

# Frenchtown News

June 2012

Frenchtown Historical Foundation

No. 1

## ST. JEAN BAPTISTE DAY CELEBRATION AT FRENCHTOWN WITH CABIN TOUR --MUSIC, DANCING, BONFIRE IN EVENING AT WATERBROOK WINERY--

### Traditional French-Canadian Day Comes to Frenchtown June 24

What St. Patrick's Day is for the Irish, St. Jean Baptiste Day is for French-Canadians. This celebration of French-Canadian culture has been observed annually on June 24 throughout Canada and in some northern parts of the U.S. since 1834.

Bonfires, fireworks and dancing are a traditional part of the celebration which coincides with the time of the summer solstice, along with ringing of bells, concerts, parades, and fairs.

The first St. Jean Baptiste Day celebration in the Walla Walla valley in modern times will be held on Sunday, June 24, 2012, sponsored by the Frenchtown Historical Foundation and Waterbrook Winery.

Free activities will begin at noon at the Frenchtown Historic Site on Old Highway 12, two miles west of the Whitman Mission, with the annual meeting of the Frenchtown Historical Foundation. Lunch will be provided for those who RSVP to FHF by emailing [frenchtownpartners@charter.net](mailto:frenchtownpartners@charter.net) or writing to FHF, PO Box 1222, Walla Walla WA 99362.

At 1 pm, there will be a discussion of Frenchtown cabin locations, along with guided tours of the Frenchtown site by living history company characters and others.

A tour of five Frenchtown cabin sites will begin at 2:30, including histories of the families who lived there, followed by closing remarks back at the Frenchtown site at 4 pm.

Evening activities will begin at 7 pm at Waterbrook Winery, located on Highway 12 a mile east of Lowden, including music and dancing, food, drink, and a bonfire.

Waterbrook will be the sponsor of the event, in cooperation with the Frenchtown Historical Foundation. Admission will be \$12 for members of participating organizations, including the Frenchtown Historical Foundation and the Waterbrook wine club, and \$18 for the general public, and includes the first glass of wine. A portion of each ticket price will go to the Frenchtown Historical Foundation for maintenance costs of the Frenchtown site.

For Waterbrook's first annual *Jean-Baptiste Arts Festival and Bacchanal*, performers will include our newly formed Frenchtown Dance Troupe, a local French-Canadian fiddle band, and others. Food from Waterbrook's kitchen, as well as drinks will be available for purchase.

In addition to dance and music performances, the Frenchtown Dance Troupe will lead French Canadian participatory dancing.

### History Of Saint Jean Baptiste Day

While Jean Baptiste is Quebec's patron saint, Jean Baptiste Day has more pagan than religious roots and remains a secular holiday today.

The day was originally a celebration of the summer solstice, which can be traced back to ancient times, when civilizations across the world, including the Gauls (ancestors of the French), celebrated the longest day of the year. These agrarian and solar festivities often included bonfires in honour of the regenerative and healing powers of the sun. As was the case with many pagan feasts, this one was Christianized in the 4th century AD and placed under the patronage of St. John the Baptist. It was in this context that the feast was brought to America where French settlers first celebrated it on the shores of Newfoundland in 1606.

In 1834, after becoming inspired by the celebration of St. Patrick's Day in Montreal, an influential journalist, Ludger Duvernay, rallied to create Quebec's own holiday. This led to the birth of the modern St. Jean Baptiste Day as an expression of cultural pride. In 1908, the Pope designated St. John the Baptist the patron saint of French Canadians. For a number of years, the holiday took on a religious tone, as it was supported by the Catholic church. Today the holiday has been scrubbed of religious undertones and remains purely secular.

Bells ring in celebration and public dances and fairs are held. The flag of Quebec and the fleurs-de-lis are widespread symbols of Saint Jean Baptiste Day. Many people choose to wear blue or white clothing to the celebrations.



### Artifacts, Cabin and Family Histories

The Frenchtown Historical Foundation's History & Artifacts Committee is collecting information on Frenchtown families and their cabin locations.

If you have anything to share--who, when they came, where they lived, where they came from and where they went, please contact either co-chair Judith Fortney, 310 E Chestnut, Walla Walla WA 99362, email [jafortney@q.com](mailto:jafortney@q.com), tel. 509-529- 8210, or co-chair Gerald Reed, 805 Elderberry Loop, Pendleton OR 97801, [ofgwreed@gmail.com](mailto:ofgwreed@gmail.com), 541-278-4075.

The artifacts recovered by FHF from the LaRocque Cabin site have been moved to Tamastlikt Cultural Institute, where they have been cataloged and entered into the vault for safekeeping. One of the crosses from the Frenchtown Cemetery (St Rose of Lima) which is in very fragile condition has also been moved to Tamastlikt, and will go on display this summer next to the St. Rose of Lima Mission display.

### Peterson Cabin Committee

President Sam Pambrun is coordinating FHF's Peterson Cabin project, and has put together an advisory committee to develop recommendations on preservation and possible relocation to the Frenchtown site of what may be the oldest existing cabin in our area or in the state. The committee has met and is planning a work day at the current cabin site. Stay tuned for more information.

### More News on Page 2:

**New Board & Committee Members**  
**Frenchtown Shelter Campaign**  
**Frenchtown Site Work**  
**Rendezvous Plans**

# FRENCHTOWN NEWS

## New Board and Committee Members

Four new members have joined the board of the Frenchtown Historical Foundation.

*Dorothy Gagnon Hall* is a Frenchtown descendant and founding member of the foundation. Dorothy returns to the board after several years service in other roles. *Ross Osborn* comes to the board following exemplary service on our Site Maintenance and Development Committee.

*Tom Henderson* is a Frenchtown descendant and also joins the board after service on our Site Maintenance & Development Committee.

*Mari Sams Tester* is a Frenchtown descendant who has served on a variety of nonprofit boards, and brings great experience and expertise to her responsibilities with the Frenchtown Historical Foundation.



## BOARD AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Retiring board member *Frank Munns* has joined our History and Artifacts Committee. Following service on the board, *Terry Bergevin* continues to co-chair our Site Maintenance & Development Committee. Retiring member *Denise Bergevin O'Bryan* will be assisting with our October Frenchtown Rendezvous.

New committee members include Whitman Mission education specialist *Mike Dedman* who serves on our History & Artifacts Committee and has joined our Events Committee. Small business consultant and living history player *Rich Monacelli* has agreed to serve on our Events Committee.

## FRENCHTOWN SHELTER PROJECT

The campaign for the Frenchtown Shelter is progressing well. We are within \$10,000 of our goal of \$100,000 to complete this important project to honor and interpret our Walla Walla valley heritage by providing:

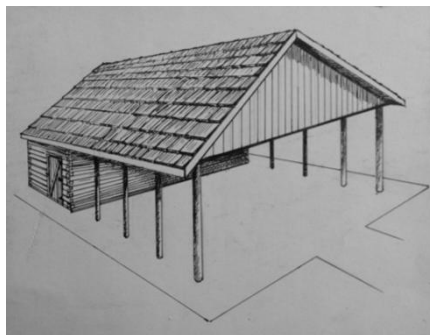
- Covered Space For Educational Gatherings & Presentations
- Display Space for Local History & Culture
- Storage Space for Chairs & Equipment
- Restroom Area for Visitors.

We hope to go to construction on this project this season. For more information, to donate, or to help with the final stage of fundraising, call 509-522-0399, email [frenchtownpartners@charter.net](mailto:frenchtownpartners@charter.net), or write to Dan Clark, PO Box 1222, Walla Walla WA 99362.



## Frenchtown Volunteers Needed

Volunteers are needed to help with site maintenance, events, and other tasks. If you can help, please contact Debbie Beal, 509-386-1500, [debbieb@pocketinet.com](mailto:debbieb@pocketinet.com), 2050 Wallace, Walla Walla WA 99362



## Site Maintenance and Development

A new visitor's box has been installed at the Frenchtown Historic Site on the hill adjacent to the Interpretive Overlook. Inside the box visitors can find a guest book, brochures, donation envelopes, and contact sheets. Please help us protect and maintain the site by reporting any needs.

## Frenchtown Rendezvous

Plans are underway for this fall's Oct. 6 Frenchtown Rendezvous under the leadership of Karen Bergevin Zohner.

This is the foundation's major fundraiser of the year for the maintenance and upkeep of the Frenchtown Historic Site, including insurance, weed control, capital replacement, and other costs.

An important part of the event is the Silent Auction for which we need donations as well as bidders. If you have valuable items to donate for the auction, please contact Karen Zohner, 541-969-7841, [kzohner6@hotmail.com](mailto:kzohner6@hotmail.com), Tom Henderson, [wthenderson@yahoo.com](mailto:wthenderson@yahoo.com), or Mari Tester, 509-525-9428, [maritester10@charter.net](mailto:maritester10@charter.net).

## JOIN FRENCHTOWN HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

You are invited to join the Frenchtown Historical Foundation to promote a better understanding of our diversity and history.

Please mail your annual membership to Frenchtown Historical Foundation, PO Box 1222, Walla Walla WA 99362 for one of the following categories: Individual, \$25; Couple, \$35; Immediate Family, \$45; Advocate, \$100; Sustainer \$250; Patron, \$500; Sponsor, \$1000; Benefactor, \$5000 together with your name, address, email, and telephone.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,  
The Frenchtown Board

