Dear Members and Friends of the Frenchville Historical Society,

2015 was a year filled with challenges and successes for the Frenchville Historical Society. It is always a challenge to upkeep our sites. Through a Preservation Grant from the Maine Acadian Heritage Council and funds from our society, the Wylie House was painted this summer.

The Heritage Trail Guide Grant enabled us to have a guide at the Wylie House on Fridays. The guide worked at the Caboose and Water Tower on Saturdays and Sundays. With the help of volunteers, the Wylie House and Storage Unit were opened on Saturdays and Sundays.

This summer we welcomed about 100 visitors to the Wylie House and 105 visitors to the Caboose and Water Tower.

In September, the first, second and third graders from Dr. Levesque School visited our sites. We hope these visits help our young people foster an appreciation and an understanding of their cultural heritage.

As you can see from our list of acquisitions, we received several new artifacts to add to our collection. Of note is a steel engraving of the Last Supper. This originally hung in the Ste. Luce Rectory for generations. Eventually, it hung in the convent of the Sisters of the Holy Rosary now the Christian Life Center. Through their graciousness, the sisters donated it to our society.

The donation of a dining room table and chairs and several beautiful pieces of depression era glassware completed our dining room. We are grateful to all our donors for their generosity.

An upcoming project for our society is to identify homes in the Frenchville area that are at least 100 years old and still inhabited. We will highlight the architecture, the structure and the lives of the families who inhabited these homes. This project will be ongoing for several years. If you know of a home that is at least 100 years old, please contact Donna Levesque at 207-543-7445 or any members of the Frenchville Historical Society. We would appreciate any help with this project.

As always, we thank you for your continued support. We look forward to seeing you this summer. We are open the last weekend of June through Labor Day weekend on Saturdays and Sundays or by appointment.

Sincerely,

Donna Levesque
President
Frenchville Historical Society
Frenchville Heritage Park

What started as an idea has turned into a community-wide project. In January 2015, John Raymond, a native of Frenchville whose career brought him back to his hometown, had an idea to take an abandoned piece of property and turn it into a community park. The idea quickly grew and a committee was formed to explore this idea.

The idea for the Park had three main goals. The first was to create a place where people could gather, especially young and old, and exchange ideas and pass on traditions. The second was to tie together Frenchville’s historical center to include the Historical Society’s Museums, a proposed Farm Tractor Museum, together with French and Acadian history and culture of the area. The third goal was to create a visitor destination in Frenchville.

The piece of property for the Park originally had a string of potato houses and is located between the Historic Water Tower and a developing Farm Tractor Museum owned by James Pelletier and Dr. John Bouchard. The property, along the once Bangor and Aroostook Railroad tracks, was owned by the State of Maine after their acquisition of the railroad. The property was located in the center of town and had become an eyesore of bushes and weeds after each former potato house had been abandoned or destroyed.

With the help of the Frenchville town officials, the property was acquired from the State on a 99-year lease. With a small army of volunteers and a personal interest and equipment from Clarence Roy, owner of C.L. Roy & Sons Inc, the old potato house concrete foundations were removed and the property leveled and shaped. Other local people including Bert Albert, Adam Dube, and Ed Pelletier & Sons Co. of Madawaska donated landscaping materials that would give a new life to the property. The Park was quickly becoming a visible reality.

Because of limited funds, the Committee planned the construction of the Park as a two-year project. Phase I, during the first year, would complete half of the property, starting at the Historic Water Tower. Phase II, during 2016, would complete the other half starting at the Farm Tractor Museum. With a grant from the Maine Community Foundation, significant donations from the local Dora Franck family and Acadia Federal Credit Union, and a Spaghetti Feed fundraiser, a gazebo was erected, a security fence along the railroad tracks was constructed, and an underground electrical network of wiring was installed.

By mid-summer, Phase I of the Park had taken shape. The Park was not only being noticed, but was starting to be used by the community. People could be seen walking through the Park as well as sitting in the gazebo and enjoying the view.

In October, the official Ribbon Cutting and opening of the Park was held. More than 100 people gathered to be part of the opening, to see the reality of the Park, and to experience what a small community can do by itself and for itself. What had started as an idea was now a community’s reality.

The Park’s first major community activity was held in December. A Christmas tree for the gazebo was donated by Vern Labbe, and decorated with holiday lights donated by Fred Michaud from the Maine Department of Transportation. On December 8, Frenchville’s first Christmas Tree Lighting ceremony was held. Even Santa Claus arrived to greet the more than 100 children and parents. Carolers from Dr. Levesque Elementary School provided a musical background for the occasion. The Tree Lighting was a huge success and a display of the people’s pride in the Park as well as a sense of community.

Ribbon cutting at the gazebo

Phase II of the Park will be completed in 2016. This will include installing benches and picnic tables for the community to use. A number of community activities are also planned for the Park, starting with a snowshoe hike for kids and those who are kids at heart.

The Frenchville Heritage Park was truly done by the community and for the community.

Donald Raymond
SISTERS OF THE HOLY ROSARY
ARRIVE IN FRENCHVILLE

Father Charles Sweron, a native of Belgium, was appointed pastor of Ste. Luce in 1860. He was a strong believer in education. He tried for many years to recruit a religious order to help educate the children.

On May 5, 1897, the Frenchville Board of Selectmen wrote a letter to Bishop Healy of Portland asking his help in finding a religious order of sisters. Eventually the Sisters of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary of Rimouski, Quebec expressed an interest in coming to Ste. Luce.

The sisters arrived in Frenchville on August 19, 1899. The three foundresses, Sister Mary of Saint Adolph, Sister Mary of the Heart of Jesus and sister Mary of the Infant Jesus arrived in St. Hilaire, N.B. by train. They were also accompanied by two other sisters. Five carriages awaited them at the CN station. They crossed the St. John River on a ferry one mile east of the Ste. Luce Church. The sisters lived temporarily in the home of the "bédeau" until the convent was constructed. The school was located in an old building until the new convent was built.

Finally on November 8, 1902, the new convent was ready for occupation. Some days in the winter, classes were cancelled because it was difficult to heat the four story building.

On September 5, 1905, one of the sisters noticed smoke from a cupboard in the kitchen. A bell was rung and neighbors rushed with buckets of water to put out the fire. The wind carried burning debris from the convent roof across the road to the church. For the second time in less than twenty years, Ste. Luce church was destroyed by fire.

The second convent and boarding school for girls was constructed in 1905 - 1907. On Sundays, the sisters taught religion to the public school children.

In 1908, the sisters requested to be allowed to teach in the public schools with the right to teach religion. The State of Maine granted their request. Religion was taught in the public schools until 1973. After March 1973, no religious instruction was allowed in the schools.

In 1962 Bailey School, now Dr. Levesque School, was built. Because of safety issues, a new convent was built for the twelve sisters who were still teaching in public schools.

In 1980, the convent was sold to the diocese to be used as a Christian Life Center.

The people of Frenchville will always be grateful to the Sisters of the Holy Rosary for their devoted services during the years of 1899 - 1994.

On April 26, 2015, Elisabeth Turgeon, the foundress of the Sisters of the Holy Rosary, was beatified in Rimouski, Quebec.

The influence of the sisters continues to enrich the lives of many families in the community.

Photos and text information taken from:
Raymond, David R., Sainte Luce
Sister Vivian Bond, A Time for Remembering
Frenchville Women who Bec...
Sister Thelma Bouchard RSR, a native of Frenchville died Dec. 16, 2015. She taught several years in Frenchville. After her teaching career, Sr. Thelma continued to devote her life to the service of others. Some of her ministries included the AIDS community and Mexican migrant workers in Florida. She was a true advocate for the poor.
Wylie House Project

Over the years we as a Historical Society try to preserve the history our town and artifacts donated by the public. As part of this preservation effort we must also work towards maintaining our buildings.

This year our goal was to have the Wylie House repainted to protect its exterior. We were fortunate to receive a grant of $3,000 from the Maine Acadian Heritage Council to assist towards this project. With funds from the Historical Society and with volunteer workers our goal was met.

We are grateful for the support we received from the Maine Acadian Heritage Council and the volunteers. Without this assistance many of our goals would not be achieved.

Our paint contractor, Reno Sylvain, did an outstanding job in scraping off the old paint down to the bare wood from the whole building. His excellent work will preserve this house for many years to come. Following are a few photos of the project showing the before and after.

This year we are planning to make some repairs to the foundation. Hopefully we will be successful in obtaining funds from the Maine Acadian Heritage Council towards these repairs.

Philip G. Levesque, Treasurer FHS

Ste. Luce Church

Once again a Pilgrim Church

Our own Ste. Luce Church, the oldest church in Northern Maine, has once again been honored to be blessed as a Pilgrim Church. Our church had received this honor once before when it was blessed by Bishop Joseph Gerry in the Holy Year 2000 proclaimed by Pope John Paul II.

In the fall of 2015, Bishop Robert Deeley of Portland announced that, in an effort to spread the word about God’s mercy, Pope Francis had proclaimed a Holy Year of Mercy throughout the world.

Four churches in Maine were chosen to have a door blessed that would allow anyone going through that door on a pilgrimage to obtain special graces and indulgences if that person followed certain requirements aimed at bettering his/her life. Besides Ste. Luce, three other Maine churches were chosen for the same honor, one in Portland, one in Bangor, and one in Lewiston.

In a special ceremony on December 13, 2015, Bishop Deeley blessed and opened a door at Ste. Luce to officially begin the Jubilee Holy Year of Mercy which began on December 8 and which will end on November 20, 2016.

Although Ste. Luce Church is not a holding of the Frenchville Historical Society, we hold it dear in our hearts since it has such significance in the history and traditions of the general area. Therefore, we share in the honor bestowed upon this church and we encourage everyone to visit the church and make a pilgrimage there.

Cleo P. Ouellette
2015 Acquisitions

Cleo Ouellette -
first communion certificate - 1920,
homemade comforter, Green stamps and Plaid
stamps books, old liniments and ointments,
linens and doilies

Estate of Blanche Baker and Jacqueline Ouellette -
Mink coat and hat, fur muff, two puzzles, corner
bracket, Frenchville Fire Dept. 50th Anniversary
book, doilies, catechism, orange juicer,
depression glass dish, antique living room chair

Fort Kent Historical Society - dining room set

Sisters of the Holy Rosary - a steel engraving of the “Last Supper”

Rodney Berube -
a spinning wheel once belonging to Julie Roy
Marquis was donated to the FHS according to the
wishes of her daughter, the late Edna Berube

Alice Ann Estes - photos, an article about Public Health
Nurse Estelle Ouellette

Stan Albert -
Six green long stem depression-era glasses,
orange grape and cable center piece, carnival
glass bowl 1920’s, purple carnival glass footed
bowl 1930’s, blue leaf and chain Fenton carnival
glass 1930’s, antique creamer and sugar set, six
green depression-era glasses, gold depression
glass dish

Brenda Hebert -
souvenir book of “Centenaire de la Paroisse
Sainte Luce 1843-1943”

Steve Page -
souvenir book of “Centenaire de la Paroisse
Sainte Luce 1843-1943”, three Paper Talk
magazines, four document frames

Donna Levesque -
view master, three 1961 model cars

Pauline Rossignol Havelick -
homemade blanket made by Mrs. Romeo
Rossignol

Judy Ayotte Paradis -
desk from the State Senate Chambers

Aline Corriveau -
La Bonne Chanson, Chante Ta Joie,
Evangeline, Le Bon Usage

Bern Albert - CD of the beatification of Elizabeth Turgeon
Foundress of the Sisters of the Holy Rosary

Paul Raymond -
two small classroom desks from Dewey School

Memorial Donations for 2015

In Memory of Allen Thibeault by Robert & Colette Bouchard,
Philip G. & Karen Levesque

In Memory of Leon Gagnon by Donna Levesque

In Memory of Priscille Pelletier by Donna Levesque

In Memory of Anita Bourgoin by Donna Levesque
New Lifetime members

Aurel Lavoie
Joanne Lavoie
Philip Morin

Christmas Tree Lighting at the gazebo

A handmade blanket made by Anne Marie Rossignol donated by her daughter, Pauline Rossignol Havelick.

Frenchville Historical Society Officers

Dear Historical Society Members:

It's that time of year again – dues time:

Students & Seniors: $ 8.00 for the 2016 year
Adults: $10.00 for the 2016 year

If your spouse is not a member, would you consider inviting them to join?

Enclosed please find my 2016 dues of:

$ ____________

Name ____________________________________________________________________________

Address: __________________________________________________________________________

E-mail ___________________________________________(only if interested)

I would like to make a donation to help with expenses for maintaining your buildings.

Donation amount $ ____________

Mail dues to: Frenchville Historical Society
PO Box 184
Frenchville ME 04745

Thank You for your support!