



Belgrade Historical Society

September-October 2020 E- Newsletter

By Eric Hooglund, Editor

Another summer season has ended in Belgrade, an unusual season when we all needed to be careful on account of the persistence of the COVID-19 pandemic in most of the country. Fortunately, the disease has not been widespread in Maine, because since mid-March the people generally have observed the wearing of facial coverings in public and have been practicing the ‘art’ of social distancing. Within these parameters, summertime on the lakes continued and the BHS History Room was open on Sundays to welcome visitors. Now we are looking forward to fall, which means putting away boats and summer furniture, harvesting the last garden crops and noting how the stores are getting ready for Halloween.

Speaking of that last night of October festivity, your BHS is pleased to present below a real ghost story by BHS Board member Rod Johnson, whom most of you know as the author of *The Luckiest Boy*, I and II, true accounts of growing up in Belgrade Lakes village in the 1950s and 1960s, and also the writer of interesting and greatly appreciated articles in the summer weekly newspaper, *Summertime in the Belgrades*.

Belgrade Lore: The Guide Ghosts of Long Pond

By Rod Johnson

As you all know, the Guide Ghosts of Great Pond have made themselves known several times over the last decade or so. Residents who got lost in the fog disturbed each witnessed episode of their foggy night antics. Mostly, the reports tell of running upon old guide boats—either laying at anchor or quietly slipping across the glassy lake in the wee hours. No one has been able to get a good clear look at them yet, but in 2017 one man, waiting out the fog on Whale Rock, did get a decent glimpse. He told the game warden this, and I quote: “A pale, wispy haired, skeletal figure steering a guide boat scared the pants off me. He slithered by the stern of my rowboat not 2 feet away.” In another account last summer, a guide boat was found tied to the Thompson dock after a hellacious night, with fog so thick you could cut it with a knife. Oddly enough, every single report has included people noting harsh smells. Some of the smell descriptions were: wet wool or felt, boat paint or spar varnish, sweat, old motor oil or linseed oil. In addition, every one told of pipe tobacco and potent ale. No definite answers have ever been found by the authorities or the local yokels.

Just last week a report was called into the Kennebec Sheriff’s office, the Mount Vernon constable and the Maine Warden Service. There may be a new wrinkle in the Guide Ghost’s repertoire, as this report detailed some strange activities down in lower Long Pond, actually up in Ingham Stream. This is a first, as all previous reports have come from Great Pond. There’s some speculation that the ghosts were irritated by all the intrusions during their foggy night get-togethers over the last few years. They are not strangers to Long Pond, as during their guiding years they all took people fishing on both Great and Long Ponds—and the latter does tend to be a quieter place.

The cell phone report came into 911 Central about 10:30 p.m., well after a heavy fog had blanketed the area earlier in the evening. A Dr. W. Rimm and his wife Cinda had come up from

Potomac, Maryland, the day before, and were staying at Castle Island Camps, which are right near the Narrows Road bridge that tends to separate lower and upper Long Pond. They had canoed all the way down lower Long Pond during their first day in Maine and had picnicked and napped on Black Point. The leisurely day turned into a scary nightmare when the pair awoke immersed in a fog thicker than pea soup. When they called Horatio Castle with their old flip phone to report their predicament, he suggested they stay put until the skies cleared. Rache, as he was nick-named, said he would come down by powerboat and tow them back when weather permitted. Against this advice, and not wanting to be a bother, the pair decided to try and find their way back to Castle Island and started up the lake. Within 5 minutes it was clear that leaving Black Point had been a bad decision. After 45 minutes or so of aimless paddling, the couple heard what sounded like a ho-down, the kind with fiddles and harmonicas, maybe even a mandolin. Great hope came over them that the mainland was near and a party was happening at someone's camp. They paddled in the direction of the sound of old-time music, which became clearer with each sweep. A scary moment happened when the bow of their Old Town canoe bashed broadside into a long slender wooden boat. The boat seemed unattended, but the smells emitting from it were enough to wake the dead. Smells of motor oil, fish innards, wet hemp anchor line and other stuff too mixed to sort out were overwhelming. Almost simultaneously, the music stilled and only the sounds of crickets and pine borers could be heard. As Bill and Cinda hung onto the side of the old craft, feeling a touch of security for whatever reason, a slight breeze rattled the pennant mounted on the bow of the old wooden relic. The swale grass in the area also gave a gentle but audible waggle. Within 20 minutes the fog was entirely gone as the moon and stars became a very welcome sight.

After struggling with a weak cell signal, Horatio's voice finally filled their old flip phone. He listened intently as they explained their surroundings and he realized the couple had gone south rather than north. They were clearly up in Ingham Stream. An hour later, about midnight, Bill and Cinda smiled as they heard the outboard churning up the stream, ready to haul them home. Horatio and his wife Valerie, who had come along for support, had a thermos of coffee and some sandwiches ready for the tired but thankful couple. Cinda and Bill agreed that the kids would never believe their story—perhaps not even the locals!

The next day a Maine Game Warden stopped by Castle Island to report in and to interview the Rimms. At daylight he had scoured Ingham Stream and there were no signs of any boat or other activity. Skeptically, he agreed to file the report along with the others from Great Pond under G—for Ghostly Happenings.

Is LORE history? I suppose only if you believe it – and who could not believe that the Guide Ghosts do in fact live among us, especially on foggy nights!





Take a trip to Augusta to view an old double-ended guide boat on display at the Maine State Museum.



“NEW”

“The Belgrade Historical Society” NEW Face book page

We look forward to enhancing your understanding of the rich history of Belgrade and its lakes. And also keeping you up to date on any new activities

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.

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.

Please stop by and check out the progress of the restoration of the Old Town House, they are doing a fantastic job of restoring the building!