

### First Cheese Day Queen Selected in 1923

The honor to be the queen of the 1923 Cheese Day was open to any female in the county who was at least 18 years old, and was determined by popular vote throughout the county. It was to be "strictly a popularity contest." It was announced on September 5 that the campaign would take place for the last three weeks before the event with nominations being placed the first week and voting taking place the next two weeks. The prizes offered to the winner and her nearest competitor were "attractive enough to make any girl happy." The winner would receive "a diamond ring that will be the envy of any girl and she can treasure it among her prized possessions." The next highest vote getter was to receive an "expensive mahogany writing desk." A third prize was also planned with prizes being displayed in Monroe.

The committee for selecting the queen consisted of chairman Mrs. Ray T. Bast, Mrs. Jacob Gempler, Jr., Mrs. Robert L. Rote, Mrs. John Strahm, and Mrs. H. W. Chadwick. A nomination blank, worth 500 votes, was printed in the Times on September 5 and was to be turned in by September 15. Ballot books containing 100 votes were prepared for the contest with each ballot in it counting as 10 votes. These books were sold all around the county for \$1.00 each. Votes were to be sent to the chairman in Monroe or deposited in ballot boxes in Monroe with the contest opening on Monday, September 10.

More than 40 had been nominated by the next day. The response to the contest had "exceeded all expectations and indications point to the most exciting contest ever staged in Green County." The names were printed in the paper on September 6. More prizes were also added to the list. The Anderson Style Shop "offered to dress the queen in a beautiful frock which she may keep for ever after." A sassy hat from the "Klassy Shop will bedeck her regal head." And she would be given the diamond ring "on the day she rules the great pageant."

It was announced in the newspaper on that Monday that voting had already begun, but that the queen of the pageant may not have been nominated yet. Nominations were still open through Saturday. Ballot books were available for purchase at 18 places around the square. Money received from the sale of the books was placed in the advertising fund. Each side of the square also had a ballot box where people could deposit their own votes; those who lived outside Monroe were able to mail their ballots to the chairman of the Queen Contest.

The newspaper asked, "Who will be the queen? This promises to be a mystery until the last votes are cast. It is not going to be a walkaway. The prizes are so worthy of competition that there is sure to be a lively contest around the county and the number of candidates will be greatly increased by the end of the week, if reports are correct. The lucky girl should be a credit to the pageant. That she is popular and will present a queenly appearance there is no doubt, judging by the entries thus far."

The newspaper shared the top vote getters each day along with the number of votes received. It was announced on September 21 that Florence Miller had more than 7,000 votes with Mayme Steiner less than 800 behind her. Marion Burgy, Dora Blum, Mae Flanagan, and Wilhelmina Tschudy rounded out the top six with Miss Tschudy having only 1,400 votes. There was still another week of voting, so the field was still wide open. "No one can say that the list is closed in view of the large number of nominations and there is yet time for others to swoop in and come to the front. All it takes is the votes to win."

It was announced at 1:30 in the morning on October 1, that Marion Burgy, Monticello, had been chosen as the queen with 83,650 votes. The announcement was made at Young & Company on the northwest corner of the square where the votes had been counted. "At the stroke of midnight, after an exciting evening of voting, the ballot boxes were closed and the count begun in the balcony at the rear of the Young store." As if they were summoned by invitation, there were more than 100 inside and outside the store by 12:15. The crowd had swelled to nearly 200 within another 15 minutes. Miss Burgy happened to be in the crowd and made a speech. She said that she had not entered the contest and was surprised to win. She was warmly applauded and extended sympathy to the Monroe girls who she felt would be more disappointed in not winning than she would have been.

Miss Florence Miller, Monroe, who had led during most of the contest, received more than 6,000 less votes and was in second place. Miss Mayme Steiner was third and received a string of pearls. Miss Dora Blum and Miss Mae Flanagan were the next vote getters. More than \$2,000 was received through this vote even though each vote was only one cent.

Miss Burgy was hailed as “Green county’s first dairy queen” and received her diamond ring when it was delivered to her home in Monticello on Monday morning by Mrs. Irene Bast, chairman. Miss Burgy made a trip to Monroe on Monday afternoon to choose her other prizes as well as to get her hair done for the parade the next day. She would wear a crown and royal purple robe in the parade. She would also be the guest of honor at a reception given for her at 3:00 by the ladies of the Universalist Church.



The first Cheese Day queen, Marion Burgy, in her royal purple robe, rode the queenly chariot as it was drawn by four blacks, who tossed the red pompoms on their backs and heads as they moved through the crowd. Gold blankets trimmed with red fringe were thrown over their backs. Two little girls, Marion Etter and Marion Buehler, held the reins from the back of the peacock during the parade. This photo is from the Cheese Day archive.

After all of this planning for an “annual” event that had not happened for five years, you may read next week about the success of this Cheese Day.