



## **BHS Newsletter**

**November-December 2022**

*Edited by Eric Hooglund*

***The BHS wishes all our friends and members a wonderful Thanksgiving, a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year in 2023!***

This past summer and fall were very busy times for BHS, as many of you who participated in our diverse programs are aware. We continued work on the interior restoration of Belgrade's historic 1814 old Town Meeting House; we participated in the summer craft fairs on the Village Green in Belgrade Lakes village; and we presented diverse programs for members and the public in the old Town Meeting House, the North Belgrade Community Center, the Belgrade Community Center on Route 27, and the Belgrade Public Library in Belgrade Depot. On Oct. 15, BHS hosted the fall meeting of the Kennebec Valley historical societies, during which Kevin Johnson, the photo archivist of the Penobscot Marine Museum in Searsport gave a wonderful presentation of old photographs—late 1890s to 1950—from PMM's extensive old photo collection of Kennebec County, including hundreds of the Belgrade Lakes region.

As we enter the holiday season, our BHS president, Dianne Dowd, suggested that we write a story about the colorful glass Christmas ornaments of Belgrade that members have been

donating to the BHS collection in the past few years. So, she did some historical research about these colorful ornaments, which are shown in the photo below.



One person who knew the history of the seven Christmas ornaments is Diane Oliver, proprietor of Day's Store, and she also owns one each of the seven different ornaments. She graciously invited Dianne Dowd to visit her home and take the above photograph. According to Diane Oliver, the Belgrade Region Inc., a business group formed in 1946 to promote tourism in the Belgrade Lakes area, commissioned and sold these ornaments, in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The Belgrade Region Inc. was active for over 50 years, building the little log cabin

Information Center on Route 27 just south of Belgrade Depot, although the original site of that building, from 1955 to 1977, was Belgrade Lakes village. The Belgrade Region Inc. dissolved in 2006, and its members formed the current Belgrade Region Business Group.

The Christmas ornaments are unique and commemorate Belgrade's past and continuing history. For example, looking at the top row of ornaments in the photo above, from left to right, the first ornament has a drawing of the Old South Church at the corner of West Road and Route 135. The Old South Church was built in 1826 (minus the steeple, which was added in 1910), and it has served as both a religious and social center for almost 200 years! The light blue ornament next to it features a drawing of the Village Inn, the region's most famous restaurant for over 50 years, and from 1921 to 1965, a popular locally dining place known as the Locusts' House. The light green ornament features Day's Store, which has been providing local and camp groceries, etc., since 1958. The last ornament in the top row has a drawing of the Union Church (est. 1872), which, like the Old South Church, is both a religious and social institution.

In the bottom row, the first ornament on the left commemorates the Great Pond mail boat service, which has operated every summer since 1900! The bright red ornament in the middle features a drawing of the *nationally* famous Belgrade Hotel, where the famous and wealthy spent most of their summers from 1900 to 1956! The last ornament commemorates, as the lettering under the loon states, *the real Golden Pond*, that is Great Pond, which provided the playwright Ernest Thompson inspiration for his famous play, *On Golden Pond*, which became a popular movie, but which—to considerable disappointment in Belgrade—was not filmed on Great Pond, but rather on a smaller lake in New Hampshire!

In Closing..... S A V E THE D A T E..... DECEMBER 3

On Dec. 3, 2022, Belgrade's legendary Christmas Fair returns to the Center for All Seasons!

Lots of vendors, selling lots of hand-crafted items. AND the BHS History Room will be open! Stop by for a visit. Old Photos galore on our computer to browse through! We can print out and sell copies of your favorites at bargain prices. And we have our historical publications, placemats, and other items for sale. History is a great gift, and proceeds help us to finish the final touches to preserve the Old Town House into its 3<sup>rd</sup> century!