



August 2021 E-Newsletter

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On August 1, the Village Inn in Belgrade Lakes village held a community open house to mark the 100th birthday of this famous dining establishment, which is on Main Street, right across from Long Pond, with The Stream that meanders out of Great Pond and empties into Long Pond just behind it. The Village Inn's proprietors, Kate Beales and Heather Pena, hosted the afternoon event on the lawn beside The Stream. That lawn has been a longtime favorite spot of customers for afternoon lunches and early evening dinners during the summer months. And August 1 was a beautiful sunny afternoon, a refreshing rarity after a very usually rain-laden July. Complementing the warm, sunny weather was the band, Les Amis, which provided live music while guests enjoyed an array of appetizers, including Lebanese delicacies that Kate Beals learned how to make when she lived in Beirut.

The Village Inn and its parent, The Locusts' House, have been a continuous part of Belgrade's history for over a century. Thanks to the late Pauline Plourde, who compiled much of the history of Belgrade's early 20th century tourism business, we know that the Locusts' House opened as a Tea Room in the summer of 1920. The

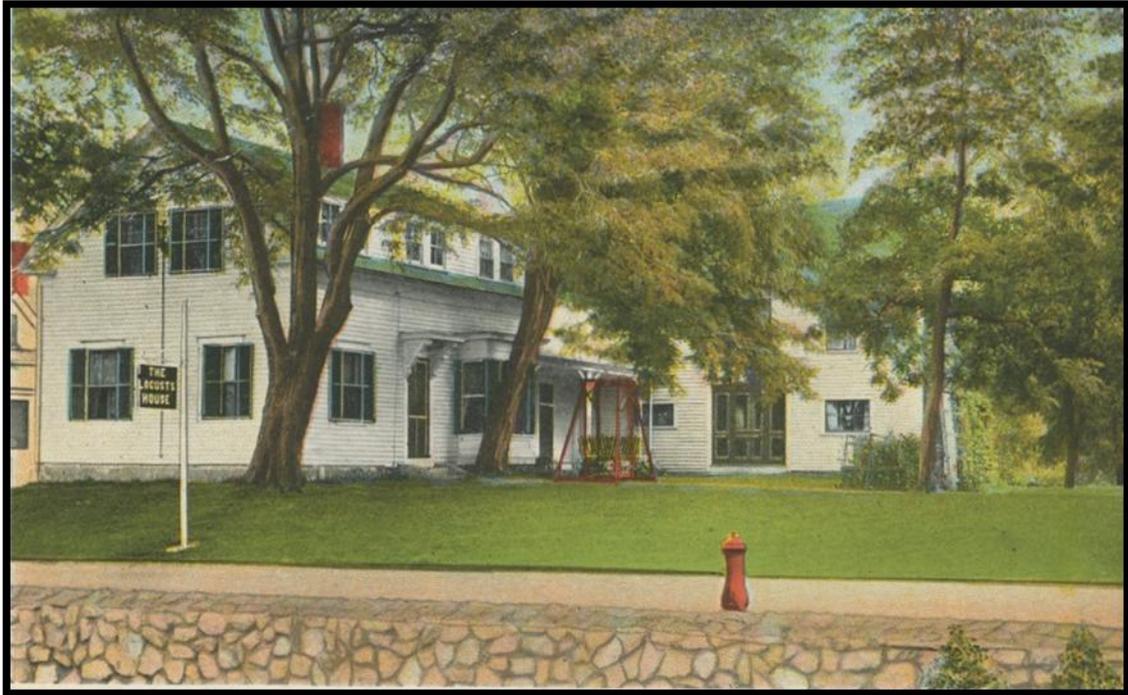
proprietors were Ed and Blanche Megill, who redesigned a room in their house as the Tea Room. Ed—for Edwin—was one of many tourist guides who came to Belgrade around 1900. These guides were important in the early 20th century, because most tourists came from the large cities and did not know how to fish or operate boats, skills that the guides had. Ed Megill, who was born (1883) and raised in central New Jersey, enjoyed being a guide, liked Belgrade and decided to stay here. He went to New York City in the late spring of 1904 to marry Louise Blanche Downward, and he brought his bride “home” to Belgrade Lakes to live in the white house on Main Street that had two locust trees on its front lawn. Ed and Blanche—her family and friends knew her by her middle name—had a son and two daughters. By 1920, their children were in school and old enough to help with chores; some tourists were beginning to buy camps and even boats, and the need for guides was waning, BUT the need for tourist accommodations was increasing, and tourists included more families interested in taking up the new sport of swimming. The combination of all these ‘developments’ prompted Ed and Blanche Megill to open the Locusts House Tea Room.

The Tea Room was successful, and the Megills began planning to convert part or even their entire barn into summer accommodations. Of course, guests would need to eat more than tea: The Locusts House would have to become a hotel providing breakfast, lunch and dinner for its guests. Blanche Megill, actively involved in the Ladies Aid Society and the Grange, had become accustomed to preparing and serving meals for many people, so she welcomed the new challenge. The summer of 1921 brought the first overnight guests to the Locusts House.



Caption: The Locusts House, 1921 (Hand tinted post card, 1921. BHS: Pope Postcard Collection]

Each following summer witnessed the addition of more guest bedrooms and a larger dining room: They enlarged the barn; an ell was built to connect the main house to the (former) barn; the house next door was purchased; then it was expanded with an ell; then the two separate properties were connected. Meanwhile, the additions soon overwhelmed Blanche Megill's home kitchen, so she supervised the construction of a below ground kitchen under the former barn! The Megills accomplished all the above changes between 1920 and 1935, effectively transforming the Locusts House into what looks much like The Village Inn today—from the outside! And more than the guests were enjoying the meals, as the dining room gradually had transformed into a restaurant open to locals and camp owners who loved Blanche's cooking!



Caption: The Locusts House, ca, 1940 (Postcard, BHS: Pope Postcard Collection).

In April 1936, as the Megills were planning for another summer season, Blanche suffered a sudden stroke and passed away that evening; she was only 51. Ed made no further changes to the Locusts' House. However, in 1940, he did purchase the Lakeview Manor (recently renamed the Seven Lakes Inn) and its annex (currently Balloons and Things Gift Shop and Pin Curl Salon) from the estate of Ervin Bean (famed Belgrade Lakes entrepreneur who was a brother of L.L. Bean). He moved across the street to live in the Lakeview Manor, and some summers he used its bedrooms for overflow guests at the Locusts House.

By the summer of 1964, when Ed Megill was in his early 80s, he was thinking about the future of his hotel/restaurant. Liking the food at the Lobster Pot (now the site of the Sunset Grill), he approached owners Paul and Priscilla Povandie about buying the Locusts House. Eventually, Ed Megill and the Povandies made a deal, and he sold his famous hotel/restaurant to them for

\$10,000. However, Priscilla Povandie did not want to cook in a basement kitchen! Thus, the Povandies spent 18 months renovating the Locusts House. Their principal carpenters were son-in-law Richard Johnson and the grandson of Ed Megill, Frank Megill. Their priority project was the construction of a new kitchen on the ground floor—a major renovation. There was other remodeling as well, including converting the former kitchen into a tavern and updating the guest rooms. Moreover, since the Locusts trees were gone, a new name seemed necessary. Given its location right in the heart of Belgrade Lakes village, what name could be more appropriate than The Village Inn? And so, the popular old hotel re-opened in the summer of 1966 as The Village Inn.

In the past 55 years, there have been changes in ownership, repainting and décor alterations, but many of the recipes introduced by Priscilla Povandie, especially her slow-roasted duck, still are customer favorites. And Mrs. P, as she was known to customers, even adapted several of Blanche Megill's recipes from the 1920s. The Village Inn continues into the 21st century to perpetuate a fascinating accommodations and culinary tradition that began one hundred years ago. The next time you dine there; remember that you are in a unique historical space that has been serving guests delicious meals for a century! [Special thanks to Judith Johnson, Beverly Megill and Pam Partridge for details about the sale of the Locusts' House and the renovations that modified it into The Village Inn.]



It's never too late to buy a BHS book about the past for yourself or for a present (see titles below), or to purchase a gift membership, or to make a deeply appreciated contribution to our Old Town Meeting House Restoration/Renovation Fund. The outside is restored beautifully, but we still are working on the inside, and contributions will help us to finish installing new electric wiring and a new floor, as well as to purchase display cases for our numerous, donated historical artifacts!

Also, Hot off the Press!

***Eighty-Eight Years on a Maine Farm*, by Will and Minnie Penney**

Reprint of the 1970 edition by *Down East Books*.

Retail price: \$19.95 BHS price: \$17, plus \$4 postage and packaging if mailed

A reprint of The Belgrade Grange cookbook is available at Hello Good Pie and Oliver and Friends Bookstore in Belgrade Lakes Village.

It is also available from the Belgrade Historical Society for \$15.00 + a \$3.00 for Postage. To order from BHS send an email to belgradehistoricalsociety@gmail.com.

**BELGRADE,
A
HISTORY**

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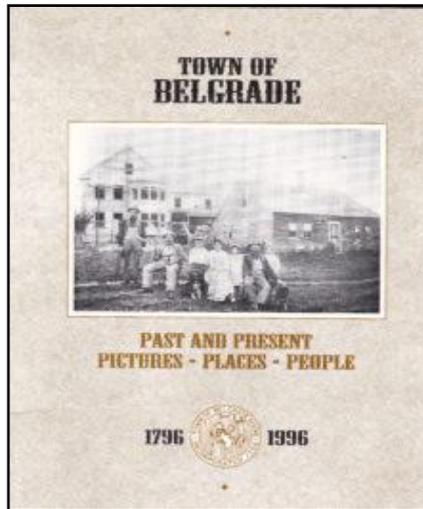
Illustrated History
of Kennebec County, Maine
1625-1799-1892

Editors: Henry D. Kingsbury, Simeon L. Deyo



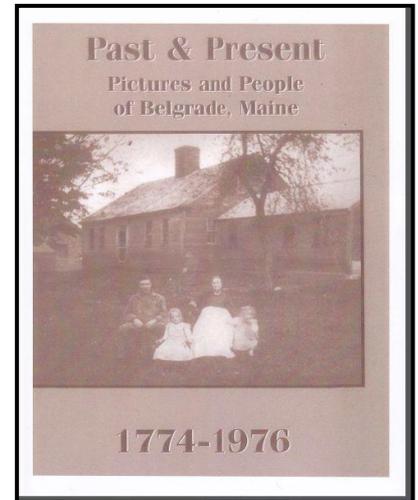
Also available is *The History*, reprint of 1892 history compiled by Belgrade native John Clair Minot who eventually moved to Boston and became editor of *Youth's Companion*, a popular magazine for boys & an editor for Boston's Herald newspaper. \$10.00 includes postage.

Town of Belgrade Past and Present Pictures of People and Places



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

Special price: \$26.00, featuring over 100 old photographs, each with historically accurate descriptions! \$18.00 includes postage. includes postage and handling



The Past and Present,

reprint of 1976 Bicentennial book featuring over 100 old photographs, each with historically accurate descriptions! \$18.00 includes postage.

**Don't forget to renew your BHS membership for 2021!
Or consider buying a membership for a friend or a family member who
would enjoy the stories of Belgrade!**

The Belgrade Historical Society welcomes all who support our mission and share our commitment to preserve the rich history of the town and its lakes.

Individuals, families, organizations, or businesses may join. The membership year is January 1 – December 31, and at any meeting of the members each membership is entitled to one vote. Members may also attend any meeting of the Board of Directors. Please visit our website for more information on becoming a member or how you can donate to the BHS @

<http://belgradehistoricalsociety.org/>

The Capital Fund Drive is going well, it is still not too late to donate to our ongoing campaign, please stop by the Old Town House to view the work that has been done to the building, it will preserve the building for many years to come!



Rendering of Townhouse after complete Renovation

Sketch by Artist Erik Johnson

For those who want to give and have not yet done so, it is not too late. 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

<http://belgradehistoricalsociety.org>

Or contact us through email at the following email address:

belgradehistoricalsociety@gmail.com.

Don't forget that BHS is a non-profit 501 (3) 2 organizations, 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.

Remember...history not recorded is history lost!

Don't forget our face book for the most up to date news and information on The Belgrade Historical Society at

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/httpwww.belgradehistoricalsociety.org>