

Mason Jar Jamboree June 25th

By Alexa Zoellner azoellner@dailyunion.com | Posted: Friday, June 17, 2016 9:39 am

The fifth annual Mason Jar Jamboree is coming up fast, with more family activities than ever before.

Slated for Saturday, June 25, the jamboree at Dorothy Carnes County Park-East is taking place several months earlier than in the past.

“We were looking for a time when kids are off of school. It felt like there were a lot of conflicts of interest with kids and families, being that we were hosting it the week after school started,” Kevin Wiesmann, Jefferson County Parks Department operations supervisor, said. “We’re trying to make it more available to the families, which is really what the event has been geared toward.”

A fundraiser for Carnes Park, the Mason Jar Jamboree began as a fundraiser for restoring a log home built in 1850 by early settler Jeremiah Mason. That was completed last year, so the Parks Department is moving on to the barn, which, when completed, will be used as a public space.

This year’s jamboree will kick off at 10 a.m. with a prairie walk guided by Tom Belzer.

“Everyone is invited. There’ll be a little bit of plant ID, a lot of bird identification — Tom always brings extra binoculars — and other stuff,” Wiesmann said. “It’s always a good walk through the park and you’ll get lots of information from Tom. He’s a great naturalist to have out there.”

From 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., there will be activities for children and families led by Robert Schweitzer; Dick Wanie, of the Friends of Rose Lake; Dr. George Clokey, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater; Clare Carlson, of the Friends of Glacial Heritage Area; Dr. Josh Kapfer, a professor from UW-Whitewater; Sue and Bob Volenec, Rock River Coalition; Stuart Helwig, miniature log cabin volunteer; Craig Roost, timber framer; and Julia Ince, local historian.

“Dick Wanie will be doing his ‘Birds of Rose Lake’ presentation,” Wiesmann said. “We’re going to have the Rock River Coalition there and they’re going to have a display about water quality and aquatic plants and insects and some interactive things where the kids can actually pick up and learn more about aquatic insects.”

Schweitzer will demonstrate woodturning and Helwig will be bringing a miniature log home that children can assemble. Roost, who helped with the log home restoration, will hold a log and timber-framing question-and-answer session.

“Josh Kapfer, who’s a professor at the UW-Whitewater, is going to have a little booth about reptiles and amphibians,” Wiesmann said. “George Clokey is going to be there with Clare Carlson

of the Friends of Glacial Heritage Area. They're going to have a booth with plaster casting of animal tracks and some other natural stuff. Clare also has a display about biological controls.”

Ince, a park historian at UW-Whitewater, will give a presentation about the Mason log home and a building tour. The log home tours will be between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m.

A pie and log home memorabilia sale will take place from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Pie, hotdogs, heart-healthy wraps, chips and cold beverages will be available for purchase. Visitors are welcome to bring their own picnic items.

Live music by the Merry Horde, Tricia Alexander, Bill Camplin and the Old Tin Can String Band will take place.

Attending the jamboree is free; donations are welcome.

The history of the Mason Farm is an interesting one. Records show that in 1847, Elias Mason and his second wife, Lois Fiske Mason, followed Elias' older children to Wisconsin from out east. The eldest children were some of the earliest pioneers of Jefferson County.

It actually was Lois who purchased the initial 115 acres for \$402.50 in 1855, one week before the Wisconsin Constitution was amended to allow married women to own property. She and Elias raised their three children — Elias Fiske, Frances Amelia and Jeremiah — on the farm.

The Masons continued to live on the farm until 1870, when they sold it to Christian and Louise (Brandel) Gross. Christian Gross was fatally injured by a tornado that shredded the farm in 1878.

According to Mason family records on Ancestry.com, Elias Mason, the youngest of Abel and Ruth (Hobbs) Mason's 11 children, was born on Nov. 20, 1784, in Sturbridge, Mass., On Dec. 20, 1807, at the age of 23, he married Betsy Coburn, in Sturbridge; together, they had seven children: Deliverance, Asenath, John, Edwy (Edward), Royal Lyon, Jesse and Betsey Catherine.

It was in Stockbridge that the Masons would become acquainted with “yankees” who eventually would settle in what would become Fort Atkinson.

Betsy Mason passed away on Feb. 14, 1829, at 43. At age 45, Elias married Lois Fiske, in New Woodstock, N.Y.

The current Mason family — Mona Mason and her sons, Jeff and Jay, who spearheaded the home restoration — are descendants of Jeremiah.

To attend the Mason Jar Jamboree, enter Carnes Park's east entrance at W6509 Jones Lane. Take Banker Road a mile north from Fort Atkinson; the entrance will be on the left.

For more information on the Mason home or jamboree, contact the Jefferson County Parks Department at (920) 674-7260.