



September 2017 E-Newsletter

Tukey Brothers Lumber Company of North Belgrade

Compiled by Priscilla Tukey Spiller and written by Rod Johnson

The story of Tukey Brothers Lumber Company—from its early days in the mid-1930's to the present, some 82 years later—is one of perseverance, Yankee ingenuity and long working hours, qualities that helped to create a business which has grown from catering to very local needs to producing lumber products for such far away places as Iceland and Kuwait. The story begins with Hugh Carlton Tukey, who was born in New Gloucester, Maine, on July 31, 1910, the son of James and Lottie (Tripp) Tukey. At the age of 3 or 4, Hugh moved to Belgrade with his folks and older siblings. He attended Belgrade schools, after which he worked as a mason with his father, a bricklayer by trade. Among other major projects, they both helped to build the masonic building in Greenville, Maine.

In 1930, Hugh began working for Leslie Damren in his water-powered sawmill in No. Belgrade. Hugh dreamed of owning his own sawmill, and in 1935 he was able to purchase the mill from Damren. He moved it to a location at Log Haven Camps, where he set up for business. Hugh and his older brother Earl started small, sawing logs into boards for the Proctor and Bowie Company of Waterville. They trucked the logs across Salmon Lake in the winter, sawed and planed them, then trucked them back to Proctor and Bowie. According to a family story, Hugh and Earl were paid \$11 per one thousand board feet, a pittance compared with today's prices! After two years, in 1937, tragedy struck when a fire destroyed the mill. Although Tukey Lumber was out of business, it would return in good time.



Prior to buying that first mill, Hugh Tukey had married Lucille E. Withers on April 2, 1933. They lived with Lucille's parents, William and Lubertha (Watson) Withers, for about four years. Hugh then bought from the Furbush family 100 acres of land for a cost of \$1,200. The land was located along Route 8 in North Belgrade. There he raised milking cows and grew potatoes. For about 11 years, Hugh also trucked milk for H.P. Hood and Sons, Whiting Co., and New England Dairies, Inc. A family story is that Hugh's first milk delivery truck was one that he found pushed off into a ditch and fixed up. Meanwhile, both he and Lucille continued to farm and to sell potatoes. They would put an entire year's harvest into their cellar and fill it to the brim. Then, they sold potatoes from their cellar by the pound all year long.

Around 1946, Hugh and Lucile sold their dairy business and built another sawmill. Once again, Hugh bought logs and turned them into boards and planks for the local retail yards, selling nearly everything as a wholesale supplier. Business started booming again, but after 18 years, disaster struck again, when the second mill burned to the ground in 1964.



Saw Mill Burns

Fire of undetermined origin razed Tukey's Saw Mill in North Belgrade late Wednesday evening, destroying the main building and lumber stocked inside. Loss was estimated by owner

Hugh Tukey at approximately \$150,000. The business uninsured. (Earl Smith Photo)

With the help of good friends and a portable mill, Hugh moved to Washington County, where he produced custom-sawed cedar logs and boards for L.C. Andrews Lumber Company of South Windham, Maine. The demand for L.C. Andrew's custom-made cottages and homes was good at that time, so Tukey's subsidiary business paid off with Hugh remaining in Washington County for seven years, until 1971.

While Hugh was in Washington County, his five sons—Bill, Ken, Leroy, Dan and Peter--were rebuilding the saw mill in North Belgrade, and in September of 1971, they bought out Hugh and the business became Tukey Brothers Lumber, Inc. At first, the brothers specialized in sawing eight-foot studs, handling only enough to keep the five of them busy. Working nights and weekends, the Tukey brothers completed a long-log sawmill capable of producing studs, planks and boards. Then they installed an automatic mill, which allowed them to saw up to 15,000 board feet per day. The mill was in full operation in 1973, with output increasing until the Tukey brothers had 22 employees on their payroll.

After two years of retirement, Hugh came back to the lumberyard. His five sons were sawing 10 hours per day and needed their Dad back to keep track of shipments and to scale the in-coming logs. Hugh had started sawing lumber at the age of 17 and had compiled 23 years in the sawmill business, so when a reporter for the Waterville *Morning Sentinel* asked him how he liked being back, he responded that it felt good, even if only for a short while. He added, "It wasn't like I just sat around the last two years." Being a man of many talents and lots of ambition, he had built several

camps and houses and done many carpentry projects while retired!

Hugh soon retired for the final time—but not really. His love for horses and experience with them in the old days of logging led him to keep racehorses in his own back yard. With the assistance of one of his daughters, Mary Ann, he built a racetrack behind his house. In 1977 the first horse arrived, named Lakewood Wag. Hugh's new love required a lot of work, but resulted in only a few wins. However, in 1985, one of his colts, Two Keys Choice, was racing.



Hugh enjoyed his latter years, with hunting, fishing, horses and watching the sawmill prosper with its up and downs. He helped to raise his 8 children and later several grandchildren, and was a very loving and caring person. He died on November 13, 1991, after a long illness, and he is buried with wife Lucille in Belgrade's Pine Grove Cemetery.

Three years prior to Hugh's passing, the mill burned to the ground yet again. A neighbor spotted flames in the wee hours of the morning on November 29, 1988. After much indecision about whether or not to rebuild, the Tukey brothers once again dug their way out of the burned rubble and salvaged what machinery they could. Much unsolicited support came from contractors, suppliers and individuals, who gave their time, use of equipment and encouragement.



By March 1989, Tukey Brothers, Inc. was back in business, sawing logs in a new 7,200 square foot building constructed with their own lumber. Though more than \$500,000 in damage had occurred, it wasn't long before there were 19 employees including the owners. Over the years many more transitions have taken place at the mill,

with more efficient saws, trimmers, etc., that helped the company become a major supplier. Tukey Brothers went from selling hardwood for coffins and railroad ties to selling hemlock landscape timbers, pine log home stock and finger joint material. After 82 years, lots of hard work, losses from fire, and competition from both domestic and international suppliers, Tukey Brothers Lumber Co. Inc. is going through yet another transition: Most of the brothers are retiring now, and, sadly, the youngest brother, Peter, passed away last year. Thus, the future of their sawmill business is yet to be told. However, we are thankful to all the Tukey family for creating and operating such an important lumber business in Belgrade for 82 years.



Remember...history not recorded is history lost!

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.



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, Former 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



Upcoming Historical Society Programs

2017 PROGRAMS

**September 21, 2017 “Lest We Forget: Using Lessons from
Our Past To Guide Our Future”
Earl Smith, author of Head of Falls
Maine Lakes Resource Center -7:00 p.m.**

**October 21, 2017
“Viewing Belgrade’s Past Through
Postcards and Snapshots”
Eric Hooglund
Maine Lakes Resource Center-7:00 p.m.**

BYO Picnic Supper Picnic Socials (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.

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

Don't forget to visit the Belgrade Historical Society History Room at the Center!

BELGRADE IN BYGONE TIMES

An exhibit which shows what life was like in Belgrade over a hundred years ago is on display in the Belgrade History Room at the Center for All Seasons at 1 Center Drive in Belgrade Lakes. The exhibit paints a picture of Belgrade as primarily an agricultural community with many prosperous farmers using the Maine Central Railroad to carry apples, corn, and potatoes to far-away markets. This was the Golden Age of Tourism, when visitors began fleeing the increasingly crowded and dirty cities to get back to nature in the Belgrades, where they could enjoy clean air, pure water, and excellent fishing in the lakes. The free exhibit is open from 8am-4pm Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, & Friday, and is staffed on Thursdays from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. (through the end of September)



Hope you enjoyed this newsletter, please send comments or questions to Co-Chairs of the Belgrade Historical Society - Dianne Dowd at dilib56@aol.com or Mary Vogel at vogel9252@roadrunner.com

Don't forget to visit our facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/belgradehistorical/>

Our new facebook page editor is Laura Hudson, we would like to thank her for her assistance. If you would like something historical to Belgrade posted or a picture of Belgrade, please contact her through the facebook page.