

Planning for Cheese Day 1923

A meeting was held on August 7, 1923 to discuss the Cheese Day to be held on Tuesday, October 2. After four annual events were held from 1914 to 1917, this would be the first held after five years of uncertainty because of the war period. Enthusiasm at the meeting “was at a high pitch” and cooperation from every section of the county was expected. One of the promoters stated, “This is going to be the biggest day the county ever had. It’s not going to be primarily a trade boom for Monroe merchants; that isn’t the idea. It is promoted in the interests of the Green County dairymen and is intended to be a boost for every person who makes his living in the county.”

The drive for selling Cheese Day buttons to fund the 1923 event was to be pushed on Friday and Saturday, August 17 and 18 “when county fair crowds are packing the city.” The woman’s auxiliary for the American Legion volunteered their services to boost the “big county day.” Buttons had not been selling well even though “cards of the green buttons are on display in every place of business.” Up to this point, few plans could be made because the necessary money was not in hand.

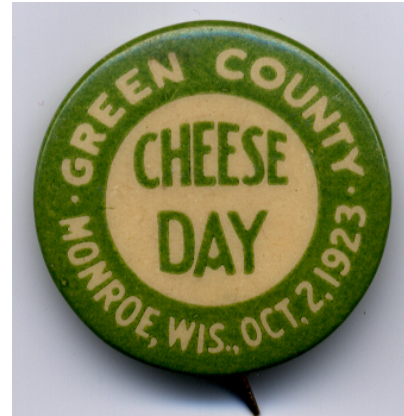
Other organizations who were taking an interest in the day were the Farm Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Kiwanis club, Holstein Breeders association, and more. A committee member stated, “Cattle and cheese are the two big sources of county income and Cheese Day is being planned to emphasize the leadership of Green county in these two lines.” The opening of the livestock pavilion at the fairgrounds was also to be a notable get-together for the farmers with the holstein sale to follow.

The parade committee reported that 25 floats had been promised thus far; the parade was to be in three sections. There was also to be plenty of Swiss entertainment. Fred W. Galle made the selection of July Swiss cheese for the dairy luncheon and already had 2,000 pounds in storage “for curing to be prime and fit for the Cheese Day sandwiches.” At this time, the most pressing need was still to acquire the funds - and the sale of buttons was of major importance.

At their meeting on August 21 City Council approved all that the Cheese Day officers asked for, use of the court house square, control of concessions, and adequate police protection. Any profit that was to be made from Cheese Day would go into the pockets of Green County people. “Outside hot dog vendors, novelty dispensers, saloon men, and fakirs of all kinds” were banned from the city that day. The streets had been crowded with them at the Cheese Day in 1917 with many people objecting to their methods and the fact that they deprived locals of profiting. Traffic on the square was suspended for the day and the police were asked to help “make Cheese Day orderly, clean, and entirely a credit to the city.”

A “Cheese Day boosting crew invaded Monticello and New Glarus” on August 23. J. H. Durst, H. C. Roth, Charles A. Schindler, George Carr, and F. W. Galle were “armed with cards, pamphlets, buttons, and enthusiasm.” The plan was to visit the bankers to arrange for them to distribute the buttons to the factories in their territory. By this time they had already raised \$2,000, but still needed to sell another 1,200 buttons to be able to pay for the entertainment, advertising, parade, and dairy lunch. Ira Pierce, postmaster in Monticello, sold all 20 buttons left with him on Friday and sent a money order to Monroe the next day. The Chamber of Commerce voted on August 28 to spend \$300 to purchase the decorations. The bunting and other materials could then be used for other special occasions in the city. Green and gold were the colors for Cheese Day, green for the county and gold for the cheese.

Some details about the parade were shared on September 1, a month before the parade. It was expected to be three miles long and to be “greater, brighter, and more showy than ever,” according to parade chairman Robert L. Rote. It was to wind out of the fairgrounds promptly at 1:30 and travel west on 10th Street to 22nd Avenue. It would then go north to 8th Street and then west again until 16th Avenue. It



More than 2,000 of these small Cheese Days buttons were sold in 1923 for \$1.00 each to do some major funding for Cheese Day 1923. As you can see, the button was simple and made of green for Green County and gold for cheese. People now collect the buttons; one of the 1923 buttons was sold in 2022 for more than \$1,000. This photo of the button is from the Cheese Day archive.

would then proceed east on the north side of the square before traveling on the east and south sides of the square. It would then turn south again on 16th Avenue at the White Block and travel one block to 12th Street where it would turn east again. It then went north again to 11th and then 10th Streets to return to the fairgrounds.

The parade was to be led by a band followed by the livestock section, with some Swiss dairy maids also featured. Next was the industrial section, completely motorized with a band leading it and including the American Legion guard. The queen was also in this section. The circus section was to conclude the parade with many bands, comical clowns, and all manner of “wild” animals, some in cages and “some left to terrify the populace.”

The column next week will explain how the queen for the 1923 Cheese Day was chosen and learn more about her experience.