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## Tribune-Review Trib North

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# Log home reopening its doors

By **Ashley Gerwig**  
TRIBUNE-REVIEW  
Wednesday, August 28, 2002

After three years of being rebuilt piece by piece, the Jones-Neely log house in Franklin Park is ready for company.

Built more than 200 years ago by Will Jones, believed to be Franklin Park's first white settler, the cabin was disassembled three years ago to be moved to the borough's Blueberry Hill Park.

Since then, workers from the borough's public works department have spent hours reconstructing the two-story house. Borough officials said they hope it will be a historical center for years to come.

"We're very excited, and we're anxious to let people become aware of the history of Franklin Park," said Debby Rabold, chairwoman of the Franklin Park History Committee. "I think the house is going to help us teach about the early history of area."

On Sunday, during the borough's annual "Festival in the Park," local officials and descendants of Jones will be on hand to dedicate the log house.

Will Jones and his wife, Catherine, originally built the 15-foot-by-20-foot home around 1800, along what is now Brandt School Road on land that sits across from the existing Orchard Hill Church.

At the time, Jones headed north of the Ohio River because the land had been divided into large tracts inviting to settlers. The Native Americans, who had first hunted and lived on the land, had moved farther west.

## Photo Gallery

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**Grandmas' House**

Heidi Murrin/Tribune-Review

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The house was the typical size of most log homes at the time and had one room on each of the two floors.

While Will Jones died in 1836, his log house remained in his family until about 50 years ago. During the years, the house was enlarged and modernized, and siding covered the wood logs.

Rabold said although the siding covered the building's history, it likely prevented it from rotting away.

Descendants of the Jones family — the Neely family — lived in the home until the 1950s, when it was sold to someone outside the family.

In 1999, the new owners of the land donated the house to the borough, said Jim Watenpool, the borough's park and recreation director. Watenpool said the borough spent several thousands dollars to rebuild the structure, but costs were kept low because the borough's public works department did the labor.

A \$5,000 donation by Paul Neely, who was born in the log house, helped cover the cost of relocating the house.

The house will be used for educational programs and displays promoting local and natural history.

Rabold said one goal is bring students in to learn about the times when the borough of Franklin Park was known as Franklin Township and most residents were farmers.

She said the log house, which has electricity but no heat or air conditioning, will give children a realistic look at life in the borough before the opening of major roadways — particularly Interstate 79 — sparked development.

In the future, Watenpool said, he would like to add a hand water pump and perhaps an outhouse to the site to better re-create days past.

*Ashley Gerwig can be reached at [agerwig@tribweb.com](mailto:agerwig@tribweb.com) or (724) 779-7112.*

## Festival in the Park

Franklin Park's 17th annual "Festival in the Park" will be Sunday in Blueberry Hill Park, off McDevitt Road. Events will run from noon to 10 p.m. and will include the dedication of the Jones-Neely log house. The schedule includes:

- Noon to 9 p.m. — Chinese auction, climbing wall, speed pitch contest, sand art craft table, moon bounce, obstacle course for preschoolers, petting zoo, pony rides and face-painting.
- 1:30 to 2 p.m. — Strolling barbershop quartet.
- 2 p.m. — Breaker Boys country/bluegrass/ folk music.
- 2:30 p.m. — Jones-Neely log house dedication.
- 3 to 5 p.m. — Quilt show in log house.
- 3:15 p.m. — Billiard tournament in activity center.
- 3:15 to 4:15 p.m. — Teen band Debris at activity center.
- 4:30 to 5:15 p.m. — Erin Dragan, acoustic soloist at activity center.
- 5 to 6 p.m. — Bingo.
- 5:15 to 6 p.m. — Karaoke at activity center.
- 5:30 to 9:30 p.m. — One

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