

March 2018 E-Newsletter

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Published monthly for members of the Belgrade Historical Society

Remembering Sadie (Gamble) Yeaton, 1895-1991

In December I had the opportunity to meet with Charlie and Shirley Blood to talk about Shirley's remarkable mother. Shirley is the youngest daughter of a well-known Belgrade personality for more than 60 years: Sadie Yeaton. In my youth during the late 1940s and the 1950s, Sadie Yeaton already was a legendary woman. She delivered the mail to roadside boxes throughout Belgrade and operated a taxi service, mostly in the summers, to transport guests staying at the Belgrade Hotel and other inns to and from the train station in Belgrade Depot. She also provided a much appreciated taxi service for these summer visitors so they could go to Waterville to take in a movie at the ornate Haines theater, which featured 20th Century Fox and Warner Bros. movies, or the older State theater on Silver Street, which showed MGM musicals and thrillers. She also provided discreet taxi service for the rich and famous ladies staying at cosmetician Elizabeth Arden's famous Maine Chance Farm health spa on Long Pond, just past Castle Island and the Belgrade/Mt. Vernon town line. The latter were on restricted 'health' diets at the spa, and some of them liked to get away for 'secret' meals at local restaurants or to imbibe forbidden cocktails at the Lakeshore Hotel bar and lounge in Belgrade Lakes.

Shirley Blood graciously gave to the BHS a copy of her mother's memoir, 'See My Buggy on the Street,' which was published in 1988, the year that Sadie turned 93! This is a book that the BHS has wanted to acquire for a very long time because of its vignettes of living and working in Belgrade during the era when passenger trains brought hundreds of summer tourists to Belgrade to stay for entire

weeks and several hundred boys and girls attended the numerous youth camps that used to be on the lakes (a few have survived, notably Pine Island and Runoia, both on Great Pond). The book also provides—in a humorous way so like Sadie in real life—details about her background. For example, she was not born in Belgrade but in the mid-coast region, in the rural town of Prospect, along the Penobscot River and where historic Ft. Knox is located, as well as the bridge to Verona Island and Bucksport. She was born in September 1895 as Margaret Sarah Gamble. Both of her parents were immigrants from Ireland who had settled in Maine.

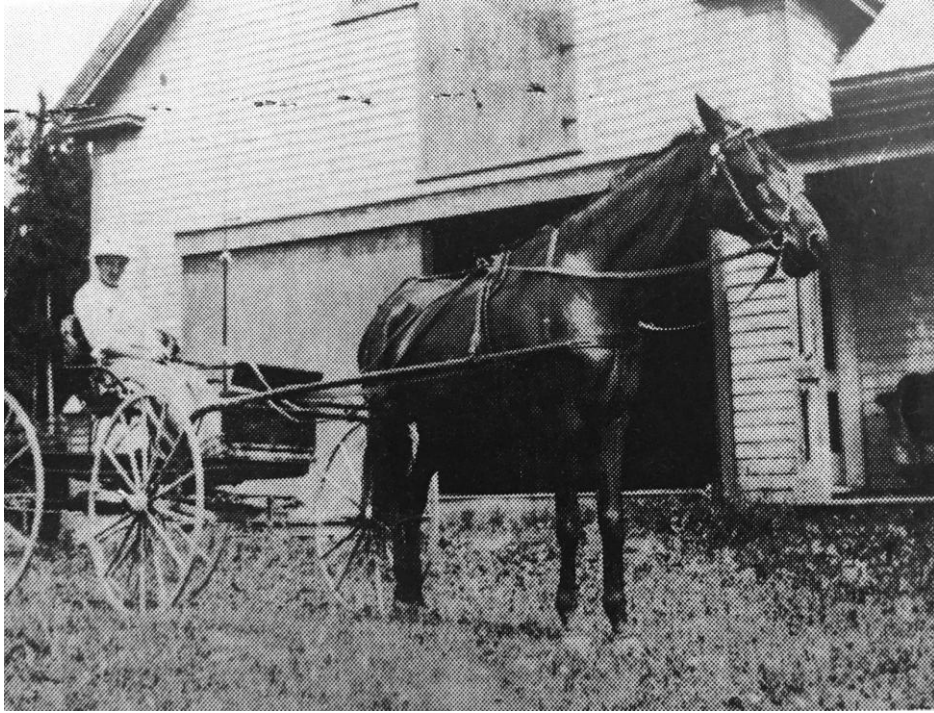
Sadie had an older sister and a younger brother. She doesn't reveal why she was called Sadie, but it seems she was known by that name from a very early age. She loved horses, and by the time she was a teenager, she had her own horse and buggy. According to Sadie:

I went everywhere in my horse and buggy. When I was sixteen, I went to dances every Wednesday night in Prospect. We girls used to tie our horses outside. We would come home through the woods, singing and laughing so much you could hear us for miles. We had so much fun. [p. 19]

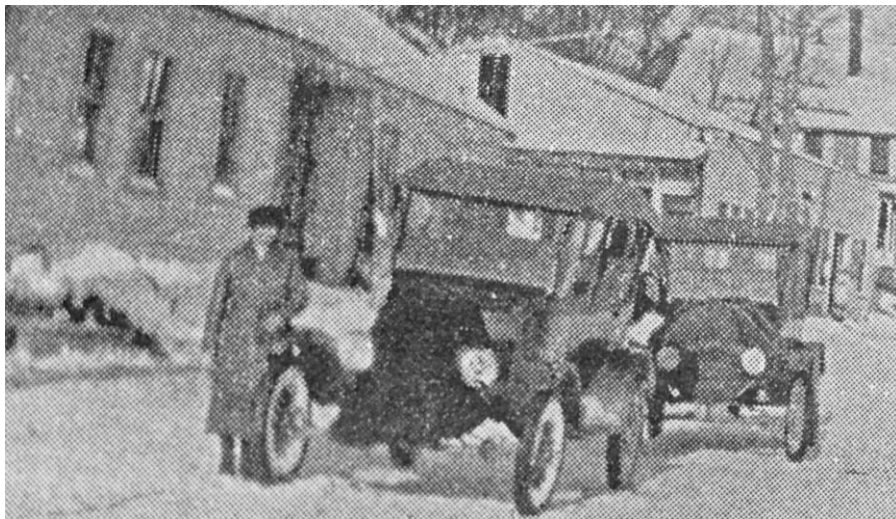
Sadie worked at various jobs in the Prospect/Searsport area until 1920 when she moved to Augusta to work for Gannet Publishing. She described her work there as 'wrapping papers and magazines and getting them ready for the mail.' [p. 21]. She moved to Belgrade Lakes in 1921 and got a license to drive a taxi. By this time, automobiles had replaced horses as a means of transportation, and Sadie obviously recognized a demand, especially in the summers, for a taxi service.

Sadie met Lester Yeaton, who drove the mail route in Belgrade, and they got married in 1922. They had 4 daughters together. Soon after the birth of their youngest daughter, Lester died of gangrene poisoning caused by an untreated hernia. Sadie applied for and got his mail route. She also had her taxi service and worked in the late spring to help open the Belgrade Hotel and camps for the season. All these jobs not only provided her an income to raise her daughters, but also enabled Sadie to meet and know most of the year round residents and summer visitors in Belgrade. She never lost her love of

dancing, telling stories, enjoying family dinners, meeting—and helping--new people, the very qualities that contributed to her legendary reputation!



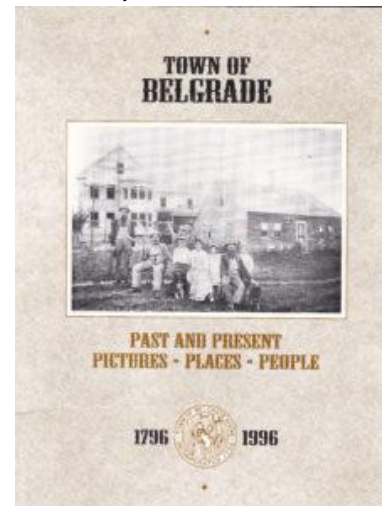
Sadie Yeaton sitting in her buggy, ca. 1911 (Photo from cover of *See My Buggy on the Street* © Sadie Yeaton, 1988.)



11 years later, Sadie has a new buggy, a Model A Ford. She is standing next to it in front of the old post office in Belgrade Depot (Photo from *See My Buggy on the Street* © Sadie Yeaton, 1988, p. 36.)

Reminder: The BHS has 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.

We also have the 2nd printings of the 1774-1976 Soft Cover "Past & Present", Pictures and People of Belgrade, Maine Books, are available for sale at the Belgrade History Room, \$15.00 or \$13.50 for Members.



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