

There will be something for everyone who attends Imperial's 125th birthday (quasquicentennial) celebration July 2-4.

A local planning committee has been working for nearly a year on plans for three days of events that will kick off Friday night, July 2, with a cake decorating contest and birthday party, and an appearance by newly crowned Miss Nebraska, 17-year-old Teresa Scanlan of Gering. Miss Nebraska will be on hand from 6 to 8 p.m. MT and will say a few words at the opening ceremonies starting at 7 p.m. MT that night.

Other special guests at the opening ceremonies Friday night, July 2, will be a great grandson of one of Imperial's founders, Mark Mercier Jr. and his wife, Sherie, of Spring Valley, Ariz. They will also greet the crowd and say a few words. Mark's great grandfather, Thomas Mercier, was a co-founder of Imperial in 1885.

Friday's events will be capped off with a square dance outside on West 8th St. in Imperial.

On Saturday, July 3, a full day of events will start off at 7:15 a.m. MT with a 5K, mile run, mile walk and a kids' half-mile race in town. Citywide garage sales also start at 7 a.m. throughout the community. Also featured Saturday will be a program by horse "gentler" Paul Daily of Trout, La., at the fairgrounds, a Nebraska Arts Council-supported music program by Greenblatt & Seay at 1:30 p.m. MT, concluding that night with a big fireworks show after dark at the fairgrounds by the Imperial Volunteer Fire Department.

Other activities on Saturday, July 3, include an art show featuring area artists, a quilt exhibit, city history display, a frog jumping contest and turtle races for the kids, carriage rides, a homemade pie contest and an ice cream social.

On Sunday, July 4, the Ministerial Association of Southwest Nebraska will conduct an early morning service at 7 a.m. MT, followed by a breakfast.

That afternoon from 1 to 4 p.m., the Imperial Volunteer Fire Department will conduct its annual Fireman's Fun Day on the old football field at 10th and Wellington Sts.

The Imperial FFA chapter will host a mud volleyball tourney at the field starting at 1 p.m., as well.

The opening night events will be "under the tent" along Imperial's main street. Nearly all the weekend events will be at the tent, in the Lied Imperial Public Library or in St. Patrick's Catholic Church Hall, all located in the same block between 7th and 8th Sts., on Broadway.

Breakfast will be served Saturday and Sunday morning, July 3-4, by the District 12 ABATE organization. There will also be other food available during the weekend. With the exception of the running events, carriage rides and food, all events are free as people from the area come to Imperial to help celebrate the city's 125th.

According to Chase County Historical Society information, the original town of Imperial was built on land homesteaded by Thomas Mercier and M.L. Goodrich in 1885, and some of Imperial's original buildings were built on their homesteads.

Mercier and Goodrich provided lots to anyone who would put up a building and help to start the town. Thomas Mercier was also Imperial's first postmaster when the post office was established in December, 1885.

Imperial became the county seat of Chase County and a municipal corporation in January 1888.

More information on the weekend of events, contest rules and entry forms, visit the city of Imperial's website at: www.imperial-ne.com. Click on "quasquicentennial celebration."

