



## May 2017, e-Newsletter

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***Published monthly for members of the Belgrade Historical Society***

### *Memorial Day Celebration in Belgrade, Maine*

Memorial Day weekend will soon be here! For many it is the day that signals the beginning of our summer season, a season of relaxation and recreational fun for all. However, Memorial Day is a much more solemn occasion borne out of the Civil War, a war in which over 750,000 Americans lost their lives. Originally called Decoration Day, it was a day where we honored all those who lost their lives while in military in military service for our country. There are more than two dozen cities and towns that claim to be the birthplace of this day. While it is impossible to determine its exact origins, in May 1966 President Johnson officially recognized Waterloo New York as the birthplace of Memorial Day.

On May 5, 1868, General John Logan, national commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, officially declared Decoration Day to be held on May 30, 1868 to honor our dead. In his General Order No. 11 he proclaimed that, "The 30th of May, 1868, is designated for the purpose of strewing with flowers, or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in

defense of their country during the late rebellion, and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village and hamlet churchyard in the land." The date of Decoration Day, as he called it, was chosen because it wasn't the anniversary of any particular battle.

New York State was the first state officially to recognize this holiday and by 1890 it was recognized by all northern states. Southern states refused to acknowledge this day and honored their dead on separate days until after World War I when the purpose of the day was changed from honoring those who died in the Civil War to those who died while serving their country in any war. In 1971, with the Congressional passage of the National Holiday Act of 1971 (P.L. 90 – 363), Memorial Day is now celebrated in almost every state on the last Monday in May. President Clinton, in May 2000, added to the solemnity of the occasion when in a Memorandum to all Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies, he asked all Americans to come together for a "national moment of remembrance" to be held at 3:00 p.m. on each Memorial Day. As part of the White House Memorial Program there is now an official moment for Americans to pause for a

moment of silence and listen to “Taps” in honor of our country’s fallen heroes.

Annually, our small town of Belgrade participates in honoring those who died while in service to our country by holding our Memorial Day Celebration at the Old Townhouse at the Woodside Cemetery. Preceding the actual event, volunteers and members of our Cemetery Committee plant flowers and put up flags on our veteran’s gravesites. The celebration begins at 10:00 a.m. on Memorial Day and features a parade with the Messalonskee Middle School Band, our Belgrade Fire Department, the Belgrade Boy and Girl Scouts, a guest speaker, and the roll call of our fallen heroes.

While relatively unknown, the Adam-Cobb-Stevens Post has been supporting our Belgrade Memorial Day celebration for many years. This is a small non-profit organization established in 1990 by the last members of the Adam-Cobb-Stevens American Legion Post #140.

As you learned from our April 2017 e-Newsletter, Belgrade, had many people serving in World War I...with a population of 1,037 in 1910, an estimated 52 young men from Belgrade served in the armed forces during the war, including several sets of brothers: Enoch, Frank and Mellen Adams; Everett and Milfred Childs; Clarence and Delmont French; Lauren and Leon Kelley; George and James L. Minot; and Edwin and Raymond Yeaton.

Maine draftees were trained at Camp Devens, which was set up in 1917 in central Massachusetts on the site of a former Civil War training center. Two of the Belgrade men actually died at Camp Devens when the 1918 influenza pandemic spread through the camp:

Mellen Adams, Belgrade High School, 1912 and Bates College, 1916; and Marcellus S. Cobb. In the late 1920’s a few of our local veterans purchased the old Belgrade Lakes New Century Schoolhouse (now Dockside Physical Therapy and the Print Shop), renovated it by adding a second floor, and made it the home for the Adams-Cobb American Legion Post #140, naming it in honor of Adams and Cobb. The Post changed its name to the Adams-Cobb-Stevens Post #140 after WWII to honor Willis Stevens, who died in Luxembourg on January 11, 1945.



While we do not have photographs of Mellen Adams or Marcellus Cobb, the picture of Willis Stevens (right) is taken from the 1945 Belgrade High School yearbook *Echo*. *The Echo’s* memorial dedication to him states:

*“It is with deep pride and humble respect that we, the students of Belgrade High School, dedicate this page of THE ECHO to our fellow schoolmate, WILLIS STEVENS, who quietly left home and school to serve his country, and who gave his life for us on January 11, 1945 in Luxembourg.”*

Although much of the early history of the Adams-Cobb Post #140 has been lost, it was an active post from its formation through the 1930’s, WWII, the Korean War, and into the 1960’s as a result of the support of these war veterans. However, times and interests change and membership in such organizations waned through the 1980’s. Post #140 was not immune

to this and in 1985, post members voted to sell the American Legion Hall. After a continuing decline in membership, the remaining members of Post #140 (Lewellyn A. Ashland, Chennel L. Cormier, Douglas Jenney, Robert G. Martin, Charles H. Mills Jr., Lawrence Sturtevant, and Carl Tompkins) dropped their association with the American Legion and in 1990 voted to incorporate as the Adams-Cobb-Stevens Post a non-profit organization “for charitable and fraternal purposes to promote the ideals of Veterans of the Armed Services of the United

States.” Since that time the Post has supported a number of activities, including the annual Memorial Celebration, the Belgrade Bicentennial Celebration, Boy’s and Girl’s State, Pine Tree Council of the Boy Scouts, and contributing one-half of the costs for the purchase of “flag holders” for veteran’s graves in our cemeteries. Current members of the Adams-Cobb-Stevens are: Dennis L. Keschl, Ernst Rice, and Gary Mahler.

### **Interested in learning more about Memorial Day?**

**The following websites are great resources for information that you may want!**

<http://www.usmemorialday.org/>

<http://www.history.com/topics/holidays/memorial-day-history>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/30/opinion/30blight.html>

### **Some needed “sprucing up” on the Old Townhouse!**

In preparation for the upcoming Memorial Day Celebration, Duane Farnham, Doris Mathias, Rod Johnson, and Bob Lewis, members of the Belgrade Historical Society, spent time doing some much needed painting of the trim on the Old Townhouse. The Belgrade Historical Society is planning to begin fundraising for the renovation and restoration of the Old Townhouse for use as its “new” home soon. Thank you all for your continuing support.



Prior to painting of trim



After painting!

# Wanted

## Oldest Photograph OLD TOWNHOUSE

### \$100 REWARD

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, 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

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As we research issues that may be of interest to our membership, 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.

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***Remember...history not recorded is history lost!***

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