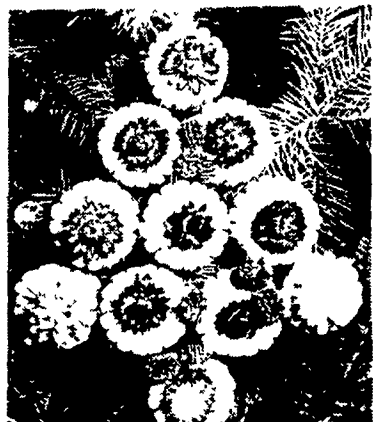




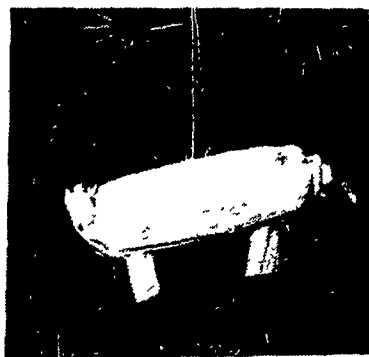
Some people waited in line for nearly one and one-half hours to see the delightful tree bearing the fruits of Pennsylvania's agriculture.



Every spot on this Christmas tree was a special surprise as no one knew what to expect as they circled the tree.



Styled in a tree shape is this "corncoction" of ear corn slices, accented with strawflower and tiny cones.



This Christmas pig made of cornhusk hide and cob body was the contribution of Dana Danfelt, Saltillo, Huntingdon County.



This little sheep peeping out through the branches was from a ball of lamb's wool completed with a glued-on face and a rhinestone studded bow.



The tree at the Thornburgh home this year stands as a statue dedicated to Pennsylvania's agriculture.

Farm products decorate Governor's Christmas tree

BY JOYCE BUPP
Staff Correspondent

Baler twine. Corn husks. Milkweed pods, thistle heads, corn cobs.

Items you might find on any Pennsylvania family farm.

But in the Governor's mansion? Indeed, all those items - and more - have found a home on one of the most delightful, imaginative, Christmas trees to ever grace the home of the state's first family.

Actually, it was first lady Ginny Thornburgh's idea.

"I got the idea in bed one night last summer," explained Mrs. Thornburgh. "It just seemed like it would be fun to have a Christmas tree decorated with Pennsylvania farm products. So I called Trish Hallowell and asked if she'd help."

So to Trish Hallowell, wife of

state Secretary of Agriculture Penrose Hallowell, fell the task last week of the actual decorating of the 13-foot shapely Douglas fir from York County's Strathmeyer Forests.

With the aid of a few extra sets of tree-trimming hands from the Ag Department, Trish Hallowell spent an entire day unpacking and hanging the hundreds of ornaments. There were 11 large plastic bags filled with boxes of farm product ornaments, plus several dozen others that had been delivered directly to the Front Street mansion.

The assortment of hand-crafted ornaments had come in response to a call sent out in early Fall to several of the state's major agriculture organizations. Youth, up to age 18, were invited to design

ornaments of Pennsylvania farm products for use on the 1981 first family's Christmas tree.

Response was enthusiastic as ornaments poured in from every county in the state. Organizations represented included the 4-H, Future Farmers of America, Future Homemakers of America, Pennsylvania Farmers Association, Grange, and Farmers Union.

Last Sunday afternoon, over 600 ag guests, including rural youth who created the ornaments, their parents, and advisors, attended a reception celebrating the official lighting of the tree in the stately home of Governor and Mrs. Thornburgh.

Although the Governor was unable to take part due to illness, the ag guests were received by Mrs. Thornburgh, Secretary of Agriculture Penrose Hallowell and Mrs. Hallowell.

After being greeted in the reception line, wide-eyed youngsters being honored encircled the decorated tree, searching out their own creations, and enjoyed an elegant snack buffet of fruits, cheese, crackers, vegetable nibblers with dips, candies and punch, served at the candlelit state dining room table.

From the Somerset County-made star of straw, baler twine and pine cone center that topped the tree, to a large dipper gourd ornamented with pine cones hanging from one of the bottommost branches, the collection was a tribute to the creativity of farm youth and to Pennsylvania's farm segment.

Encircling the tree was a 25-foot string of dainty hemlock cones, the "fruit" of Pennsylvania's state tree. Chester County youth had collaborated to string the cones as part of their contribution to the natural ornament tree.

"Oh mommy, this one's beautiful," one four-year-old observer, in obvious enjoyment of the tree and its original ornaments, was overheard to say. That description could have applied to every single creation.

Corn was a favorite raw material ornament.

Angels of corn husk and a husk-covered cob styled into a pig with a

stem-end snout and husk ears hung from the tree.

Twigs inserted into another piece of cob formed the legs of a horse, and inch-thick cross sections of an ear of corn were wired together in a tree shape, ornamented with colorful strawflowers.

Miniature wreaths of a variety of materials filled the fragrant boughs of the Douglas fir. Herbs, grape stems, woven wheat and braided baler twine, even what appeared to be pressed and shaped milkweed fluff, or maybe angora rabbit hair, formed the small circle ornaments, colorful with ribbons, tiny bows and dried flowers.

Milkweed pods also saw heavy use, with some forming angel wings, others filled with various decorated inserts, and five glued together in a starburst poinsettia shape.

Teasel, the prickly porcupine-like heads of a plant of the thistle family, were transformed into heads of tiny mice, dressed in colorful calico gowns.

Decorated with various seeds, eggs hung from the branches, or had been crushed into bits to ornament snowmen and angels.

Then there were some even more unusual ideas.

A shawdowbox of real honeycomb, with strawflowers centered on it, added a suggestion of holiday sweets.

Luzerne County's 4-H Clovers Club sent a hand carved white-tail deer, designed by Erin Asolfi. Not only had Erin used native wood for carving the diminutive buck, but added tiny eyes of Pennsylvania coal as well.

The three children of dairy farmers Mr. and Mrs. Gideon Yoder, Mifflin County, were among the families of ornament makers. Diane, age 8, loves the farm cats, and styled a cat in a basket from cornhusk. Twins Caryn and Daryn also shaped cornhusk, with Caryn making an angel, and Daryn creating a horse with - what else - a tail of real cow hair.

While guests mingled through the state area of the beautiful mansion, soft notes of chamber music added a festive holiday touch.

Quietly playing in the background throughout the reception were musicians David Hildebrand and Ginger Houpt, of Annapolis, Maryland. Both are private music teachers as well as students at Dickinson College, and entertain professionally with special emphasis on appearances at historic sites and museums.

Caught in a moment of spontaneous entertainment with the duo was Heather Lawson, 8, of Curryville, in Blair County. As the musicians played the familiar notes of the "Twelve Days of Christmas," Heather delighted those in the immediate area of the music with hand motions to the song that she had learned in her elementary school. She was also an ornament contributor, with eggshell creations among those on the tree.

When the last of the several hundred had gone through the receiving line, Mrs. Thornburgh and the Hallowells had made their way to the tree, amidst a chorus of

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Posing by the fully-decorated tree are Susan Hallowell; Ginny Thornburgh, originator of the idea; Penrose Hallowell; and Trish Hallowell, decorator of the tree.

Homestead Notes