



# Lancaster Farming celebrates 25 years of service

This week marks the 25th anniversary of the first edition of **LANCASTER FARMING**.

The first issue of the paper appeared November 4, 1955 and opened with letters of congratulations to the paper's first Editor, Ernest J. Neill, from two contemporary secretaries of agriculture: Pennsylvania's Bill Henning, and the redoubtable U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Ezra Taft Benson.

Not without some pains, the first edition came off the press.

The publication was set up to be "a trade paper, devoted to the interests of the farmer, to report his activities, to help others, to keep the farmer informed on what affects him," readers were told in the first issue. The first page of that historic paper appears on page three of this anniversary issue.

The tradition of serving farmers has continued to the present day.

"Emphasis will be on meetings, on sales, on crop and weather conditions, legislation — state and national — markets, marketing, a clear, concise, condensed fact sheet," readers were promised. "There is no pledge to paint only a rosy picture, for the policy will be to report the facts as they fall, to keep the reader informed on what is a factor in his business." The editor's promises have been kept to this day.

The paper was not born suddenly. Weeks of work and conferences were held on the original idea starting in August 1955.

To do any job, men and equipment were needed.

Octoraro Newspapers, which included the **Quarryville Sun** and the **Christiana Public Ledger**, published by Alfred C. Alspach, was to be the home of the new farming publication.

Although those papers were distributed in a farm area, **LANCASTER FARMING** was to be different: it would be devoted solely to agriculture.

Over the months before the first publication a staff was assembled. Ernie Neill, the first editor, arrived. Robert G. Campbell joined the staff as the advertising manager and became publisher in 1958 when he purchased the paper. Wallace Abel of Octoraro Newspapers was Business Manager.

The Tom Godfrey advertising agency art staff designed the "flag," the banner at the top of page one which includes a typical Penn-

sylvania Dutch home, bank barn, trees, and strip farming. It remains unchanged to this day.

The first editions, all 16 pages of them, were printed at the **ELIZABETHTOWN CHRONICLE**. Cost of a year's subscription to the paper was \$2, not too much less than today's price of \$7.50 when inflation is figured in. Charter subscribers were allowed to sign up for a year's worth of issues for one dollar if they were to 'act soon.'

There was a total of 24,000 of those Volume 1 Number 1 issues published. Of those, 22,000 were mailed out to the rural delivery routes of Lancaster and surrounding counties.

The news then was similar to the news today with some exceptions. A farm in Earl Township had sold for \$815 an acre. Corn support price was pegged at \$1.75. Abe Dittenbach banged the gavel on the first All-Pennsylvania Feeder Calf Sale champ at \$43 per cwt. Criticism from packers over the use of DES as a cattle fattening agent was dying out, and County Agricultural Agent Max M. Smith had recently been

named one of the top 10 county agents in the nation.

Smith's co-workers included Harry Sloat, the poultry and vegetable agent; Victor Plastow, the youth and DHIA agent; and Miss Ruth Kimble, the home economist.

Several other stories of the period appear inside this special anniversary supplement.

In 1957 Max Smith started his popular "Now is the Time" column which appeared for a while on page one before moving to the editorial page where it still runs.

In 1958 the paper moved to offices at 53 North Duke Street in Lancaster. In mid-February 1962 the paper's offices were moved again, this time to Lititz.

**LANCASTER FARMING** currently is published at 22 E. Main Street, Lititz. It began to share office space and production facilities with **THE LITITZ RECORD-EXPRESS** when that paper was purchased by Robert G. Campbell in January 1962. Campbell currently is the owner and publisher of both newspapers.

Even into the late 1960s **LANCASTER FARMING** contained a

comparably anemic 16 to 20 pages per issue. It was about that time the paper began to run county DHIA reports and the classified advertising and mailbox market sections began to grow.

Soon **LANCASTER FARMING** had established its reputation among farmers as the place to find any farm-related item which seemed impossible to find. Increases in both page numbers and circulation began to snowball.

In the past decade, the paper has grown to be the largest farm weekly in the nation. Its circulation has expanded to almost 38,000 readers and its thickness has enabled the news staff to include a wider range of up-to-date material of interest to farmers than can be found in any other farm publication in the nation.

**LANCASTER FARMING** has served the Pennsylvania farm community and surrounding states for a quarter century — one full generation.

With good fortune and continued support from the finest farm community in the world, we look forward to serving agriculture for many decades to come.

