

## July 2017- E-Newsletter

*“Belgrade Information Center & Belgrade Lakes Business Region, Inc.”*

Have you ever wondered about the small log cabin that sits back off the road on Rt. 27 just south of the state boat launch? The history behind the establishment of this small building is both interesting and fascinating! The cabin (known to locals as the Belgrade Information Center) had at one time received as many as 1,200 visitors during the summer months from both the United States and countries all over the world. The organizations involved in the founding of the building had the idea to promote tourism to the “Belgrade Lakes Region”.

Thanks to the diligent efforts of past members of the Belgrade Regional Inc., and the Kennebec Fish and Game Association, the history has been kept throughout the years. The Belgrade Historical Society has been fortunate enough to acquire a binder of handwritten minutes, advertisements, maps of lakes, documentation of fish stockings, a hand-painted sign, and documentation of visitors as well as newspaper articles about the organizations’ activities. Some of the material in the binder dates back to 1948 with references back as far as 1919.

The first organization involved was the Kennebec Fish & Game Association which was incorporated in 1938. In 1955, they maintained a space for promoting tourism in the library in Belgrade Lakes Village. Prior to this space, they were meeting at the homes of members often gathering and sharing a meal with their fellow members as they conducted business. Their goal was to promote tourism in the Belgrade Lakes area by promoting fishing, lodging camps, housekeeping and boarding camps and area hotels for guests from away. They attended sportsmen’s shows around the country to promote the area. Members of the Kennebec Fish & Game Association were not just from Belgrade, but included residents from Smithfield Rome Waterville and Oakland. The group worked with Maine Propagation and Legislation Committees on projects such as fish stocking of lakes and ponds. One excerpt from minutes of the November 30<sup>th</sup>, 1948 meeting documents the fish stocking for the summer and reads as follows;

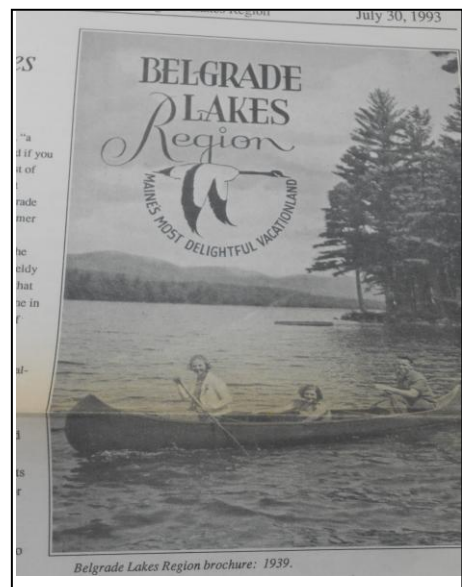
*“ Fish stocking for the fiscal year was as follows, Messalonskee 20,000 brook trout 2-4 inches long, Long Pond 10,400 – 6” trout, 6,000- salmon, 19,500 – 2-4” trout; Beaver Brook 2,000 trout,; Great Pond 35,000 – 2-4” Salmon, 2500 mature Salmon, 16,500 Trout, 10,000*

*fingerlings, 5,000 small mouth bass; East Pond 2,000 Bass; McGrath Pond, North Pond and Salmon Lake, nothing.*



The group was full of activity, not only did they function on making sure the lakes were well stocked, but they kept maps of the lakes in the area and documented fishing activity. They held fishing contests and kept records of reports of the contests. (The picture depicts one of the maps of 1948 showing the locations of the fish stocking)

(The photo to the right, is a brochure that was distributed in 1939 by the Kennebec Fish & Game Association)



On September 28, 1948 the Kennebec Fish & Game Association formally voted to reorganize to promote the Belgrade Lakes Region and voted to change to “Belgrade Region Inc.” a non -profit corporation. A log cabin was built in 1956. (The Belgrade Town Report of 1956 shows the new building at its original location on Old Rt. 27as depicted on the left).



It was built in the spring of 1956 by Clair Marston, Dan Snow and Curly Casselly. Its original location was on old Route 27, (now the Depot Road) just south of Guy Yeaton’s farmhouse on the east side of the road.

An excerpt from a 1957 newspaper reads;

*“In 1956 Belgrade opened and Information Booth for the first time. This booth directed travelers to lodging places in the area and provided information to guests. Two persons manned*

*the little log cabin. They received many different requests from the guests who visited. People from 18 states, Puerto Rico, Canada and Belgrade, Yugoslavia signed the guest book that year, with over 1200 persons calling on the bureau between June 30, 1956 and September 2, 1956!*

The cabin was moved from this location to its current location in the summer of 1977 due to the relocation of Route 27. The site was bought from Reginald Hammond and was previously the



home site of M. Cram in 1879 and William Bartlett in 1856. The building has retained its quaintness with an old kind of feel. When you walk into the small cabin, it takes you back to yesteryears as it sports a rough unfinished log cabin look. A small desk sits in the building where volunteers worked answering phone calls from non-residents looking for lodging and recreational facilities. A painting of the old Golf Course (part of the Belgrade Lakes Hotel) hung on the wall and brochures were readily available for guests. In 1997 the group was distributing annually 15,000 brochures that listed attractions and member businesses. The brochures were printed and

mailed to destinations all over North America and abroad, they were displayed in many Chambers of Commerce and visitors bureaus around the state. They listed lodging facilities, cottages fishing camps, bed and breakfast inns and campgrounds on all seven lakes of the Belgrade's chain. The booth itself served uniquely for reservations. Their efforts were both nonprofit and volunteer.

It is still manned by the Belgrade Lakes Region Business Group (also known as BLRBG) and they retain the same philosophy as those before them. They retain the non-profit organization status and are located in the greater Belgrade Lakes Region of central Maine. The objective of the BLRBG is to promote the business community in the region for the benefit of our residents, our visitors and our town. They currently man the Belgrade Information Center with volunteers and as technology has grown have developed a website for visitors. They maintain a mission statement that continues to promote tourism to the Belgrade Lakes Region.

#### **“Mission Statement of the Belgrade Lakes Region Business Group”**

“The mission of the BLRBG is to promote "The Region" as a premier community, four-season vacation and recreational destination and to contribute to the economic growth of the area.”

I encourage you to go to the Belgrade History Room and browse through the Blue Binder that holds so many interesting stories about both the log cabin and the History of Belgrade Lakes Region Business Group, because there is so much more! The stories and articles are both interesting & fascinating because the volunteers are Belgrade's Chamber of Commerce and continue their work through Volunteerism!

**Acknowledgements: The Belgrade Historical Society would like to thank the Amon Family for the donation of this history to add to their collection.**

## Oldest Photograph of the OLD TOWNHOUSE

One of the oldest extant buildings in Belgrade is the Old Townhouse on Cemetery Road beside the Woodside Cemetery. Built in 1815 and in use as the location of the annual Town Meetings until 1873, the facility has a long and interesting history.

Dennis “Denny” Keschl, Chair of the Belgrade Historical Society’s Board of Directors, has been researching this historically significant building. One thing he’s not been able to find is a photograph showing the building without the front porch, which was added in the early 1940s. With his deep interest in the Old Townhouse, Denny is personally putting up a prize of \$100 for the oldest known picture of the building prior to the porch’s addition.

If you have an old photograph of the Old Townhouse, please send us a copy with descriptive information to verify its provenance to:

Belgrade Historical Society  
P.O. Box 36A  
Belgrade, ME 04917

After reviewing the photo and information, our Collections Committee will make a determination as to which photograph will win the reward. All entries must be received prior to June 30, 2017. If more than one copy of the winning photograph is submitted, then the one that we receive first will be the winner. The society will keep copies of all the entries submitted for our use. If an original is submitted, we will make a copy and return the original unless it was given as a donation. The reward will be made immediately after the oldest photograph is selected. If you have any questions, please contact Denny at: [keschl@yahoo.com](mailto:keschl@yahoo.com) tel: 207-495-2973 ~ cell: 207-441-3701



### “NEW OUTBOARD MUSEUM”

Rod Johnson and Doris Mathias Johnson are opening a small museum in their basement at 51 Dry Point Drive, Rome. For those who do not know where that is, it’s barely over the Rome town line—most think it is Belgrade. Heading north, turn right about 200 feet after the bridge in Belgrade Lakes onto Dry Point Drive. Go perhaps ¼ mile to their home on the right. There will be a sign on a tree at the entrance saying Outboard Museum.

The museum has on display 35 outboard motors between the years 1925 and 1958, a wall display of ice tools, old desks from the Stewart/Johnson boat shop (where Lakepoint Reality is now) and a few nifty older pictures. They will open and tend the museum on Wednesdays from 1 – 6 p.m., and Saturdays from 9 – 12 a.m., through Labor Day.

Donations are the admission. They are donating 20% of whatever they take in over the summer to the Belgrade Historical Society, with the intentions of the money raised to go into the Old Town House Renovation Fund, or something similar.

In addition the Great Pond Yacht Club’s kids sailing program will be given 10% of the funds raised.



**PICNIC SOCIALS - COME JOIN THE FUN!**

**EAT: BYO Picnic Supper**  
(Water and Iced Tea will be provided.)



TALK: Bring stories to share

SHARE: Pictures of the past

SWAP: Bring a dessert to swap

Let's find out about Belgrade's past through neighbors and friends.  
We will be filming these socials to save our history for future generations.

LOCATIONS: Grange Hall in the Depot- July 27

Center for All Seasons - August 24

No. Belgrade Community Center – September 28

TIME: 5 pm to 7 pm

Brought to you by the Belgrade Historical Society's Oral History Project

For more information call: Margaret 465-9680 or Sandy 495-9046



## **THIRD ANNUAL!!!** **The Belgrade Historical Society** **Summer Fair**



**Bake Sale**

**Proceeds to benefit  
Old Town Meeting  
House Restoration  
Project.**



**Food  
&  
Drink!**

**Day: Saturday,  
August 12, 2017**  
**Time: 10:00 am -  
3:00 pm**  
**Place: Old Town  
Meeting House  
(Near Woodside  
Cemetery)**



**Plant  
Sale!**

**DONATIONS NEEDED!!!  
Please Help!**  
**To Donate to the Fair, go to our  
website for more info at  
[BelgradeHistoricalSociety.org](http://BelgradeHistoricalSociety.org)  
Or Call 495-3581**



**Lawn  
Sale!**



**History  
Table &  
Exhibit**



**Book  
Nook!**

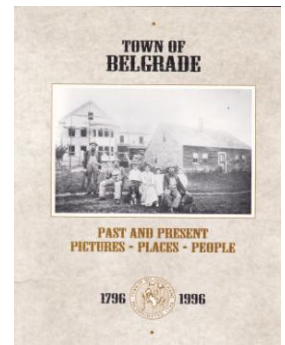


**Costume  
Jewelry Sale**

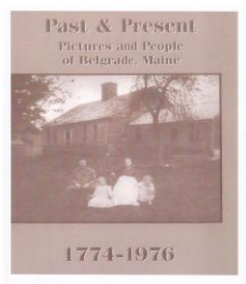
**Upcoming Program**  
**July 20, 2017 “Day Lilies and Cellar Holes:  
 Reading Rural Landscapes”**  
**Robert Sanford, author of**  
**Reading Rural Landscapes, a Field**  
**Guide to New England’s Past**  
**Maine Lakes Resource Center -7:00 p.m.**  
**August 17, 2017**



The 2nd printings of the Town Of Belgrade Past and Present, Pictures -Places - People 1796-1996 are now available for sale at the Belgrade History Room.  
 Pricing for these books are \$30.00 each or \$27.00 for Members.



The 2nd printings of the 1774-1976 Soft Cover “Past & Present”, Pictures and People of Belgrade, Maine Books, are now available for sale at the Belgrade History Room \$15.00 or \$13.50 for Members




---

Remember, as we research issues that may be of interest to our membership and others, please know that we want your input on topics of historical interest that you would like to see in our newsletter. Do you have a particular subject that you believe might be of interest to others? If so, please pass on the information to us by simply replying to the e-Newsletter. We will work to research the issue to develop an article on the subject. Better yet, if you have written on a topic that you believe might be of interest...send that along as well!

We want this newsletter to be educational, entertaining, and oriented to the topics about which our readers want to learn. Finally, we want your feedback. If you see something that is inaccurate in the information that we provide...let us know! We will be establishing a “Member Feedback” column in the upcoming issues and want to hear from you about what you liked or didn’t like about your e-Newsletter.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Remember...history not recorded is history lost!**