

Anvita Sinha

Nov. 20, 2018

Block 2

Woodbridge Essay

### **Woodbridge 300th Birthday: Celebration Of The Tercentennial**

It's astonishing that our town, Woodbridge, is going to turn 350. Woodbridge has lived a long life, longer than multiple countries, and it has been a loved home for many people. Throughout the year, our culture, ideals, and the generations themselves, have progressed and grown, but the elation in celebrating Woodbridge has always been unchangeable. Fifty years ago, in 1969, to celebrate Woodbridge's 300th birthday, many events were set in place. Though that time has past, the similarities between the celebration types of now and then are quite uncanny. Some of these were a fair, an art show, a concert, imprinted gold coins on sale, and various memorabilia.

Despite the fact that the most sincere celebrations are usually not material, the tercentennial had its fair share of mementos and memorabilia. Imprinted gold coins were minted, as a memorial for the festivity. The \$2.50 coins apparently were widely-sought. Miss Ruth Wolk, the chairman of the anniversary celebration, so jovially stated, "Centennial Committee ordered 10,000 coins, but there were so many advance orders from Numismatics that on the day the coins were to go on sale publicly — THERE WERE NO COINS LEFT" (Wolk, Ruth. 4/16/1969. Leader Press 1). In the June 25, 1969 issue, other souvenirs were also named, specifically: coffee and beer mugs, ashtrays, Woodbridge township charter copies, and different sized decals. The organizers of the celebration really didn't skimp on the tokens and relics. And now the future generation gets a story to hear, along with some old-fashioned memorials.

Additionally, the festivity organizers embraced their creative side. A concert was held in Woodbridge High School on March 24. Along with the traditional music, there were plays and reenactments of historical events, like Marquis De Lafayette's visit to Woodbridge. There was also, "Sixteen young girls, dressed in white will carry letters made in flowers, which, when placed in proper sequence will spell out, 'Welcome Lafayette'" (3/5/1969. Leader Press 1). According to the May 14, 1969 issue, there was an art show included in the plans. Renowned judges, with diverse credentials, were appointed to judge the multiple pieces of art. It's marvelous that the people of 50 years ago still comprehended the importance of the arts, theatrical, musical, visual, et cetera. We could take note from them, especially in today's more technological and isolated world.

My personal favorite of all the exciting celebrations was most definitely the fair. As explained in the June 4, 1969 issue of Leader Press, the fair was placed in

Merrill Park, for June 14 & 15. The event had a baking contest, the previous art show, picnic spaces, 3 rock bands, and other equally appealing booths. My preference to go here particularly, was not only influenced by the many attractions. In my opinion, the fair would essentially have the whole community, and thus inspire a sense of unity. In the present age, which is filled with schisms and dividing factors, we could use that.

All in all, the celebrations for the tercentennial anniversary of Woodbridge were indeed enjoyable for anyone. With the concert, gold coins, souvenirs, art show, and fair, we're hard-pressed to not let the future fail the past. However, while we're preparing for Woodbridge 350th birthday, we must also remember to ask what our purpose for this is. Are we merely getting ready for this occasion because it is expected and a tradition? Or are we celebrating the hard work and conviction that made sure Woodbridge stood tall for 350—and hopefully many more—years?