

April 2018 E-Newsletter Eric Hooglund, Editor

Published monthly for members of the Belgrade Historical Society

Although Belgrade has been renowned as a summer tourist destination area for more than 100 years, this history has been marked by several distinct eras. The period from approximately 1940 to 1956, for example, included the summers when Belgrade's lakes attracted many popular stars of the stage and screen, as well as artists and writers.

One of these stars was the British-born actor Stanley Ridges (1890-1951). He already was an experienced stage performer when he immigrated to New York in 1917 to appear in a Broadway musical comedy. During the following 19 years, he appeared in many popular Broadway plays, including musicals, comedies and dramas. In 1923, he made a brief foray into the movies, being cast with the renowned silent film star Mary Astor in *Success*.



Ridges' movie career did not take off until the early 1930s, when the arrival of 'talking' movies compelled Hollywood's casting directors to seek out actors who could project strong but pleasant sounding voices. Ridges, thanks to his years on the stage, could project his voice very well. Between 1934 and 1950, he starred in scores of movies, mostly in supporting roles, alongside some of Hollywood's biggest stars of the era, such as Jack Benny, Humphrey Bogart, Gary Cooper, Carole Lombard, Sidney Poitier, Claude Rains, Ginger Rodgers—twice—and Barbara Stanwyck.

One movie in which he did have a leading role was the 1940 horror classic, *Black Friday*.

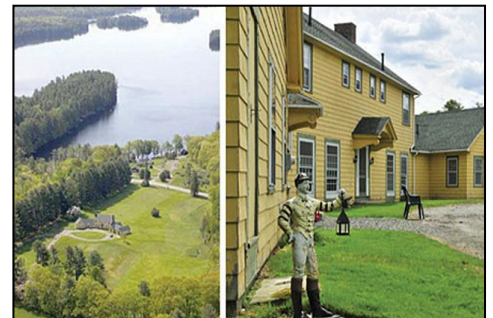


We do not have record of when Ridges began coming to Belgrade, but we do know that he visited a camp on Long Pond each summer during the 1940s. BHS member Bill Pulsifer remembers the summer night that Ridges's camp burned—when Bill was an adolescent, and he graciously agreed to share his recollections with fellow BHS members.

I remember Stan as he was a great friend of my Mother and Father. Once he took my mother and me to the Lakewood Theater to see a show. He had a Chrysler 'Woody Wagon'. Some place I have a picture from the paper of the event. At that time his camp was off Birch Point on the end of what is now Castle View Rd. The camp there now was rebuilt after Stan's camp burned. ... I

remember that it was around midnight when Stan came pounding on the front door of the telephone office—which was in our home--and said that his camp was on fire. By the time the fire truck, with all of us in it, got there, the camp was flat. I remember that Cass French, Frank Depietro, Clifford Johnson and others set up the portable pump at the lake to wet down the remains. Father sent me to Snellenberg's camp to call Mother and have her call Lealand Levet in Oakland to have CMP turn off the power to the camp! It was very dark and on the way back to Stan's camp a Hoot Owl let go with a Hoot, and it scared the hell out of me so I ran all the way back. Stan had just come from California and had brought a friend's big "Great Dane" dog with him. Stan had been at "Jack Cronin's Bar" in the Lakeshore Hotel, just across the street from our house. He had gone there with Dumont Townson, his drinking buddy, and then had gone back to camp to sleep. It was a cool night and he said, "I built a small fire in the sheet metal stove." After a while the Great Dane pulled him out of bed as the camp was full of smoke and on fire. He then came up here to get the fire department.

Later, I interviewed Mary Beals, who also knew Stan. She told me about the hotel, etc., and how Stan and Dumont would take Stan's "speed boat" and ride over to Elizabeth Arden's [Maine Chance health spa] and take some of the girls out for a boat ride! Ha! I might be able to find the fire records of when his camp burned. I'm guessing in the late 1940's. I don't know if he rebuilt it or just rented one some other place. There is a camp now on that campsite, which is located at the end of Castle View Drive. This is about all I remember about Stan. Maybe some BHS members would like to share some of their memories!

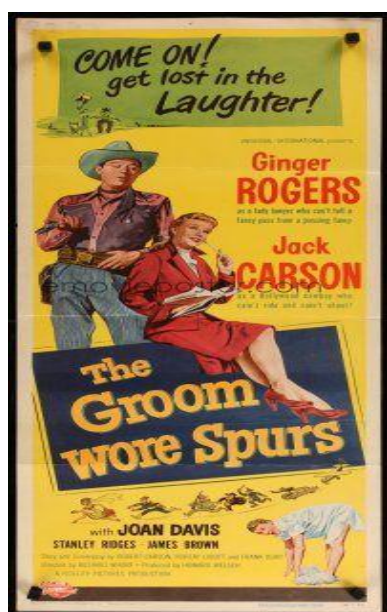


Bill's memories of Stanley Ridges prompted some recollections of this famed summer resident from Shirley (Yeaton) Blood, who wrote in March:

Stanley used to stay at a camp beyond our house [down Hulin Road, on the stream from Great Pond to Long Pond, so this was probably after his camp on Castle View Drive had burned] and when he came to vacation he used to stop at our house. My dog, a yellow German shepherd, would jump into his convertible and Stanley would give her a steak, take her to camp and leave her off when he went home. Also, Stanley's daughter's nickname was Sugar. He would take my sister Helen and the dog on vacation with his family. He would buy her a suitcase of clothes just like Sugar's.

During the last two years of his life, Stanley Ridges became involved with productions for the then still new medium of television, and he appeared in plays sponsored by the Chevrolet Tele-Theater, Studio, Suspense and the Philco Television Playhouse.

His last movie was *The Groom Wore Spurs*, which Universal Pictures released in March 1951.



As in most of his movies, Ridges was not a leading star but had a strong supporting actor role, in this case to Ginger Rogers and Jack Carson. He died in April 1951, only one month after the movie's release. Belgrade, about as far to the northeast of Hollywood as one can get in the USA, was one place where many people knew Ridges personally and genuinely mourned his passing.

Thanks to Rod Johnson for suggesting a story about Stanley Ridges and to Bill Pulsifer and Shirley Blood for sharing their recollections about this movie star who loved Belgrade enough to return here for several successive summers!

“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

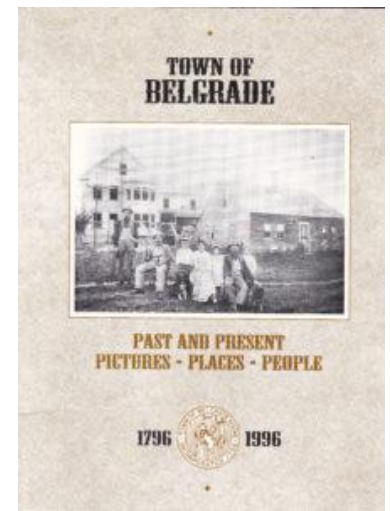
4. August 16, 2018 - The Belgrade Historical Society will hold a program in Pine Grove Cemetery: Come Meet your Ancestors! A Cemetery Walk; Curious about who is buried in Belgrade, come hear about some of our ancestors and illustrious forefathers and mother's. August 11th: The Belgrade Historical Society will hold its annual Summer Fair

5. September 20, 2018 –Join us for this presentation, “The Life and Mysterious Death of Maine-born Millionaire, Sir Harry Oakes.” Mr. Oakes’ career, fortune and death garnered worldwide attention, but he never forgot his Maine roots. David Leigh, a local historian and Maine educator with a 31 career teaching and administering provides a program filled with mystery and intrigue involving a yet unsolved but brutal murder.

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. The BHS also has the 2nd printings of the 1774-1976 Soft Cover "*Past & Present*", *Pictures and People of Belgrade*, Maine Books prices are \$15.00 or \$13.50 for Members.*

There are also many more gift items to choose from at the Center Historical Room or visit our website at <http://belgradehistoricalsociety.org> to view the items available



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