

November 2017 e-Newsletter

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Thanksgiving in Belgrade, 100 years ago

In the early 20th century, the Waterville *Morning Sentinel* had agreements with correspondents in Belgrade and other towns to provide items for the paper's local news section. Below is an excerpt about Thanksgiving in 1913 in Belgrade Hill (Rt. 11 in North Belgrade) from the December 4, 1913 issue of the *Sentinel*:

Among those who entertained Thanksgiving Day were Mrs. Charles H. Wyman and son Almond, who had as guests for dinner Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Burbank, Mr. and Mrs. Henry F. D. Wyman, Mr. and Mrs. Hermon Adams, Mr. and Mrs. Charles W. Wilder, Mr. and Mrs. E. T. H. Gibson, Mr. and Mrs. Ralph B. Wyman, Mr. and Mrs. R. L. Hammant, and Miss Dorothea Wilder.

This item is interesting for the insights it provides about socializing between old and new families in Belgrade. The old family is the Wyman family, the first family to settle in Belgrade, back in 1774, when Simeon and Thankful Wyman arrived from Woburn, Mass., with their six children and began clearing land that would become the Wyman farm on Belgrade Hill (see photo of old Wyman house below). Charles H. Wyman (1837-1907) was the great-grandson of Simeon and Thankful Wyman, and he farmed part of the original homestead. His widow, Alice (Mills) Wyman, and their oldest son, Almond Wyman, were the hosts for the 1913 Thanksgiving dinner. Among their guests were Mr. and Mrs. Henry F. D. Wyman. Henry Wyman was the younger brother of Charles H. Wyman, and thus the bother-in-law of Mrs. Alice Wyman and uncle of Almond Wyman. A Mr. and Mrs. Ralph B. Wyman were also guests at the Thanksgiving feast. Ralph was the youngest child—of four sons and one daughter—of Charles and Alice Wyman. Sadly, the beloved daughter and sister, Mary Wyman Kidd, had died of tuberculosis eight months prior to Thanksgiving. She was only 33 at the time, and she left behind a husband and young daughter in Minnesota.



Photo shows interior of the historic Wyman house on Rt. 11 in Belgrade, ca. 1950. John Wyman, son of Simeon Wyman and great-uncle of Charles and Henry Wyman, built the house in early 19th century. The Wyman family no longer owns this home.

Several friends of the Wyman family also attended this 1913 Thanksgiving feast. Most prominently were Mr. and Mrs. Hermon Adams. In the 1893 *Illustrated History of Kennebec County, Maine*, the editors (Henry Kingsbury and Simeon Deyo) write about Hermon Adams (b. 1856):

The earlier years of his life were passed in Litchfield and his education was completed at Kents Hill. Soon after leaving school he married Hattie M., daughter of Crowell Taylor of Belgrade, and removed to that town, where he has since resided. In 1876 he engaged in school teaching at Oakland, and the following year began farming on Belgrade Hill. ... His first wife died in 1885, leaving one son. ... He afterward married Effie M. Philbrick. ... Of this union were born ... Enoch H. and Frank C. Adams [twins Mellen and Helen were born in 1896, after this text was written]... In 1890 he was elected to represent the towns of Winthrop, Rome and Belgrade in the lower house of the state legislature. ... [F]or a number of years [he] has served as school commissioner [in Belgrade].



Photo of Hermon H. Adams, from *Illustrated History of Kennebec County, Maine* (New York: H. W. Blake, 1893).

The other non-family guests at the 1913 Thanksgiving feast were friends who had discovered Belgrade as a summer resort after 1900. Mr. and Mrs. Eleza Burbank, for example, were from New York, and in 1906 they had purchased Charles Taylor 's farm in No. Belgrade. Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wilder were from New Rochelle, NY, and were building a new home in North Belgrade, one they expected to occupy in the spring of 1914. Mr. and Mrs. E.T.H. Gibson also were from New Rochelle but in the summers resided at the Overlook estate on Belgrade Hill. The illustrator Charles Gibson, who had created the popular 'Gibson girl' cartoons in the 1890s, built Overlook. However, the BHS has not been able to ascertain whether there was any family relationship between Charles Gibson and E.T.H. Gibson. Finally,

who were Mr. and Mrs. R. I. Hammant? They were from away but owned a 'bungalow' on Great Pond in No. Belgrade.



New Accessions in October

BHS acknowledges with gratitude the donation of three Edwardian dresses (ca. 1901-1914) by BHS member Katherine Nerret of Panama City, Florida. Katherine Nerret's grandmother was Agnes Rockwood Griffiths, daughter of Wendell David Rockwood, and the dresses belonged to Wendell's sister, Rose Rockwood, when she was an adult woman. Both Wendell and Rose were born and raised on the Rockwood farm, which still stands at the corner of Rt. 135 and the West Road, directly across from the Old South Church. That house was built in 1800 by their grandfather, John Rockwood, in 1800. Katherine remembers fondly spending childhood summers at the house with her grandmother Agnes during the late 1940s and early 1950s. The house was sold out of the Rockwood family after the death of Grandmother Agnes.



BHS also gratefully acknowledges the donation from Sylvia Ashland Morin of the old wall clock that hung at the 'new' one-room Lincoln School, which opened in 1903 on the Bartlett Road, just above the railroad tracks. The 'old' Lincoln School, also a one-room building but closer to the railroad tracks, was one of 18 district schools in Belgrade in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Sylvia's father, Albert Ashland (1896-1960), attended the 'new' Lincoln school from second through eighth grades (1903-1910). When he was in the upper grades, writes Sylvia, he was 'janitor for the school, carrying wood and starting the fire, carried in water, swept floor, etc.'"

After the new Central School opened in 1923, Belgrade consolidated most of its scattered district schools, and the Lincoln School was among those that closed. Albert Ashland saved the schoolhouse clock and kept it at his home until his death, after which it passed on to his daughter. Thanks, Sylvia, for preserving this unique memento of Belgrade's very long tradition of providing education for its youth.



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

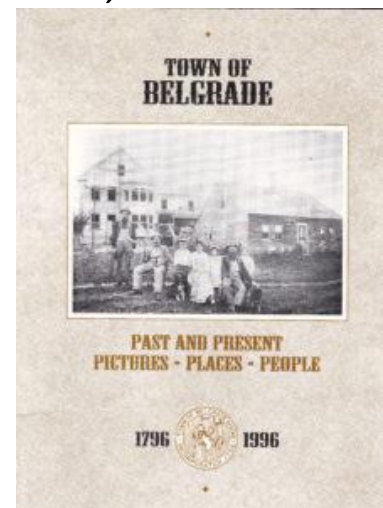
1872. For the past 145 years, the building has been used for storage of town equipment and as an office for the cemetery sextant. Because of modifications made to the building over time, BHS was not successful in getting the old Town House listed as a National Historic Site. Nevertheless, the old Town 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. Look for more information on this project in the December e-Newsletter.



Reminder: 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.

The books would make great Christmas Gifts!



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

