

Frenchtown News

June 2014

Frenchtown Historical Foundation

No. 3

THIRD ANNUAL ST. JEAN-BAPTISTE DAY CELEBRATION AT FRENCHTOWN SITE JUNE 21 CAPITAL CAMPAIGN FOR FRENCHTOWN CABIN

The Third Annual St. Jean-Baptiste Day Celebration will be presented by the Frenchtown Historical Foundation on Saturday, June 21, 2014.

This year's celebration of French-Canadian culture at the Frenchtown Historic Site will feature songs and presentations by the Voyageurs & Co. from Vancouver, British Columbia, a bus tour of several different Frenchtown cabin sites, a barbecue potluck dinner, and an evening contra dance.

Events will begin at 2:00 pm with an orientation and an approximately hour and a half bus tour of original Frenchtown cabin locations. Beginning at 2:30 there will be traditional finger weaving instruction for children, youth and others led by Mechtild Morin from Vancouver, B.C. (see article below). At 4:00, there will be a guided tour of the Prince's cabin restoration project at the site. At 4:15, the Voyageurs & Co. choir will sing and teach a selection of French, Canadian and First Nations songs of the 17-20th centuries taken from among the 13,000 known voyageur songs and variations. At 5:00, all are invited to a potluck barbecue dinner followed by a second performance by the Voyageurs at 6:00. At 7 pm, the local folklore society, Walla

Walla Friends of Acoustic Music, will provide an introduction to contra dancing, followed by a free contra dance from 7:30-10:30 featuring the Wednesday Night Band and several callers. There is no admission charge for any of the day's events.

St. Jean-Baptiste Day has been observed annually since 1834 throughout Canada and in northern parts of the U.S. to honor the birthday of Quebec's patron saint, Jean-Baptiste, and French-Canadian culture.

See the articles below on the Capital Campaign for the Frenchtown Cabin restoration project, details on this year's cabin sites tour, the visit by the Voyageurs, the weaving workshop, and other interesting Frenchtown developments.



The Voyageurs & Co.

CAPITAL CONTRIBUTIONS NEEDED FOR FRENCHTOWN CABIN PROJECT

Work is progressing on the Frenchtown Cabin Project, to relocate, restore, and interpret the oldest cabin of French-Canadian design in the Walla Walla Valley, and probably also the oldest existing cabin in Washington State, but more capital contributions are needed to complete the project.

The most recent owners of the cabin were Rev. Robin Peterson and his wife Kriss, who farmed just east of the Whitman Mission. Prior to his death in 2011, Robin had performed extensive research on the history of the cabin, which he planned to move to a more prominent location on his place where he hoped

to restore it for public interpretation and use as a center for cultural reconciliation. Following Robin's death, Kriss Peterson offered the cabin to the Frenchtown Historical Foundation on the condition that it be moved to and displayed at the Frenchtown Historic Site, since it was rapidly deteriorating and needed to either be moved or torn down.

The cabin, which has now been moved to the Frenchtown Historic Site, appears to have been constructed at or near a Cayuse village just east of the Whitman Mission in about 1837 as a peace offering by the Hudson's Bay Company to an Indian leader

known as The Prince. Narcissa Whitman mentions the cabin in a letter of January, 1844 reporting that an immigrant family of 8 had moved from the crowded mission into “the Prince’s house up the river.” On October 21, the upper story of the cabin was moved to the Frenchtown Historic Site, where it was placed on cribs above a new foundation. The lower cabin walls, which had been partially dismantled by the Petersons, were moved for storage to a barn in the vicinity, and have recently been moved to the Frenchtown site where restoration work is taking place, including its reassembly and the replacement of missing logs.

The restoration plan for the cabin includes the completed fabrication and installation of steel posts to be bolted to brackets which have been installed in the new foundation to provide needed stability and weight-bearing for both the upper story and the lower cabin walls. Additional restoration elements include the rebuilding and installation of cabin windows and doors, an interior wall and stairway, cleaning, chinking and sealing of the walls, replacement of the current metal roof with shakes, and the design and installation of interpretive signage.

These elements can’t be completed without further capital contributions, so the Frenchtown Historical Foundation will be contacting foundation members and others throughout the community to encourage needed gifts.

To help with the cabin project campaign, please contact Frenchtown president Dan Clark, clarkdn@charter.net, 509-522-0399 or cabin project co-chair Sam Pambrun, dspambrun@msn.com, 541-566-0360.

WEAVING WORKSHOP WITH MECHTILD MORIN

Mechtild Morin has worked for over 40 years in First Nations and Métis communities in B.C., Ontario, and Saskatchewan. Since marrying into a Métis family, Canada's early history has become a personal journey for her. Her in-laws' ancestors, of Cree, Saukteaux, Chippewa, Dakota, French and Scottish descent, were all involved in the early North American Fur Trade with the North West Company as well as the Hudson’s Bay Company. Many were voyageurs, who travelled across the continent extensively. They spoke mostly French (even those of Scottish background), but also numerous indigenous languages.

Since her husband passed away, it has become an important responsibility to keep the Métis history and culture alive for her son, other family members and anyone who is interested. Mechtild has done a lot of research, collected old photos, songs, stories and facts, and learned some of the traditional crafts, including leatherwork, beading, embroidery and the traditional style of sash weaving (fingerweaving). For fourteen years she has been doing weaving workshops for children, youths and adults, in classrooms, kitchens and outdoors, at Métis celebrations, family reunions, folk festivals, museums and art galleries, sharing with great joy the "Métis Story" with anyone who is interested. Join her beginning at 2:30 at the Frenchtown site on St. Jean- Baptiste Day!



Top: Eric Sederburg making the critical dovetail corner cut in a replacement log, with help from Jehenn Poirot & volunteer Ross Osborn. Below, the cabin starts to take shape again as the lower walls are reinstalled with additional help from volunteer Steve Smart.

TOUR OF FRENCHTOWN CABIN SITES ON JUNE 21

This year's Cabin Site Tour will kick off our Jean-Baptiste Day Celebration at 2 pm on Saturday, June 21 at the Frenchtown Historic Site. The bus tour will visit the original sites of four cabins, including the cabin of Father Eugene Chirouse at the St. Rose of the Cayouse Mission on Yellowhawk Creek, the cabins of William McBean and Andrew Pambrun near Mojonnier Station, and the site of the Cayuse village at Wailatpu where the Prince's cabin was located. A bus for the tour is being provided by Walla Walla University.

We'll be discussing the history of the cabin occupants at each of the sites, and ending the tour back at the Frenchtown Historic Site in time for the 4 pm tour of the Prince's cabin restoration project, followed by the Voyageurs & Co. performances, the barbecue potluck dinner, and evening contra dancing. There is no charge for any of these events.

VOYAGEURS ENTERTAIN AT FRENCHTOWN

The Voyageurs & Co. is a choir of singers from Canada who began as part of "The Pioneers Project," an art installation by artist Joanne Plourde at Minnekhada in British Columbia. Voyageurs & Co seeks to bring back the spirit of the ancient voyageurs, the *canadiens* who travelled the continent and established settlements in the west, building built forts, cabins, treaties and relationships for 250 years along the major rivers and portages in the 17th-18th and 19th centuries. These men and women sang while they worked, as well as for gatherings in forts and for house parties. The Voyageurs & Co will bring their favorite songs and also their costumes and stories to share the culture of the *canadiens* and Metis and to provide a new perspective on history, exploring our past and celebrating it in the present with our Frenchtown community.

OFFSITE INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE

The Frenchtown Historical Foundation has extended its educational mission to the placement of offsite interpretive signage along both county roads and state highways. Current offsite signage includes the signs next to the Oregon Trail marker in the vicinity of the Whitman Station grain elevator on Old Highway 12 just east of Frenchtown and Detour roads, where two pedestal signs interpret the role of the Tellier Cabin Site in the Battle of Walla Walla along with the Whitman Station of the Walla Walla and Columbia River Railroad, also known as the Baker Railroad. Two other signs recently put up honor the encounter on the Touchet River between the Oregon Mounted Volunteers and Walla Walla Chief Peopeomoxmox and his warriors, which has been placed on North Touchet Road near the Lewis & Clark campsite sign, and a Saint Rose of the Cayouse Mission sign placed on the Bob and Cindy Gregoire property along the Old Milton Highway just north of the Walla Walla River bridge, honoring the first Catholic Mission in the valley established in 1853. Additional signs have been proposed on Highway 12 near the mouth of the Touchet River where the Battle of Walla Walla began, at Lowden where the Tribes made their first stand during the battle, and on Last Chance Road just north of the Walla Walla River bridge interpreting the nearby Cayuse village and the original location of the Prince's cabin.

NEW FRENCHTOWN BOARD MEMBERS

We are glad to welcome four new members to the board of the Frenchtown Historical Foundation, Whitman College French professor Sarah Hurlburt, Frenchtown descendant and retired Waitsburg school district custodian Margaret Benson, Whitman College intercultural director and Frenchtown volunteer Matt Ozuna, and ex officio member Tim Nitz, the new superintendent of the Whitman Mission National Historic Site.

FACEBOOK PAGE AND WEBSITE

Don't forget to visit Frenchtown Historical Foundation on Facebook! View photos, share comments, and keep up-to-date on all programs and events. Also visit our main Frenchtown website, www.frenchtownpartners.org.

OCTOBER 4TH DATE CHOSEN FOR FRENCHTOWN RENDEZVOUS

Plans are underway for this fall's Frenchtown Rendezvous on October 4 under the leadership of Karen Bergevin Zohner, Debbie Bergevin Beal, and Susan Allen. This event is the foundation's major fundraiser of the year for the maintenance and upkeep of the Frenchtown Historic Site, including costs of insurance; weed control, capital replacement, and other expenses. We really need your help in selling tickets to friends and family members as our goal is to set a record for this year's attendance. We can do it with your help. We hope to have tickets available at the St. Jean-Baptiste Day celebration on June 21.

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, or Mari Tester, 509-525-9428, maritester10@charter.net.

JOIN OR DONATE TO THE FRENCHTOWN HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

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

Please mail your annual membership to Frenchtown Historical Foundation for one of the following categories: Individual, \$25; Couple, \$35; Immediate Family, \$45; Advocate, \$100; Sustainer \$250; Patron,\$500; Sponsor, \$1000; Benefactor, \$5000.

Please also consider a gift to the capital fund for the Frenchtown Cabin Project. All contributions are tax-deductible, and should be sent to FHF, PO Box 1222, Walla Walla WA 99362, together with your name, address, email, and telephone. Or you may contribute by credit card by providing the following information:

Charge my credit card in the amount of \$_____. Name on Card: _____
Card Number: _____ Expiration Date: _____ Card type: ___Visa ___Mastercharge
Signature: _____
Name: _____ Date: _____
Address: _____

Street City State/Province Zip or Postal Code

Thank you. Because of your efforts and generosity we continue to work to create lasting monuments that pay tribute to the unique history of our region to be enjoyed and treasured by generations to come.

Best wishes, The Frenchtown Board

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