

Surf, Sand Will Star In Celebration

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MELBOURNE BEACH — Thousands will take to the streets Saturday as Melbourne Beach celebrates 104 years with surfing and sand sculpture contests, an art show and a 10,000-meter race.

The Founder's Day festival, which started in 1983, recognizes the time in 1883 when land was bought in Melbourne Beach from the federal government. The cost was \$1.25 an acre, said town historian Frank Thomas.

About 20 years later, a group of investors turned the small settlement into a company that issued stock for \$5 a share to pay for a pier and railroad. The investors wanted to make the town a popular resort, but flocks of tourists never arrived, Thomas said.

In 1923 the area was incorporated into a town.

To celebrate the event, activities will begin Saturday at 8 a.m. with a 10,000-meter run and a surfing contest and will last until midnight with a street dance on Ocean Avenue near town hall.

Other events include a triathlon, fishing contest for children, sand sculpture contest, arts and crafts show, 440-yard children's run, tennis tournament, trash barrel painting contest, puppet show, music and cloggers.

Len Turner's Orchestra will play at the street dance, which will last from 7 p.m. to midnight.

The county Sea Turtle Preservation Society also will have a dedication ceremony for its new headquarters in the old Ryckman House near town hall. Although renovations are not complete, society members will sell T-shirts, give out information and release into the ocean either a year-old turtle hatchling or an adult turtle that was found injured at Sebastian Inlet this week, said society Director Peter Bandre.

In past years the event has drawn about 6,000 people, said Jim Kelley, town parks and recreation committee chairman.

"This thing brings everyone together," he said. "It's a lot for one day but we usually survive."

All contests, except the surfing contest, have entrance fees. Registration will be taken up to the time of the race.