



TOWN OF FRIDAY HARBOR
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (10/05/2020)

Town installs bronze sculpture of founder Edward Warbass

A life-size bronze statue of town founder Edward D. Warbass and his companion, Bob, was added to the Town’s public art collection this week. The piece by northwest artist Gareth Curtiss has been installed at the First Street entrance to Sunshine Alley as part of the Town’s Sunshine Alley Design Plan. Ed Warbass is one of three men credited with founding the town. He was also instrumental in breaking San Juan County away from Whatcom County and making Friday Harbor its county seat. The bench is positioned to face towards Mr. Warbass’s namesake street, Warbass Way.

Curtiss was selected from several professional bronze artists who responded to the Town’s 2017 request for sculpture proposals. An Art Selection Panel composed of representatives of the Friday Harbor Arts Commission (FHAC), local arts community, and neighboring properties reviewed proposals from artists based in Washington, Idaho, British Columbia, Chicago, and Spain. The panel’s recommendation was discussed at public meetings after which both the FHAC and Town Council concurred with the panel’s unanimous selection of Mr. Curtiss. “We were impressed with the appealing and realistic style of his previous works,” said FHAC member Diane Martindale. “We also appreciated the artist’s interest in meeting people in our community and demonstrating his technique firsthand.” In 2018, Curtiss spent a week at SJIMA describing his bronze sculpting process while he worked on the piece.

Mayor Farhad Ghatan said, “The Town will be forever grateful to the anonymous donor whose extremely generous gift helped bring this charming, historic, and enduring art piece to our community.” He explained that the Town matched the donation using Municipal Arts and Lodging Tax funds. Town Administrator Duncan Wilson noted the graciousness of Steve Buck regarding the relocation of his family’s memorial bench to make way for installation of the sculpture. The plaque honoring the Buck family is now located at the circular bench across from Coldwell Banker.

This is the fifth major art project involving the FHAC since its formation in 2015. Previous projects include the mural “Witness the Beauty” in Sunken Park, Tom Small’s stone benches in Breezeway Park, the acquisition of Georgia Gerber statues “Red Fox” and “Paired Owls” for display on Second Street, and the Poetry Gardens recently installed at four locations throughout town.

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ATTACHED: Photo by Matt Pranger

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Artist Gareth Curtiss with statue of Ed Warbass and Bob
Matt Pranger photo