

Butter Sculpture Celebrates 10th Anniversary At Pa. Farm Show

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— It was only fitting that the first butter sculpture unveiled in 1991 featured one of Pennsylvania's earliest pioneers, Ben Franklin.

Franklin used his ingenuity and imagination to invent many modern conveniences that we now take for granted. The Pennsylvania Farm Show and regional dairy promotion groups used that same ingenuity to create a unique way to pay tribute to Pennsylvania's largest agriculture industry while drawing thousands of visitors, along with the media, to the Farm Show each year.

The 2000 Farm Show marks the tenth anniversary of the butter sculpture. It has been a highlight for the thousands who attend each year.

The first butter sculpture was unveiled in conjunction with the 75th anniversary of the Pennsylvania Farm Show.

According to William L. Piper, Deputy Director of the Farm Show since 1983, the butter sculpture was placed in the McClay Street lobby to draw people through the Main Exhibit Building.

"We needed something in that lobby as a focal point because of other changes we made that year, including moving the food into a new food court area. We wanted to get people to come through the main floor and equipment vendors to see the butter sculpture."

Using outside vendors to provide the refrigeration equipment and building materials, Farm Show employees designed and constructed the octagon-shaped case that still houses the butter sculpture today.

"We are pretty proud of that case and the sculptures it has featured over the years. It's been quite successful."

The butter sculpture has always been a joint venture between the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and Pennsylvania's dairy farmers. While the Farm Show contributes the case, dairy farmer-funded promotion groups sponsor the artist who creates the sculpture and work with local media to generate coverage.

Currently groups sponsoring the sculpture include the American Dairy Association/Dairy Council Middle Atlantic (ADA/DC Middle Atlantic), the Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Program (PDPP), and the American Dairy Association & Dairy Council Mid East (ADADC Mid East).

In the beginning, area butter manufacturers rotated the responsibility of donating the butter. However, Land O'Lakes manufacturing plant in Carlisle has donated the butter for the last seven years.

Their contribution has totaled to more than 4,000 pounds over the years. Leftover butter is donated to charity each year.

According to Cindy Weimer, industry relations manager for ADADC Mid East, the promotion groups first got together in early 1990 to plan the butter sculpture. "Both the New York and Ohio State Fairs had butter sculptures, and we thought it should be a part of the Pennsylvania Farm Show — something that would be a highlight for many years to come."

Both Governor Bob Casey and Secretary of Agriculture Boyd Wolf unveiled the first butter sculpture ten years ago, which drew media from all over Pennsylvania. The press conference held the Thursday before each Farm Show still draws significant numbers. Last year the butter sculpture garnered coverage from eleven television stations, including a station in Miami, Fl., and another in Houston, Tx.

This year's sculpture pays tribute to the 115 county fairs found scattered throughout Pennsylvania. The sculpture created by five-year veteran Ed Shank features a carousel with two children riding horses, centered between a key-stone and the shape of Pennsylvania.

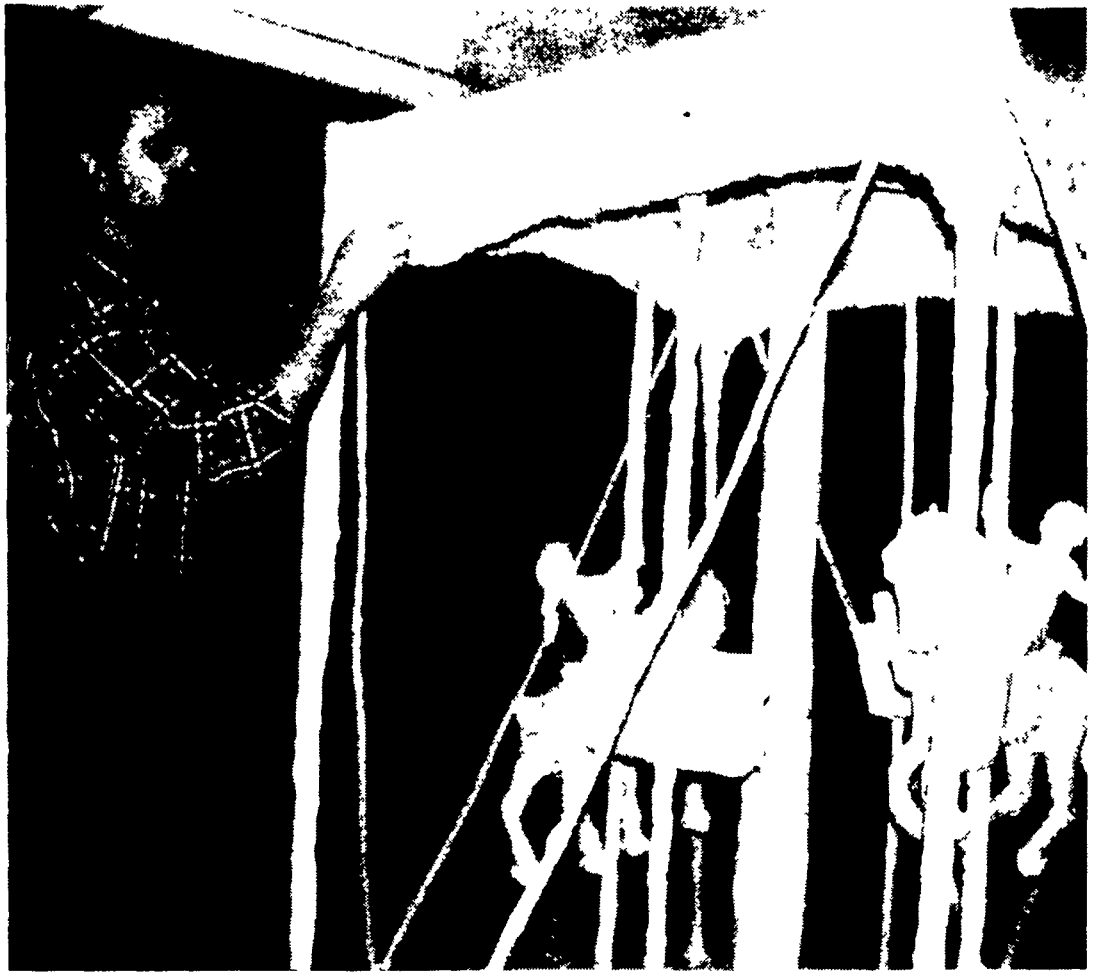
According to Shank, the sculpture is both gratifying and difficult to create. "When I first started working on the butter sculpture back in 1996, many of my colleagues thought the idea seemed a little corny. But after they saw it, they realized how much harder it is to create a sculpture out of butter than out of marble or clay."

Shank has had to hone his butter sculpting skills over the years. "Butter doesn't remain consistent. It starts out really hard and then softens in your hands. Once an area gets too soft, you have to move to another area on the sculpture. It's really difficult for an artist to stop and come back to an area later."

Still the fame that Shank has received from the butter sculpture is phenomenal. "I can go just about anywhere in Pennsylvania, and people know the butter sculpture. More people seem to recognize my creations done in butter than any of the bronze or marbels I've sculpted."

Shank's favorite butter sculpture to create was "Miss Commonwealth," who was featured last year. "I had to research the artist who sculpted the original Miss Commonwealth and actually went on top of the Capitol building to see the sculpture."

Still Shank admits that the sculpture for which he has received the most compliments was the Amish boy pulling a calf,



Sculpting butter is more difficult than other mediums, according to five-year veteran butter sculptor Ed Shank from Middletown. Shank puts his finishing touches on this year's sculpture of a carousel.

unveiled in 1997. "Last year I was amazed when a couple from Erie came up to me and told me they took a six hour trip each year just to see the Farm Show butter sculpture."

Over the years, the butter sculpture has featured various images resonant with the agriculture industry, the Commonwealth, and the nation. One of the most famous sculptures came in 1995. To mark the 50th anniversary of D-Day, the Farm Show unveiled a "Salute to World War II" carved in butter.

1991 featured then-Pennsylvania Dairy Princess Robin Wilbur with then-4-Her and current Clinton County Dairy Princess Lauren Daubert. An old fashioned ice cream vendor handed an ice cream cone to a child in 1993's sculpture, while 1994's sculpture featured two football players poised in a tackle position, tying in with Penn State's recent football success.

The 1996 sculpture featured President Dwight D. Eisenhower, whose farm can still be toured in Gettysburg. During that year, area dairy princesses handed out "I Like Ike 'N Ice Cream" buttons to Farm Show visitors. In 1998, a "Salute to School Lunch" sculpture featured a cafeteria employee serving lunch to children.

While the butter sculpture was in the McClay Street lobby, dairy promoters did various things to educate Farm Show visitors about the butter industry. In 1993, visitors could pick up handouts that featured facts about the butter sculpture and the industry.

For several years, video monitors were mounted above the sculpture to showcase the butter making process. Area dairy princesses also staffed the exhibit for several years, talking to spectators about the sculpture.

In 1997, the sculpture was moved to the food court so that more people would see it. But, because of the congestion and crowds, the video monitors and education opportunities were eliminated.

This year the sculpture will return to McClay Street lobby. Piper invites everyone to see this year's sculpture and view the photos of past sculptures that can be found in the large display windows to the left of the butter sculpture case.

"People can see what we've done over the years. It's been very successful for both the Farm Show and the dairy industry."

Maryland/Virginia Cooperative Goes Online In New Millennium

RESTON, Va. —Maryland and Virginia Milk Producers Cooperative launched a website on January 1, starting the year 2000 with a click! Cooperative members, dairy farmers and the general public can learn more about Maryland and Virginia, its plants, products and services. Milk market reports, press releases, staff contacts, and links to other great dairy websites—it's all online at www.mdvamilk.com.

"Since more and more dairy farmers are using the internet, it is not just useful, but essential to have an informational, interactive, easy-to-navigate website," says Stephanie Meyers, Maryland and Virginia's director of communication and education. "We are excited to provide this service not only to more effectively communicate with our members, but to benefit the dairy industry and the general public."

From the homepage of www.mdvamilk.com, visitors can choose:

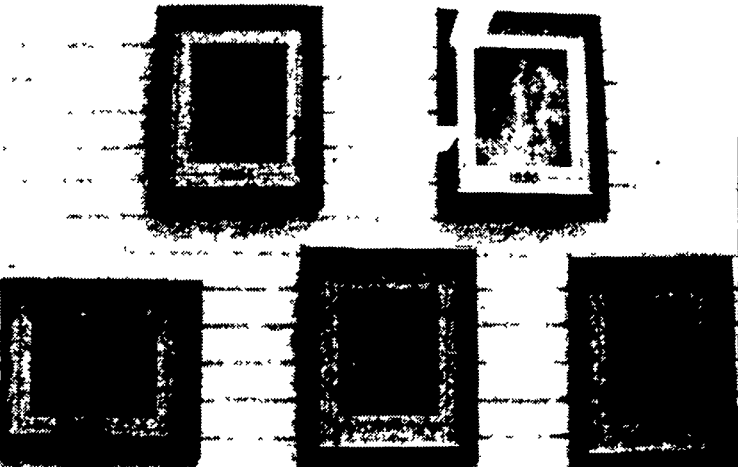
- About Us — An overview of Maryland and Virginia, its producers, plants, products and services.
- Markets — Archived issues of weekly and monthly market newsletters about milk prices and market conditions, and links to other dairy pricing websites.
- News — Cooperative

press releases, a trading post and media information.

- Why Join? — Benefits and services offered to members, including legislative representation, education, communication and field staff.
- Contact Us — E-mail links to key Maryland and Virginia staff members.
- Links — Other dairy websites about markets, milk quality, publications, legislation, and promotion.

A "Members Only" section is also being developed for fall 2000, featuring milk quality test results, blend prices, member meeting dates and other specialized information for Maryland and Virginia members.

Maryland and Virginia Milk Producers is a milk marketing and processing cooperative which markets milk for over 1,600 dairy farmers in ten states from Pennsylvania to Alabama. Headquartered in Reston, Va., with a regional office in Charlotte, N.C., the cooperative includes a fluid milk processing plant in Newport News, Va.; two manufacturing plants in Laurel, Md. and Strasburg, Va.; and an equipment warehouse in Frederick, Md.



A McClay Street lobby houses photos of past PA Farm Show butter sculptures. Those who see this year's sculpture can compare the other nine shown in the display window.