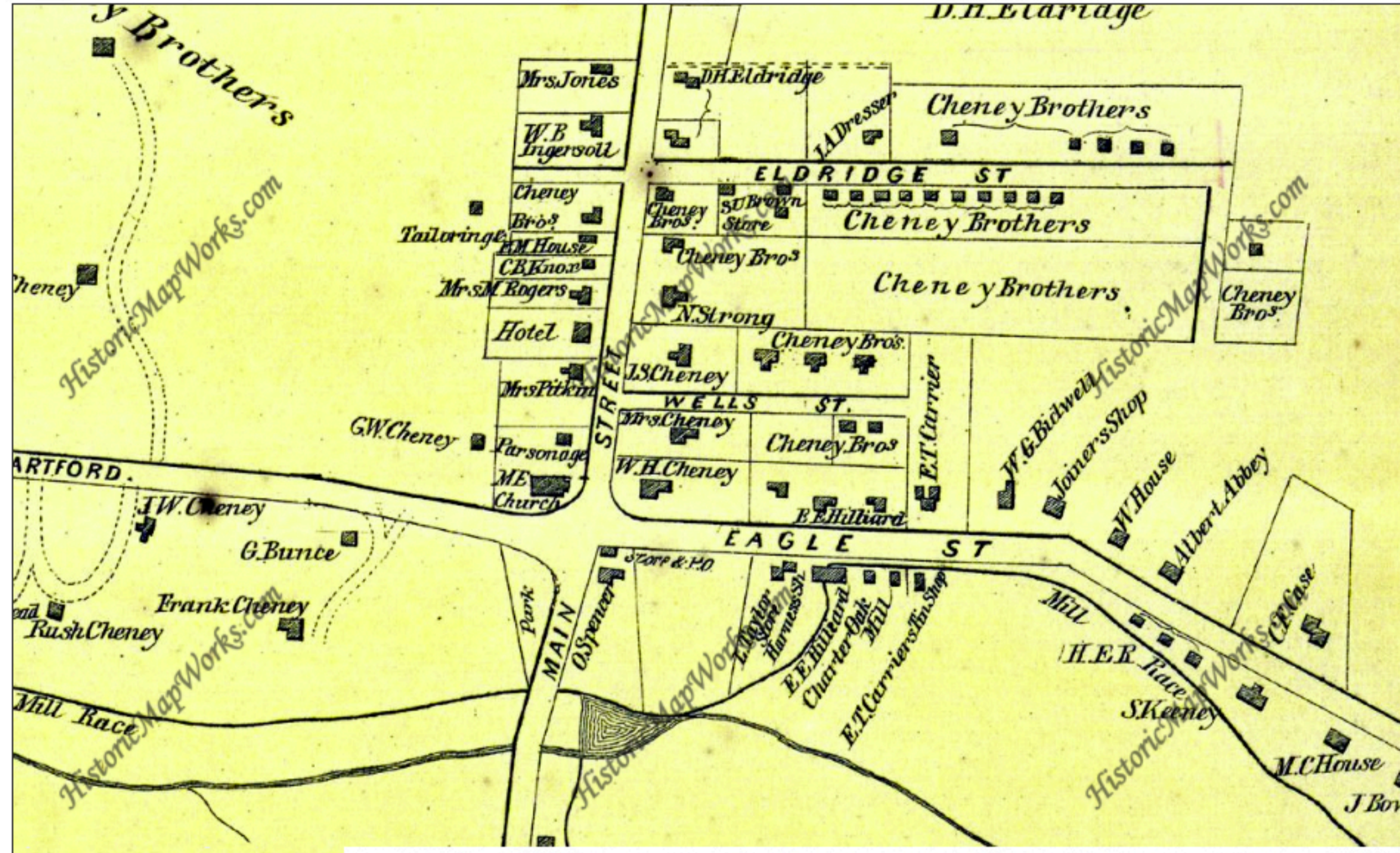
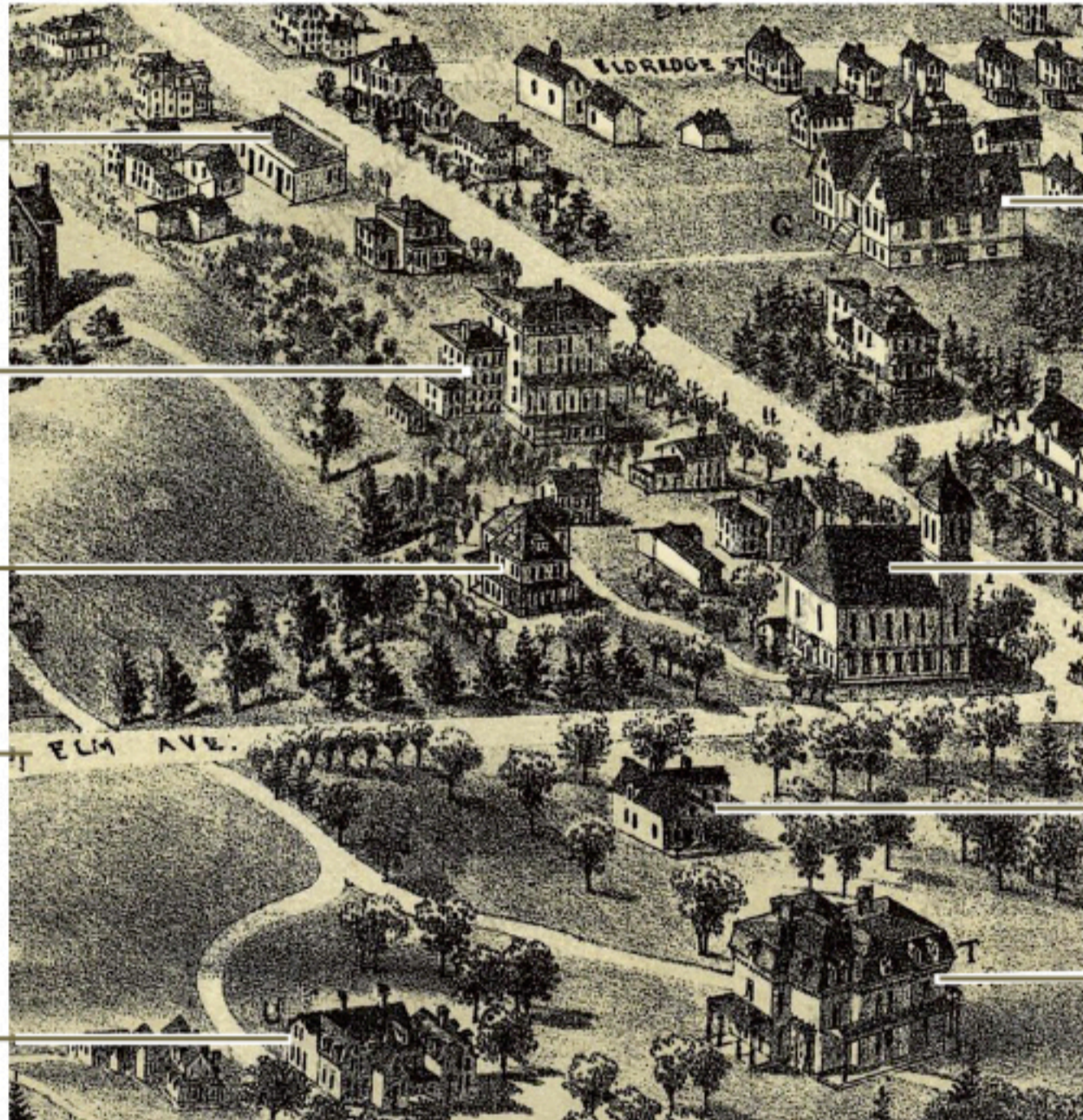


# In the Beginning South Manchester High School

By Dick Jenkins, Manchester High School Class of 1955, Niceville, Florida



South Manchester 1869



South Manchester 1880

Perhaps it's just me, but I've always considered that the land on which SOMANHIS or So. Manchester High School stood was barren before the Cheney's offered to erect our beautiful brick high school in 1904. Much to my surprise, I came across this map of Manchester's south end dated 1869 around Cheneyville only to find that the land was occupied by many homes and businesses.

Don't be confused by Eagle St. since that was the name given Charter Oak St. early on. Many of Manchester's streets were renamed as the town grew and things changed. For instance, School Street was once in the midst of Cheneyville, running from Pine Street to West Street. The Cooper Hill School was situated high on a knoll and perhaps 400 feet east of the corner of Cedar Street. The West School, later referred to as the Cooper Hill School, then changed to the Lutz Museum, and today, the Old Manchester Museum.

Many of the things appearing on this small portion of the map that are of interest, are:

(1) The Methodist Episcopal Church in 1854 occupied this site. Then in 1924 the South United Methodist Church replaced it. South's Church parsonage was erected in the early 1940s. Prior to that their parsonage was on the northeast corner of Spruce and Charter Oak Streets.

(2) From the 1869 map immediately north of the Methodist Episcopal Church is the Pitkin home. In early times both Chester and Mary lived here. Chester was a soldier in the War of 1812. Her father, Josiah Hollister, was a revolutionary soldier. Mary was an honorary member of Oxford Parish Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution. Mary lived to be eight months shy of 100 years while Chester passed sixty-seven years prior to his wife. Mary didn't occupy the home her last twenty years. It was later occupied by Calvin Tiffany, a jeweler and watchmaker in town for many years who conducted his business first in the W.H. Cheney Store and then in the new Cheney Block after the Cheney Store fire of 1898. In January of 1911 this dwelling became the home of the Open Air School. A Hartford Courant article dated January 26, 1911 read as follows: "Open Air School Started. Yesterday saw the opening of the open air school in town which starts with twenty pupils. The Tiffany house on Main Street which is to be used as a resting place for the children, has been fitted up with cot beds where the children can take their naps when they become tired."

(3) The map shows a hotel next. Mention of this hotel appears in the Manchester Evening Herald article dated March 27, 1968 written by William E. Buckley and Arthur H. Illing reading as follows: "An item in the feature, "Manchester Past and Present," in the Herald, June 14, 1967,

(5) Mrs. Martha Rogers occupied a home next north.

(6) Chancey Knox lived next north and it is recorded he ran a hotel. I'm not sure at this point if his hotel contained the tailor shop of K.M. House and Charles M. House, but the name Fannie Doty, a widow who came here briefly, ran a boarding house near or at the corner of what would become Forest Street and Main Streets. She appears in the list of residents in this vicinity in the Manchester Directory.

Forest St. was yet to be at this time. Chestnut St. was the express route to the Cheney Mills. Chestnut St. began about opposite Ford St. at the center, cut across what would later become Center Park and terminate at its connection to Pine St.

When all of these Main St. buildings were removed down to Mrs. Pitkin's home, it offered room for the Army & Navy Club, built just after WWI, the home of Fred Verplanck, Supt. of Schools, Manchester High School itself, and Teachers' Hall. I don't know of a single photograph of this lineup of homes and businesses before MHS and Teachers' Hall. It was in 1910 that the town agreed to have an Open Air School for children suffering with tuberculosis.

(7) George Bunce had a home on the Cheney spread, most likely before the land was completely acquired by the Cheney family. George Bunce owned and operated a paper mill. He later became partners with one of the Cheney's and that mill located on Hop Brook was completely destroyed by fire on March 17, 1874. The paper was used in the cloth-pressing process in the silk mills. His home stood slightly northeast of the Frank Cheney, Sr. home later to become his daughter, Miss Mary Cheney's home.

Notice all of the mills along the "Mill Race" or Hop Brook. Mills lined the Mill Race in the lowlands of the natural valley reaching as far west as to where the stream flowed under Hartford Road near the junction of Olcott St.