

The “Frenchman’s Cabin” on Commonwealth Creek: One of the “Lost Lodges” at Snoqualmie Pass

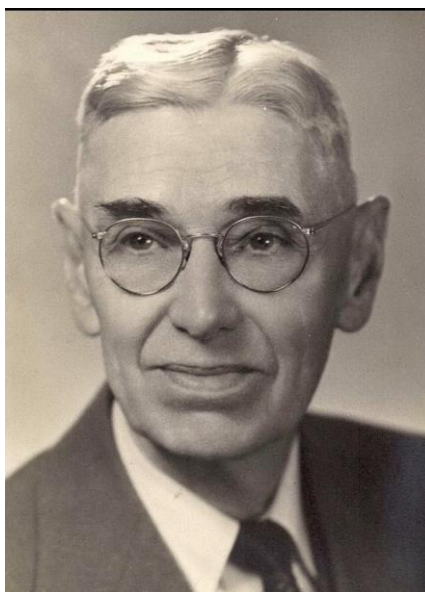
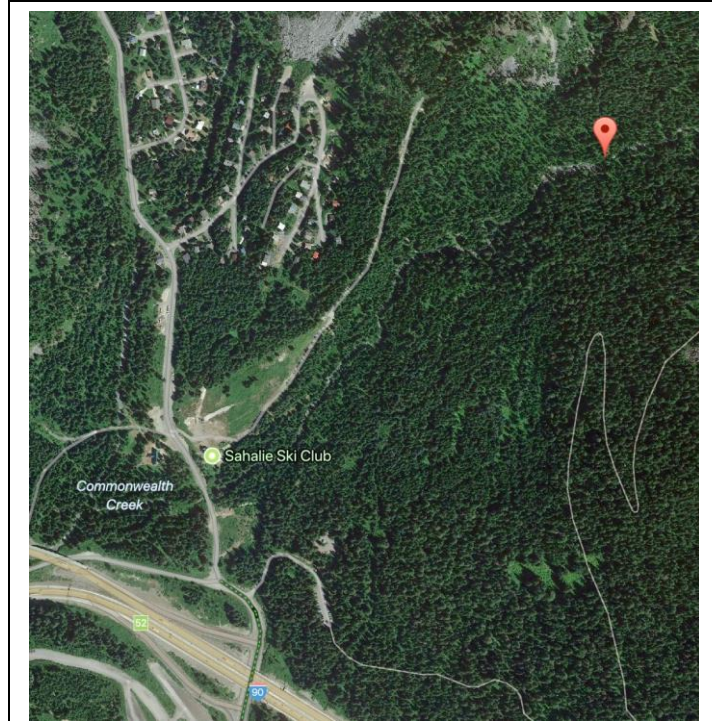
■ Dave Galvin, December 2017

Uphill of Sahalie Ski Club’s property lies an old cabin site, long decomposing after the roof fell in during one of the unusually big snow years in the late 1950s, now returning the logs to the forest soil from which they came. The site, known in Sahalie lore as “The Frenchman’s Cabin,” is on the north side of Commonwealth Creek, along the old trail that runs from Sahalie property farther up into Commonwealth Basin. Tom Hopp has often commented about this site, recalling times in the early 1960s when he explored the cabin in its last recognizable years.

So who was this Frenchman and what do we know about this place?

Out-of-the-blue, Gary Knell contacted me recently based on the historical articles posted at Sahalie’s website. He wondered about a cabin co-owned by his uncle, Frederic Treffinger, and a guy named LeBlond. Hmm, LeBlond – could this be the “Frenchman” of Sahalie lore? Well, sure enough, the more Gary and I dig into this question, the more certain we are that the dilapidated cabin site just east of our property along Commonwealth Creek is the same spot that Gary recalls visiting as a kid and at which he and his mom spread his uncle’s ashes. It turns out that these were not the only ashes returned to this location.

Edgar LeBlond (born in Ohio in 1881) entered into a lease with the Northern Pacific Rail Road and built a cabin on the north side of Commonwealth Creek immediately south of Guye Peak, on land east of the “upper 40” purchased from the railroad by the Seattle Gymnastic Society (Turnverein) in 1932. LeBlond must have entered into a deal with the Rail Road at around the same time that the Seattle Turnverein purchased the ski club land and built our original lodge there. At some point, maybe soon thereafter while the NPRR was looking for cash in the



Edgar Knight LeBlond, 1881 – 1962
[Source: Ancestry.com .]

depths of the Depression, LeBlond purchased the 40-acre square of land adjacent to ours. More research is underway to document these transactions.

Edgar LeBlond worked as an engineer for the City of Seattle. He recruited three other, younger, “partners” in the cabin: **Frederic Treffinger** (Gary’s uncle), born 1918; **Peter Vogel**, born 1916; and **John “Jack” Berrian**, born 1916. If readers know of contacts related to any of these guys -- Peter Vogel, Jack Berrian, Frederic Treffinger or Edgar LeBlond -- please let us know.

LeBlond passed away in 1962 at his home on Camano Island, at which time his daughter, Neva, spread his ashes at his beloved cabin site.

Neva LeBlond Bequette became owner of the 40-acre parcel. She kept it in the family until her death in 1998, upon which time her ashes were joined with her dad’s on the site and the family deeded the 40-acres to the U.S. Forest Service to buffer the Alpine Lake Wilderness Area, “with the provision that no development would be made” on this land.¹

Now back to Gary’s uncle: **Frederic Treffinger** was an electrical engineer who worked for Puget Power. He was a woodworking craftsman in his spare time, sailed competitively, and loved to be out in nature in the mountains. He didn’t talk



Doris Treffinger Knell and Gary Knell at the Commonwealth Creek cabin, c. mid 1950s. [Photo from Gary Knell’s family collection, used with permission.]



Frederic Treffinger skiing into his cabin near Commonwealth Creek, c. 1940s. [Photo from Gary Knell’s family collection, used with permission.]

much (why is this such a common issue with these historical male figures, including our own parents?), yet he passed along a love of nature and the mountains to his nephew. He was known for always smoking a pipe, as shown in the photo from that era as he worked his way into the cabin on his skis.

Gary Knell, Frederic’s nephew, recalls visiting the cabin with his mother, Doris Treffinger Knell, and includes this lovely photo, probably from the mid-1950s. We all wish we had photos such as this of ourselves and our moms, outside enjoying nature.

The photo reveals details of the cabin's construction that helped us to confirm that this lodge is the same spot as that found decomposing in the early 1960s by Sahalie Ski Club's Tom Hopp. Tom noted that "the all-log construction and shingles applied directly to log beams" matched his memories exactly.²

So on our historical journey commences -- a work in progress as Gary and I continue to drill down looking for more details about the land transactions as well as the people involved.

Gary combed his mother's photo albums for a series of images of the cabin in its prime, and put together the attached pages of photos that show the cabin at various angles. See the next two pages for these excellent details.³ Tom Hopp confirmed that these photos matched his memory of the decomposing cabin he explored in the early 1960s. We are confident that Gary's and Sahalie's "Frenchman's cabin" sites are one-and-the-same.

Maybe you or an ancestor recalls this cabin on Commonwealth Creek? Or you recall one of the names mentioned as associated with this cabin? Let us know, so that we can continue "history as a verb" to better document what is known about this spot and the people who made it special.

I will use this opportunity to launch a new page on our website dedicated to documenting the various cabins and lodges built at Snoqualmie Pass in the 1930s. These "Lost Lodges" are an interesting addition to our local history. Please get in touch if you were a SnoOwl, you went to the Henderson Ski Cabin, or you otherwise had connections to the old cabins east and west of the Summit back in the day.

■ Dave Galvin (© Copyright 2017, Dave Galvin, galvind53@gmail.com)

Please let me know if you have comments or corrections, at galvind53@gmailcom .

Most recently updated 12/3/2017

Photos gleaned from Doris Treffinger Knell's albums by her son, Gary Knell:



Front entrance to Leblonde cabin.
View is North side facing Guye Peak

Leblonde Cabin on Commonwealth Creek located approx. 3/4th mile up old Commonwealth Creek trail to Red Mountain. Also may be known as "Frenchman's Cabin" according to historian for Sahallie Ski Club, Dave Galvin (Nov., 2017). Leblond befriended my uncle, Frederic Treffinger in the 1930s, along with Peter Vogel and Jack Berrian. These men all shared in the lease and upkeep of the cabin.



Rear entrance to Leblonde cabin.
View shows South side facing Commonwealth Creek



Front entrance to Leblonde cabin. Kendall Peak in the background



Leblonde cabin view to back side from across Commonwealth Cr. Note footbridge in foreground.



Leblonde cabin showing back porch view from Commonwealth Creek side



Interior view Leblonde cabin. Unknown woman May be daughter of Leblonde. Ca. 1930's



Frederic Milton Treffinger – May 25, 1918 to April, 1984

Notes on the cabin based on personal visits to site ca. 1973 and in 1984 after my uncle's passing. At these visits there was very little remaining of the cabin except for some rotting logs scattered in a rough cabin outline. The site was being used as a campsite. Information on history of ownership based on personal interviews with Frederic Treffinger ca. 1973-75. My mother, Doris C. (Treffinger) Knell also provided details in personal interview as late as 2017. I helped my mother and her sister Enid scatter Frederic's ashes on the site after his passing in 1984.

November 6, 2017
Gary Frederic Knell

¹ This quote appears to be from Neva's husband's book: *My War – And More*, by William C. Bequette, 2000, as referenced in Ancestry.com . We have been unsuccessful to date in finding a copy of this self-published book.

² Tom Hopp, email communications, December 3, 2017.

³ While Gary and I were researching this issue, we were not sure how "the Frenchman" spelled his name: Leblonde, Leblond, LeBlonde or LeBlond? When Gary put together the photo spread from his mother's albums, we thought the correct spelling was Leblonde. Later, we discovered signed draft cards in the genealogical records that confirm that this guy spelled his name LeBlond.