

Canada celebrates Oktoberfest

Over the years Oktoberfest in Canada has become a tradition synonymous with the annual mass migration of thirsty souls from all over the continent, to share in the revelry at Kitchener-Waterloo in Ontario.

But in the wake of this success the idea has spread to other communities across Canada. In the smaller towns and villages the event can be an intimate, cozy, down-home community affair. The scale may not match that of Kitchener-Waterloo but the Oktoberfest spirit can be just as good-natured and pervasive.

Maritime festival

The only Oktoberfest in the Maritimes is the Mahone Bay 'fest, now in its third year. The celebrations last for four nights in this Nova Scotia town of 1,300, just up



Beer halls are a hallmark of Oktoberfests.

the coast from Lunenburg. The first night features a band concert, the second a barbershop quartet competition, and the third night a Rathskeller, or family restaurant, with children's choruses, a children's art competition, and lots of Lunenburg sausage and sauerkraut. There is also an auto rally, obedience trials for dogs, equestrian events and soccer matches followed by an Oktoberfest Ball.

Oakville, Ontario's, version of Oktoberfest is the oldest in the province and this year will mark the twentieth anniversary. It is a one night affair, held in the 1,200-seat "Festhall", and along with the music of the "oompahpah" bands and a Miss Oktoberfest Pageant, the event is enhanced by the aromas of the home cooking of the local German-Canadian Club.

Hamilton with its "Steel City Oktober-



Bands in the street are part of Kitchener-Waterloo's Oktoberfest.

fest", now in its twelfth year, strives to be true to traditional Bavaria. Authentic food, such as pigtails, pork hocks and fried chicken on a stick, are served — all mouthwateringly abundant. Traditional "oompahpah" bands, complete with tubas and trombones, supply the music for Bavarian "slap dancers".

The Niagara Falls Oktoberfest has grown steadily since it began three years ago, and overlaps with the one at Kitchener-Waterloo, less than two hours away by car.

Biggest in Canada

The Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest is still the place to be. Between October 9 and 17 this year 500,000 people are expected to join in the fun, many with hotel reservations made over a year in advance. Luckily the twin cities are a mere 110 kilometres (70 miles) west of the major hotels of Toronto, and even closer to those of such cities as Hamilton and London.

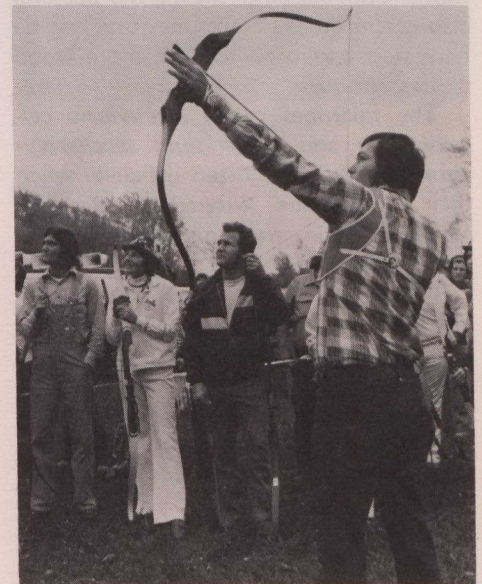
Kitchener-Waterloo organizers have not been content to rest on their laurels. This year they have added an air show to the wide range of events that go into making this the largest Oktoberfest on the continent. The Kitchener Arts Centre now in its second year, will present a special operetta, *The Merry Widow*.

Other events include the Miss Oktoberfest Pageant, the famous, bustling, Kitchener Farmers Market, the Jogfest, the Oktoberfest Parade, a Musikfest, motorcycle races, equestrian events and a great barrel race. All this is on top of the chance to down some tasty brew, feed on the finest German cuisine, shout out a

chorus of "Ein Prosit", and unwind in the atmosphere of "Gemutlichkeit", in one of the almost 30 "Festhallen".

In western Canada one will find both styles of Oktoberfest, big city and small town. In Winnipeg, the event in the city's Convention Centre is designed to appeal to the younger generation, with entertainment provided by German singing star, Uschi Bauer. The Oktoberfest runs for ten nights and is a virtual sell-out every night.

A number of towns in Saskatchewan feature an Oktoberfest, smaller affairs of one of two nights only. Longenberg, Moose Jaw, Kindersley, Cupar and Assiniboia are among them. In Vancouver, the site of the Oktoberfest celebrations is the Commodore Ballroom.



An archer participates in Kitchener-Waterloo festivities.