

June 2018 E-Newsletter

Eric Hooglund, Editor

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‘June is bustin’ out all over’ go the lyrics of the popular song from Rogers and Hammerstein’s 1945 musical about a fictional Maine coastal village, *Carousel*. And June definitely is ‘bustin’ out in Belgrade, with lilacs, lupines, rhododendrons and numerous other flowers blooming in profusion. Summer is coming to Belgrade, and each day sees more seasonal boats on its lakes. Indeed, boating on the Belgrade lakes has been a tradition for more than 100 years. But how many people know that boats once were manufactured right here in Belgrade? That activity took place primarily in the old boat shop that once stood in Belgrade Lakes Village on the north side of the stream just before the dam. And we are very fortunate to have for this month an historical account of the old boat shop written by BHS member Rod Johnson. Many readers know Rod as the author of *The Luckiest Boy*, his memoir of childhood in Belgrade Lakes Village during the 1950s. Enjoy!

THE OLD BOAT SHOP AND ITS USES

By Rod Johnson

This is more of a “history of” rather than a “story about” the *old boat shop*, once located in Belgrade Lakes Village. The original building sat on a relatively small lot of land that borders the north side of Mill Stream, just before the waters of Great Pond go under Route 27 and fall through the dam into Long Pond. The old shop's successor, now housing Lakepoint Real Estate, sits on the same spot. Like many commercial properties, it has evolved both in looks and usage over the hundred-plus years of existence.

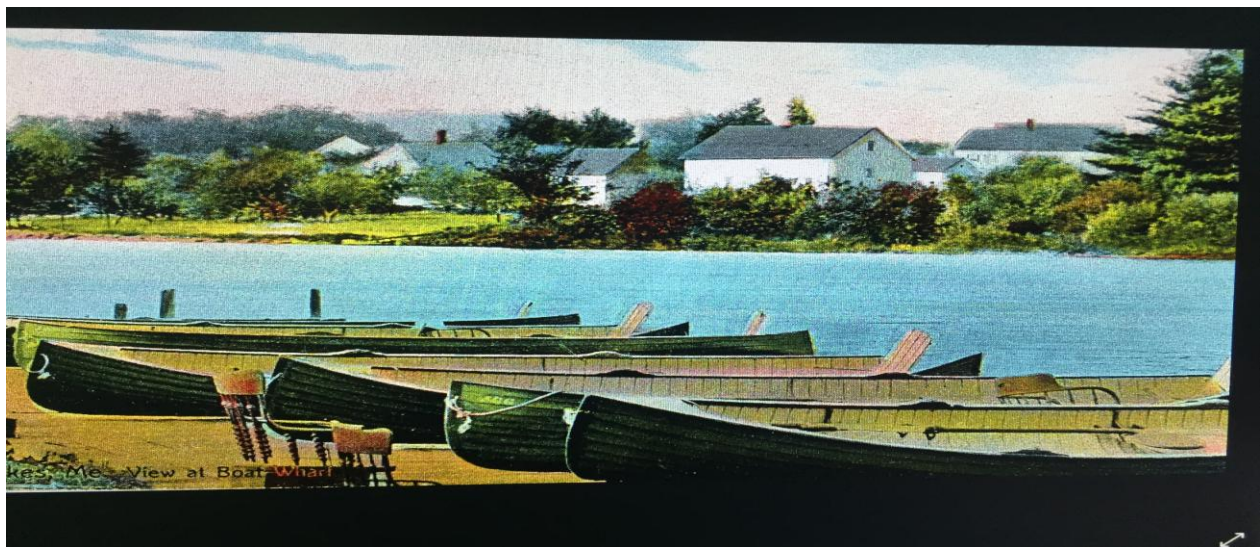
Let us begin in the early part of the 20th century. The year is not precisely known, but near 1900 a man named William Gilman became owner of the property. It appears his interest was in waterpower rights for the dam and properties bordering the spillway. The property's deed still carries a notation of gas and water rights. He also owned the property just across Route 27, where he built some rental cottages early in the century, now known as Village Camps. Gilman

leased the first noted property to a man named Ernest Sola in 1913. Sola built a large 30x50 foot shop for the purpose of building wooden boats.

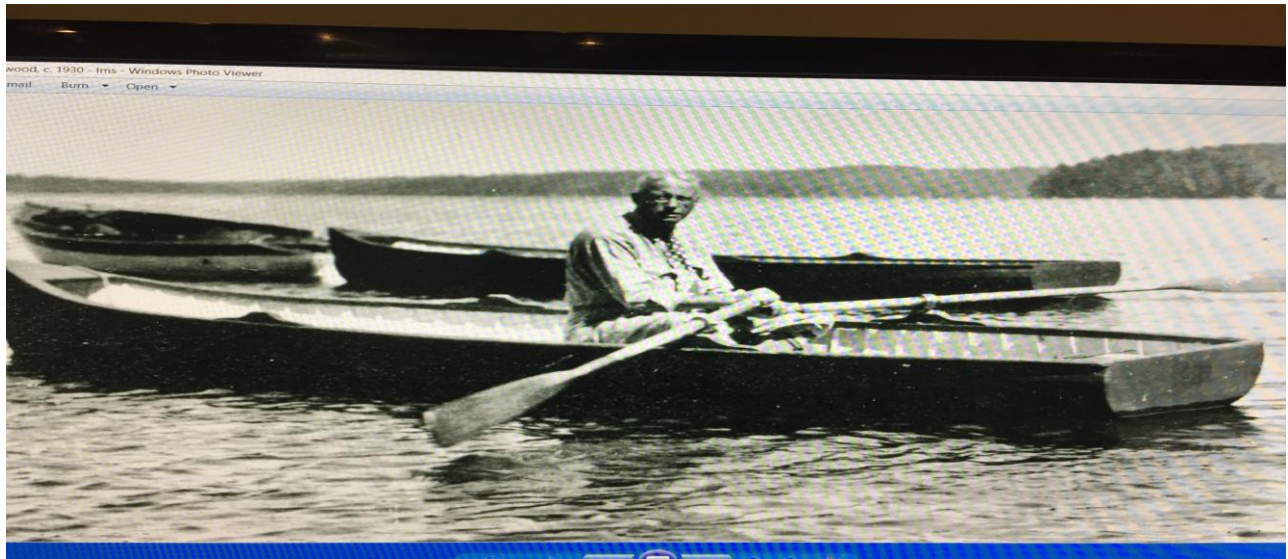
Old Boat Shop, which Ernest Sola built in 1913. Photo from BHS Collection.



Sola built at least three quite different boat designs, all of which were used as fishing boats during the heyday of fishing on Great and Long Ponds.

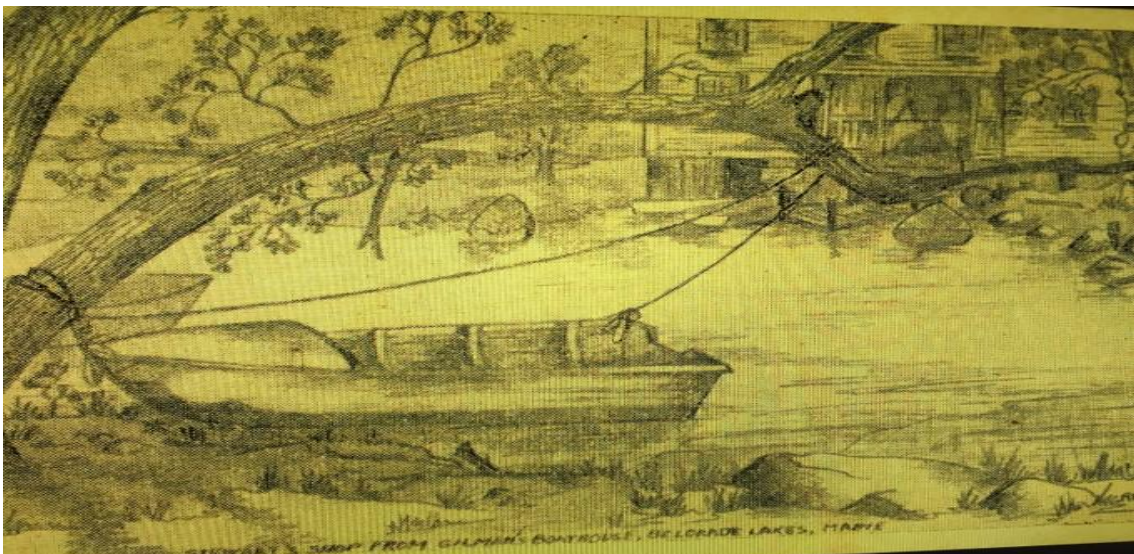


What became known as *guide boats* were the biggest of the three, often in the twenty-foot range with both ends pointed and referred to as double-enders. Common elements of these boats were two sets of oarlocks for the guide to use and two chairs for the comfort of the sports doing the fishing. Small gasoline engines, mounted mid-ship with a shaft running through the keel back to the propeller, powered these boats. The early engines were one or two cylinders and were direct drive (no neutral or reverse). It is worth noting that the oars were important, as these boats would not go slow enough to troll for fish, so the guides supplied the arm power with oars. The lack of reverse also required that oars be used to back the boats out of a slip and direct it, before starting the hand-cranked engines.



Double-ender guide boats, without engines, similar to the ones built by Sola, but probably built after 1923 by Ralph Stewart. Photo from BHS Collection

As the years went by, four cylinder engines became common, as did a transmission or "gear" with forward, neutral and reverse, along with 6-volt electric starters. After 10 years, in 1923, Sola purchased the building from Gilman and resold it a month later to Ralph Stewart, who continued building boats there.



*An old postcard with sketch of Ralph Stewart's boat shop.
From BHS Collection*

I believe Stewart built the last of these guide boats sometime in the 1940's. Several were in existence and used sparingly through the 1950's. The few that are left are in museums or are owned by collectors. A shorter, engineless version of the double-enders was built to row, as were

later versions with a square transom to accommodate a small outboard motor. As gasoline outboard motors became more and more popular in the early half of the 20th century, the square sterns became the front line boats seen in the area. All three of the above mentioned boats can be seen in many of the Belgrade Historical Society's photographs, as well as in some of the photos that are hanging in the MLRC building on Main Street in Belgrade Lakes. Many of the outboard motors used on those boats in that era are in the collection of outboard motors at the Antique Outboards of Belgrade museum on Dry Point Road. The museum is open on Wednesdays, 1 pm to 6 pm, and on Saturdays, 9 am to noon, from July 4th to Labor Day.



The use of the old shop for wooden boat building and repair waned during the mid-century decades to a point where it was no longer a viable venture, and the shop fell into major disrepair. Stewart died in 1961. His apprentice, both before and after WWII, was my Dad, Clifford Johnson. After Stewart's death, Dad purchased the property from the mortgage

holder, Mayo Richardson. During father Cliff's tenure, he continued with wooden boat repairs, a fishing boat rental base and general workshop for camp caretaking and repair needs. He also modernized the rental fleet to include a half-dozen 14-foot aluminum boats, along with a dozen or so of the wooden boats built by his predecessor Stewart.

A short lived (10-15 years) infusion of molded plywood hulls built in Canada and outfitted by Clifford were put into the mix, but they rotted quickly due to being built with integral birch keels. These were, however, popular due to being deeper, wider and dryer than the smaller planked and ribbed boats. A few of these were fiber glassed over the years and hung together for another decade or so. In 1971, Clifford passed away unexpectedly and his two sons, my brother Richard and I, soon owned the property. I purchased Richard's interest and continued with the boat rentals, camp caretaking and outboard motor repairs. In 1973, with the help of friends, we tore down the rickety old boat shop and replaced it with a multi-use building to include large overhead doors for truck and boat repairs.

After several years, I remodeled the building for different uses and sold the remains of the rental boats to friends and customers. The remodeling allowed for three sections, each to be rented/leased to small mom and pop seasonal businesses. These businesses included Terry's Auto Body Shop, The Great Pond Sweater Company, John McCloud's Fly Fishing Shop, Phil Foster's Duck Carving School and Louise Hanson's Antique Store. In 1993, I sold the property to M.P. McCardle, IV.



In the early 1970s, this building containing mom and pop stores replaced the deteriorating old boat shop.

Photo from BHS Collection

McCardle operated a summer Sea-Doo rental fleet of 10 machines for a few seasons. However, the initial newness wore off quickly, and the presence of the machines in Mill Stream and Great Pond was not well received.

In 1999, McCardle folded his business, and David Hollingsworth and Deborah Smith purchased the property from the mortgager. Hollingsworth and Smith moved their home-based business of movie rentals to the shop and added a business called Outlaw Pizza, a successful venture for several years. Ready for retirement in 2005, David and Deb sold the property to Stephanie and Ray Feegel. They did a complete remodel, but kept the footprint to accommodate office space for the Lakepoint Real Estate Company. This engulfed the shop that I built and changed the appearance greatly. As of 2013, the property was sold to Geneva Ventures LLC, and soon after to Belgrade Partners LLC. Dan McCarron now owns both Lakepoint Realty and the property. Dan grew up in the late 1970's and early 1980's just up across the lawn from the old shop, in what most of us know as Wing's Hill.

The old shop property continues today to house Lakepoint Real Estate.



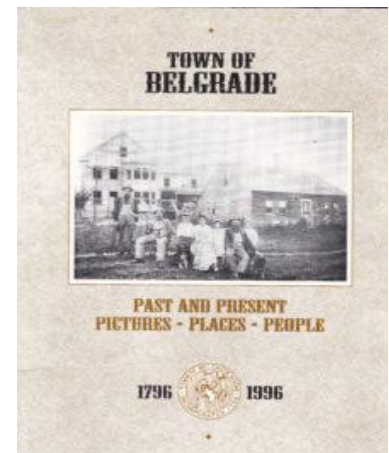
We hope you enjoyed this piece of history!

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.

Looking for gift ideas? Don't know what to get? 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.



“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. June 21, 2018** – Following the annual meeting, Rod Johnson, our local storyteller and member of the Society, will present, *“A Brief History of the use of Outboard Motors on the Belgrade Chain of Lakes.”* As part of the presentation, Rod will have several motors from the early 1900’s to the early 1960’s on display. Come prepared to learn from a “local” about the use and impacts of outboard motors on the Belgrade Lakes Region.
- 2. 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.
- 3. 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
- 4. August 16, 2018** - The Belgrade Historical Society will hold a program in Pine Grove Cemetery: Come Meet your Ancestors! A Cemetery Walk; Curious about who is buried in Belgrade, come hear about some of our ancestors and illustrious forefathers and mother's.

**Contact Eric Hooglund at 495-2310 if you would like
to enact one of your ancestors!**



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 tel: 207-495-2973 ~ cell: 207-441-3701

