

FREMONT IN REVIEW – 2009 REPORT OF THE TOWN HISTORIAN

2009 was a difficult year for many Americans. The national unemployment rate was the worst it has been since 1982 with over 10% of Americans being out of work; many businesses downsized or went out of business; numerous home foreclosures continued to escalate throughout the year; and cautious consumers spent less while trying to pay down debt. It was certainly a challenging year to say the least.

2009 started off with several snow storms between January and mid-March, including a Nor-Easter that dropped 10 ½ inches of snow on March 2nd. Spring was disappointing as a considerable amount of rain fell frequently and continued to do so through mid-July. June proved to be one of the top five rainiest Junes on record. Many gardens suffered from over precipitation and many crops failed due to rotting seeds. A tomato fungus also impacted many local gardens as a result of all the rain. After mid-July summer weather was mostly pleasant until hot, sweltering humid weather occurred during mid-August. On August 20th a small power outage struck Fremont, Chester, Derry, Londonderry, Raymond, Candia & Deerfield due in part to at least one squirrel shorting out two power- lines with its body. Autumn was one of the nicest in many years both weather-wise and in vibrant foliage colors. December proved cold, windy and snowy much like 2008 only without the Ice Storm.

Here are the major 2009 events that occurred in Fremont during this challenging year:

- * The first Fremont Deliberative Session (which took the place of annual March Town Meetings) took place on Saturday, January 31st at the Ellis School Gym with a total of 69 voters in attendance. The session lasted 4 ½ hours as 33 warrant articles were debated upon.
- * Town Election Day on March 10th brought out 701 voters out of 2,990 registered voters, with the majority of voters closely watching their hard-earned money by voting NO on 26 warrant articles, and YES on 7 articles. Fremonters were clearly concerned about the national economy further spiraling downward as 2009 progressed.
- * Greta St Germain became the first **elected** Town selectwoman in Fremont's history. Pearl Davies was the first Fremont selectwoman but was **appointed** to fill out the remainder of her deceased husband's term back in 1966.
- * The Annual School District Meeting was held on March 14th at the Ellis School Gym with 300 voters attending this highly raucous School District Meeting of which over \$300,000 was cut from the School budget.
- * Fremont tied with New Boston, NH as "**Most Patriotic Town in NH**" in the July 2009 edition of *New Hampshire Magazine*. The Town was credited with putting on an exceptional Memorial Day Observance honoring our past & present veterans.
- * By late summer, well over 100 Fremont homes had been foreclosed upon, and many were for sale due to the bad economy, job losses, variable-monthly mortgages, medical issues, etc. 2009 was a very difficult year for many, especially for those trying to land new jobs. Business was off

dramatically for many businesses, while most businesses cut out waste or unnecessary employees in order to survive. Gasoline prices fluctuated during the year between the \$2.40 to \$2.71 per gallon price range. Heating Oil by the end of the year hovered around \$2.59 per gallon.

* The Ingalls-Sleeper Cemetery on Martin Road was expanded on the south side of the graveyard in late July and a new concrete wall built across the front of the new section.

* The Copp Family opened up *C & K Ice Cream Stand* in the gambrel-roofed building standing near the corner of Ann-Louise Lane & 518 Main Street in July. Another business was opened on Roger's Road called *Angel Paws Pet Grooming* in August.

* Four new homes were built along Brentwood Road (Route 111A) near the intersection of Main Street (Route 107). Two other homes closest to *Action Autobody* were built in late 2008. Two new homes were built on Rogers Road during the summer months.

* On August 28, a 5,000 square-foot house located at 6 Pollinger Lane was totally destroyed in a three-alarm fire. Two firemen were taken by ambulance suffering from exertion and were treated and released.

* The **24th Annual Fremont Grass Drags** held over Columbus Day weekend drew over 30,000 spectators making this the largest event of its kind in the United States. Snowmobile free-styler Darryl Tait, age 19, of Altin, British Columbia Canada was seriously injured on October 11, 2010, while performing a stunt on his snowmobile before a huge crowd that was shocked into complete silence. His spine was severed, and his lungs crushed, along with broken ribs and shoulder blades. He was flown by helicopter to a Boston Hospital where he underwent surgery. His many fans are hoping he will walk again after a long, extended rehabilitation period.

* Two Fremont police officers, **Police Chief Neal Janvrin** and **Officer Dan Whitman** were taken to the hospital on July 10th after encountering a belligerent motorcyclist from Fremont on South Road. They were both released with minor injuries.

* **Rowe's Gas Station** at 225 Main Street was a Fremont landmark that unfortunately closed its doors in October. The Gas Station was first owned and operated by **Kenneth Rowe** who opened the business back in 1962. He sold it to his son **Charles "Sonny" Rowe and his wife Louise** in 1972. The Rowe's in turn sold it to **Richard Maloof** the current owner during the mid-1980's.

* The **World War II Spruce Tree planted in 1946** directly in front of the People's United Methodist Church was cut down in September. It was an impressive tree that was frequently decorated with lights each Christmas Season during the 1960's, 1970's and occasionally in the 1980's as a tribute to our WWII servicemen & women.

* The *Rockingham News* which covered Fremont and neighboring communities since 1995 ceased operations with its last edition on March 27, 2009. In 1995 the Rockingham News acquired *The Kingstonian*, *Plaistow-Hampstead News*, and *Raymond Times* all small newspapers dating back into the 1960's and early 1970's.

* H1N1 - the so-called “Swine Flu” - was much in the news during 2009 and Americans were highly encouraged to get the flu vaccine shot to help prevent coming down with this rare strain of flu.

Fremont People in the News during 2009:

On Sunday, November 29th, **Fremont Police Lieutenant Detective Reese Bassett & his wife Beth**, while off-duty and about to shop at Walmart in Epping, chased down two suspicious thieves who were attempting to steal a high definition TV by passing it over the Walmart Garden Center wall. Beth managed to chase the getaway car and write down the license plate number, while Reese chased down and captured the second suspect. Both culprits were quickly apprehended thanks to the smart hunch and quick action of this alert Fremont couple.

Former Fremont **Fire Chief Richard Heselton** was honored by many of his friends and colleagues on May 30th for his 32 years of service as the longest serving Fire Chief in Fremont's history. It was a position his father **Frank “Carroll” Heselton** held from 1947 until 1964. Richard assumed the position in August 1976.

A Fremont man who admitted to robbing six banks in New Hampshire & Massachusetts between December 2007 and February 2008 was sentenced to just under six years in Federal Prison during early March 2009.

A Fremont man was arrested on December 17th for allegedly running a counterfeit money operation out of his bedroom at 166 Main Street. State, Federal and local authorities combined efforts to apprehend the alleged counterfeiter.

Sergeant 1st Class Christopher Carr was honored and presented with a *Quilt For Valor*, a program honoring injured veterans who have served during times of war. Carr, the son of John & Carolyn Carr of Fremont, served in the Air Force in the 1991 Gulf War and more recently with the Army in Iraq.

Alexandria Tonas, Jessica Girardi, Hannah & Emma Keane were nominated to attend the Junior Presidential Youth Inaugural Conference in Washington, DC. The four Fremont middle school students were able to raise \$10,000 in order to attend the conference of which the highlight of the trip was attending the Inauguration of the 44th US President - Barack Obama on Inaugural Day, January 20, 2009.

Karen Acton, age 37, was honored as one of *New Hampshire's 40 Under Forty 2009*, for her commitment to humanitarian efforts by organizing a medical relief team to travel to India to supply orthotic and prosthetic services to patients unable to access or finance them.

Milestones:

George Steele, 97, holder of Fremont's *Boston Post Cane* died August 16th. He was a fine gentleman with a very keen sense of humor, good-heartedness, and a true sense of devotion to all his family & friends. He became the honored recipient of the Boston Post Cane in 2002.

Marilyn Baker, 77, died May 13th. Marilyn had spent many years serving Fremont on the Planning Board, Budget Committee, and was active in the People's United Methodist Church and Fremont Historical Society.

George W. Towle, 88, a Fremont native and lifelong resident, died September 3. He was an Air Force Veteran decorated with several war medals for his many successful flying missions during WWII. He was also a Fremont mail carrier for 32 years until his retirement.

Eleanor Gates, 88, died February 5th. She served in WWII as a nurse and moved to Fremont in 1957. She served as a longstanding Marshall of the Fremont Memorial Day Parade and was a caring and compassionate friend and neighbor.

Fremont soldiers are still performing valiant military duty in Iraq & Afghanistan. Their hard work and sacrifices must not be taken for granted or forgotten. We THANK each and every one of them for their devoted service to our country.

Though 2009 was a challenging year for many, we hope that 2010 will bring better health, greater prosperity, and much happiness for all my fellow Fremonters as we embark upon a new decade. **THANK YOU to all who work so hard to make Fremont a great town to live in.**

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew E. Thomas
Town Historian



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Photo Courtesy of Carolyn Carr