

## **Belgrade Historical Society**

*October 2109 E- Newsletter*

**Eric Hooglund, Editor**

September was a big month for the Belgrade Historical Society! On the 11<sup>th</sup> of the month, Maine Preservation, a Yarmouth-based non-profit with a mission to identify Maine's historic sites, announced that our town's Old Town Meeting House had been selected as one of nine historic buildings and sites in Maine being designated as 'most endangered' for its 2019 List. You can read the announcement on Maine Preservation's website:

<https://www.maine Preservation.org/most-endangered-2019-1/2019/9/11/old-town-house-belgrade>

Being selected for inclusion on this list does not bring any monetary or other benefits, but it does focus statewide attention on the listed sites, with the hope that such designation can help local organizations in their efforts to try to raise funds needed to preserve their historic sites. As members are aware, we launched a major campaign in the summer of 2018 to raise \$235,000 to preserve Belgrade's Old Town House. As of the end of September 2019, we had raised over \$75,000 from our members and friends. This money is sufficient money to start the very important initial work to preserve the interior and exterior from damage caused by insects and weather. For that reason, the BHS has decided to start this work, and we contracted with a local historical preservation and restoration firm to remove the 20<sup>th</sup> century wall paneling added to the inside of the building. This vital preliminary work will be done in November. Removing the paneling will reveal the original timbers--post and beam--and permit us to assess to which ones remain solid and which ones need to be repaired.

We also are continuing our long-range plans for the Town Meeting House: We will be sending out an end-of-year appeal for contributions to all members, and we encourage each of our members to be as generous as possible. Remember, the Belgrade Historical Society is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit, charitable organization, and any donations you make by the end of 2019 can be tax-deductible. We also are in the

process of applying for grants from foundations that give to community projects, and we are hopeful that being included in Maine Preservation's List of Most Endangered Historic Sites will assist our efforts to secure one or two such grants. If members are aware of foundations that are supportive of historic preservation projects, please let us know about them!



**Belgrade's 1814 Old Town Meeting House (Note: The porch is an early 20<sup>th</sup> century addition.)** [BHS Photo Collection]

Belgrade's Old Town Meeting House IS very historic and it is very worthy of preservation. At the town meeting in 1813, townsmen voted to raise \$200 to build a town meeting house. It was agreed to site it at Pinkham's Corner, which was about equidistant from the farthest northern, eastern, southern and western points of town (i.e., before the annexation of Dearborn in 1839; the annexed area--north of the stream from Salmon Lake into Great Pond--became known as No. Belgrade). Moses Carr, Sherebiah Clark and Hezekiah Sawtelle were appointed as a committee to supervise its construction, which took place during 1814, the same year that the town burying ground was established adjacent to the site. The first town meeting was held in the (then) new Town Meeting House in March 1815. Two significant votes took place there in 1819: The state-wide vote on whether to separate Maine from Massachusetts on July 20, with 84 in favor and only 8 opposed; at this same meeting Rev. Elias Taylor was elected as Belgrade's delegate to the constitutional convention in Portland. The vote on adoption of the new state constitution was held on Dec. 6, with 20 votes in favor and only 2 opposed.

Belgrade's Old Town Meeting House not only is one of the oldest in the state, but also it is one of a very few such buildings built specifically for town meetings, and it never has been moved from its original site. Town meetings were held in it every March for 57 years. During the summer of 1872, however, a case of small pox appeared in Belgrade, and the afflicted man was taken to the Town Meeting House, as there was no other building to serve as a quarantine place. Although the victim recovered, the following March (1873), the selectmen felt somewhat squeamish about

holding the town meeting in what recently had served as a small pox hospital, so they decided to move the town meeting to the newly constructed Masonic Hall in Belgrade Depot, and meetings continued to be held there for many years thereafter. Nevertheless, the town did not abandon its old Meeting House. Because the graves in the adjacent burying ground—officially named Woodside Cemetery after 1883—had grown numerous enough virtually to surround the Meeting House on 3 sides, the town allowed the cemetery committee to use the building to store records and equipment, a use that has continued up to the present. The BHS is grateful to the members of the cemetery committee for removing its files and tools from the building in preparation for the upcoming restoration work.

On September 19, the BHS held its annual meeting at the Lakeside Inn on Main Street in Belgrade Lakes village. We had a very good turnout of members, and we owe a special thank you to Elizabeth Fontaine and Katherine Couture for letting us hold our annual meeting in this historic old mansion. Thanks also to the BHS members who donated the delicious hors d'oeuvres--made by Belgrade chef Laura Richter--and also the fine selection of wines, beer and cider--from Uncorked Wine & Cheese in Augusta. And special thanks to Mark Gliniewicz and Garrett Parker, both of Belgrade, who surprised us by spontaneously volunteering to be butlers and made sure members got plenty to eat; and they also provided guided tours of this historic 1843 house! Everyone had a good time, and we also accomplished our working agenda: electing Board members and officers; recapping activities and programs during the successful summer; and discussing plans for 2020, the bicentennial of Maine statehood. For the record, Dianna Dowd was re-elected as president; Duane Farnham was re-elected as treasurer, and Eric Hooglund was elected as secretary.



**Lake View Manor, Belgrade Lakes, Maine**

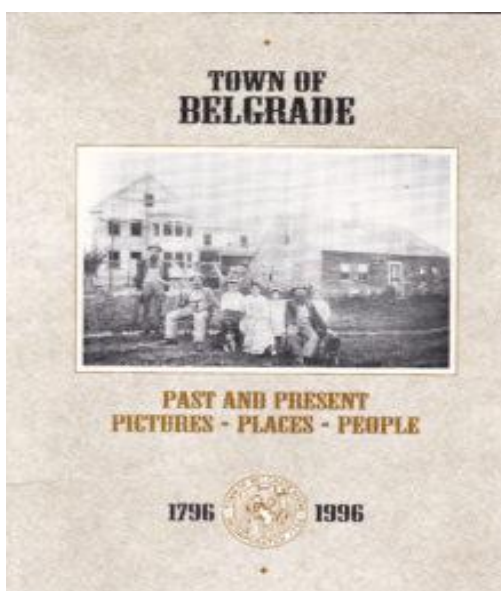
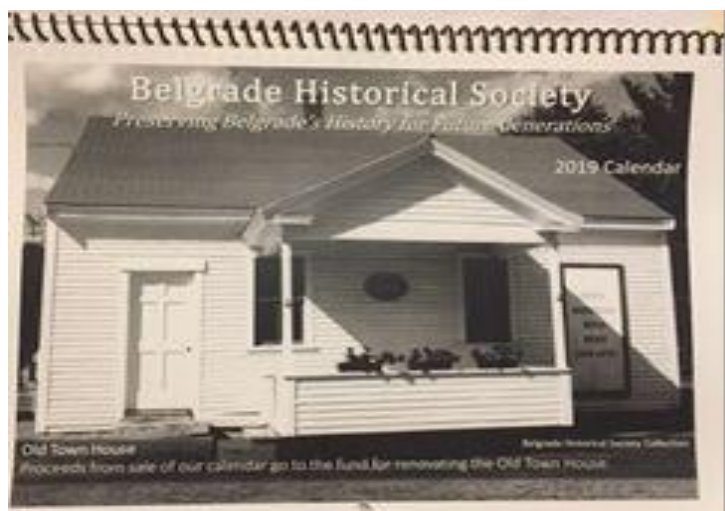
*In this 1920s photo, the Lakeside Inn was known as the Lake View Manor. It was owned by Ervin Bean, brother of L.L. Bean, who operated it as guest house. It originally was built in 1843 by Hiram Savage, a local blacksmith, who used it as both a residence and a tavern, where travelers on the stagecoach road from Augusta to Farmington could get a meal and, if needed, a bed for the night. (BHS: Pope Postcard Collection).*



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**Looking for gifts, don't forget our calendars and *Reproduction Past & Present Books*. Available at the Center for All Seasons BHS History Room or Day's Store!**

Our **2019 calendars**, with classic 8" X 10" photographs of Belgrade from the 1890s to the early 1950s. Wonderful way to enjoy Belgrade all year long! And the photos are perfect for framing as keepsakes when each month is over. **ONLY \$15, a bargain for those who love Belgrade!**



***Past and Present Books*** More than 140 unique and priceless photos of Belgrade's past, all with historical captions  
***Town of Belgrade Past and Present Pictures of People and Places***  
A special hardbound photo and text book for the coffee table!

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

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

**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.**