

How the Arthur Cheese Festival began

On January 19, 1933, George Marner started a cheese factory on his farm southwest of Arthur. Forty-four shares of stock were sold at \$25 per share. The first cheese made by this factory was on Tuesday, Feb. 2, 1933. A total of 6,000 pounds of milk was received that day.

On Jan. 27, 1938, Mr. Marner sold his cheese factory to A. W. Schmidt and his son, Omar, of Freemont, Wis. Their ownership was short-lived, however, because on Feb. 3, 1938, the cheese factory was purchased by Cecil E. Sheldon.

Mr. Sheldon moved the cheese factory from the Marner farm into Arthur. On April 17, 1941, the Arthur Graphic-Clarion reported that April 19 would be Cheese Day in Arthur. To celebrate the

opening of the new business, every merchant in Arthur ran specials to draw large crowds to town.

The Farmers Cheese Company, as it was then called, prepared for their grand opening using 17,000 pounds of milk and making 1,700 pounds of cheese per day for the event.

On Aug. 6, 1944, the Farmers Cheese Company was sold to Sugar Creek Creamery of Danville. In 1971, the company was sold to Erland Kondrup, who began operating it as the Arthur Cheese Company.

Under Kondrup the company started producing 12,500 pounds of cheese per day. Some of its varieties of cheese won national and international competitions.

After the Arthur Cheese

Company's first open house in 1973, Erland kept adding to what had become an annual event on a Saturday in August. He provided entertainment and submarine sandwiches to those who attended.

The Arthur Association of Commerce began hosting events in collaboration with the Cheese Company's open houses. Downtown businesses ran sidewalk sales and then outside vendors were added which turned the event into a full-size festival centered on cheese.

In the early 1980s, Erland met with Association president, Rod Randall, about moving the event's date to Labor Day weekend. Like today, the Association's president was responsible for much of the planning and execution of the Cheese Festival. Despite criticism from many of the downtown merchants who wanted to be closed on Labor Day, the decision was made to move the event to that weekend.

The move to hold the Cheese Festival on Labor Day weekend was so successful, producing large crowds of shoppers, attracting more outside vendors than before, and making more sales for the downtown businesses, that it has remained on Labor Day weekend ever since.

Even though the Arthur Cheese Factory closed its doors on Oct. 1, 1987, the annual festival named in its honor remains. The Arthur Amish Country Cheese Festival stands as a tribute to one of those Arthur industries that brought attention to this community from far and wide.



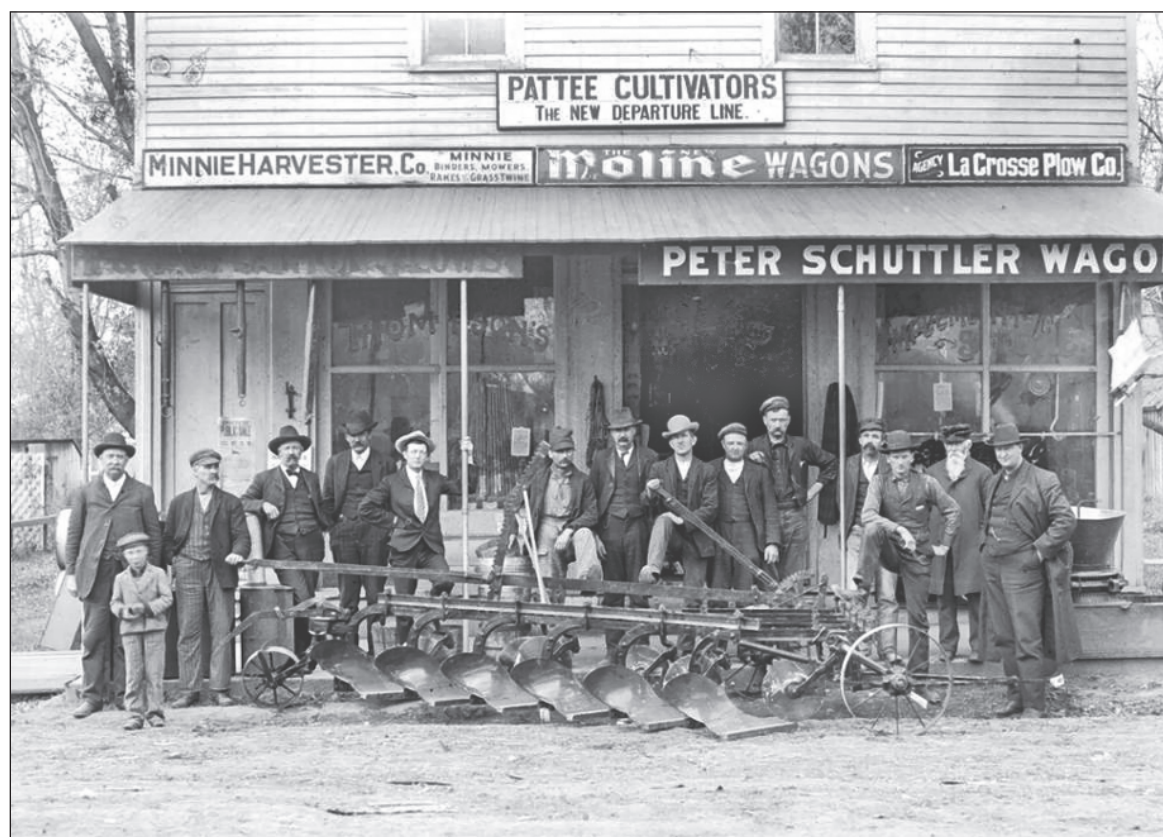
PICTURED ARE Mark Albert, Erland Kondrup and Pete Kondrup during the 1982 Cheese Festival. Photo courtesy of Decatur Herald & Review.



THE OLD Arthur Cheese factory.



THE MARNER CHEESE FACTORY as it looks today. Located just north of Beachy's Bulk Foods on the old Marner homeplace.



FARM IMPLEMENT business, 225 S. Vine St. Showing off a new six bottom plow.



INSIDE VIEW of Thompson Implement, located on the southwest corner of Park and Vine. Claus Thompson, Chandler, Mike Mentzer, Claude Weaver and John Thompson.

Additional Sesquicentennial essay winners

My town's Sesquicentennial

By Laila Sanchez

"It's not necessary to go far and wide. I mean, you can really find exciting and inspiring things within your hometown," the famous Daryl Hannah said in an interview in 2016. I feel like Hannah said exactly what I think today. My hometown is very inspiring and exciting, along with being very interesting, and Hannah though the same way about her hometown.

Your town's sesquicentennial should mean at least something to you, like family. To me, my town's sesquicentennial means a lot more. My town's sesquicentennial means, to me, generations of good-hearted people and a place to belong.

Good-hearted and kind people have lived here, in this area, village, town, or community, for a century and a half now. Today, people open many shops with amazing, interesting, and beautiful goods, like the shop, Frenchie's, just uptown, which

is owned by the generous Monts family. There is also Yoder's, right next to C.H.I. where delicious homemade food is made and prepared for anyone.

Our town's motto is, "You're a Stranger Only Once." I feel like it really just shows how people in this town are compassionate, thoughtful, kind, sympathetic, polite, neighborly, and overall kindhearted. I can't say I have met everyone in Arthur, but everyone I've met is pleasant to be around, sweet, patient, understanding, unselfish, well-rounded, and educated.

To me, this beautiful rural village is a place to belong. Arthur is an amazing place to settle, to raise a family, to buy goods, to make friends, to sell goods and/or produce, and is overall a great community to live in.

Arthur is not only a great place to live, but also a beautiful place. Arthur is a rural village, which makes most of our land farmland, which is really beautiful at dusk in the spring. We make every holiday amazing with just decorations that are put in town.

Whether you believe it or not, you

will always belong on our town of Arthur, no matter what. The people here are the nicest people I have ever met. Everyone knows, or is friends with, everybody.

My school is also a great place to belong. Students, like me, know other students, students know teachers, teachers know fellow teachers, and the principal knows everyone.

Our amazing and interesting community, above all, is a great place to belong or fit in. It's not always easy, but it is fun to make new friends here.

Daryl Hannah's quote about hometowns is less than what I think about Arthur, or my hometown. When I think of Arthur, I think of a beautiful, strong, kind, rural village. My sesquicentennial means, to me, generations of good-hearted people and a place to belong.

As you can see, my town means a lot to me, and I wish that I open-heartedly showed you and proved that. I hope that you think as much about your own hometown as I think about mine.

(Laila's essay was selected as best

6th Grade essay by the District #305 Education Foundation Board of Trustees.)

Family and farming

By Hadden Fabert

150 years this great town has been here. 150 years, and I'm excited to be here for it. Arthur has been here for 150 years, but my family has been here for nearly half of that, whether it be farming, or growing here in the community. Farming has been here in Arthur for as long as the town itself, and my family has been here farming the ground as well, while also raising future generations.

My family has grown up in the same house in the same town for 75 years. I am so lucky to be part of this tradition, where I continue that legacy as the fourth generation to grow and live here in Arthur. It's great to walk down the street and have people ask me, "Are you Hadley's son?" or "Are you related to Harlan?" That's

all part of living in the same town for so long and I can't wait for my kids to have the same experiences.

Farming was a major draw for my family to come to Arthur. My family has farmed this land since we came to Arthur way-back-when. The farming community has helped Arthur thrive for 150 years and surely will for the next 150. I'm excited to grow up and farm here in Arthur just like my family before me and them. This wouldn't be possible without an amazing community like Arthur that helped us to grow and thrive.

It's still crazy to think that my family has been here that long, and Arthur itself, even longer. My family has been farming this ground almost as long as this town has been here, and we've done it while also raising a family. Arthur has been here for 150 years and I can't wait for my family to be here for the next 150.

(Hadden's essay was selected as best 8th Grade essay by the District #305 Education Foundation Board of Trustees.)