



August 2017 E-Newsletter

100 Years Ago: A Belgrade Farm Boy Becomes Big City Mayor

By Eric Hooglund

Wendell D. Rockwood (1863 -1944), who was born and raised on the old Rockwood farm at the corner of the West Road and Rt. 135, was a Belgrade native who moved out of state as a young man and had a successful business career in the Boston area. In fact, exactly 100 years ago, in 1917, he was serving as mayor of Cambridge, the famous college city that is located right across



HON. WENDELL D. ROCKWOOD
Mayor 1916-1917
Cambridge, Massachusetts

the Charles River from Boston. Thanks to BHS member Katherine Nerret, your society now has a trove of information about this man who was descended from one of the earliest families to settle in Belgrade. One interesting document is a photocopied ‘sketch’ of Rockwood written by the Maine correspondent for the *Boston Sunday Herald*, and published in that newspaper on Dec. 26, 1916. The Maine correspondent signs his article as ‘Kineo’, apparently to identify himself with that famous mountain that rises 1,789 feet out of Moosehead Lake. Kineo provides some interesting historical details about growing up in Belgrade in the late 19th century, and your society would like to share them with

you. Thus, we present an excerpt from that article below:

Here in Maine, and especially in Kennebec county, there was intense interest in the contest in Cambridge, Mass., and much satisfaction that the corrupt ring in that city was overthrown, and that a native of Maine, Wendell. D. Rockwood, was the leader in this good work. Mr. Rockwood, who will be the next mayor of Cambridge, was born in Belgrade a little more than 50 years ago and still owns the old farm there that his father and grandfather owned before him. His grandfather, John Rockwood, moved from Oxford, Mass., in 1800, and cleared a farm at the spot in Belgrade that has ever since been known as Rockwood’s corner, about a mile west of the village [Belgrade Depot]. There a little white church has stood for almost a century—a landmark for miles around [Old South Church].

John Rockwood had a large family of children and lived to be 100 years [1774-1874]. The boys and girls scattered far and wide, after the fashion of Maine families of that generation. Albion Rockwood [b. 1826], who remained on the home farm, was the father of Wendell D. Rockwood, who was an only son. The young man attended the little red school house half a mile along the road toward Belgrade Lakes, six miles away—though that place was known as Chandler’s Mills in those days—and then with other boys of the neighborhood went for a few term to Kent’s Hill seminary in the adjoining town of Readfield. One of his schoolmates in both places was Bert I. Stuart [Bertram P. Stuart, 1863-1927], now the county treasurer of the county of Kennebec, and for years one of the Republican party leaders in that part of the state.

The old people of the neighborhood will recall the boyhood of Wendell Rockwood and will tell you that they always knew that he would make his mark in the world. He was a studious fellow, thorough, methodical and always dependable. As a mere lad he had a little printing press—probably the first printing press in the town. In the days when a “magic lantern” entertainment was an unusual attraction he obtained a lantern and slides and gave an illustrated lecture in the schoolhouses of Belgrade and the neighboring towns. Not that he shirked farm work for these things, for he was a young man of powerful physique and could keep abreast of the best of them in the hayfield or in the woodlot. But he was not cut out for a farmer, and in young manhood he struck out for the distant city to make his fortune.

First he took a course at the business college in Augusta. That was more than 30 years ago [i.e., prior to 1886]. His success as a wholesale grocer and in the business, banking and political affairs of Cambridge tells the rest of the story to date. He has fought his own way along to the success that he has attained, and Cambridge people may lie sure that their new mayor is of the stuff that honest, faithful, conservative public servants are made.

Every summer he gets a short vacation trip to the old farm in Belgrade, across the road from the little white church. In recent he has come down from Boston in his car. His mother (Sarah Jane), who is living at a very advanced age, has made her home there till the past few years, but of late she has been in Cambridge. This winter [1916-17] she is in the south with the only son (Albion Ray) of the mayor-elect, who is a lieutenant in the regular army, having graduated from West Point two years ago with rank right at the top of his class. Mr. Rockwood has daughters who live at home (Agnes and Jeannette), and his home life is particularly happy. He is active in church work. In fact, whatever claims his interest has a loyal and enthusiastic worker. The multitudes of former Maine people in Boston have every reason to be gratified at the honor Mr. Rockwood has earned, and the way he has earned it.

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BHS Members Respond to April E-Newsletter

Readers may recall that our *BHS Newsletter* for April featured an article about the participation of Belgrade men in World War I, as April 2017 marked the 100th anniversary of America’s participation in that war. We asked readers to respond with any information on the WWI veterans, and the relatives of Mellen Adams, one of the 3 veterans in whose honor the Belgrade

post of the American Legion is named, contacted us with information on the Adams family. We are sincerely grateful to Harvey and Marie Gile for sharing with BHS some of the family history they have been collecting for several years. Harvey Gile is the grandson of Helen Adams, the twin sister of Mellen Adams. Helen and Mellen both graduated from Belgrade High School in 1912. Mellen went on to Bates College, where his older brothers, Enoch and Frank, already were studying and would graduate the following year, 1913. Helen, however, got married and moved to Monmouth, but she gathered and saved in her new home a collection of family photographs and memorabilia, including pictures of the Adams family farm on Belgrade Hill. Mellen Adams graduated from Bates in 1916, then taught school in Maine for one year before being drafted into the U.S. Army. Tragically, he died at Fort Devens in Massachusetts after contracting influenza during the great pandemic of 1918. Among the many images of photographs that the Giles donated to the BHS is the one below of Mellen Adams in uniform at Ft. Devens.



BHS Social at former Belgrade Grange

On Thursday, July 27, BHS hosted a 'social evening' at the old Grange Hall in Belgrade Depot. The objective was to encourage local residents to come out and share their memories of life in the Depot many years ago. These memories are the oral history of Belgrade, and the BHS Oral History project believes that preserving these memories is one important way to preserve our town's history. The social at the Grange was envisioned as an informal occasion to reminisce about the era when the Grange was a center of social life, the place where civic meetings, dances, musical and theatrical performances, graduations, weddings, etc. took place. BHS is recording

these socials. Katy Damren and Dune Farnham, especially, recollected about many of the past events they had attended/helped to organize/participated in when the Grange was still active. BHS thanks all those who attended the Grange social. We have two more socials coming up: at the Center for All Seasons on August 24, and at the No. Belgrade Community Center on September 28.

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Presentation on History of Belgrade Lakes Village

BHS Board Member Eric Hooglund will speak on Tuesday evening, August 15, at the Union Church on how Belgrade Lakes village managed its transition from a small industrial village in the nineteenth century to the tourist center it is today. His talk will be illustrated with visual images from the BHS collection of over 3,000 digitalized photographs, including many from the 19th century. The presentation in the Union Church Hall on Main Street in Belgrade Lakes will take place from 6:30 to 8 pm and is free to the public.

**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

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!

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





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
Or Call 495-3581



**Lawn
 Sale!**



**History
 Table &
 Exhibit**



**Book
 Nook!**



**Costume
 Jewelry Sale**