

## Cheese Day 1923 Was a Success

Cheese Day 1923 was successfully held on Tuesday, October 2 after the five-year hiatus because of the war and economy. The headline in the Monroe Evening Times that day said that near record crowds, estimated to be 25,000, saw the “mammoth parade.” Emery Odell, president of the Cheese Day committee, stated, “Monroe never entertained a bigger, better appearing or more orderly crowd in my opinion. Cheese Day, once in bad repute, came back and has gloriously triumphed. It stands supreme as a distinctly dairy day in Wisconsin, the celebration of the greatest dairy region of like area in the entire country.”

Cheese Day was actually kicked off on Monday evening with the dedication of the county’s “Temple of Agriculture,” the livestock pavilion at the fairgrounds, with more than 250 people at the banquet. “The pavilion, declared by visitors to be the best in the state, was dedicated to Green county farm progress, the development of the dairy industry.” John M. Kelley, a Holstein breeder from Baraboo, gave the master address. Of the queen, he said, “You have a beautiful queen. Right now the news should go out on the telegraph wire that this queen is beautiful - not because of cosmetics and substitutes, but because she built up her beauty from the inside eating Green county cheese and drinking Green county milk.”



This float contained a wheel of Green County gold made by C. M. Gere. He used 5,166 pounds of milk to manufacture the 403-pound wheel of Swiss cheese. In this photo, from the Cheese Day archive, the parade is going west on the north side of the square past Huffman & Burgi (dry goods), Louis H. Kohli (clothing and men’s furnishings), and the Albert Zilmer bakery.

The day finally arrived and the weather was not too hot or cold, just a partly cloudy autumn day. Crowds arrived by auto and by train from every direction. The “multitude steadily increased in numbers from 8:00 o’clock. By 10:30 “the streets around the square were alive with moving crowds ready for the day’s entertainment.” School children, who were happy not to have school that day, “scampered around the streets, or were dragged along behind mother and father.” Monroe high school athletes performed marvelous feats of tumbling on the south side of the square at 11:00.

Also reported on that Tuesday, "More than 22,000 sandwiches were made by 100 Legion workers last night. They used 2,000 pounds of the best Swiss and 1,100 loaves of square bread. At 36 cents a pound the cheese going into the sandwiches was worth \$720. More than 22,000 paper cups of pure rich Holstein milk were also given away free at the dairy stand on the northwest corner of the square."

The parade started promptly at 1:30 with the motorcycle police clearing the way for the procession. The colors with the guard were first in line. The New Glarus marching band was ahead of the car carrying the surviving original Swiss settlers. A total of 75 floats were in the parade. It took about an hour for the parade to pass by. Then there was a Swiss wrestling competition on the south side of the square followed by Swiss dances and yodelers. A concert with all eight bands that were in the city that day was held at 4:30. The Monroe band then had a concert at 6:30.

During the event, Bob Scouts from Troop No. 2 were a great help in handling the parking of automobiles on 17th Avenue and in Market Square [now south of the Middle School]. Their hard work helped to relieve the traffic congestion.

One of the smaller headlines that day read, "Rest Rooms Are Appreciated Today." It is unknown what facilities had been available in 1917, but the Times shared that more than 85 had registered in the restroom on Washington (11th) street by 2:00 p.m. "The spacious courtroom furnished a cool comfortable place for many people wishing to rest, while the First National bank and Cheese Day headquarters was open for the convenience of all."

The newspaper's description of Monroe the day after Cheese Day stated, "streets littered, deserted stands, sagging bunting, aching feet, and sleepy looking eyes." But there was nobody who wasn't happy about the festival! It was still being continued in the early hours of that morning at Turner Hall and the Monroe Amusement park where crowds had packed the dance floors all evening. There had been 290 admissions sold at the amusement park; about 450 passed through the doors of Turner Hall. All of that meant a satisfactory profit for the Cheese Day committee who had sponsored the dances. According to these reports, the day was a total success.

Not all reports for the day were positive. Two pockets were picked with a Twin Grove farmer feeling a hand in his pocket; the farmer clutched at the trespasser. "In the melee that followed, the would-be thief threw away the purse which he had his hand on, but the farmer continued to hang on to him until police came to his aid and marched the 'dip' to jail." The farmer saved himself about \$16 by detaining the pickpocket. Another man, attending with his wife and baby, reported his wallet with \$10 as stolen; the police were watching "several suspicious looking men," but never located the offender.

More than 1,000 people showed up for the Holstein auction in the new \$35,000 pavilion at the fairgrounds on Wednesday. It set records with the best quality of offerings, the largest attendance in history, and "the biggest delegation of outside buyers on record." The average price of \$180 per head was higher than any local sale in the previous two years.

It was reported on Saturday that pictures, as well as stories, had been used in many papers. Some coverage was carried in almost every newspaper in the midwest and even in many publications even further away. This publicity of the Swiss cheese industry was worth thousands of dollars. The article went on to say that, "From now on farm publications and organs [sic] of institutions connected with the dairying interests will begin to publish Cheese Day accounts and additional favorable comment will be borne to thousands of people."

A financial report for the event was printed on February 9, 1924 which stated they had a profit of about \$1,660. The sentiment of the committee at that time was that the event should not be repeated more often than every other year. Cheese Day(s) never became an annual event again; the next Cheese Day was held on Tuesday, October 2, 1928.