

Thirty years of Heritage Days in Macomb

By John Hallwas

McDonough Voice correspondent

Heritage Days 2011 marks 30 years of celebrating community through a focus on the local past, and it's a good time to reflect on the "heritage" of our popular annual festival.

It all began with Bob Anstine, who spent a record-breaking 18 years as our community's mayor, starting in 1973, and whose emphasis on cooperation among local leaders and agencies made such a sizable undertaking possible. As he said in a 1990 interview, "We started Heritage Days in 1981, working with people throughout the community, including the university. . . . It takes time and effort to get those barriers

down."

Anstine also came up with the funds for the Heritage Days festival through his office and was the event's chief promoter. It is, then, an honor for Macomb's signature festival to have him serve as co-chair 30 years later.

The first Heritage Days festival, for which planning began in 1981 and which was held in 1982, simply had as its theme "The Heritage of Macomb," but since then the themes have commonly related to some facet of local life, such as business, public education, military personnel, law enforcement, service organizations, sports, WIU, and the arts. This year's theme is the first that refers back to a specific period in the local (and national) past.



Pictured is an entry in Macomb's Heritage Days parade in 1983.

Heritage Days has rich personal history

By Ryan Hagan

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In 1981, Macomb's Heritage Days celebration was born.

Bob Anstine, Macomb's mayor for 18 years, was one of the founding fathers of Macomb's annual celebration. He saw a need for summer activity in Macomb and began drafting ideas.

The first Heritage Days celebration was themed "Heritage Macomb" and featured skits performed by the Macomb Community Theatre at Fellheimer Auditorium. The skits were produced by Jane Ring and John Hallwas. The first celebration also had themed days.

Anstine said Heritage Days has been an opportunity for local high school classes to reunite. He hopes the celebration will become more regional, encompassing more of West Central Illinois. He also looks forward to expanding the cel-

ebration and its activities to suit high school students and having more lessons of Macomb's history taught in Macomb schools.

Updates to Chandler Park's electrical system should allow for more vendors and entertainment.

About \$15,000 is required to make Heritage Days a success. Funding has been accrued from fundraising dinners, raffles, and a tax on Macomb hotel rooms.

Chandler Park's gazebo was built during the 1976 celebration and since then, an effort has been made to have other events in Chandler Park - including Brown Bag days and the Al Sears Jazz Festival. New jungle-gym equipment provided by the Kiwanis gives the park a fresh look.

This year's theme is the 150th anniversary of the Civil War.

Anstine wanted to schedule a Civil War reenactment this



COURTESY PHOTO

This year's Heritage Days events have a military theme and a grand marshal for the annual parade will be chosen by the Macomb Armory.

year but funds were unavailable. Reenactments were done in the early 1980s in Everly Park. As part of this year's

military theme, the members of the Macomb Armory will name this year's grand marshal.