

Good-Bye!

Landmark Sales Barn Saga Ends

BY SALLY BAIR

Lancaster Co. Correspondent

LANCASTER — This week marked the end of an era when papers were signed for the final sale of the Guernsey Sales Pavilion at the intersection of Routes 30 and 896 to Quality Centers of Orlando, Florida. Removal of the Lancaster County landmark could begin next week so that construction can get underway for the proposed shopping center which will occupy the site by next Spring.

Pennsylvania Guernsey Association officials said the sale price of the property, which they purchased 40 years ago, was nearly \$1 million, and it is hoped that the well-known Guernsey cow which symbolized the Barn and the name "Guernsey" will remain as part of the proposed commercial development. The Dairy Queen restaurant, originally built by the Guernsey Association, will remain open.

The final chapter in the saga of the Guernsey barn began 32 months ago according to Business Manager Lee Yost, and was written Tuesday after about 70 to 80 meetings on the future of the building. Guernsey Association President Wilmer Campbell said, "We've had all kinds of buyers." However, various technicalities delayed the final signing until this week.

The decision to sell was not made lightly, but changes in the economy, in the Guernsey breed and in the location itself dictated a different reality for Guernsey breeders. Campbell said, "This was one of the hardest decisions I've ever had to make." Campbell dispersed his first herd of Guernseys at the Barn four years after it was completed, and re-built his herd partly with cows purchased there. He says, "I've probably attended 100 sales there. I've sold quite a few animals there and bought quite a few." Campbell has a herd of Guernsey at Halifax, Dauphin County.

Nevertheless, with increasing costs of taxes, water, sewer and energy, the Guernsey Barn has not been profitable for the Association for quite a few years. "Til we paid all the expenses, we were losing money," Campbell said.

Yost concurred, "It was a matter that financial we couldn't operate the Barn anymore. There was no insulation and the building was mostly windows and cement. It was losing money every year."

Ruth Ann John, assistant business manager for the Association said increased costs and decreased activity both played a part in the decision. She said there was a need for major

renovations aimed at making the building more energy efficient.

Guernsey sales, the purpose for which the Barn was originally built, have decreased to about four per year, compared with two to three activities a month when the barn was first built.

William Juzi, former manager of the Guernsey Association, recalls that there was a strong need for the building at the time it was built in 1947. The Association had been holding sales at the Egg Auction building in Coatesville, and that building was not only not for sale, it was pretty much out of the center of the action.

On the other hand, the land at the intersection of Route 30 and Route 896 seemed ideal. John Bleiholder, a fieldman of the Association at that time, recalls, "When we built it, it sat in the middle of hayfields."

"Progress" came to Lancaster County, however, and the Barn is now at one of the most heavily traveled roads in the county. Campbell says, "It's in the middle of a metropolis." Noah Graybill, whose father owned the farm from which the land was purchased recalls that the association paid \$6,000 for six acres.

Despite evidence that there was a need for the building because of the prosperous and growing Guernsey industry, there was some opposition Juzi recalls. "There was a difference of opinion about how much to spend."

He adds, "There was no argument once it got underway. The place was very much in demand. We had to schedule sales way a head of time and it was pretty hard to accommodate everybody who wanted to use it."

Both he and Bleiholder recall vividly the dedication of the Barn, with its first sale. The date was in November, and there was heavy rain. Of course there was no paved area as yet, though Juzi recalls ordering many truckloads of stone to allow the trucks to get close to the barn to unload the sale cattle. Nevertheless, it was very muddy and many sale visitors parked on the side road to escape being stuck in the parking area. They subsequently got tickets from the local police Juzi says with a laugh, "They were all mad at me. I said I never told them to pack on the road."

Bleiholder added, "Almost everybody got stuck. There was a lot of excitement." It was a day to be remembered."

Juzi also recalled that the Association "never borrowed a penny" to pay for the building. Yost pointed out, "It was Golden Guernsey milk royalties that



Signs of the past and future. The sale of the Guernsey Sale Barn in Lancaster was completed this week. Next week the landmark barn and sign will be demolished in preparation of the spring 1987 construction of an outlet facility.

helped build the barn. Because of the trademark, the Association received a royalty on every quart of milk that was sold."

Yost adds that herds producing Golden Guernsey milk were under strict supervision, with the Association doing their own inspections. He said, "Pennsylvania was the biggest producer of Golden Guernsey milk." The cholesterol publicity helped spell the demise of Golden Guernsey milk, and the final nail was put in its coffin with the bankruptcy of Abbott's dairy, the last dairy of any size offering Golden Guernsey milk.

Bleiholder noted that consignors to the first sale donated the money their animals brought, or half the cost their animals brought. Some simply gave donations. In any case, the money materialized for the Barn.

Juzi says building the barn was "the best investment we ever could have made." Bleiholder concurs, "It made good sense to do something. We used to have two to three sales a month. There was some opposition and some people thought we were wasting a lot of money to build in the middle of a hayfield."

Campbell recalls, "It was a very debated question at the time. There were those who thought we shouldn't build it, but my hat's off to those who made it happen. It was the best decision they ever made in their lives and they deserve the credit."

Bleiholder contends that there was no other place like it, adding, "There isn't to this day." He said hundreds of sales were held there over the years, including "special" Guernsey sales, royal sales, state sales and dispersals. Backus Brothers also held many Garden Spot sales over the years. Bleiholder says, "It was a service to the dairy industry."

Yost agrees, "I worked with the sales business quite a bit, and it was a top facility. There was no other place to go with the kind of barn we had, where cattle could be washed inside, and there was an arena to show in. We were the only Guernsey Association to have a sales pavilion."

In the early days, Juzi remembers worrying about whether the consignments would bring enough money. "I was afraid if they didn't, people wouldn't bring more cattle."

He sought consignments from neighboring states as well as Pennsylvania and added, "The prices were satisfactory because they would come back with more." Bleiholder adds, "People could buy and sell with confidence."

Campbell noted, "We had a good reputation with our consignment sales. We usually had about 50 head in each sale held once a month. About 12 years ago we cut back to about four or five sales a year and recently we had just three or four."

He noted that the number of Guernsey herds in Pennsylvania has decreased by two-thirds since the busy days of the Guernsey Barn, also cutting into the economics of hosting the sales.

B. Snavely Garber, a well-known Guernsey breeder from Willow Street, says there was an element of prestige felt by those who sold cattle at the barn. He said, "We felt smart selling there. It was a pleasure to be able to sell cows in comfortable surroundings, instead of in a windy barn. Here, we had prestige." He remarked that there were more Guernsey herds than Holstein herds in the county at that time.

Garber also credited Bill Frew, owner of Paradise Seed Company and a Guernsey breeder, with being coordinator of the project. "He helped the farmers get together," Garber said.

Richard Maule, Quarryville, said he felt building the facility was a good idea, and added, "I bought a lot of cows there. I always tried to do the best to use good judgement in buying cows." He

noted that the good animals could be counted on to bring good money.

Auctioneer for the sales was Walter Dupes, who continued to sell there until his retirement.

Tom Groff, Lancaster, was caretaker of the Barn for 14 years until a heart attack in 1980 forced him to become less active. Groff shares the sense of loss that many people express about the sale. "It's sort of a shame that the building is not staying. It is a landmark. It was the only building of its size in Lancaster County. A motor vehicle could drive into it."

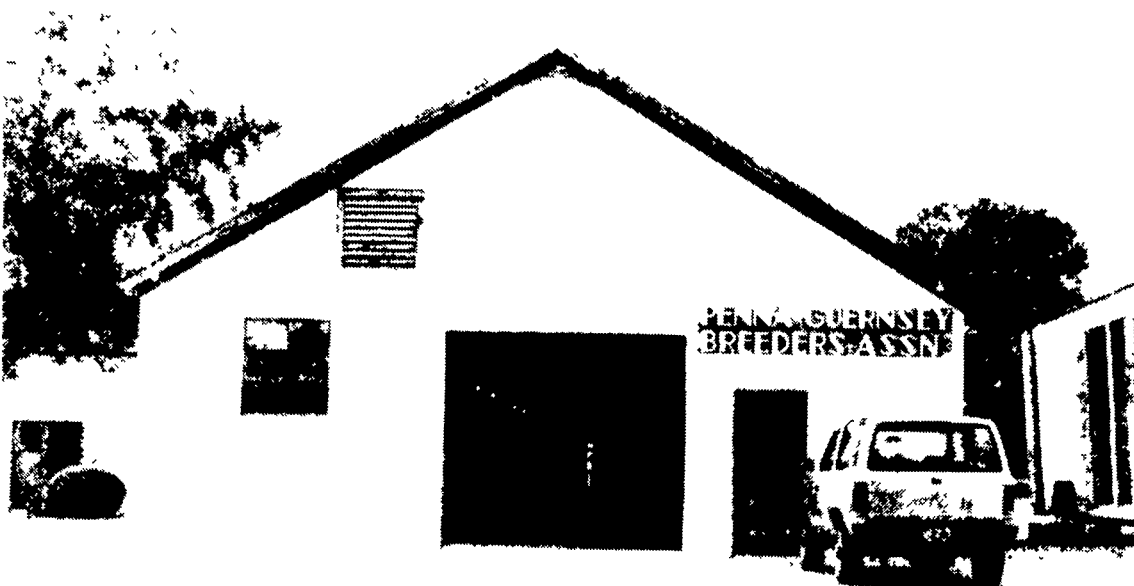
Groff recalls that the Barn played host to everything from wedding receptions to antique shows to the cow sales. The busiest year experienced by the Barn was when it was once used 312 days of the year!

One of the side benefits of the sales was the education of tourists who drove through that part of Lancaster County in increasing numbers. Groff remembers that when the barn was open on summer evenings there were frequently a lot of tourists watching the milking process. It is these same tourists who will be customers for the proposed 30-store outlet center.

Groff said that in his 14 years he only remembers having one cow which he considered dangerous, and he and the other barn workers stayed away from her. After she kicked at him with both hind feet, he also suggested that she not be led into the sale ring, and she wasn't. He says with a laugh, "But that was the only animal in the whole 14 years."

And so, the landmark will go. Many Guernsey breeders will mourn its passing; indeed dairymen everywhere will miss the Barn, and will probably continue to use it as a reference point for directions. But Yost says succinctly, "You have to face reality."

The reality is that today's economy will not support a costly landmark. The landmark must be cherished in hearts and minds for its positive contribution to the Guernsey breed over its nearly 40 year history.



One last look at the facility before the lights in the barn go out for the final time.

