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Block 2

Woodbridge Township Essay

Woodbridge Township is almost 350 years old. This calls for a celebration! The township's tercentennial anniversary is coming up. In the past 350 years, the township has made many milestones, such as holding the first anti slavery meeting, building the first Safety Engineered Super Highway, and receiving the All American City Award. To celebrate its success and growth, Woodbridge held its 300th Tercentennial Anniversary in 1969. The celebration consisted of many activities and events, some of which included anniversary coins, music programs, a gala, an art show, and a ball.

The tercentenary coins played a significant role in the celebration. The committee had been given a suggestion to sell anniversary coins so that people would have a "memento of the tercentennial," (*300th Anniversary Coins Going Like Proverbial Hot Cakes; Advance Orders Coming From Near, Far*, 1969). The coin featured "a seal of the Township of Woodbridge, with the dates 1669-1969 underneath and Woodbridge, New Jersey, 300th anniversary in a circle near the rim appears on the front." The other side showed a rim around the municipal building. Each coin had cost \$2.50. Some of the other items on sale were mugs, beer mugs, dinner plates, decals, and copies of the original Township Charter.

Another one of the many events that took place for Woodbridge's 300th anniversary was the "Music to Remember" program performed by the fifth grade students at Lafayette Estates

School #25. The program "reflected the music which came from our country's important periods of history," (*Music Program For Township's 300th Birthday*, 1969). John Lapczyniski, Cindy Warren, Miss Liberly, Lori Cohen and Jeffrey Weislow participated as the speaking cast. Miss Irma Grundman, Mrs. Ada Kammer, Mrs. Esther Rapsons, and Mrs. Joyce Zashin's fifth grade classes took part in the chorus under Miss Irma Grundman's direction. Ms. Ada Trites was the pianist.

An additional event that occurred during the Tercentenary Fair was the Art Show. Artists from New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania were invited to participate in the outdoor art exhibit in Merrill Park. There was also a Children's Division within the exhibit. According to Mrs. George Molnar, the chairman of the exhibit all entries had to be "oil, watercolor, drawings and prints and other media," (*Tercentenary Committee To State-Wide Art Show of Fair June 14-15*, 1969). The paintings that were sold paid a small commision to the 300th Anniversary committee to help pay the cost of the art show. All paintings were judged and prizes were given to the best ones. I think it would be interesting to participate in this event because I love and appreciate art. I would have even entered my own art into the contest.

Furthermore, there was also a gala reception to open the 300th birthday party. It was held on January 1, 1969, in St. Anthony's Auditorium, Port Reading. Many of the honored guests that attended the gala were the mayor, Council President, general chairman of the 300th anniversary committee, reception chairman, as well as Governors, Senators, Congressmen, members of the State Legislature, Freeholders and mayors of other Tercentenary cities. There was plenty of entertainment, such as two orchestras (one for square dancing and modern and the other for rock-and-roll), and the "Sing Out Middlesex County" program. On display was the original

Woodbridge charter and an exhibit of historical pictures and objects. The committee urged everyone attending the gala and other tercentenary events to “possibly attend dressed in Colonial costumes as some very fine prizes would be awarded for the best costumes,” (*Gala Reception To Open 300th Birthday Party*, 1968). A short cake-cutting ceremony took place and a dance group dressed in colonial costumes danced in the Minuet. The mayor and his family arrived at the gala in the stage coach, also dressed in colonial costumes.

Not only was there a gala for the birthday party, but there was also a 300th Anniversary Ball, which was said to be “the climax of the 300th Birthday year of the Township of Woodbridge,” (*300th Anniversary Ball November 15 To Be Climax of Tercentenary Year*, 1969). The affair was scheduled for November 15 at the Seven Arches in Perth Amboy. The ball was limited to 500 tickets and each ticket was \$12.50. According to Miss Ruth Wolk, general chairman of the 300th Anniversary committee, “(...) there will be no head table and the speeches will be confined to a few moments of greeting.” The ball featured the Marly Ames Orchestra, which played for dancing, a filet mignon dinner, a cocktail hour, and a few other surprises.

As can be seen, Woodbridge Township had an interesting 300th anniversary celebration in 1969. The tercentennial coins, art show, the “Music to Remember” program, gala, and ball were just a few things the residents of Woodbridge did to honor their township. Many events that create civic pride and foster community partnerships and planned for the sesquicentennial anniversary celebration. I cannot wait to participate in some of these amazing events and activities for the 350th anniversary!

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