based on the age of materials, some windows and doors appear to have been replaced or otherwise altered.
 - iii. Eastern side: The cross gable has one first floor window that has been shuttered. The original wing to the north appears to have undergone substantial window alterations. The second floor of this wing has only one squat aluminum window which does not appear original to the house. The first floor windows on this wing may have previously had decorative crowns that are no longer present. The northernmost part of this wing (the possible addition noted above) has no second floor windows on this wall, and the first floor has one centered tall rectangular window with no decorative crown alongside an asymmetrical squat aluminum window that could not be original to the house. Based on the age of materials, some windows and doors appear to have been replaced or otherwise altered.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: The house has an asymmetrical cross floor plan, with the northern wing extending much further than the others. The first floor consists of a living room, sitting room, dining room, kitchen, one bedroom, one bathroom, and enclosed porch. The second floor consists of four bedrooms, one bathroom, and a family room.
2. Stairways: There are two interior stairways in the house. A stairway on the eastern side leads from the first floor living room to the second floor hallway, and a stairway on the northern side leads from the first floor kitchen to the second floor family room. The east staircase steps are carpeted, and the railings are composed of wood balusters and a decorative newel post with curved top rail at the second floor landing. The north staircase steps are carpeted, with a short pony wall at the second floor landing.
3. Flooring: All bedrooms, living room, family room, sitting room, and dining room are carpeted. Both bathrooms and the kitchen have what appears to be vinyl flooring. The enclosed porch has a concrete floor with outdoor carpeting laid on top.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The enclosed porch walls are clad with narrow vertical wood slats, except for the eastern wall which is clad with the same horizontal wood drop siding as the exterior of the house. All walls in the enclosed porch have been painted. The

walls of the first floor bathroom have been fully wallpapered and the walls of the second floor bathroom have been partially wallpapered. All other interior walls and ceiling appear to be of flat plaster with a painted finish.

5. Openings

- a. Doorways and doors: All interior doors, door surrounds, and door framing have been constructed with wood that has been painted. Most are four-paneled with raised molding, and many have what appears to be original metal doorknobs, escutcheons, and backplates of a simple design. There is an original bi-folding door in the wide doorway between the sitting room and living room. In the dining room, an original door has been abandoned in place due to the installation of the bathroom. The door has been modified so only the top half opens and provides access to electrical wiring installed in the bathroom.
- b. Windows: All windows appear to have wood casings, jambs, and sills on the interior. On the second floor, the tops of the upper sashes of the tall rectangular windows have a decorative curve. This detail is absent on the windows in the second floor family room and stairway.

6. Decorative features and trim: Throughout the house there are wide wood baseboards which are capped with colonial-style molding in the second floor bedrooms and first floor sitting room, living room, dining room, and bedroom. All door and window frames have a similar colonial-style molding. There is a cut-out with curved top corners in the kitchen wall where the refrigerator is placed. The kitchen has built-in wood cabinets in the wall shared with the staircase. There are some simple metal vent covers and a baseboard door stop that appear potentially original to the building's construction.

7. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Heating: The house has central heating.
- b. Plumbing: The house has running water.
- c. Electric: The house has electricity.

D. Site

1. Historic landscape design: The Elliott Farmhouse is the only residence on a large rectangular lot. It is grouped together with several outbuildings along a short gravel drive that provides access to Woolley Road. The western entrances of the house are accessed by a small sidewalk leading to a garage facing the gravel drive.
2. Outbuildings: On the west side of the gravel drive, there are two large barns with cylindrical grain bins alongside them, and a small open-walled structure. On the east side of the gravel drive behind the farmhouse, there is a garage, another large barn, and two small sheds. None of the outbuildings have historic or architectural significance.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Selected Sources:

“Obituary of William F. Elliott.” *Kendall County Record*. January. 28, 1914.

“Oswego News.” *Kendall County Record*. July 27, 1876.

Baker, John Milnes. *American House Styles: A Concise Guide*. 2nd ed., Countryman Press, 2018.

Gottfried, Herbert, and Jan Jennings. *American Vernacular Design 1870-1940*. Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1985.

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Middle West Publishing Company. Cartographer. *Oswego Township, Troy, Fox River in Kendall County 1870*. Map. 1:126,720.
<http://www.historicmapworks.com/Map/US/1593251/Oswego+Township++Troy++Fox+River/Kendall+County+1870/Illinois/>

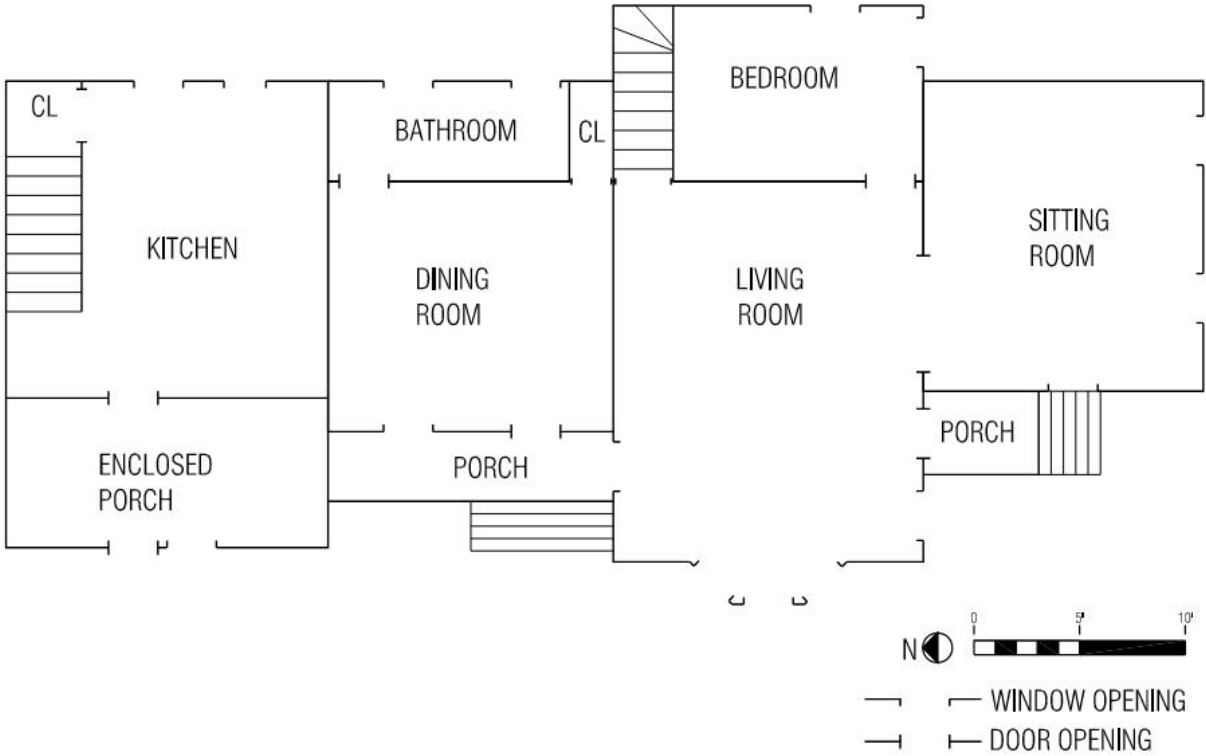


Figure 1 First floor plan of the William F. Elliott Farmhouse

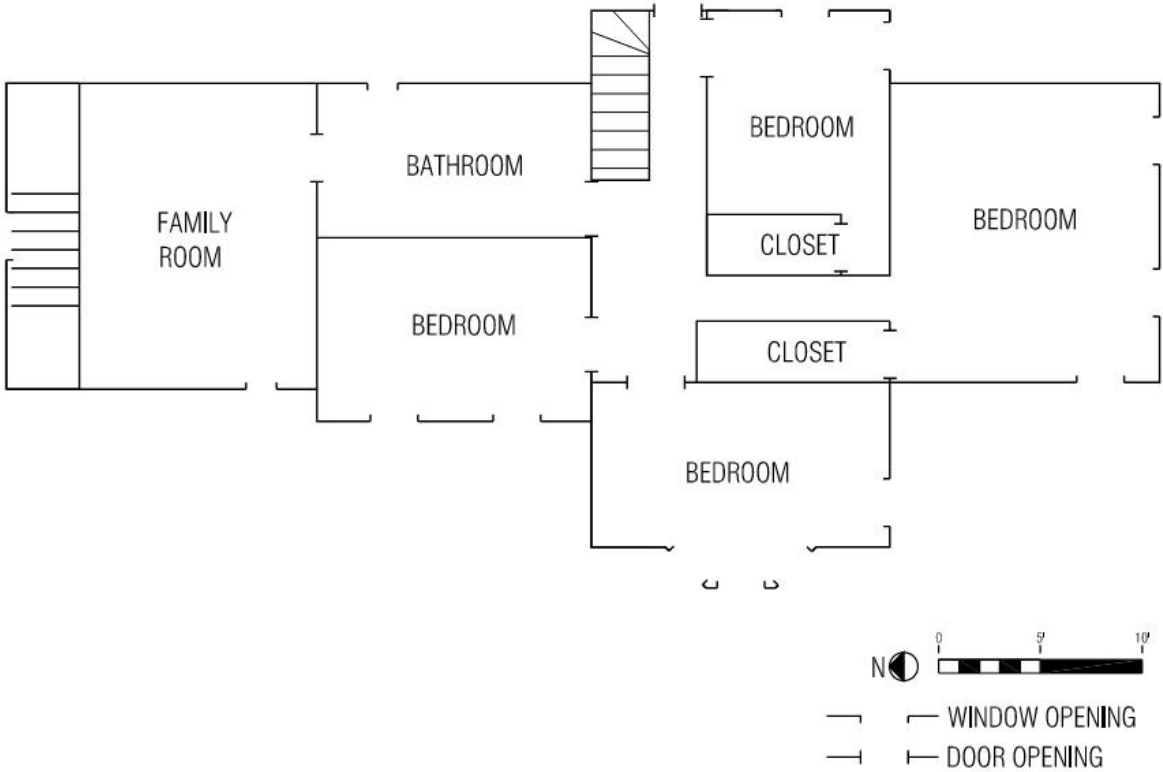


Figure 2 Second floor plan of the William F. Elliott Farmhouse

Bibliography

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS RECORD

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HABS No. IL-1275

Dirk Matthews, Photographer, April 2021

- IL-1275-1 Looking north from across Woolley Road towards south façade and outbuildings.
- IL-1275-2 Looking south towards north side. Outbuildings are visible in foreground.
- IL-1275-3 Looking east towards west side. Decorative wood features of open porch, one-story canted bay window exterior, and enclosed porch are visible.
- IL-1275-4 Looking northeast. Front entry, one-story canted bay window exterior, and partial south façade and west side are visible.
- IL-1275-5 Looking northwest. Original wood exterior windows with decorative arched crowns on partial south and east sides are visible.
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- IL-1275-10 View from sitting room into living room. Original bi-folding door, interior wood trim, and interior wood window frame and trim are visible.
- IL-1275-11 Interior view from living room of one-story bay window. Original interior wood trim, and interior wood window frame and trim are visible.
- IL-1275-12 Interior view of original wood arched window frame in sitting room.

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