

Celebrating Our History

The Ed Warbass Sculpture Project

Friday Harbor, Washington





Edward Warbass

(1825-1906)

and Bob

Adventurer, prospector, miner, trader,

promoter, soldier,

public official, island pioneer,

and

founder of Friday Harbor

Courtesy of the

Town of Friday Harbor, Friday Harbor Arts Commission,

and an anonymous donor

Gareth Curtiss, artist. October 2020.

The Ed Warbass Sculpture Project

Friday Harbor's history is all around us in the architecture, the artwork, the museums and memorials, and the legacy of orchards, farms, and fishing. It's in community events like the Memorial Day parade, July Fourth Pig War Barbecue, County Fair, Farm Parade, and Island Lights Festival. These help define the roots of our island's charm.

This history is also reflected in our people—those who shaped it and those who honor it. Our history includes people like Ed Warbass who made extraordinary contributions to the early development of this community. With that in mind, we honor the life and accomplishments of one of Friday Harbor's most interesting and industrious founding fathers by recreating his presence with a life-size bronze statue.

What began as an idea from one of the founding members of the Friday Harbor Arts Commission developed into a three-year project culminating in the installation of this extraordinary life-like piece by northwest sculptor Gareth Curtiss in October 2020. The completion of this project would not have been possible without the extremely generous contribution by a single donor who wishes to remain anonymous. The Town matched the donor's contribution with funds from our Municipal Arts and Lodging Tax funds.

As with bronze statues in towns across the country, this art installation provides a prominent and creative way to stir historical, educational, and artistic interest in people of all ages. Like the man it represents, this permanent installation is accessible to all who pass by. Islanders and visitors will be charmed to find Mr. Warbass in the heart of our historic district resting on a park bench with his faithful dog, Bob, by his side. Ed and Bob are positioned facing toward the namesake street, Warbass Way, and serve as a marker at one of three entrances to Sunshine Alley—an area we look forward to seeing further developed into an inviting pedestrian space.

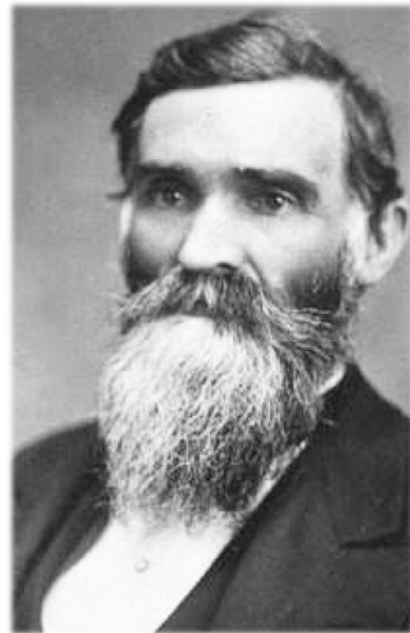
Captain Ed Warbass

Captain Edward D. Warbass (1825-1906) enjoyed a well-earned reputation as one of the island's most respected and cherished pioneers. General George Pickett brought Captain Warbass from Fort Bellingham to San Juan Island in 1859 as a U.S. Army post sutler (storekeeper), and soon declared him sole provisioner for the island. Warbass went on to become one of three founding fathers of the town of Friday Harbor. He brought the first post office to Friday Harbor, spearheaded the creation of San Juan County, and helped establish Friday Harbor as the county seat. Warbass served the community as the county's first auditor, a justice of the peace, and a deputy customs collector.

Warbass lived a storied life as an adventurer, prospector, miner, trader, explorer, promoter, soldier, and public official. Originally born and raised in New Jersey with 10 siblings, Warbass ended up on the west coast during the California gold rush after a six-month voyage around Cape Horn so treacherous the ship barely docked in San Francisco. Poor health lead him to migrate north to the Oregon Territory and eventually on to what would become the Washington Territory where he established the town of "Warbassport" and, at 26, became the first US Postmaster north of the Columbia River. Among his many ventures, he was the first auditor of Lewis County, served in the 1855 Indian Wars, herded cattle across several states, initiated oyster farming in Griffin Bay, and introduced California mountain quail to San Juan Island.



Ed Warbass at home at what was originally General Pickett's residence at American Camp. Warbass dismantled, moved, and rebuilt it on land he homesteaded on the edge of town. *Photo courtesy of San Juan Historical Society and Museum.*



Circa 1877. *Photo by A. B. Woodard, Courtesy UW Special Collections.*

For additional details, enjoy two essays posted at <http://www.historylink.org/File/20162> and <http://www.historylink.org/File/20202>.

The Artist

Gareth Curtiss

Sculptor and foundry man Gareth Curtiss has completed almost 50 commissions in eighteen different states and Canada primarily featuring life-size or larger figurative sculptures of famous people, historic events, memorials, and other works of social significance. For over thirty years Curtiss has worked in the tradition of the old masters and is a recognized expert in his field. He possesses master-level skills in multiple sculpture mediums, sculpture enlargement, bas-relief, alto-relief, mezzo-relief, figure drawing, and all aspects of large scale bronze casting and fabrication including welding, patina, and mold-making. He has said that art has been his lifelong passion, and his goal has been to create timeless works that reflect the human spirit and its values and aspirations.

Originally from Whitefish, Montana, Curtiss lives and works in Shelton, WA, and casts his large-scale pieces at his foundry in Montana. Curtis began his study of art and sculpture under Richard Sprang in 1979. His first bronze sculpture was produced in 1982, and by 1986 his first commissioned piece was created for Anheuser Busch. After a two-year apprenticeship with Valley Bronze Art Foundry in Joseph, Oregon, he built his own foundry in 1990, and completed and cast his first heroic-size sculpture the following year. One or more life size or larger commissions have been completed every year since 1996.

A selection of past commissions

Spirit of Champions. Three life size figures emerging from flame. South Lake Tahoe, CA. 2017.

Chief Bemidji. Life and a half size bronze statue (9 feet). Bemidji, MN. 2015.

Governor Francis Pierpont. Life and a half size (9 feet) bronze statue. Wheeling, WV. 2015.

The Patriots. Three life size bronze sculptures with flag. Johnstown, CO. 2016

Spirit of Peace. Life size bronze statue. Mackinac Island State Parks, Mackinac Island, MI. 2015.

Harvey & John Parish. Life size (6 feet) bronze father and son statue. Johnstown, CO. 2013.

Franco & Barbara Savoia. Five 3/4 life size bronze figures. YMCA, Edmonton, Alberta. 2012.

Chief Black Hawk. Life size bronze, 42"x 24"x 20". Aurora Public Schools, Aurora, IL. 2011.

Thomas Dove Keizur. Life size equestrian bronze, 8.5' x 8' x 3'. City of Keizer, OR. 2010.

Lewis & Clark at Dismal Nitch. Bronze alto-relief 4'x 8'. Washington State Historical Society in cooperation with the Weyerhaeuser Foundation. Lower Columbia River, WA. 2009.

Arrowhead Brigade Memorial. Life size bronze. 3rd Stryker Brigade, 2nd INF DIV, Fort Lewis, WA. 2008.

The Minute Man. Life size bronze. West Virginia Air National Guard, Martinsburg, WV. 2007.

The Military Family Memorial. Three life size bronze figures. Hawks Prairie Rotary, Lacey, WA. 2006.

Captain Clark at Cape Disappointment. Bronze alto relief 3'x 4'. Pacific County Friends of Lewis & Clark and the WA Parks Service. 2004.

"Tree of Life" WWII Memorial. Life size bronze tree with alto reliefs. Wellsboro, PA 2003.

Remember the Fallen. WWII memorial. Life size bronze. City of Puyallup, WA. 2003.

Red Horse Flight Memorial. Life size bronze. Virginia Air National Guard. Virginia Beach, VA. 2002.

Senator Mike & Maureen Mansfield. Life and a quarter size bronze. State of Montana, Rotunda of the Montana State Capitol Building, Helena, MT. 2001.

Saint Ignatius De Loyola. Life and a quarter size bronze. Loyola University, Chicago, IL. 2001.

Oregon Veterans. Two life size bronze figures. Oregon Veteran's home, The Dalles, OR. 2001.

Captain Joseph Buck. Life size bronze. City of Millville, NJ. 2000.

The Volunteer. Life and a quarter size bronze. Oregon National Guard, Salem, OR. 1999.

Captain Robert Gray. Life size bronze. Captain Gray Maritime Museum, Garibaldi, OR. 1998.

The Good Shepherd. Life size bronze bas-relief. Joseph Baptist Church, Joseph, OR. 1994.

Spirit of the Guard. Life and a third size bronze. Washington National Guard, Tacoma, WA. 1991.

Clydesdales and Wagon. 72"x 18"x 12" bronze. Anheuser Busch, St. Louis, MO. 1986.



Chief Bemidji



Senator Mike & Maureen Mansfield



The Military Family Memorial



Harvey & John Parish



Governor Francis Pierpont



Arrowhead Brigade Memorial at Fort Lewis



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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