

LOCAL

Menasha turns 150 years old and celebrates the achievement with contests and parties

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MENASHA — The city will celebrate its 150th anniversary this year, and organizers are getting a jump start on the festivities commemorating the March 5, 1874, incorporation.

The Great Button Hunt already is underway and will last through December. Participants can purchase a Menasha sesquicentennial lanyard for \$1.50 and then collect buttons from participating Menasha businesses and organizations.

The first stand-alone event of the Menasha sesquicentennial celebration will be the Menasha History Trivia Challenge, which will be held Jan. 19 at the Menasha Public Library, 440 First St.

The biggest event will be "Celebrate Menasha!" on June 21 and 22. The gathering will feature bands, kayak races on the Fox River, a motorcade of Ford Model T cars and fireworks.

Walt Ulbricht, a member of the Menasha Sesquicentennial Committee, said everyone is welcome.

"We not only want to attract local residents to these events, but we're inviting our neighbors throughout the Fox Valley and beyond to discover Menasha and what we have to be proud of," Ulbricht told The Post-Crescent.

Ulbricht and his wife moved to Menasha five years ago after living in Kenosha and South Pasadena, Florida. He is impressed with Menasha's history, natural beauty and vibrancy.

"We discovered it's a great place to live in so many different respects," he said. "I think it has a tremendous potential to move forward as one of the premier cities of the Fox Valley."

Menasha plans to spend \$100,000 on its sesquicentennial, according to the city's 2024 budget. The city and Menasha Utilities each will provide \$10,000, and \$80,000 is anticipated in gifts and donations.



January: Public library hosts trivia challenge

The Menasha History Trivia Challenge will run from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. Jan. 19. It is free and open to all ages.

Sixteen teams of four will compete against one another, testing their knowledge of notable Menasha people, businesses, organizations, landmarks and sports. Winners will receive gift cards to local businesses.

"It's a fun event to learn more about Menasha's remarkable heritage for local residents or any of our neighbors in the Fox Valley," said Sarah Bauer, chair of the Menasha Sesquicentennial Committee.

Registrations for the contest can be made online under the events tab at www.Menasha150.com.

February: 50 teams compete in speed puzzle contest

A speed puzzle competition will be held at 5 p.m. Feb. 3 at Maplewood Middle School, 1600 Midway Road.

Fifty teams of four will race to assemble a 1,000-piece jigsaw puzzle that depicts a collage of historic photos of Menasha. Prizes will be awarded, and each team will keep the puzzle.

"We have 30 teams already registered," Ulbricht said. "We'll probably have to cut off the registration fairly soon."

March: Birthday party at City Hall features time-tripping

The city will recognize its sesquicentennial at noon March 5 with a birthday party at City Hall, 100 Main St.

Menasha teacher Troy Wittmann, a historical reenactor, will emerge from a time machine to appear as O. J. Hall, Menasha's first mayor. He will tell attendees what Menasha was like in 1874.

And there will be cake.

April: Menasha will plant 150 trees on Arbor Day

The city will plant 150 trees on Arbor Day. A ceremony will be held at 9 a.m., but additional details haven't been released.

May: Historic house hunt and history walk are in the works

The Menasha Sesquicentennial Committee will partner with the Menasha Historical Society to organize a discovery of historical houses in the city.

"There are more hidden gems than there are signs," the sesquicentennial website says, "but we chose some of the most captivating houses that were once owned by prominent citizens or have interesting features."

In addition, the Menasha Landmarks Commission will hold a downtown history walk on May 11 to highlight businesses.

June: Downtown celebration will include surprises

The "Celebrate Menasha!" event on June 21 and 22 in downtown Menasha will offer music, kayak races, an antique car show and a Model T motorcade.

Ford Motor Co. mass-produced the Model T between 1908 and 1927.

"If you look at historical photographs of downtown Menasha or Neenah or Appleton during that 20-year period, what do you see on the streets? Lots of Model T's, either as passenger cars or delivery trucks or what have you," Ulbricht said. "It's a car that transformed America starting really at the hometown level like Menasha."