

Small Town Oktoberfest

by Vera Blaine

“Oktoberfest in Leavenworth is the next best thing to being in Munich.” That is the headline for the celebration held every year in a small town in the eastern part of the State of Washington. They celebrate each Friday and Saturday the first three weekends in October with German foods, arts and crafts, activities for the whole family and, of course, “beer”.

For entertainment, musical groups from the U. S. and Germany will perform as well as their hometown ‘Musikkapelle Leavenworth.’ According to Bavarian tradition, there will be “tapping the key” every Saturday.

Leavenworth is an old commercial timber town with a population of less than 2,000 people. It was incorporated in 1906, more than one hundred years ago. In 1962, in an attempt to revitalize, the community transformed itself into a mock Bavarian Village. They remodeled old buildings in authentic Bavarian style complete with flower boxes at windows, and they started their tradition of hosting an annual Oktoberfest.

About eight years ago I was with a tour group to Washington and Oregon and I remember one stop we made was in Leavenworth. It was early September and the town had a charm of its own with quiet streets, small shops and flower boxes at the windows. It didn’t take much imagination to think you were in Germany. I visited the Leavenworth Nutcracker Museum that had a collection of over 5,000 large and small nutcrackers from prehistoric to modern. It had opened in 1995 and was another attraction among many others in town. For a souvenir, I bought a small nutcracker, a replica of a Royal Palace Guard.

As much as I would enjoy going back to Leavenworth, especially if I could participate in their Oktoberfest, I think I will stay here at Windsor Gardens and take part in their celebration on October 5th.