

## September 2018 E-Newsletter

**Eric Hooglund, Editor**

*Published monthly for members of the Belgrade Historical Society*

In the early evening of August 16, your Historical Society hosted a unique program, ‘Come Meet Your Ancestors: A Cemetery Stroll!’ Visitors gathered in front of the Old Town House on the edge of Woodside Cemetery, where they heard a brief history of Belgrade’s cemeteries. For example, the town purchased part of Woodside back in 1814 to be a ‘burying ground.’ Originally, it was only 1 acre with 160 lots. First settler David Farnham, forefather of the Farnham family still living in Belgrade, is believed to be the first deceased resident buried there, with his tombstone listing his death date as 1814. The burying ground filled up over the decades and was expanded periodically until 1880, when it reached its current extent and had no more room to grow. The town then negotiated with Vassal Pinkham to purchase land across the road for a new burying ground, with the sale completed in 1883. Adjacent to the new burying were a few old gravestones dating to the late 1700s in what then still was a private lot among pine trees, but as the new burying ground expanded southward, these older graves were incorporated (ca. 1909) but not disturbed, although the writing on the stones was badly eroded, and still is 130-plus years later. In 1905 the Board of Selectmen voted to give the name Woodside Cemetery to the old burying ground and Pine Grove Cemetery to the new burying ground.

With this introduction, the group headed across Route 11 to Pine Grove, where they encountered their first spirit of a long departed Belgrade citizen. The spirit was friendly enough and only desired to narrate the story of her life on earth, obviously so that future generation not forget her and her family. That spirit was Lottie *Scribner* Fuhrman (1890-1958), who was beside her gravestone in the north end of Pine Grove. She was the youngest of the four children of Fred and Celinda *Blaisdell* Scribner, and she grew up on her parent’s farm on the Point Road. Her parents’ graves, as well as those of her two brothers and sister are nearby her headstone. Lottie was one of the 21 students who graduated in the historic Belgrade High School class of 1908—the first ever high school graduating class. Like for so many of her classmates, high school graduation opened the door to amazing opportunities. Lottie, for example, went on to Gilman Business School in Bangor. After graduating from Gilman, she taught school for about ten

years, going as far away as Fort Fairfield in Aroostook County and Rogue Bluffs in Washington County. But she also taught close to home in Rome and right in Belgrade. Around 1920, she moved to Washington, DC, where she got a clerical job at the Bureau of War Risk Insurance—it later became the Bureau of Veterans Affairs. In Washington, she met her future husband, William Fuhrman, and they married in 1927. By 1930, she had changed her employment and was working for the Department of Public Roads, which later became the Department of Transportation. She worked a total of 33 years in Washington, but she returned home to Belgrade in the summers to visit her family. After husband died, Lottie decided to move back to Maine, settling in Waterville to be close to Belgrade, where her oldest brother, Jay Henry, still lived. Jay Scribner died in April 1957, and Lottie followed him nine months later in January 1958. [Special thanks to Dianne Dowd for helping Lottie narrate her fascinating life for us!]



Lottie Scribner, 1908 Belgrade High School Photo. BHS Collection

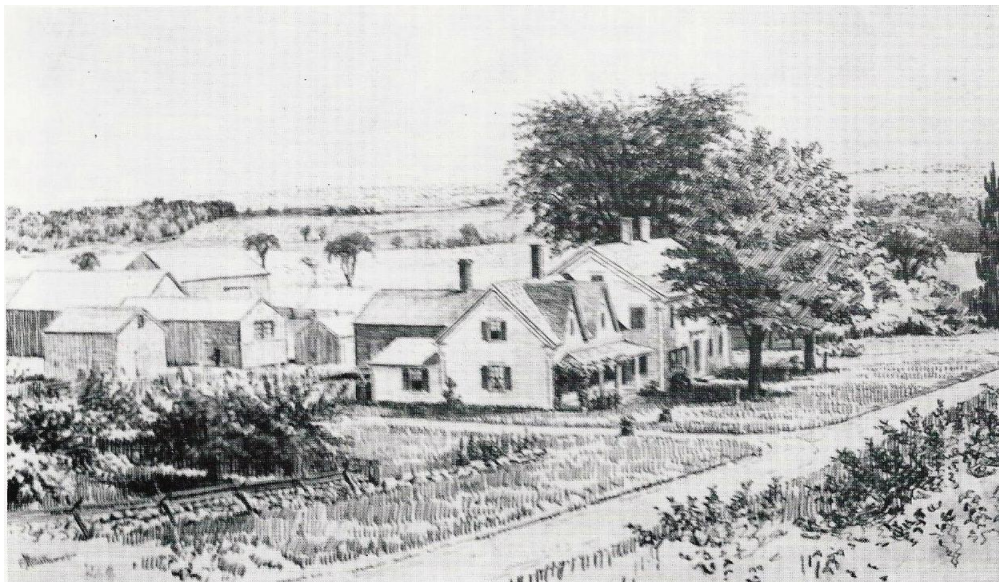
As the group finished listening to Lottie's story, a spirit further down toward the middle of the cemetery beckoned them forward. Arriving near several Minot headstones, there they met the spirit of John Clair Minot. Like the Scribner family, the Minot family had been living in Belgrade for a very long time. Their ancestors, James and Elizabeth *Rogers* Minot, moved here from Massachusetts in 1804 and settled on a farm on what now is known as Minot Hill Road. Their eldest son, John (1805-1890), was born on the farm, and as an adult, he was a successful farmer and very active in Belgrade's civic affairs. He had been educated at Kents Hill Academy in Readfield and served one term in the Maine state legislature, representing the district that included Belgrade. He was the grandfather of John Clair Minot (1872-1941), who told the visitors how his grandfather not only had encouraged him to pursue education and a professional career but also had entrusted to him his own vast knowledge of Belgrade's history and politics. Following his grandfather's death, John Clair, then only 18, was determined to write the first history of the town of Belgrade, which he compiled from his grandfather's stories for the massive edited book, *Illustrated History of Kennebec County, Maine, 1625-1892*, and which was published in 1892, just as John Clair was beginning his college studies at Bowdoin. His chapter, 'Town of Belgrade,' has a footnote with a fitting tribute to the source of his inspiration: "If there is anything of value and interest to the reader in this brief sketch of my native town, the preparation of which has been so pleasant to me, let the credit be given to the memory of my grandfather, the late John S. Minot, who possessed a remarkable knowledge of local history, and dictated to me, when still a lad, much of the material contained in this chapter." (Ibid, p. 993.)



John Clair Minot, ca. 1910. BHS Stuart Collection After graduating from Bowdoin in 1896, John Clair became a well-known writer and editor in New England. Initially, he worked for the *Kennebec Journal* newspaper in Augusta. He started out as a reporter (in 1896) and gradually rose to become an assistant editor by 1909. He may have remained in Augusta longer than he originally had planned, because his father, George Evans Minot (1836-1897), died only one year after John Clair began working, and he thus was concerned about his widowed mother, Effie *Parcher* Minot (1836-1939), and his younger sister, Blanche Minot (1874-1935), who aspired to be a teacher and an artist. Eventually, John Clair's older brother, George L. Minot (1867-1933), took over the family homestead and became a successful farmer; his wife and children—a nephew and 3 nieces for John Clair—became a

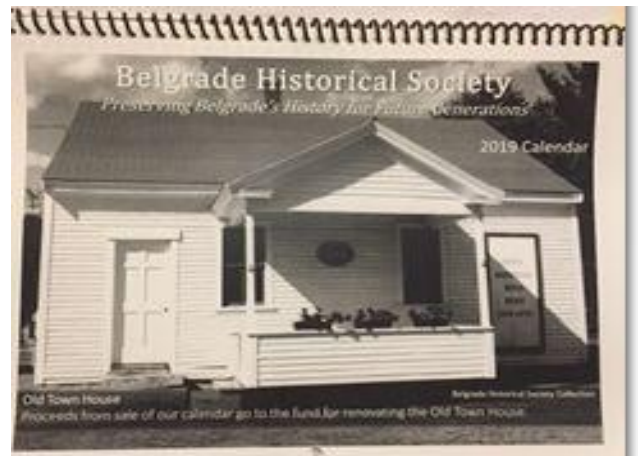
loving family for Effie Minot, who lived happily to age 102! And Blanche Minot became a teacher in Waverly, Mass., where she also had a studio in which she painted, especially watercolors. John Clair moved in 1909 to Boston, where he spent the rest of his life. He worked for 12 years as a writer and editor of *Youth's Companion*, a popular magazine of stories and advice, aimed primarily at boys, aged 10-18. Subsequently, he served for 19 years as the literary editor of the *Boston Herald* newspaper. Like Lottie Scribner, he returned to the family homestead in Belgrade during the summers, and often on holidays such as Thanksgiving and Christmas. In the 1930s, his brother George and sister Blanche both predeceased him and also their mother. John passed away in 1941, just two years after his mother died. His enduring legacy to Belgrade is his history of the town from the first European settlements in 1774 to 1892.

Drawing of Minot Farm by Blanche Minot, ca. 1915. BHS Stuart Collection





**Enjoy history throughout 2019:** Order a copy of the new 2019 BHS Calendar, with an assortment of 12 old photographs of Belgrade from 1890 to 1950. Only \$15 each, and all proceeds benefit our capital fund to preserve the Old Town House. They make special gifts, too, so order several 2019 calendars.



## **REMINDER: September 2018 programs**

**Thursday, September 20, 2018: *The Life and Mysterious Death of Maine-born Millionaire Sir Harry Oakes*** by local historian David Leigh.

This promises to be a fascinating presentation about Harry Oakes, who was born in Sangerville, Maine in 1874, educated at Foxcroft Academy in Dover-Foxcroft and Bowdoin College and became one of the world's wealthiest men after discovering gold in Ontario and developing a major gold mining operation. His brutal murder in the Bahamas in 1943 still remains unsolved. You don't want to miss this unique opportunity to learn about the spectacular rise and grisly demise of one of the most famous men in the world in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Presentation is at the Maine Lakes Resource Center in Belgrade Lakes at 7 pm. Program is free, but donations to the BHS capital campaign to preserve the Old Town House are appreciated.

**\*\*Still not too late to sign up for walking tours of historic and picturesque Belgrade Lakes village!**

Entertaining way to learn about the many historic houses and businesses in this 200+-year old village. We are requesting a \$10 per person donation, all of which goes into our capital campaign to preserve the Old Town House. Call Eric Hooglund to arrange: 207-495-2310.

**\*\*Don't forget to visit the BHS History Room, which is located in the Belgrade Community Center and is staffed by a volunteer docent every Wednesday, 10 am to 2 pm, through the end of September.**

**October 6<sup>th</sup> Harvest Festival**, the History Room will be open during Belgrade's annual Harvest Festival. Come view our history exhibits, do research on history of old Belgrade families or view the 3,000-plus old photographs of people and places stored on our computer. Stop by and visit between **10 am and 1 pm**, before or after the kids and/or grandkids are carving pumpkins in the Center for All Seasons.

**We'll have 2019 calendars for sale and fun history tales to share!**



## **Belgrade Historical Society's Capital Campaign**



### **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](mailto:belgradehistoricalsociety@gmail.com).

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



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

### **Oldest Photograph of the**

### **OLD TOWNHOUSE**

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, 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. 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](mailto:keschl@yahoo.com) tel: 207-495-2973 ~ cell: 207-441-3701