

## **July 2018 E-Newsletter**

**Eric Hooglund, Editor**

*Published monthly for members of the Belgrade Historical Society*

### **BHS Launches Capital Campaign to Preserve the Old (1814) Town House!**

At our annual meeting on June 21, the BHS officially launched its campaign to raise \$235,000 to preserve and renovate the Old Town House, which is adjacent to Woodside Cemetery on Cemetery Road/Route 135. We are grateful to the many members who came out on a beautiful, first day of summer evening to attend our annual meeting at the Maine Lakes Resource Center on Main Street in Belgrade Lakes village. And we are thankful to the BHS bakers for providing delicious and thirst-quenching refreshments for the post-program reception!

The Old Town House is a historically significant building. According to Belgrade native and writer John Clair Minot (1872-1941), who wrote the 'Town of Belgrade' chapter for the 1892 *Illustrated History of Kennebec County, Maine*, Belgrade residents approved of plans to raise \$200 to build a town meeting house at their annual meeting in 1813. The site that a committee settled on was adjacent to the town's burying ground—now the Woodside Cemetery--because it seemed to be about roughly equidistant from the town's easternmost, southernmost, westernmost and northernmost corners. Construction of a single- room, meeting house took place during 1814, and the March 1815 town meeting was the first one to be held there. Thereafter, the building was used for the annual town meetings for over 50 years, but it also was modified several times during this period to add outhouses, a storage room, etc. The last town meeting to be held there was in March 1872. That summer, a small pox epidemic swept through central Maine, and the town house was used as a temporary quarantine place for at least one victim—who recovered. But, the following spring (1873), to quote from the above 1892 source, 'the town authorities did not like the idea of holding public meetings in a small pox hospital, so they hired

Masonic Hall, at the Depot, where town meetings and elections have been held since. The old town house has been repaired and altered, and is now used as a hearse house.’ (p. 1000)



### **Current Old Townhouse**

One hundred and twenty-six years later, on June 21, 2018, BHS Board member Rod Johnson, who is chair of our fund-raising effort, introduced our campaign to preserve the Old Town House, which slowly is rotting away, with help from unwanted pesky wood beetles and the Maine weather. He explained our envisioned plans for doing so, which include restoring the building and adding a small room (see artist's sketch below). He stressed our commitment to utilize the space to display and safely store the BHS's ever-growing collection of artifacts from our town's history, specifically those items that are too large to exhibit in our History Room in the Community Center.



### **Rendering of Townhouse after Renovation**

Sketch by Artist Erik Johnson

As an example of one such item, Rod had brought along--but kept hidden under a large black cover--a surprise artifact. The curious audience was guessing what it might be! Since Rod had mounted on display several examples of outboard motors, from 1910 to the 1960s, for his presentation. 'A Brief History of the use of Outboard Motors on the Belgrade Chain of Lakes,'

and because many people had been examining them before the meeting began, most in the audience assumed that under that black cover must be one of the first-ever gasoline motors. Their curiosity became more intense when Rod assured everyone that the surprise was *not* any kind of motor at all but something whose sound had been a familiar in Belgrade Lakes village for over 75 years, but had not been heard by anyone since 1965. WOW! What could it be?

Rod removed the cover to reveal a very large cast iron bell. It was, he said, the old school bell that hung in the belfry of the New Century grammar school in Belgrade Lakes from ca. 1888 to 1929, when it was moved to the new grammar school on School Street, and where it hung in a special cupola for over 35 years. The bell rang on school days to call pupils to class. It has been in a private collection since the grammar school closed in 1965, but it was donated to the BHS in 2016. Fortuitously, earlier in the spring of this year, Rod was shown a metal rod sticking out of the mud behind the empty building that used to be the grade school. Upon digging it up, it proved to be more than a metal rod: The entire metal frame that once cradled the bell, and the metal arch from which the bell hung! Rod carefully had reassembled the bell into its cradle and arch for the display and also to ring in the BHS fund-raising campaign. He called upon Bill Pulsifer,



**1887 School Bell used in Belgrade Lakes until 1965 in cradle with arch**  
***Photo courtesy of Rod Johnson***

who was in the audience and had attended the grade school on School Street, to come up and ring the bell. Bill recounted how he had done so many times as a student, the last time in 1944, when he was in the fifth grade. (Rod had attended the same school in the mid-1950s but modestly refrained from telling about his own days of pulling the rope to ring out the call to class!) When Bill pulled on the rope, the bell gave a mighty clang that everyone in the audience, as well as people along nearby Main Street, heard very distinctly. This was the first time in over 50 years that the loud clear peel of that bell had been heard, and it was an exciting and hopeful omen with which to inaugurate our fund-raising campaign!



The rest of the evening was devoted to Rod's presentation about the evolution of outboard motors and the ways they changed the nature of boat culture on the Belgrade Lakes. He began by showing a 3-minute video of his private museum of old outboards at [51 Dry Point Drive, Rome, Maine](#). Then he discussed outboard motors from their introduction about 1910 to the 1960s. He illustrated his lecture with real examples from the museum's collection, although he noted that the museum had not been able to date to acquire one of those earliest 1910 outboard motors. Nevertheless, it was fascinating to see the small outboards from the 1920s and the progressively larger ones from the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. The outboard motors had multiple effects on boat culture. Importantly, boat design changed, as the classic double-ender boats were not practical for motors, which needed a squared off end on which to be mounted. Over time, the outboards contributed to the decline of guides, who had played such an important role in the development of tourism on the lakes in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This happened as tourists began to purchase summer 'camps' and their own boats, which they easily could self-pilot around the lakes with outboard motors.



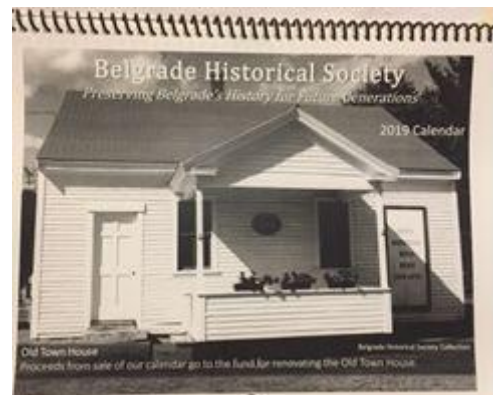
**1948 Evinrude Zephyr Outboard motor engine**

*Courtesy of Johnson's Outboard Motor Museum*



**NEW, Hot off the Press! -2019 BHS Calendar, with assortment of 12 photographs depicting Belgrade from 1890 to 1950. \$15 each.**

**All proceeds to benefit capital fund to preserve Old Town House!**



## **“SAVE THE DATES!”**

### **Belgrade Historical Society 2018 Program and Summer Fair Schedule**

This year is an exciting year for the Belgrade Historical Society (the Society). This is because we have started our major capital building fund campaign. As you may recall the Executive Committee has been working on plans to renovate/restore the old Town House, located on Cemetery Road after membership authorized this action in 2015. We hope to raise the \$225,000 for the project by the end of the year. Consequently, because of the work involved, we have reduced the number of programs that we will offer this summer to four. Our program schedule is:

- 1. July 19, 2018** – We invite you to journey with us “Uptah Camp” with our guides, Bernard Fishman, Director of the Maine State Museum, and Jennifer Dube, Friends of the Maine State Museum. During this presentation, you will take an historic journey that spans a century of sportsmen traditions in a unique, multi-media, history program. The presentation will include 60 visually stunning, century-old historic stereo view images of Maine Sporting Camps in 3-D format, followed by a documentary video that includes rich stories of avid Maine sportsmen and women who share a deep and important traditional knowledge of this important Maine heritage.
- 2. August 11, 2018:** The Belgrade Historical Society will hold its annual Summer Fair. Fabulous Food, Fantastic Bargains & FUN! We are accepting donations of furniture, plants, household items, etc. Please contact Adelaide Lalime at 207495-3581
- 3. August 16, 2018 - August 16, 2018:** The Belgrade Historical Society will hold a program in Pine Grove Cemetery: ‘Come Meet your Ancestors: A Cemetery Stroll!’ Curious about who is buried in Belgrade? Then come hear about some of Belgrade’s illustrious forefathers and foremothers. Do you want to enact one of your ancestors? We still are welcoming volunteer actors! Please contact Eric Hooglund at 495-3210 for details.

## **Visit Your History Room**

**The Belgrade Historical Society’s History Room, located in the Center for All Seasons on Route 27, is open Wednesdays and Thursdays, 10 am to 2 pm, May 1 to August 31. All are welcome to come and view our exhibits of historical artifacts and photographs and/or to explore our archives of old camp and family photographs and our ever-expanding genealogy files.**

## September 2018 program

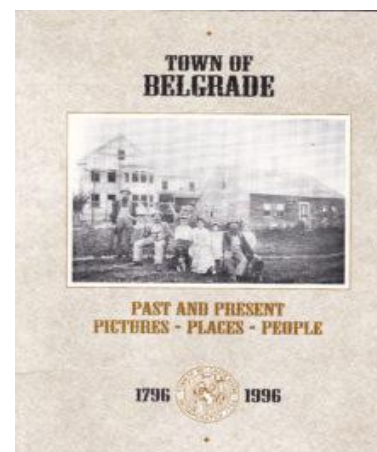
Walking Tours of historic and picturesque Belgrade Lakes village are ever popular among residents and visitors. This is a entertaining way to learn about the many historic houses and businesses in this 200+-year old village. **We are requesting a \$10 per person donation, all of which goes into our capital campaign to preserve the Old Town House!** Call Eric Hooglund to arrange: 207-495-2310.

### *Looking for gift ideas?*

*How about one of the reprints of the **Belgrade Past & Present!***

*All proceeds support the BHS!*

*The books have lots of information about old Belgrade and many of the families who resided here as well as pictures of many of the old buildings that make up this historic town. The 2nd printings of the **Town Of Belgrade Past and Present, Pictures -Places -People 1796-1996** available for sale at the Belgrade History Room, Day's Store and the Belgrade Town Office. Pricing for these books are \$30.00 each or \$27.00 for members.*



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## 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, 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. 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

