

Farm Show has a long history

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Call it the greatest exposition of its kind in the world or one of the largest cultural and entertainment events to be found. Regardless of how you slice it, the Pennsylvania Farm Show is part of our heritage — the Pride of Pennsylvania. To be certain, the 69th Farm Show exemplifies the progress of Pennsylvania's number one industry.

While the Farm Show makes no claims to revolutionizing Pennsylvania agriculture single-handedly, there can be no doubt that the annual expo serves as a valuable incentive to improving agriculture, providing a testing ground for the effectiveness of research, experimentation and education in producing higher quality crops and livestock. Like the industry, the Farm Show has experienced many growing pains during its 68-year history.

Its infancy goes back to the days of Penn's Woods and founder William Penn, who sought to instill the importance of establishing a strong agricultural program in the minds of the early settlers. That effort resulted in the first Philadelphia Fair in 1686, featuring displays of food products.

Agricultural shows gained an additional boost with the creation of the Philadelphia Society for Promoting Agriculture in 1785. Through the combined efforts of that group and farmers throughout the state, the first State Fair was held in Paoli, Chester County, in 1823.

The educational value of such expos and the enthusiasm associated with them spread like wildfire. The idea of a more extensive State Fair to promote all agricultural endeavors caught on with the mechanization on Pennsylvania farms. To keep pace with the rapid succession of new ideas and inventions, representatives from 50 counties banded together to form the Pennsylvania State Agricultural Society in 1851 and conducted the first State Fair that year in Harrisburg only a short distance from the present Farm Show Complex. Paid admissions were close to 20,000 with total receipts of \$5,600.

In subsequent years, State Fairs were held in different cities, allowing new groups of farmers and the general public to view the exhibits. The establishment of Penn State University in 1855 and the State Board of Agriculture in 1876 helped expand the educational role of those fairs.

Temporary abandonment of the state fair idea in 1899 led agricultural organizations to boost an annual winter farm show idea in 1907, when they gathered for their January meetings in the old Executive Building near the Capitol. There was a small show for milk, a modest show for butter, and a big show for corn. A milking machine was demonstrated, as dairy supply and equipment manufacturers provided exhibits.

Livestock and horticulture groups continued to push for an annual Pennsylvania State Fair until 1916 when Charles Patton,

then State Secretary of Agriculture, invited agricultural leaders to meet with him in Lancaster. At that meeting the Farm Show was born.

Farmers weren't interested in a midway type of fair, but one geared specifically toward education, complete with exhibits and facilities to host their meetings. Their objective has held true to this day. The original Farm Show Committee set January as the best month suited for the show. Farmers at that time are looking to buy farm equipment, seed, fertilizer and other supplies for the coming season.

The first Farm Show held in 1917 was called the Pennsylvania Corn, Fruit, Vegetable, Dairy Products and Wool Show, and featured educational displays and meetings for the various groups. It was held in the Emerson Brantingham Building at Tenth & Market Streets in Harrisburg and attracted about 5,000 farm and city residents and featured \$735 in premiums to exhibitors. By comparison, the 1985 Farm Show offers \$155,167 in premiums and is expected to attract over half a million visitors.

From its beginning, the Farm Show has recognized the importance of our farm youth, and has served as an outstanding medium for both farm and urban youth who flock to the show by the thousands. The first show had just 40 school boys competing in corn and potato judging. In 1923 a potato baking demonstration was staged by 4-H club members to boast the quality of Pennsylvania spuds. These buttered baked potatoes were sold at five cents each and became very popular. The Pennsylvania Potato Growers Association took over the sale in 1925 and since then the baked potato is a hallmark at the show.

In 1926 the first baby beef entries were brought to the growing exposition. The grand champion animal, a 1,066-pound steer, brought 25 cents a pound at auction for a total of \$266.50. The 1983 grand champion steer show by Annette Walter of Airville, York County, went for a record shattering price of \$12 a pound for a total of \$15,060! The 4-H livestock exhibits from all corners of the commonwealth continue to be one of the more popular features at the Farm Show.

By 1928 the attendance had swelled to an estimated 50,000, forcing great crowds to stand for hours outside the main exhibit building, often in rain and snow, waiting to see the exhibits. These conditions prompted expanded facilities. Officials broke ground in 1928 for construction of the Main Farm Show Building. The cost of the structure and furnishings was about \$1.5 million. The building was dedicated on Jan. 19, 1931, and the opening day of the 15th Farm Show. The event was officially named the Pennsylvania Farm Show in 1931.

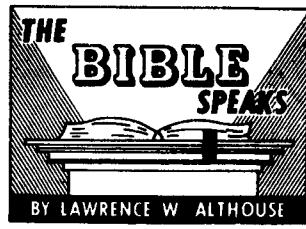
With the new building came even greater enthusiasm. The number of farm products doubled. By 1935 the competitive exhibits numbered 10,000 and the Future Farmers of

America Band made its debut, as did the Route 22 Bypass leading to the complex. With the increased activity, it became apparent that the small arena was not of sufficient size to do justice. Original plans for a State Fair Building in the 1920's included a coliseum-like structure. So the large arena, which added, 75,000 square feet of floor space and 7,639 permanent seats was constructed. It was dedicated at the 23rd Farm Show in 1939, and features a 120'x340' arena floor with no view-obstructing pillars. The immense roof is supported by eight two-hinged rigid frames or arches, each 235 feet long, hauled at that time as "the largest of their kind."

Programming of events in the huge structure included the first in a series of Pennsylvania State Police Mounted Exhibitions, horse pulling contests, farm youth demonstrations and enlarged livestock competitions. The 1941 expo had the largest number of competitive farm products ever known: 11,655. It was a most fitting salute to the Farm Show's Silver Anniversary.

The 1942 show was the last exhibition until 1947. The complex was used by the United States War Department to train civilian personnel to repair, assemble and recondition airplane motors for the war effort. However, meetings continued to be held by the agricultural organizations to mobilize production efforts to feed the nation's fighting men. When the building was returned to the Farm Show Commission after the war, a steel warehouse had been added. This structure, rebuilt in the late 1970's, now houses the beef

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THE SIGNS IN YOUR LIFE January 6, 1985

Background Scripture:
John 4

Devotional Reading:
John 4:5-24

"Why do you believe in Jesus Christ?"

This was a question which I addressed to a church school class some time ago. I made it clear that this was not intended as a rhetorical question, but one to which I was seeking answers from as many in the class as would be willing to share them. "Take your time before you answer," I told them. "I want to know why YOU believe in Jesus Christ."

They took their time, but, after someone got the ball rolling with her answer, others followed until many, though not all, of the people had made a response.

THE TESTIMONY

Most of the people in the class cited the influence of their parents, some other key family member, a clergyman, a church school teacher, and even a concerned congregation. No one said, "I believe in Jesus Christ because I have experienced him in my own life." (That doesn't mean they had not, but only that they did not indicate such an experience.)

My experience with the class is probably not all that atypical of many Christian groups. Many Christians can cite the significant influence of a person or persons who have motivated them to count

themselves as followers of Jesus Christ. At this level, at least, their faith is basically a second-hand one.

There is nothing wrong with a Christian commitment that rests in part on someone else's experience of Christ. The Bible is filled with this kind of example. Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar is in point. After her brief, but amazing discourse with Jesus at the well, the woman went back to her village to tell everyone of this remarkable man who seemed to know everything she had ever done. John tells us, "Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony" (4:39).

HEARD FOR OURSELVES

Yet, although another's experience of Christ in their life is a fine place to begin as a Christian, it is certainly no place to end. We can live off a second-hand religious experience for only so long. The time comes when, instead of hearing others talk about the Christ they have experienced, we need to draw our inspiration from the Christ in our own lives.

At the invitation of the woman's Samaritan neighbors, Jesus remained two more days and spoke to the people. At last, John tells us, "They said to the woman, 'It is no longer because of your words that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world'" (4:42).

What about you? Why do you believe in Jesus Christ? Is your belief based upon someone's else's testimony or your own experience?

MYSTICAL & SPIRITUAL IBERIA, a 23-day tour of Spain and Portugal will be conducted by Mr. Althouse, March 9-31. For information, write him at 4412 Shenandoah Avenue, Dallas, TX 75205.

NOW IS THE TIME

By Jay Irwin

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To Attend Farm Show Events

Time has a way of creeping up on us, and here it is... nearly Farm Show time. The Farm Show will open again this year on Sunday, Jan. 13 and close on Friday, Jan. 18. The theme for the exhibition is Agriculture - The Pride of Pennsylvania. Well, we are proud of our agriculture because of the hard work of our family-operated farms. And here is an opportunity for our farmers to show the consuming public the high-quality products raised on our farms today.

Active farmers should recognize the many educational meetings and banquets that are held during the week. Many of these are state-wide organizations and should have economic benefits to the producer.

To Sharpen Management
As we look ahead to 1985, it is

difficult to realize just what major problems will confront the average farmer. However, it is evident that profits will be more difficult to realize and some very good management will be needed to come out in the black. Today's farmer must be a better businessman than his forefathers. A farmer must be able to handle labor, money, equipment and keep up-to-date on all regulations and cultural practices. A farmer must be able to plan ahead and to be organized with all the responsibilities. A farmer should practice good public relations with the neighbors and respect the rights of others. Good management is just as important in farming as it is in any other industry or business. Work at it and it will pay dividends.

To Separate New Animals

The addition of a new animal to

the herd or flock, is a very common practice. However, there is always the chance of bringing new infections into the herd. Too many diseases and problems have been brought by the owner. At this time of year and in this part of the state, the Pa. Farm Show provides an opportunity for showing animals and the purchase of new ones. To those who are exhibiting animals, and to those who might buy a bred gilt or other animals, I'd say be sure to separate these animals from the rest of the herd or flock for at least 30 days. The other alternative is to treat all animals in the herd or flock for the same infections as the new animals have received. Sanitation and separation are very important items in good health programs.

To Transfer Silage

Livestock and dairy producers who have silage stored in temporary structures might be planning to move this feed into upright silos in the next month or so. Many producers use the temporary storage until some of the material is fed out of the upright silo. By transferring into the upright silo, mechanical feeders can be used. The objective is to move the silage in cold months -- January and February preferably. When transferring during warm weather (above 50°F.) there is danger of more heating of the silage. No preservative should be needed. The faster the material can be moved into the upright silo, the better it will settle and remove the air.

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