



2019

43rd Annual
Watonga Cheese Festival
#ONEWATONGA

43rd ANNUAL



2019 43RD ANNUAL WATONGA CHEESE FESTIVAL ENTERTAINMENT

OPENING CEREMONY
Thursday October 10th 7pm
Centennial Stage

FRIDAY OCTOBER 11TH

Pocket Park
on Main Street across from the Liberty Theatre
2pm to 4pm ~ RICHARD CLIFT JR
Country, Red-Dirt, Classic Rock and 90's Alternative

Centennial Stage

11am TLC Dancers
Noon Family Dance Party
1pm to 3pm Brent Krueger and Chloe-Beth
4pm to 6pm Katie Ballew Band with special
guest Joe Settlemyres & Ken Collins



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2019 43RD ANNUAL WATONGA CHEESE FESTIVAL ENTERTAINMENT

OPENING CEREMONY
Thursday October 10th 7pm
Centennial Stage

SATURDAY OCTOBER 12TH

Pocket Park
on Main Street across from the Liberty Theatre
2pm to 4pm ~ Red Grass String Band

Centennial Stage

10:30 Adora Danza Folklorica Dance
Las Adelipas (on main street)
Noon Family Dance Party
1pm Brett DeViney Acoustic Folk
4pm to 6pm CLASSIC REWIND OKC BAND



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WATONGA CHEESE FESTIVAL

Welcome to the 43rd Edition of the Watonga Cheese Festival

By **Connie Burcham**
Editor
Editor@WatongaRepublican.com

Last year I was a Cheese Festival newbie. And while I am not approaching this year with quite as much wide-eyed enthusiasm, I am still excited, enthusiastic and ready to roll.

I can hardly wait for the Friday when we all have to find someplace else to park. I will probably walk to work for ease and simplicity. Not to mention it will help offset the calories I intend to consume.

Because this year there is an enormous change. The food vendor trucks, at least a good percentage of them, will be parked directly outside the newsroom. This allows easy access and we can bring



what we buy into the office, so that we can all get

something different and share it with our journalistic brethren. Well, I say that, but happily they already know what a greedy twerp I can be.

But wait, there's more! A beer and wine garden also within staggering distance of the office. Life is good.

Of course the weekend will mean having to cover many different events —

Rat Racing around, if you will. Our staff has plans to be in strategic locations at strategic times to provide the best coverage of the best weekend fun Watonga has to offer. I hope we get to see you there.

Connie Burcham can be reached at Editor@WatongaRepublican.com



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October 4, 2019

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Cheese Festival's Cheese Food Contest

By **Connie Burcham**
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Editor@WatongaRepublican.com

If you like cheese, fun and games, Watonga, Oklahoma will be the place to visit the weekend of Oct. 11-12. The Watonga Cheese Festival will be celebrated throughout the town with many different fun-filled activities for the family. Information booths will be located throughout the town to assist visitors. There will be no admission charged to attend the Cheese Festival. One event that all ages are

invited to participate is the Cheese Food Contest. No entry fee is charged for this event. The Cheese Food Contest will be held at the Oasis Church on Main Street. Food Contest entries may be brought to the contest each morning. Please note the change of location from previous years. The junior division (under 18 years of age) will enter from 9-10:30 a.m. on Friday, Oct. 11 with judging at 11 a.m. The senior division (those over 18 years of age) will enter from 8-9:30 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 12, with judging

at 10 a.m. Rules are identical for both divisions. Each dish must contain at least 3 ounces of cheese or cheese products. At least one-half of the recipes must be brought for display, providing that the dish is presented in an attractive manner. Recipes for each dish must accompany the dish and be printed or typed on a card for display. Please use only one side of each card. There is only one entry per class allowed per person. Food entries will be released no earlier than 4 p.m. the day of each contest.

Cheese food recipes may be entered in the following classes: main dish, vegetable, breads, desserts, cheese snacks and salads. Cash awards, as well as ribbons, will be given to first through fifth places. Appropriate rosettes will be awarded to the grand and reserve champion in the junior and senior divisions. The Watonga Cheese Food Contest is a one-of-a-kind contest. No entry fees are charged, any type of cheese is allowed for entry in the six different classes, the contest is open to any in-



Eric Warsinskey | Watonga Republican
The Watonga Cheese Festival will play host to foods from both vendors and local citizens.

terested individuals and cash prizes are awarded to the top five placings. Search out your best, most innovative recipes using at least 3 ounces of cheese and enter this contest.

For more information concerning the Cheese Food Contest, contact Joy Rhodes, Cheese Food Contest Chairman at 580-623-5195. More information about the contest and other Cheese Festival activities can be found at Watonga Chamber website.

Connie Burcham can be reached at Editor@WatongaRepublican.com

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Welcomes you to the
Watonga Cheese Festival.

Enjoy!

Cheese Festival to Showcase Many Blaine County Quilters

By **Connie Burcham**
Editor
Editor@WatongaRepublican.com

Quilting developed as a way to turn scraps or bits of damaged clothing into warm, usable bedding. It is likely the isolation endured, particularly by women, as part of life on the frontier lead to the artistry displayed in many of their creations. And the names associated with some of the patterns, such as Road to Oklahoma or Kansas Troubles, reminds anyone who sees those

quilts of the difficulty – and joy—that came with that life.

Now, though, quilting is more about the creativity involved. That creativity will be on display during the Cheese Festival Quilt Show, held from 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. Friday and Saturday at the old Family Dollar location on Noble and A Street, across from Cornerstone Bank.

This is a display show, so no prizes or awards are presented. About 50 quilts are displayed each year, according to Judy Poarch,

a Cheyenne Quilt Guild member. The guild provides racks and both members and residents are welcome to bring in up to three quilts to display. Usually they are those created by the person who brings them in; family pieces are also welcome, but Poarch warns that the quilts are often touched and handled, in spite of signs asking that viewers refrain. That could soil or damage an older, fragile quilt.

Preference is given to quilts that have not been displayed previously, Poarch said.

For those who are up to a challenge, consider the jelly roll race. No, don't get out your running shoes! A jelly roll is a collection of color-coordinated strips, per cut and assembled. The race part comes in when a group of quilters gets together and races to see who can stitch

the strips into a finished quilt top the fastest.

There is generally no pattern per say, simply strips sewn end-to-end, then doubled back and stitched side-by-side. In this manner, a queen size top can be finished in about two hours.

The fifth annual jelly roll race will be held at 1 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 12. The registration fee is \$50 if you wish to purchase a jelly roll and \$20 if you bring your own fabric. Contestants should also bring their sewing machine, several pre-wound bobbins, thread and scissors.

First prize is an Oliso iron, valued at \$145; prizes will also be given for second and third place winners,

In case you need to purchase supplies, choose a special jelly roll or just look at all the beautiful fabrics and new gadgets,



both Big Bobbins and Bonnie's Fabric Yard will be at the event with their products.

If making a quilt isn't quite in your wheelhouse, how about a barn quilt instead? No, it isn't a really big blanket to toss over the buildings full of animals. It's a quilt pattern painted on plywood, made to attach to barns or buildings.


Those big blocks – usually 2-foot or 4-foot square – will be on display at the Ferguson Chapel at the corner of Weigle and Fifth Avenue. These blocks are often painted in a class. Trails that resem-

ble point to point races are springing up all over America, where visitors tour various locations in an area where the quilts are displayed on buildings.

During the Cheese Festival, the barn quilt tours will take place at noon on Friday and at 2 and 4 p.m. on Saturday at the Ferguson Chapel.

And while it may be a little warm outside to long for a snuggly quilt, remember, winter's coming!

Connie Burcham can be reached at Editor@WatongaRepublican.com



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- *Arts & Crafts
- *Cheese Tasting at Oasis Church
- *Quilt Show & Jelly Roll Race at Old Dollar General
- *Vendors at the Armory, Oasis Church & Main Street
- *Fly-In, Watonga Airport Saturday- 9am to 3pm

Northwest Oklahoma's Grand Cheese Parade
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The Watonga Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors Invites You To Attend and Participate in the Watonga Cheese Festival

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Watonga Chamber of Commerce

Free Admission!

Welcome to the 2019 Watonga Cheese Festival

By Teresa France
Director of Watonga
Chamber of Commerce

I am Teresa France, Executive Director of the Watonga Chamber of Commerce. This is my second year overseeing the Cheese Festival, and it has been a wonderful experience, much easier than the first.

The help and outpouring of support for this great tradition in our community has

been humbling. I truly could not have gotten everything done or attended to all the details without a solid base of support behind me, especially the members of the Cheese Festival Committee.

I would especially like to thank Dayla Luetkemeyer, 2019 Cheese Festival Chair and the 2019 Cheese Festival vendor and festival organizers and volunteers for the help, support and pointers provided.

Also, I can't say enough



about the love and support offered to me by my husband Greg, my kids and my chamber board.

While this is only my second Cheese Festival as Chamber Director, I hope to be here for many more to come. Let's look forward to making it as great as ever, then surpassing that goal and making it bigger and better.

I hope everyone will get out and enjoy the great weekend we have planned for you. Remember we're all Okie Made!

#OneWatonga.



The 39th Edition of the Great Rat Race All Set for Saturday

By Connie Burcham
Editor

Editor@WatongaRepublican.com

38 iterations of the Great Rat Race have come and gone and the 39th is coming down the home stretch. Runners can enter the 1M fun run/walk, or the 5K or 10K races. The race will be held on Saturday, Oct. 12. Cornerstone Bank is a

major sponsor of the run, as they have been for years. The 1M fun run/walk will start at 8:30 a.m. Refresh-

The 1M fun run/walk will start at 8:30 a.m. Refresh- in front of the Noble House Bed & Breakfast, followed by the 5K/10K race at 9 a.m. Medals will be awarded for the top three finishers in each age group.

"This is a flat, fast course," former race director Toni White said. "We get a lot of repeat runners

from as far away as Texas, Colorado and Kansas." she added.

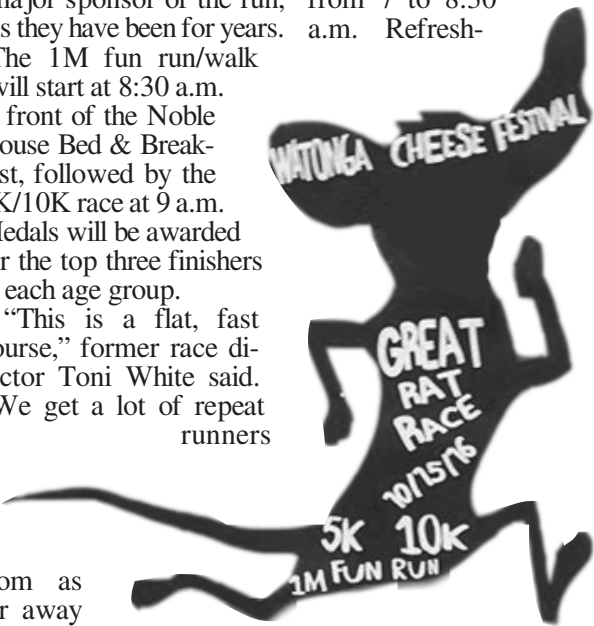
The race can accommodate up to 125 runners and those interested in running can register beforehand on the website www.active.com. Registration packets can be purchased for \$30 prior to Oct. 5, or for \$35 after Oct. 5.

Runners can register onsite the morning of the race

from 7 to 8:30 a.m. Refresh-

ments and awards will be presented at the Watonga Christian Church following the conclusion of the 5K/10K race. Make sure to come out and support the runners as they make their way through the course and compete in the 39th annual Great Rat Race!

Connie Burcham can be reached at Editor@WatongaRepublican.com



Welcome to the 2019 Watonga Cheese Festival! Enjoy!

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Step Back in to Pre-Statehood at Ferguson Home



Eric Warsinskey | Watonga Republican

The T.B. Ferguson Home Museum is located at the corner of 5th St. and Weigle Ave. in Watonga.

By **Connie Burcham**
Editor
Editor@WatongaRepublican.com

On the corner of 5th Street and Weigle Avenue in Watonga is a white, two-story building that looks like something straight out of an old newspaper clipping. That’s because, well it is. The Ferguson House was built in 1901 by T.B. Ferguson just before he was named by President Theodore Roosevelt as Oklahoma Territorial Governor. Ferguson would be the longest serving territorial governor for Oklahoma Territory. However he had many interests and in addition to being a governor, he was trained as a teacher and minister and even took an interest in writing and journalism. Ferguson moved to Watonga in 1892, during a land run that year. After moving to Watonga, Ferguson started a newspaper that is still in circulation today, The Watonga Re-

publican. He would remain the publisher of the Republican until his death in 1921. Years after Ferguson passed away, his widow, Elva Shartel Ferguson, returned to the home with novelist Edna Ferber. The Ferguson Home provided much of the material for her novel “Cimarron”. The novel was turned into a feature film in 1931. Elva Ferguson was flown out to Hollywood to show the actors and actresses in the movie how to use the printing presses correctly. Today, the Ferguson Home serves as a museum in Watonga. It provides a look back at the history of not only the town, but the state. The Home also plays a significant role in the annual Watonga Cheese and Wine Festival. Volunteers demonstrate the process of making cheese and butter for visitors and runners of the Great Rat Race will pass right by the Ferguson

Home. This year, curator Shelby Barnes will have participants create their own scarecrows on Oct. 11. Visitors can look at all the history preserved in the house for themselves on Tuesdays, Thursdays

and Fridays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Connie Burcham can be reached at Editor@WatongaRepublican.com



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WATONGA

Hurricanes to Wind Energy, NextEra Adapted

By **Connie Burcham**
Editor
Editor@WatongaRepublican.com

NextEra Energy is a major sponsor of this year's Watonga Cheese Festival. It is the world's largest utility company, proudly built and based in America with significant holdings in Oklahoma.

The company's culture is one committed to excellence and it leads the industry with a market capitalization of more than \$100 billion. This company generates more wind and solar energy than any other company in the world. Plans are to invest between \$50-\$55 billion through 2022.

Forbes Magazine has recognized NextEra as holding a place in the top 25 businesses in the world for innovation.

The NextEra team has spent years researching battery energy storage

technology, application and use. By the end of 2018, it had in operation more than 140 MW of battery energy storage systems in multiple states, more than any other company in the U.S. This helps ensure energy storage when demand is low and supply the energy needed in times of high demand.

There are storage facilities in 13 states and are developing projects in six others.

NextEra Energy is a clean energy company with headquarters in Juno Beach, Fla. It owns two electrical companies in Florida, Florida Power and Light and Gulf Power, serving a combined total of more than 5.4 million customers.

NextEra also owns a competitive business, called NextEra Energy Resources the largest gen-

erator of renewable energy in the world and a leader in battery storage research and development.

Through its subsidiaries, it generates clean energy from eight commercial nuclear power units in Florida, New Hampshire, Iowa and Wisconsin. It is a Fortune 200 company and is often recognized for its work in sustainability, corporate responsibility, ethics, safety and compliance as well as diversity.

It tops the Fortune 2019 list of electrical and gas utility industries for Most Admired Companies and is ranked in the top 25 of Companies that Change the World.

The company began in 1925 when a land boom increased the demand for electricity. The next year a hurricane struck South Florida, damaging the



lines and costing the company \$1.6 million, but it rebuilt and continued its expansion. In 1928, another devastating hurricane hit the region and the company opened one of its area warehouses as a first aid station. By 1929 door-to-door salesmen were selling electrical appliances and the company built showrooms at the local offices.

When the Great Depression was in full swing, the company reduced its rates. During WWII women were hired to fill the vacancies created when employees went to the front.

Following the war, the company created a mascot, Reddy Kilowatt, who served until 1975.

During the 1960s, the company that would become NextEra started construction on a nuclear power plant in Florida and by 1966, it had more than a million customers.

In the '70s, the company began its Wise



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WATONGA

NextEra Wind Major Supplier Of Clean Energy

FROM PAGE A9

Energy Management Program, one of the first energy efficiency campaigns in the nation. In 1978, it launched Watt-Wise Living, establishing energy saving standards

for home construction. During the 1980s, the company continued to work on energy efficiency for consumers, increasing its generating power and developed a Quality Improvement Program to increase teamwork. It

became a model world-wide for problem-solving. By 2001, the company had branched out into wind energy with its 14th wind facility in Umatilla County, Ore. and another in Walla Walla, Wash. It also operates the

largest wind farm in the Eastern United States, in West Virginia. More recent developments are in Iowa, North and South Dakota, Texas, Oklahoma and Colorado.

Recently it partnered with six schools in Florida to develop Next Generation Solar Stations, allowing the school to create emission free electricity and teaching students about renewable and solar power. Additional programs are planned around the country.

NextEra, one of this year's Platinum Sponsors of the Watonga Cheese Festival, is helping the state and the nation march into a renewable energy future while respecting the heritage and history Made in Oklahoma.

Connie Burcham may be reached at editor@watongarepublican.com





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Rodeo Among the New Additions to Festival

By **Connie Burcham**
Editor
Editor@WatongaRepublican.com

Additions this year to the annual Watonga Cheese Festival include a two-night rodeo, getting underway at 8 p.m. both Oct. 11 and 12, with a dance following the Saturday night show. Cost to get into the rodeo is \$8 and dance admission is \$10. The stock contractor is Big Horn Rodeo Co., and rough stock is by pre-entry only and entry may be made by calling Kyle Robinson at (405) 380-8404 on Oct. 7. Team roping entry is \$50 per team

member, four to a team and mutton busting is available for those six years and younger with an entry fee of \$20. All other events entry fees are \$60.

Another addition is a fly in at the Watonga Airport. It will take place from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 12. A shuttle will run to the downtown area and there will be aircraft and radio-controlled aircraft on display. The EAA will be offering free airplane rides for children ages 8-17 and fuel will be offered at a discount that day only.

The Watonga Fire Department is holding its inaugural Poker Run



beginning with registration at 9 a.m. Saturday at the Armory. The event is a fundraiser for the department and is sponsored by Diamondback Electric. Cost for riders is \$25 and passengers kick in \$20. There will be prizes for high score and low score, as well as a 50/50 draw.

Connie Burcham can be reached at Editor@WatongaRepublican.com

Watonga Republican

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It's Cheese Festival Time... Enjoy the Festivities!



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Festival Cheese Lineup: Delicious and Cultured

Tasting to be Held Inside Oasis Church on Main Street All Day on Friday and Saturday

By **Connie Burcham**
Editor
Editor@WatongaRepublican.com

Built in 1940, the Watonga Cheese Factory has been in operation for more than seven decades, and, every year at the Watonga Cheese Festival, attendees have the luxury of sampling the numerous varieties of Watonga Cheese that are available, including classic cheeses like cheddar and Watonga Cheese Factory staples like pepper jack, bacon cheddar and cheese curds as well as a number of novelty shaped cheeses.

In addition to Watonga Cheese, artisan cheeses from around the country will be available to try.

However, one change from previous years will be the location of the Cheese Tasting Line. This year, the Cheese Tasting Line will in the Oasis Church, and festival goers will also have the option to wash the delicious variety of cheeses down with some home-grown Oklahoma wine in

the tent on Main Street.

Along with the annual cheese tasting portion of the festival, adults and children of all ages are encouraged to enter the numerous cheese food contests, at no charge. The contests will take place under six separate divisions, including Main Dish, Snacks, Desserts, Breads, Salads & Dressings and

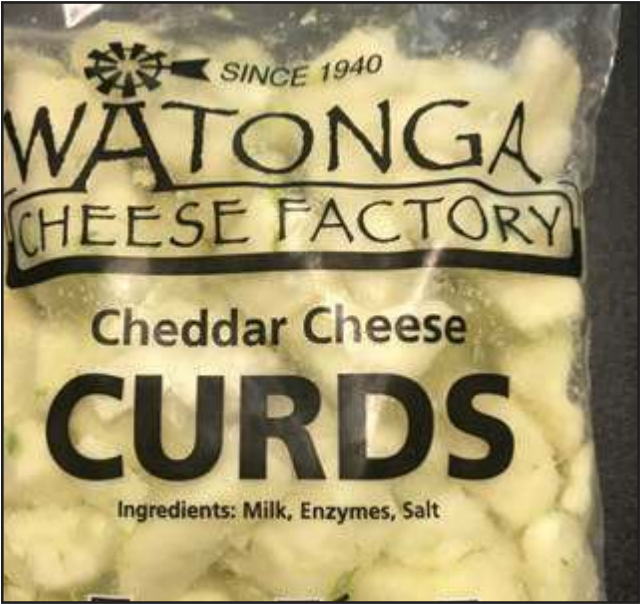
Vegetables. The winner of each food contest will be chosen by a panel of judges, but all this year's recipes will be used to create a "Festival Cookbook" that will ultimately be available for purchase.

Even though the operation moved to Texas a few years ago, Watonga Cheese Factory cheese is available at local Watonga

retailers year-round, and at this year's Watonga Cheese Festival it will be


available for purchase from the Watonga Kiwanis Club.

Connie Burcham can be reached at Editor@WatongaRepublican.com



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A Cheesy History: the Watonga Cheese Story

By **Connie Burcham**
Editor
Editor@WatongaRepublican.com

It has now been several years since the remnants of the old Watonga Cheese Factory were reduced to a pile of rubble by bulldozers and backhoes. Now, all that remains is history.

The factory hasn't been in Watonga since it moved to Perryton, Texas back in September of 2010. But, the condemned building sat as a ghostly reminder of Watonga's yesteryears. A time when Watonga was synonymous with cheese and the very product that carried its name-sake.

Now, plans are in the making for the site of the old factory to become the site of a new Blaine County Jail.

Times have changed, and the building went from being nostalgic to a footnote. However, it wasn't always that way.

Over 75 years ago, in 1940, an Iowa dairy businessman by the name of John Knudsen saw opportunity in burgeoning town of Watonga. A farming stronghold in 1940, Knudsen recognized that Watonga was home to a number of farmers who each had two to three dairy cows yet had nowhere to sell their milk. At the time, there were cheese factories fragmented around Oklahoma, but Watonga wasn't home to one.

In its earliest days, the factory hired local cheese makers to produce cheddar cheese. After collecting milk from local farmers, employees then crafted wheels and horns of cheese by hand. The factory then sold all its cheese to major producers — including Kraft — which then melted and repackaged the cheese.

As operations ramped up at the factory, word began to spread about the local factory's product quality, and more people

around Watonga and the surrounding communities began to buy Watonga's local cheese. By the end of the 1940s, the factory was churning out over 50,000 pounds of cheese a week.

From 1950 through the late 1970s, Watonga's cheese factory went from being a word-of-mouth commodity to an absolute juggernaut, as the factory produced cheese every day of the week and produced over 10,000 pounds of cheese a day — all by hand.

Farmers from as far as 150 miles away began to supply the factory with materials. Eventually, Kraft stopped purchasing Watonga Cheese and began making their own cheese as their company grew. The vendor change didn't bother Watonga Cheese's business as they had already begun to sell to local grocery stores and nearby stores in Enid and Oklahoma City.

Building off the fac-

tory's success, in 1976 the Watonga Chamber of Commerce and the Watonga Cheese Factory partnered to create the Watonga Cheese Festival. Events like cheese tastings, cooking contests, art shows and races created a showcase for Watonga's cheese prowess at the time. The festival's biggest days were back in the 1970s and 1980s when it sprawled throughout Watonga and spilled onto the Blaine County Fairgrounds.

In 1997, the Knudsen family made the decision to sell the company to a group of five investors in Oklahoma City. However, the new owners changed the original recipe, to the dismay of many consumers around the state.

Casey and Brandi Cowan purchased the factory in early 2002 and rebuilt the company, which was having difficulties after the Oklahoma City in-



Workers prepare Watonga Cheese at the old **Watonga Cheese Factory** back in the 1970s.

vestors strayed from the original Watonga Cheese recipe and processes.

Upon buying the factory over a decade ago, Casey spent months learning Wa-

tonga Cheese's

SEE HISTORY | **PAGE A16**

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A Cheesy History: the Watonga Cheese Story

FROM PAGE A15

original recipe and processes under the direction of its original cheese maker, Kenneth “Ice Water” Johnson. Under the tutelage of Johnson, the Cowans returned to the factory’s original recipe, process and equip-

ment as the cheese was once again being hand processed. Johnson continued to work at the factory until he passed away in 2003. However, his sons continued to work at the factory after his death, as the factory began to recapture its past success. Brandi and Casey operated the factory from their

home in Balko and from a home in Watonga over the next five years, until 2007.

In, 2007 Tropical Storm Erin brought 80-mile-an-hour winds and 9 to 11 inches of rain to Watonga. As the August 22, 2007, edition of the Watonga Republican described, “The roof was blown right off the Watonga Cheese Factory and many other businesses and residences sustained roof damage, both from falling limbs and high winds along with heavy rains.”

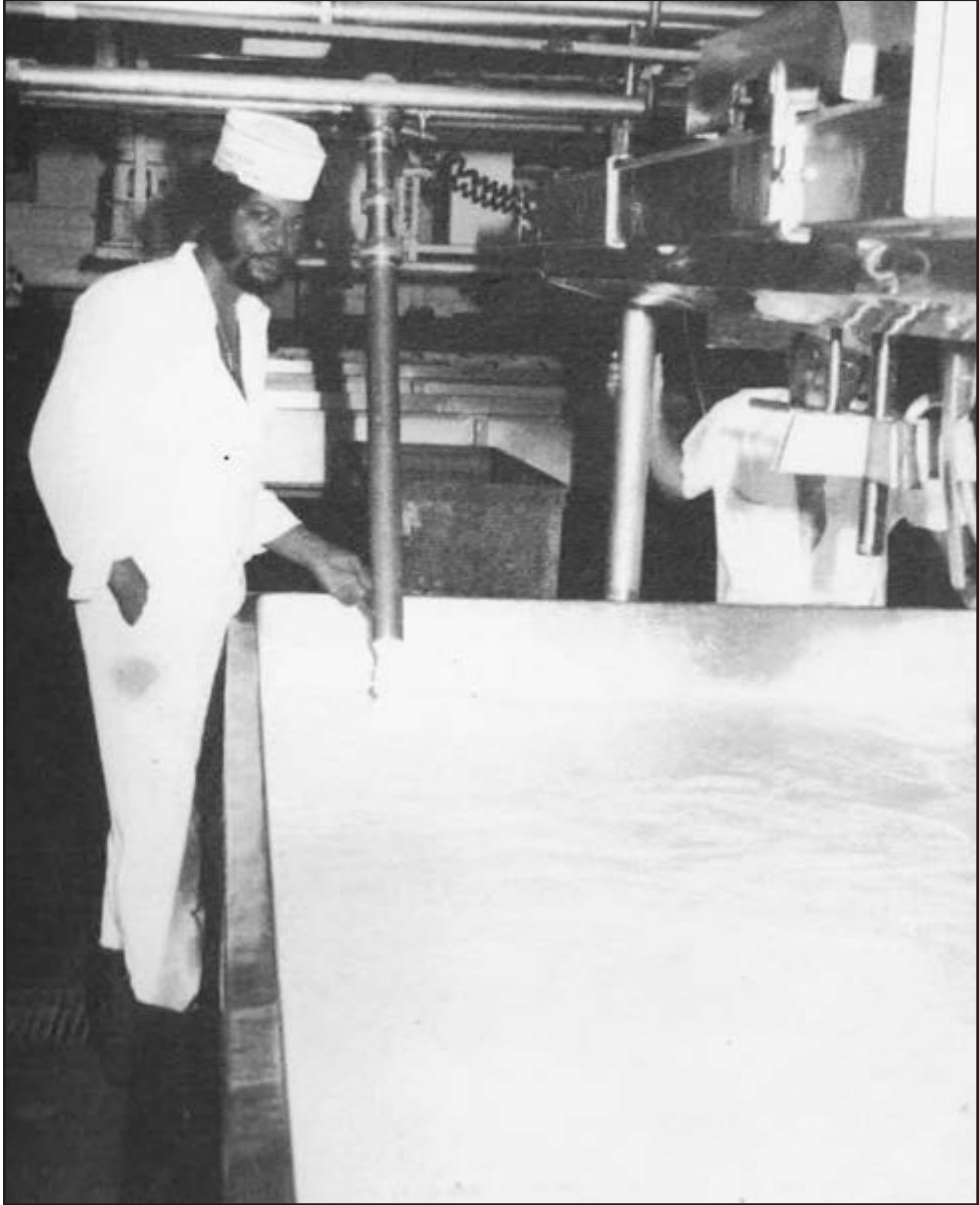
Upon further inspection, it was discovered that the storm actually managed to twist the building’s foundation and cinderblock walls. Two sections of the building were completely flooded. The insurance adjuster condemned the building, estimating \$650,000 in damages. And later, the USDA condemned approximately 7,000 pounds of cheese inventory.

According to the Cowans, the factory’s insurance settlement didn’t cover costs to rebuild, so a decision had to be made. After several months of looking for a new location to rebuild in and around Watonga, the Cowans received a number of business incentives from the city of Perryton, Texas, 170 miles away from the cheese’s namesake of Watonga.

In November 2009, the Cowans and Perryton, Texas, broke ground at the Watonga Cheese Factory’s new location over 2 ½ hours away from its origin. Six months later in 2010, the factory held its grand opening and it has operated from there since.

Watonga Cheese can be found year-round in Watonga at Jacky’s Lawn & Lube, Hutch’s and Apple Market.

Connie Burcham can be reached at Editor@WatongaRepublican.com



Watonga Republican

A worker fills a stainless steel vat with pasteurized milk before he adds rennet and food coloring in the process of making cheese at the old Watonga Cheese Factory



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Workers inspect blocks of cheese handmade at the Watonga Cheese Factory in the 1970’s.

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Get a Jump Start on the 43rd Cheese Festival with Thursday's Opening Act

By **Connie Burcham**
Editor
Editor@WatongaRepublican.com

Again this year the Watonga Cheese Festival has an early kickoff as the festivities will get underway on Thursday, Oct. 11, instead of the customary Friday

morning ribbon cutting. Watonga Mayor Gary Olsen will open the 43rd edition of the Watonga Cheese Festival by “Cutting the Cheese,” a horn of Watonga Cheese, that is. Watonga’s Mayor will be joined at 7 p.m. by members of the Watonga Chamber of Commerce and the Watonga Police Department as the festival

gets underway. The event will be held at Centennial Park on Main Street. The PD will offer free popcorn and cotton candy at the park. At around 7:15 p.m. the Cheesiest T-shirt Contest will be held. Wear your cheesiest – some would say tackiest – T-shirt and win gift cards. That is followed by the

dog show, with registration at 7:30 p.m. All dogs must be on a leash and are eligible to win a gift basket. There will also be a hayride for youngsters who can catch a country style Lyft to the library, where they can choose a pumpkin, ride the hay wagon back to Centennial Park and decorate the pumpkin they have selected. Entertainment is also planned, although the details are still to be ironed out as of press time. Make sure and come out to the opening ceremonies and cut the cheese in style!

Connie Burcham can be reached at Editor@WatongaRepublican.com

Plenty of Shopping Options at the Watonga Cheese Festival

By **Connie Burcham**
Editor
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Last year was a momentous one for the annual Watonga Cheese Festival. But what seemed to be momentous turned out to be a rebuilding year, because in terms of vendors, 2019 is putting 2018 in the shade. At press time, there were more than 120 vendors lined up. They are bringing everything from rustic décor to handmade soap and candles, games, spices, clothing and handbags. There are also vendors bringing baby items, many handmade, toys, books and gifts. There are things that smell good – like lotions, things that feel good- like massaging insoles, things that taste good – like numerous winery offerings.

centrally located on Main Street between Noble and Weigle avenues. Wineries anticipated to attend include Whirlwind, Wildhorse Canyon, Native Spirits, Deep Branch Winery, Turn-er Me on Wine, Vernost Wine Co. and OkeOzark Winery. If you need more than a taste of cheese, it will be available at the Kiwanis booth in the Armory and the church as well. When you have worked up an appetite for more than just a sample, there will be food trucks and vendors galore. Slated to be cooking at Watonga are C&C Kettle Corn, PacificBrim with island inspired food, Ookebobs with fish and frog legs, L&E Concessions with chicken on a stick and fried

pickles, State Fair Concession with funnel cakes and Indian tacos, the Lions Club with burgers, B&B Creations with cake pops, MMP Concessions with cheese on a stick, BMax Concessions with taco salads and nachos, From the Woods with handcrafted barbecue sauces, and A&J Salsa, whose name says it all. Besides the great shopping, toys and crafts already signed up, there are more vendors calling in and reserving spaces every day, and applications will continue right up until festival time, according to Chamber of Commerce Director Teresa France.

Connie Burcham can be reached at Editor@WatongaRepublican.com



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Wine Tasting Available in Main Street Tent During the Cheese Festival

By **Connie Burcham**
Editor
Editor@WatongaRepublican.com

Wine and Cheese Tasting will be available again this

year at the Watonga Cheese Festival for those guests over the age of 21.

The Watonga Cheese Festival has paired Watonga's local wines, Oklahoma wines

and other regional wines, with various cheeses from our own Oklahoma creameries all under the roof of the Oasis Church at Prouty and Main streets.

Watonga's Whirlwind Winery will also be offering tasting throughout the Watonga Cheese Festival.

Whirlwind Winery is located on the historic Main Street (109 E. Main St.) of Watonga. Whirlwind offers a wide variety of wines for almost any taste. All wines are made with fresh, locally grown grapes and fruit; therefore, all bottles produced at Whirlwind Winery carry an Oklahoma label appellation.

According to TravelOK, "Visit the working winery, once a turn-of-the-century Main Street building, now restored to showcase the build-

ing's original decorative tin ceiling and walk-in safe room. While there, sample Whirlwind's Sweet Fay Rose, the winery's best-selling wine, for a light, smooth and deliciously sweet experience. Visitors can also cozy up with a glass of Honey Apple wine, an award-winning blend of honey mead and red apple wine. For a true taste of western Oklahoma, be sure to enjoy a sip of the Wild Sand Plum Wine, made from wild plums picked along rural dirt roads."

The Whirlwind's wine-maker can also do custom wines and custom labels for special occasions. Some wines are seasonal or are of limited quantity and may not be available.

Other wineries expected as vendors may also be found on Main Street under the beer and wine tent. The organizers expect seven wineries, multiple craft beers, three creameries plus Watonga Cheese.

The entertainment and food zone is sponsored by First State Bank. There will be seating in the pocket park near the 12-plus food vendors and alcohol sales so that visitors to the festival can sit, enjoy their pairings and listen to great entertainment.

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