

March 2017, e-Newsletter

Dennis L. Keschl, Acting Editor

Published monthly for members of the Belgrade Historical Society

As we research issues that may be of interest to our membership, 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.

Spring is coming and Easter is just around the corner. We thought that we couldn't have a more fitting time for an article about the development of Belgrade's churches. This particular topic is from a 1980 Town Meeting Report that was written by Belgrade's former historian, Mrs. Pauline Plourde.

"They Would "Gather A Church"

By Pauline Plourde

In his History of Baptists in Maine, Joshua Millet wrote in 1845 that, on April 29, 1806, twelve members did "gather a church in Belgrade". Elder I. Case was the first preacher, followed by Asa Wilbur, --Gould, Joseph Palmer, Moses Low, -- Kendal and Benjamin Bishbee.

By 1810, Elias Taylor was ordained as pastor, and by 1826 this Calvinist Baptist society began to build the meeting house still standing

at Rockwood's corner of the Winthrop road and the West road.

Following a time of discord, Pastor Taylor resigned in 1833, and by 1839 attendance had "so far declined and become so disunited as to be not in a state worthy of the ante of a real church." The few members then formed as a society and applied to the Kennebec Association of Baptists for assistance.

The Association recommended re-organization. Rev. Daniel McMaster was minister for the next three years, followed by Rev. Lucius Packard, Deacon A.W. Cummings and Benjamin Jackson.

Later history of this church can be read in the 1978 booklet published by the Ladies Aid Society of **Old South Church**.

An old record book tells of a South Belgrade Freewill Baptist Church that organized September, 1848, and voted that conferences be held at the Baptist Meeting House at Rockwood's Corner.

By the next year, this church voted that conferences be held half the time at Rollins school house, at the corner of Wings Mills road. Later the Axtell school house (District 4) on the Knowles Road, was the place of meeting.

Asa Axtell was a member here, and also was a member earlier of the Calvinist Baptist Society, builders of Old South Church.

Records cease in 1858 with the notation "few in attendance."

According to early records, sometime before 1802 a **freewill Baptist church** met in the Dearborn area (part of which is now North Belgrade) and also "on the back side of Grate pond."

This group continued for more than ten years, meeting in homes of Cornelius Tilton and Benjamin Frost, in Asa Libby's barn, and in "**the school house near Capt. Jones' house,**" District 9 at the junction of the West road and the Gowell Road. Elias Taylor was the pastor in 1814.

Preceding this, a small Society of Friends (Quakers) had formed here as early as 1801, led by Calvin Stewart, Samuel Stewart and Eleazer Burbank, who was later dropped for receiving a military pension. Samuel Taylor was their first minister. By 1939 a small meeting house was

built at the southwest corner of the present Friends' burying ground at the junction of the Oakland road and the Winthrop Road.

Fourteen years later, ox teams **hailed this meeting-house to a "site near Frank Pray's house"** and the group met there several more years. Finally, the meeting house was sold to Joseph Taylor for use as a barn, and burned in 1880.

An 1856 map of Belgrade locates a church building on the west side of the Oakland road, halfway between the Friends' cemetery and the road junction at the top of Belgrade hill. This could have been later the site of this Friends' Meeting House.

Farther north, at the top of Belgrade hill and on the east side of the road, a **Unitarian and Freewill Baptist church was built in 1827.**

John Pitts and Samuel Titcomb contributed much toward its cost of \$1300. Titcomb Academy was built just east of the meeting-house two years later and burned in 1885.

William Farmer and Samuel Hutchins were two of the early preachers in this unheated meeting-house. Attendance lessened, and by 1885, by a special act of the state legislature, the building was torn down. Benjamin Gleason bought the timbers for his barn in Oakland.

In 1870, a church was built at Belgrade Mills (now Belgrade Lakes) under the sponsorship of Methodists and Adventists. A large part of the cost was borne by David Golder, the affluent owner of the spool factory.

This **Union church** was open all year until 1954 when Irene Tillson ceased her ten years of preaching there. Very early ministers, Pastors Smart, Chamberlain, Powers, and others, would come Saturday by stage and stay with Mr. and Mrs. Tillson.

John Rix preceded Mrs. Tillson, who also preached at Chelsea Sunday afternoons.

Miss Lena Kerr of Oakland worked faithfully for the church many years, playing the organ and obtaining the speakers for the Sunday services during the summer months.

The building, on the Main Street, is owned by the Methodist Conference of Maine, and the upkeep is the responsibility of the congregation, now largely summer residents and visitors.

St. Helena's Roman Catholic Church at Belgrade Lakes is a mission of St. Theresa's Parish of Oakland. The mission originated from meetings during the summers of 1907 – 1910 at the Great Pond cottage of Mr. and Mrs. J. L. McCormack.

From 1910 until 1913 these Catholic masses were held in the card room at *The Belgrade*, through arrangements made by the hotel owner, Charles Hill, and Reverend Father Kealy.

In 1913, Mr. McCormack acted as agent for Father Kealy and purchased the land where the church now stands and the building soon became a reality.

The first wedding in the church was that of McCormack's son, Frank, in 1926, followed two years later by the wedding of their daughter, Catherine.

In recent years, land to the east of the chapel has been cleared for a parking area, and interior improvements have been made to the flooring and pews. Father Hubert Paquet is the present pastor.

The present **Faith Community Church at North Belgrade**, at the corner of the Old Station Road and the Oakland Road, had its start as a Sunday School group meeting with Rev. Leo Dunn before 1950 in the now gone North Belgrade Grange Hall. When a fund was raised in January 1951 for Charles Mason, in

appreciation of his work with the group, he suggested that the money be used toward a building fund.

By 1952, the present piece of land was bought from Hugh Tukey and on December 8, 1953, the unused North Belgrade station was bought from the Maine Central Railroad for \$501. The following March, 1954, Hugh Tukey moved the building up the Station road to approximately its present site. July 7 of that year the building was in use, with the first service held Sunday, August 8, 1954, with Linwood Putnam pastor.

A newspaper item of July 1956 notes that Rev. Bob McAlister was pastor of Faith Community Evangelical Church, with Bible Study Tuesday evenings and Prayer Meetings Thursday evenings, both in homes.

By 1960, a concrete basement was built fifty feet back of the church and it was moved onto this new foundation. In 1974 a well and septic system were added and two years later the Sunday School rooms were built.

The Church took its name from the Faith community church of Roslyn, Pennsylvania, an early contributor. The church is self-support except for partial pastoral assistance by the Rural Home Missions Association. The present pastor is George Briggs.

The most recent religious group, established March 3, 1975, is the **Belgrade Bible Church**, an Independent fundamental Bible church.

A group of women who were interested in having a year-round Sunday School, rather than only the summer sessions then available at the Old South Church, started plans in late 1974, working through the American Mission for Opening Churches.

By the following March, the group was meeting regularly in the Belgrade Grange Hall,

with Rev. Charles Heckert as pastor. He was followed by Rev. Enslie Clark and presently by Rev. James Ellsmore, a missionary pastor with the American Mission for Opening Churches.

Construction began July 1978 on the church building, on part of the old Spaulding farm, on the north side of the Maine Route 27 (the East Road) east of Bog Brook.

The first use of the building was made on February 3, 1980, though only the basement area was roofed over. This is in use for Sunday School and church services as well as Wednesday and Sunday night services. As funds are available, the congregation plans to complete the main part of the building.

Source material used includes:

History of Baptists in Maine,
Joshua Millet, 1845

History of the Baptists in Maine,
Burrage, 1904

Clerk's records, Freewill Baptist Church,
Belgrade, 1802-1810

Minnie Penney's copy of clerk's records
Of "Baptist church of Belgrade",
Oct. – Dec. 1839

The Society of friends,
Rufus M. Jones, 1892
1856 Map of Belgrade

The assistance of these people is appreciated by
Pauline Plourde:

Pastor George Briggs

Erma Tillson Clement

Rev. James Ellsmore

Ralph Endicott

Betty Grant

Mrs. Oral Page Jr.

Mr. & Mrs. George Penney

Mrs. William Pulsifer

Note: This history of Belgrade churches is taken from the 1980 Town of Belgrade Annual Report and was prepared by Pauline Plourde. As such, you recognize that the history beyond that point in time is not recorded yet. This history is important to capture for posterity. The Belgrade Historical Society would like to prepare a more detailed and up-to-date history of our churches with your help. Please contact me at: keschl@yahoo.com with any information you may have...or perhaps if these churches have prepared their own history they could provide the Society with a copy for our records.

Pictures of Belgrade's Churches – Past and Present



Belgrade Bible Church – Route 27 (Present Day)



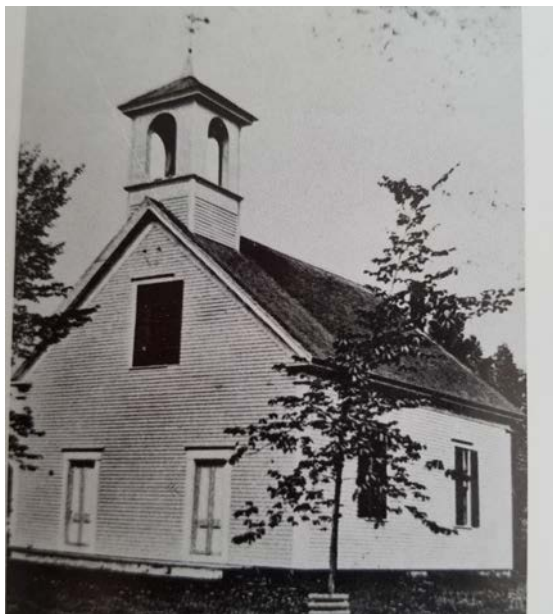
St. Helena Chapel (After Construction- ca 1926)



Old South Church (before Steeple in late 1800's)



Old South Church (ca 1910 with new Steeple)



Early View of United Methodist Union Church



North Belgrade Baptist Church- Rte 11 (Present Day)

Update by Eric Hooglund on the article about the old bell used in the Belgrade Lakes schools, which was featured in our February eNewsletter.

The name of the early school was 'New Century.' That school was closed in 1928 and the students moved to the new schoolhouse right behind it on School St. the old New Century school was acquired by the American Legion, which renovated it during 1929 as the Adams-Cobb-Stevens Post for the Veterans' of Foreign Wars. We have at the BHS History Room a copy of H. Leslie Brown's handwritten account of what the New Century School was like when he attended it circa 1918-1924.

Remember...history not recorded is history lost!

**\$100 REWARD
for
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 tel: 207-495-2973 ~ cell: 207-441-3701