

Farm Show History Remembered

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Substantial road improvements were made around the Complex in 1974, alleviating traffic nightmares, and the Commission voted to charge \$1 per car for parking in 1975. In 1976, the Commission developed a ten-acre tract for parking it purchased earlier from the city.

The legislature approved a budget of \$8.7 million to install T sprinkler system, elevator, fire alarm system, lighting system, create fire corridors, and remove wooden display stands, and walls. It included construction of a new 66,000 square foot cattle building to replace the Army Building, replacement of 900 doors considered fire hazards, and renovations on the second floor over the Main Exhibit Hall.

Partitioning caused by the construction of fire corridors led officials to start referring to the different areas as named buildings.

In 1980, the popular Sheep to Shawl Contest was added to the Farm Show competition, where teams shear a sheep, spin the wool, and weave a beautiful shawl in about two hours. Another major change came during the 1980 show, when it opened to the general public on Sunday, a day previously reserved for the Governor's preview and press tour.

With the construction of the fire corridors, much valuable exhibit space was lost, so the old concept of a new structure between the Large Arena and East Building was revived. Plans were drawn up and state funding sought for a 72,000 square foot structure. Over 300 exhibitors still remained on a waiting list for Farm Show Week.

A Family Show

Many changes were made during the 1989 show, including the introduction of Family Fun Day and the Blue Ribbon Apple Pie Contest. The recognition of a Supreme Dairy Cow was reinstated, worth \$1,000 to the winner. The success of this led the commission to approve similar awards for horses, beef cattle, swine and labs in 1990. The first live drawing of the Pennsylvania daily Lottery was held in the Large Arena.

Many other features were added to the Farm Show in 1990. The Department of Agriculture unveiled a new logo, "Pennsylvania Agriculture - Quality...From Our Home to Yours." To recognize the great contributions made by our food processing industry to agriculture, the Pennsylvania

Food Pantry was created to show case their products. Culinary students from the Harrisburg Area Community College and Indiana University of Pennsylvania made their debut with daily cooking demonstrations featuring Pennsylvania products, and are now regular participants in the Farm Show.

Also during 1990, the Commission added rabbits to the judging program and approved a split sheep show to give more exhibitors an opportunity to participate. Several major capital projects were announced totaling \$8 million, including \$3.2 million for a two-story, 82,000 square foot building, essentially the same project approved in 1957.

One of the greatest changes ever made at the Farm Show, according to most visitors, is the Pennsylvania Food Court. All of the famous commodity food booths are conveniently located in the East Building, occupying 27,000 square feet.

This 1991 change permitted the associations to expand their sales areas and add new products.

Several new associations were able to participate for the first time. Congestion was relieved in the Main Building, and hungry visitors now have ample space to eat their favorite Pennsylvania foods.

Farm Show history was also made in 1992 when the show opened to the public on Saturday to allow more families to attend and participate in the show.

The Pennsylvania High School Rodeo Association is taking up where the State Police Rodeo left off. This young group puts on two separate performances on opening day and there isn't an empty seat in the house.

Occupancy permits were secured in time for the Northeast Building to be dedicated and used during the 1993 Farm Show. Many new exhibits can be found at the Pennsylvania Farm Show, with horticulture and family living dominating the themes on the second floor of the Northeast Building. Educational and entertaining demonstrations highlight activities in the Family Corner, along with farm and home competition and educational displays.

The Pennsylvania Food market, which made its debut when the Family Corner opened, returns again this year in the Main Lobby area for visitors to sample Pennsylvania foods and purchase food items directly from the companies.

A special committee was appointed in 1990 to improve the Junior Livestock Sale and attract more buyers. The Junior Livestock Auction now takes bids for the animal itself, rather than a price per pound method used in the past. The junior livestock sales, which often generated college money for the FFA and 4-H members, continue to attract exhibitors from all corners of the Commonwealth.

A Farm Show Scholarship program unveiled in 1993 has awarded checks to 45 students already, and 16 more young exhibitors will receive scholarships this year prior to the start of Thursday's Junior Livestock Sale.

The economic impact of the Farm Show and the Farm Show Complex is considerable. Each year the show generates more than \$500,000 in revenue, such as rental fees, parking fees and commissions.

A study conducted by Penn State during 1990 found the Farm Show to generate almost \$8 million worth of direct and indirect spending.

While the Farm Show Complex still receives an annual legislative appropriation, it is becoming increasingly self-sufficient. The Farm Show staff books about 150 events a year in the facility to offset the operating costs and stimulate economic activity.

Improvements in the Large Arena - including a new roof, new lighting system, sound system and heating system - make all of the entertainment features more enjoyable for visitors. It also played a major role in attracting a professional soccer team to the facility, the Harrisburg Heat.


Sunday's hours were expanded for the 1996 show, only to be overshadowed by the worst January storm ever to hit Harrisburg. The January 7-8 blizzard led to a state of emergency in 47 counties as parts of Pennsylvania were buried under two to three feet of snow.

Since many of the livestock exhibitors were already at the Farm Show Complex, dormitories over the Large Arena were opened for them and judging competition continued throughout the week but many of the special events and meetings were cancelled.

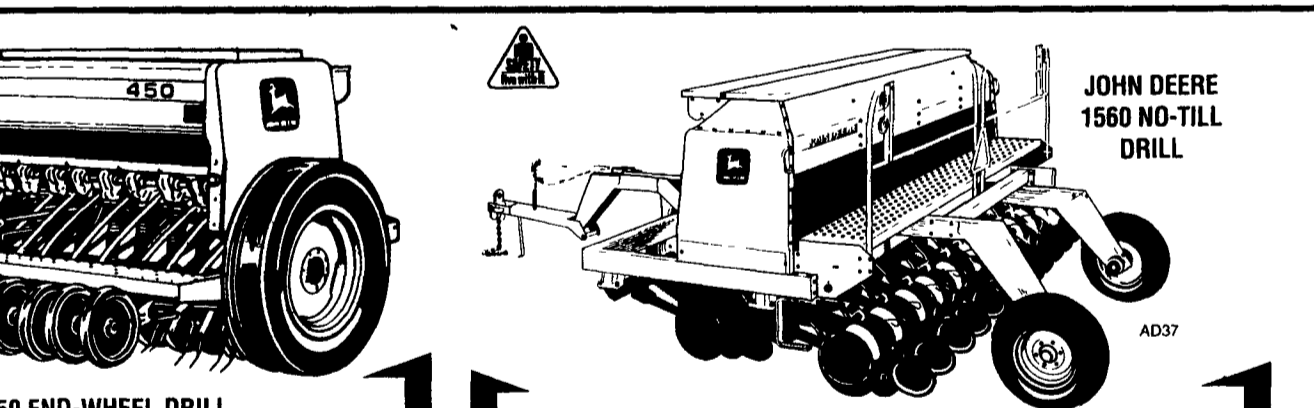
Public Cable Network (PCN), a public service of Pennsylvania cable television companies, broadcast 61 hours of coverage in 1997, the most extensive television coverage ever given to the show.

The coverage was applauded by snow bound cable subscribers, as the Blizzard of 1996 prevented many state residents and competitors from attending. PCN plans round the clock coverage for the 2000 show, featuring live and taped broadcasts.

Since 1998, visitors to the Pennsylvania Farm Show should have an easier time finding their favorite activity. The huge complex was repainted, with each building now identified by color as well as geographic location.



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