



## **March 2021 E-Newsletter**

**Eric Hooglund, Editor**

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

Our February and March E-Newsletters focused on the passing of two Belgrade women who had graduated from the former Belgrade High School during the 1940s and subsequently went on to serve important roles in their respective communities of Belgrade and Manchester. Back in the 1940s, Belgrade Depot was the main commercial, as well as civic, educational and social, center of Belgrade. Since March historically is Town Meeting month, and town meetings were held in the Depot from 1873 until the purchase of a town hall on Route 27 just north of the Depot in the early 1970s, it might be interesting to reflect on some of the diverse activities in the Depot of 70 to 80 years ago, when it was a very busy little village! This idea of reminiscence actually originated in an Email from BHS member Harvey Gile, who has given me permission to share it with you. He and I both hope that those who member the 1940s will share their memories of people and places of that era.

Harvey Gile wrote: "After watching your walking tours today, it took me back to a person I remember from the 1940s when we visited my great-grandmother in the Depot when there was quite a bit going on there then. ... [T]he person I remember is Cyrus Tobin (1917-1982). He was a very nice man who got around on his bicycle, wore bib coveralls, and picked up my great-grandmother's (Effie Adams) mail every day, for which he was paid 25 cents a week. Effie Adams lived directly across from

Harry Penney's garage. If Harry Damren (blind) walked by, I would lead him around my grandfather's truck on his way to Florie Stewart's. Effie lived next door to the Grange Hall (now private residence). Rod [Johnson] and I discussed Cyrus briefly. He actually served in the Navy in WWII. [Can any members provide more information about Cyrus Tobin?]

The Depot was a thriving place then (Esso station, Gowell's store, post office, train station). One question I have: I wonder if you ever knew of a Robert Smith Insurance Agency in the Depot. I seem to remember a calendar in Effie's house of that, or am I imagining things?"

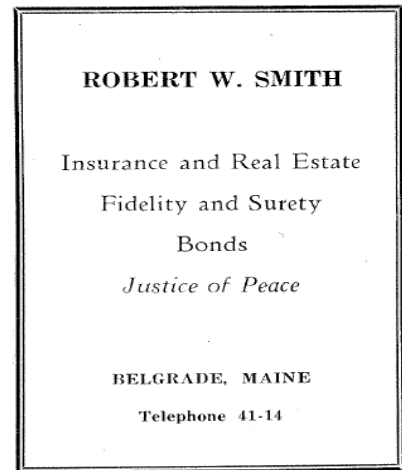


**Main Street, Belgrade Depot, ca. 1937-40. Note Gowell's Store on left.**

I can respond to Harvey that he definitely is not imaging anything about Robert Smith! He was well known throughout Belgrade for over 20 years beginning in the 1930s. He sold insurance and real estate and also helped many farmers prepare their income tax returns. And he served as justice of the peace! As was customary for many Maine businesses back then, he gave his clients new calendars each Christmas, a gift that also was an efficient means of advertising! I dimly recall seeing one hanging on the wall of Nagem's Store on Main Street in Belgrade Lakes village, ca.

early 1950s. Robert Smith always bought ads for the Belgrade High School Yearbook, the *Echo*. Below is a photograph of his ad on p. 67 of the 1948 *Echo*.

That same yearbook also had ads for Harry Penney's Garage, Gowell's General Store, and the larger Taylor's General Store, which, if memory serves me right, was located next to the Grange, on what now is a large empty lot. However, I would appreciate confirmation or correction from anyone on the exact location of Taylor's store!



The Belgrade Grange was the social center of the town during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This file photo is from 1996. Who remembers if Taylor's General Store or a house was in the gravel lot to the right of the Grange?

One reason Belgrade Depot was so busy in the 1940s was the presence very close to the village of the railroad station—which everyone called 'the Depot.' It brought summer tourists to Belgrade as early as the 1870s and until it closed in the

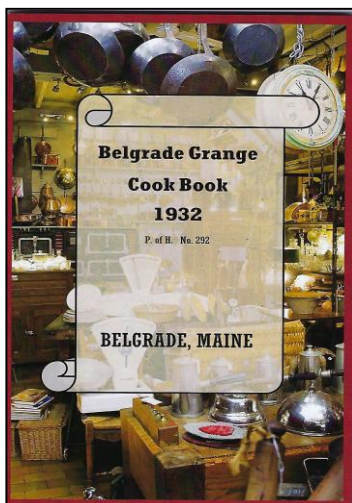
early 1950s. The train depot enabled Belgrade residents to travel south to Lewiston, Portland and out of Maine, as well as to take short shopping trips to Oakland and Waterville; some even commuted by train daily to jobs in the factories of those two towns.



**Belgrade Depot, ca. 1940 (BHS, Liebfreid collection)**

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

**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!**

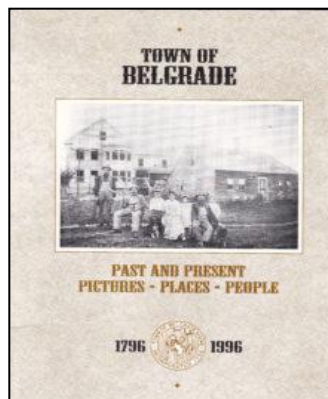


The Belgrade Historical Society welcomes all who support our mission and share our commitment to preserve the rich history of the town and its lakes. Individuals, families, organizations, or businesses may join. The membership year is January 1 – December 31, and at any meeting of the members each membership 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/>



**Don't forget our BHS Books are still available!**  
**All proceeds to our Capital Fund for renovation of Belgrade's historic Town Meeting House, built in 1814 and used for the March 1815 Town Meeting.**

***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, includes postage and handling or the *The Past and Present*, reprint of 1976 Bicentennial book featuring over 100 old photographs, each with historically accurate descriptions! \$18, includes postage.

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, includes postage.

