

Belgrade Historical Society E-Newsletter, March 2022

Edited by Eric Hooglund

March is maple month in Maine, the time of year when the maple trees are tapped to collect their sap, which then is boiled down to make maple syrup. For this newsletter, our BHS president, Dianne Dowd, has volunteered to provide us with some historical insights about how maple trees were/continue to be tapped every March in Belgrade and how their sap is made into maple syrup. She might even share a recipe for using maple syrup and recommend where to go this last weekend of March to see how sap is gathered from maple trees and then made into maple syrup. Thanks, Dianne!

When the daytime temperatures hover around 40 degrees Fahrenheit and the nighttime temperatures fall below freezing, the maple sap starts to run and all thoughts turn to sweet maple syrup. Maine Maple Sunday is always the 4th Sunday in March. This year marks its 39th celebration and it is on Sunday, March 27th.

To mark this occasion, the Belgrade Historical Society dedicates this newsletter to Maple Syrup Sunday. We urge BHS members to check out our latest YouTube video, which has been uploaded on our website, **belgradehistoricalsociety.org**:
“Old Fashion Maple Sunday in Belgrade, 1935”

The BHS has been preserving many old 8 mm movies, which Bill Martin donated to us. Because the old antique projectors that can play these 8 mm films are not easy to find, we had these historic movies digitalized by Northeast Historic Films, a company in Bucksport that is dedicated to preserving old films and images of Maine’s past. The movie that we have named “Old Fashion Maple Sunday in Belgrade” is one of several reels that Belgrade native Frank H. Chandler filmed in the 1930s. He had a farm on Chandler Road and seemed to enjoy filming his hometown of Belgrade.

Thanks to Kyle Hochmayer of Rome, BHS has been converting some of our newly digitalized films to YouTube videos and making them available on our website, including this week ‘Old Fashion Maple Sunday in Maine.’ We plan to add more YouTube videos from these old movies, and we hope also to show these movies at public events during the summer.

To get you in the mood for the above YouTube video, here is a passage about early maple sap tapping from Will Penney’s memoir, *88 Years on a Maine Farm*. It is not about his family farm in south Belgrade but rather about a 50-acre

parcel of land in Rome that his father had purchased in 1887 to use as pasture for their cows on during the summers. The extract below is about tapping the maple trees on that rented land when Will was still a boy, in the 1890s.

There were about one hundred and fifty rock maples on this pasture, and we decided to tap them. We built a nice camp in the pasture and made a fireplace about five feet square for two large pans containing the sap to be boiled down to syrup. Harry [Will's brother] and I, with Mother along to keep house would go to the camp in March and stay for the sap running season. At this time syrup sold for one dollar a gallon. We made a lot of it and enjoyed our spring expeditions to the Rome pasture and sap orchard for about six years.

*I remember one year on the first night of camp a late winter snowstorm came on with a violent wind. I woke up about midnight to find a little crack in the wall had let in snow and Harry's head was in a snowdrift. A squirrel had bored into our straw tick, but we didn't blame him for refusing to stay out on such a wild night. ... Squirrels know how to get a sort of syrup and sugar by gnawing the bark on the small limbs of the rock maple so that the syrup will run down and dry for them to consume later. [Will and Minnie Penny, *Eighty-Eight Years on a Maine Farm*, ed. by Lawrence M. Sturtevant, 2nd edition (Camden, ME: DownEast Books, 1973), pp. 19-20).*

Now, how can you celebrate Maine Maple Sunday? Right here in Belgrade! One place you want to visit is Winterberry Farm on Route 27, just before Point Road if driving north on 27, or just after Point Road if driving south. At Winterberry Farm, you can visit the sap house, help collect sap from the maple trees, and enjoy an all-day breakfast. The old barn on the property dates from the late 1880s and is original inside and out, as well as a marvel to behold. It is listed officially on the National Registry of Historic Places. However, it still is a working barn, so please admire from a respectful distance. For more information about Maple Sunday at Winterberry Farm, check out its website:

winterberryfarmstand.com

Finally, if you come home with a jug of new Maine Maple Syrup, how would like to consume it? If you want to try something deliciously different, but also very Belgrade, you can mix up a batch of Maple Oatmeal Bread. Below is a recipe from *Feed My Lambs*, a collection of recipes by the Union Church in Belgrade Lakes (published by Morris Press Cookbooks, Kearney, Nebraska, 2010), p. 32.

Maple Oatmeal Bread

1 1/3 cup Water

2/3 cup Rolled Oats

1/2 cup Maple Syrup

1/3 cup Butter or Applesauce

1 teaspoon Coriander

2 teaspoons Salt

2 Tablespoons Yeast

1 cup warm Water

1 cup warm Apple Cider

6 cups of Flour

Mix water and oats, microwave for 3 minutes & remove from microwave oven.

Add maple syrup, butter (or applesauce), coriander, salt, and yeast. Mix. Add the cup of warm water, the cup of warm apple cider, and the 6 cups of flour.

Turn onto floured board and kneed for 5-10 minutes. Place in bowl and let rise until doubled. Punch down. Place mixture in 3 loaf pans and let rise until doubled.

Bake in a 350-degree oven for 35 minutes in metal pans, a bit longer in glass pans. It will sound hollow when tapped. Cool on wire racks.

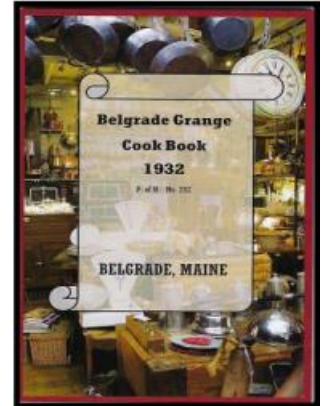
ENJOY!

If you want to read more of Will Penny's memoirs or see more old recipes, BHS has some great publications, and at great prices (see below). All revenues from these book sales help us to complete the restoration of Belgrade's 1814 Old Town Meeting House, which we plan to open to the public in the summer!

Also, Hot off the Press!

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 + \$3.00 for postage. To order from BHS send an email to belgradehistoricalsociety@gmail.com.

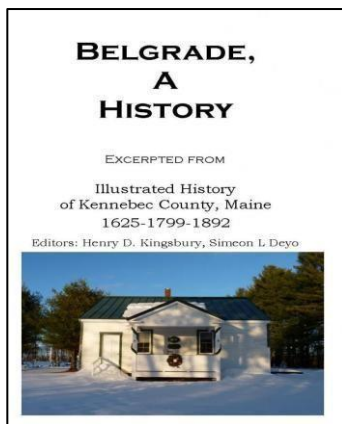


Eighty-Eight Years on a Maine Farm, by Will and Minnie Penney

Reprint of the 1970 edition by *Down East Books*.

Retail price: \$19.95

BHS price: \$17, plus \$4 postage and packaging if mailed

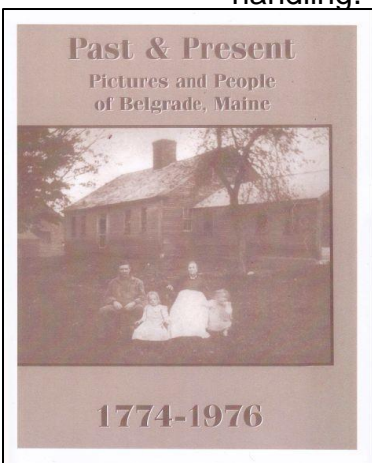
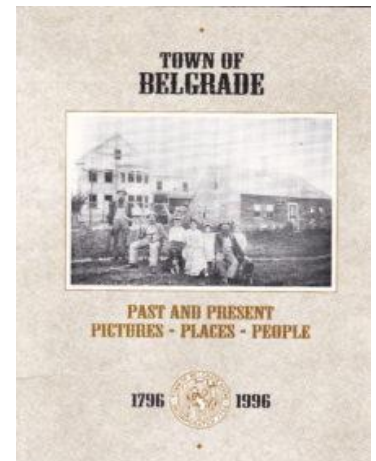


Also available is 'The History,' reprint of 1892 history compiled by Belgrade native John Clair Minor who eventually moved to Boston and became an editor of Youth's Companion, a popular magazine for boys & editor for Boston's Herald newspaper. \$10.00 includes postage.

Town of Belgrade Past and Present Pictures of People and Places

A special hardbound photo and text book for the coffee table!

Special price: \$26.00, featuring over 100 old photographs, each with historically accurate descriptions! Includes postage and handling.



The Past and Present, reprint of 1976 Bicentennial book featuring over 100 old photographs, each with historically accurate descriptions! \$18.00 includes postage.

BHS Capital Campaign



Rendering of Townhouse after complete Renovation

Sketch by Artist Erik Johnson

For those who want to give and have not yet done so, it is not too late. 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 <http://belgradehistoricalsociety.org> Or contact us through email at the following email address: belgradehistoricalsociety@gmail.com.

Don't forget that BHS is a non-profit 501 (3) 2 organizations, 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.

Remember...history not recorded is history lost!

Don't forget our facebook for the most up to date news and information on The Belgrade Historical Society at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/httpwww.belgradehistoricalsociety.org>.