

July 2019 E-Newsletter

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Summer is here, and the camps on the Belgrade shores of Great Pond, Long Pond, McGrath Pond, Salmon Lake and Messalonskee Lake are full with families, many of which have been coming here for summer fun over three or more generations. Yes, tourism has been an important aspect of Belgrade's history for over a century! But 100 years ago, tourist lodgings were probably more important than private camps, or cottages, as they were called way back then. Tourist accommodations were located near or on the water, in Belgrade Lakes, Belgrade Depot, North Belgrade and Lakeside (the name of the Messalonskee shore north and south of the North Belgrade train station). The most famous of the tourist lodgings was The Belgrade, a grand hotel that was built in 1899-1900 on what now is Lakeshore Drive in Belgrade Lakes. It burned in the fall of 1956, completely, with all of its furnishings, ledgers and other records. But historical accounts and postcards of the Belgrade have survived and provide for us a view of what The Belgrade was like.

One example of an historical account can be found in the Waterville *Morning Sentinel*, which used to feature local news items for the various towns in northern Kennebec, southern Somerset and southeastern Franklin counties. Its local news item for Belgrade Lakes on July 17, 1914, provides a fascinating descriptive account of The Belgrade. The account reads more like a promotional ad than a news item, but that is what makes this 105-year old 'story' such an historical gem. We are happy to provide you the unabridged version below, complete with its headline!

Belgrade Hotel Entertains Many Prominent People

The continued warm weather of late is causing an influx of people to Maine in order to escape the heat of the cities, and among other inland resorts, The Belgrade at Belgrade Lakes is entertaining its quota of guests, and indications are that this will be a most successful season at this popular resort. There are many of the guests of former years already sojourning there, and many others are constantly



coming and going, drawn there by the beautiful surroundings and the hospitality of Manager Charles H. Hill, whose constant care is to radiate a homelike spirit and cordial welcome to all.

The Belgrade is within easy reach of Waterville and is situated on the borders of one of a chain of five lakes that makes that section famous. It is about six miles from Belgrade Station [Belgrade Depot], and after a delightful ride past farmhouse, field, and meadow, through leafy woodland stretches, where the scent of sweet fern, spruce, and pine assail the nostrils with their invigorating odors, a glimpse of Long Lake comes into view from the summit of a knoll, and a moment after, the Belgrade is reached. The house itself is attractively situated in a setting of forest growth, and all around the charm of nature is left in a great measure undisturbed. The view from the piazzas is magnificent, the well-kept golf links, the expanse of lake and the wooded hills of Rome in the distance, making a picture of remarkable beauty.



Front view of The Belgrade

The house faces the west, and the sunsets are glorious. In the fall, the wooded slopes across the lake are gorgeous in coloring and a pleasure to all beholders. There are all sorts of amusement, a nine hole golf course, two tennis courts, boating, bathing and fishing. The black bass fishing in these lakes is unsurpassed in any locality in the state, and the fishing grounds are much sought by devotees of the gentle art of angling. Canoeing is a popular sport, and the hotel is equipped with a splendid boat livery supplied by the Kennebec Boat & Canoe Company of this city [Waterville]. The golf links are in close proximity to the hotel, and the game can be watched for the greater part from the piazza.



The inside of the house equals in attractiveness the outward surroundings, and there are conveniences for children as well as for grownups. Another feature that imparts a feeling of satisfaction to the sojourner in this delightful spot is the skill of the chef, who sends to the table some very delectable edibles for the gratification of the inner man. In view of all these attractions, it is not at all surprising that The Belgrade should be one of the most popular summer hostelries in Maine. [There follows a long list of current (1914) lodgers at The Belgrade, none of whom are residents of the town of Belgrade!]

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****** The BHS Annual Meeting is coming up! This year it will be a social event, a chance for members to meet and talk with BHS Board members. We want to hear what you would like to see in our *E-Newsletter* and to hear your suggestions for future program ideas. In addition to providing an update on plans to preserve the Old Town Meeting House, built in 1814, we will provide ample refreshments made by the BHS team of bakers. Watch your e-mail in the next two weeks for an invitation, with the date, time, and place of our annual meeting.**

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The next program will be **on Thursday, July 18, at the 7 Lakes Alliance building, former Messalonskee High School teacher David Leigh** will describe a project in the 1990s in which students wrote letters to politicians seeking their perspectives on important national and international political events in which they had participate between 1945 and 1990. Many famous leaders responded, and David will read some of their responses and provide historical context.

This promises to be a very fascinating program!



Did you ever wonder how term ‘vacationland’ got associated with Maine? For anyone under 85, that term always has been on Maine license plates. But now you can learn all about its origins at our program **on Thursday, August 22, at the 7 Lakes Alliance building, at 7 pm. Scott Andrews of the USM Senior College** has been researching the history of “vacationland” and he has some fascinating lore to present.

On Fridays at 11 am, there will be walking tours of Belgrade Lakes village. You need to reserve a spot at least 24 hours in advance. Call (207) 495-2310 to reserve!



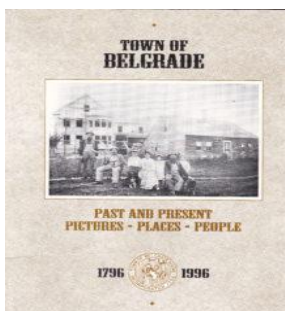
Looking for gifts, don’t forget our calendars and Reproduction Past & Present Books. Available at the Center for All Seasons BHS History Room or Day’s Store!

Our **2019 calendars**, with classic 8” X 10” photographs of Belgrade from the 1890s to the early 1950s. Wonderful way to enjoy Belgrade all year long! And the photos are perfect for framing as keepsakes when each month is over. **ONLY \$15, a bargain for those who love Belgrade!**

Past and Present Books More than 140 unique and priceless photos of Belgrade’s past, all with historical captions. **Only \$15, another bargain!**

Town of Belgrade Past and Present Pictures of People and Places

A special hardbound photo and text book for the coffee table! **Only**



Capital Fund Drive



Rendering of Townhouse after Renovation

Sketch by Artist Erik Johnson

The **Capital Fund Drive** is going well! We have received several thousand dollars and returns are coming in on a daily basis. A friendly reminder to those who want to give and have not yet done so. Use your return envelope or send your own to BHS, P.O. Box 36A, Belgrade, Maine 04917. Use PayPal as an alternative by going to our website belgradehistoricalsociety@gmail.com.

Thanks to those who have already donated, all donations will help the bottom line!

Don't forget that BHS is a non-profit 501 (3) 2 organization, so all contributions to its capital campaign to renovate the Old Town House are tax deductible. Any donation you make to BHS can be deducted from your income tax to the extent allowable by law. Please think of making an end-of-year donation to our worthy cause and help to preserve our history.