

January 2018 e-Newsletter

Eric Hooglund, Editor

Published monthly for members of the Belgrade Historical Society

We are pleased to start off the New Year with a brand new story by Belgrade's favorite writer of true but entertaining tales, Rod Johnson, author of the much-loved accounts of growing up in Belgrade in the 1950s and 1960s: *The Luckiest Boy: Tales of Youthful Adventures in Belgrade Lakes* (available through Amazon.com).

BIG BLOW OF '17

By BHS Member Rod Johnson

ROAR – BANG — CRASH. These noises awakened not only the people of Belgrade and other Maine communities but also were heard all across New England.

On October 28 and 29, the weather people were predicting that a low-pressure system would enter our area during the evening of the 29 and the wee morning hours of the 30. They said that heavy rains and near hurricane force winds were likely.

Here in central Maine, by 5 A.M. on October 30 no one could doubt their predictions. After nearly 4 inches of rain during the night, the winds roared through the pitch-black darkness at levels that few of us ever had experienced. The steady screeching was ominous and left one with an eerie sense of uneasiness and even fear. The houses were being peppered with all sorts of debris, in our case pine cones and limbs that were being torn from trees as well as most everything else that was not nailed down. Windows and doors were being tested to their limits.

As the first glimpses of a grayish sky appeared, treetops were silhouetted against the slowly emerging light. With disbelief, we all watched and listened as some trees could not withstand the battering and came crashing down. More had uprooted than had snapped off due to the earth's recent soaking.

As the front moved through and the winds reversed direction on the backside of the storm, even more confusion and destruction went on, but fortunately that was short lived. By 7 a.m. the



winds were subsiding, daylight was complete and considerable damage was apparent. A few vehicles were crawling around obstacles on local roads while drivers assessed the damage with awe and shock. Trees of all sizes lay atop buildings, cars, wires from poles and more.

Some folks were more fortunate than others, and it became clear that some cottages and homes were severely damaged by large pines and oaks. Pictures were taken and sent to alert owners of their misfortune and phone calls were made to describe damage and console friends.

By 8 or 9 am, chainsaws could be heard in all directions, generators were being fired up, and the cleanup had begun. Trucks with cherry pickers (log loaders) were rolling and huge trees were being picked off surgically from roofs and out of roadways. Local tree man Paul LaBonte's phone was ringing off the hook as were many others. Insurance companies were being called, repair people and contractors were being sought to give estimates—and get some temporary roof covers over severely damaged areas.

Central Maine Power Company reported that over 400,000 customers were without power as of early morning. In Belgrade, that included all homes along the West Road, Route 135 from Route 27 west to the Belgrade-Manchester town line and the branching roads off from Route 135, Point Road, Castle Island Road as well as most of Route 27 south of the Castle Island Road intersection, and many roads in No. Belgrade. All available power company crews were in the process of locating and assessing downed wires, poles and blown transformers. Many out of state and Canadian power companies sent trucks and crews over the next several days to help put New England's power grids back together. Hats off to all the crews and to the management teams who worked with little sleep to make it all happen. Also, a BIG thanks to all the emergency first responders for handling life threatening situations as well as road and tree crews who worked every possible hour to put our states, cities and towns back together.

Six days after the storm, much had been accomplished, although Central Maine Power reported that 67,000 Mainers still remained without power. This had been a long siege for many, but we must look on the brighter side. We have the manpower and affiliations in place to get things back to normal quickly, especially compared with the devastation in Puerto Rico and other hurricane-ravaged areas. Also, our weather remained enough above freezing so that homes were not freezing up and icy roads were not too much of an issue. Our people are resilient, creative

and self-assisting when the chips are down. These conditions can bring out the best and the worst in people, but in this case it was the best with neighbors helping neighbors. A fifteen-year old boy named Jackson Liberty even stopped by our house to ask if we were okay!

THE END



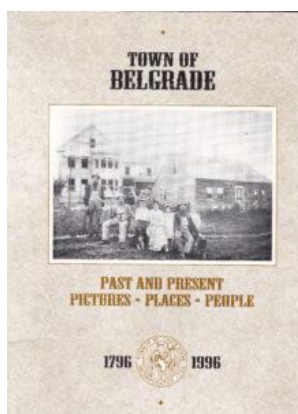
Picture of storm damage above courtesy of Mike Heino

Casino and Lakeshore Hotel in Winter, ca. 1950



Belgrade Lakes after Jan. 1950 snow storm. Possibly 1949 or 1951. If any members remember the exact year, please respond. Note that old Casino with movie screen and bowling alley was still in town o the spot now occupied by Carter's Boat Storage.

Photo from William Pulsifer Collection at BHS.



The BHS has the 2nd printings of the Town Of Belgrade Past and Present, Pictures -Places -People 1796-1996 available for sale at the Belgrade History Room, Day's Store and the Belgrade Town Office. Pricing for these books are \$30.00 each or \$27.00 for Members. We also have the 2nd printings of the 1774-1976 Soft Cover "Past & Present", Pictures and People of Belgrade, Maine Books, are available for sale at the Belgrade History Room, \$15.00 or \$13.50 for Members.

Belgrade voters approve BHS project to renovate/restore old Town House

By a vote of 945 in favor and only 140 opposed, Belgrade citizens approved the Town Warrant on November 7 to authorize the BHS to raise private funds to restore and renovate the old Town House, which originally was built in 1814, and modified in 1834. It was used for town meetings from 1815 to 1872. For the past 145 years, the building has been used for storage of town equipment and as an office for the cemetery sextant. Because of modifications made to the building over time, BHS was not successful in getting the old Town House listed as a National Historic Site. Nevertheless, the old Town House still is a place of significant historic importance for the town of Belgrade. For that reason, BHS is committed to preserving it. The very positive support of Belgrade citizens, as demonstrated in the Nov. 7 vote, allows BHS to move forward with our capital campaign to raise the funds necessary to rehabilitate the old Town House and utilize it as a space to exhibit some of the many special and unique historical artifacts donated to us over the years by both year round and seasonal residents.

The Belgrade Historical Society will launch a Public Capital Fundraising Campaign in 2018 to achieve the goals of the committee for the citizens of Belgrade.

To find out how you can help, please contact one of the BHS members listed below:

**Diane Dowd, Chair
Eric Hooglund, Secretary
Duane Farnham, Treasurer
Loyce Hayslett
Adelaide LaLime
Sandy Lewis
Margaret McMorrow
Rodney Johnson**



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 tel: 207-495-2973 ~ cell: 207-441-3701

