

Adams County Ag Center Construction Finish Nears

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Adams Co. Correspondent

GETTYSBURG (Adams Co.)

— The new Agricultural Center for Adams County is in the home stretch of construction.

The carpet is down, the office walls are going up, and the grading around the building is being done. It is still four to six weeks from being ready for occupancy but it gets a little closer each week.

Laurence V. Martick, district manager of the Adams County Conservation District, said the \$3.6 million project would have never gotten off the ground if it had not been for the dedication of the Adams County commissioners and unwavering support of the members of the farming community.

The county commissioners set the stage by offering to lease 10.2 acres along Old Harrisburg Road to the Conservation District. The land (a parcel adjacent to Green Acres, the county nursing home, and the Adams County Prison) was leased to the conservation district for \$1 a year for 25 years. The only condition was that the building should bring together all the government-funded agricultural agencies and organizations.

The way things are setup now, without a centralized building, a farmer who needs to do business with USDA, soil conservation, extension, or the county ag land preservation folks have to run to three different locations in and around Gettysburg. "It is extremely

inefficient," Martick said.

With the commissioners guaranteeing the debt, the conservation district was able to get a mortgage and enter contracts with the federal, state, and county governments, which will be renting the space for their agencies. Many of those offices are in leased space which has no room for expansion. The lack of space is making it very difficult for some of those agencies to do their job.

Martick, for example, said he needs three new staff members and has the OK to hire. But he can't hire them until he has somewhere to put those people.

Harry Stoke, a county commissioner, said the county is also facing a serious space problem at the courthouse. "The courthouse is jammed to the hilt," he said. The commissioners recently rented space in town for the juvenile probation office but still needed more room. Moving the other offices to the Ag Center will allow them to expand other departments within the court house.

The new building is a sight to behold. From the outside, it resembles a barn, complete with fancy brickwork on the wall facing the east. The foyer is an expansive open space with open beams bolted together. A round red silo-like structure houses the elevator to the downstairs.

Nearly every office is bathed in natural light from the floor to ceiling windows on nearly every wall.

"We tried to include 'green technology' every way we



could," Stoke said. As an example, he pointed to the chillers that are part of the air conditioning system. They will run during off-peak hours, at a lower rate of electricity, to make ice that will be stored in underground tanks. Air will be pumped over the ice, cooled, and then circulated throughout the building in the summer.

Penn State Cooperative Extension will occupy about one-fourth of the 32,000-square-foot building. William Kleiner, extension agent serving Adams County, said, "Agriculture is still the prime income producer here." Tourism, the second larg-

est industry in the county, is a distant second.

Commissioner Thomas Weaver said the key to realizing the dream of the Ag Center was the commitment and involvement of every element in the community. He said donations came from private individuals, local companies, and many farm organizations.

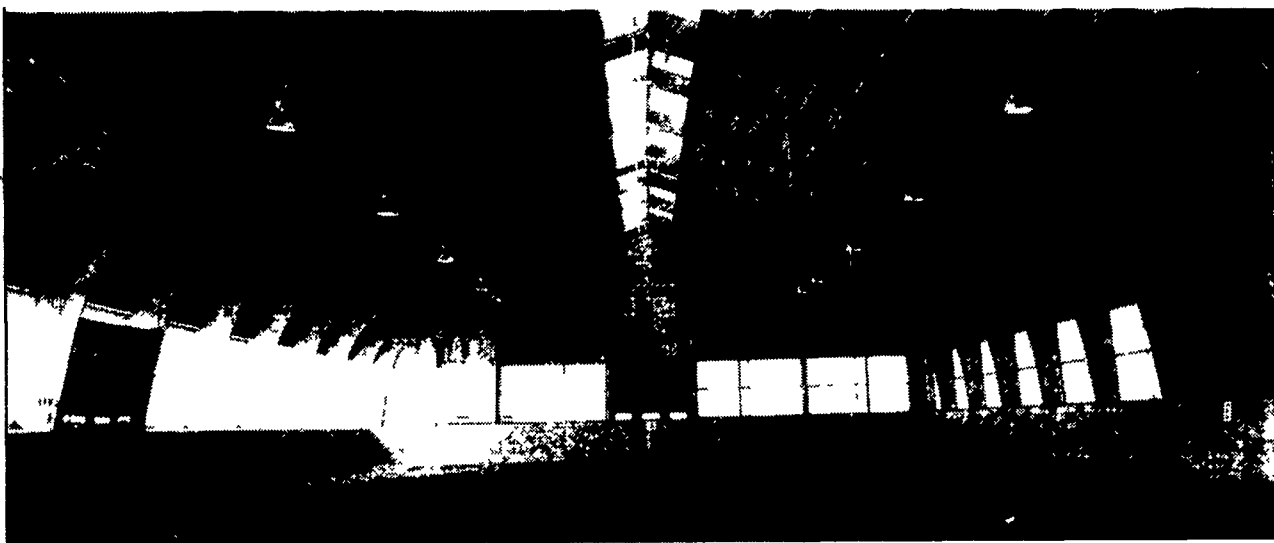
Adams County National Bank pledged \$40,000 and also gave the county such a competi-

tive rate on the mortgage that a bond issue was not needed, Weaver said.

Faith Peterson, one of the co-chairs of the Capital Campaign Committee, said they began working in September 1998 and raised \$350,000 of their \$400,000 goal. "The response (from the community) was very positive," she said. "We're really excited about it. It's just going to be so nice to have all those things in one place."

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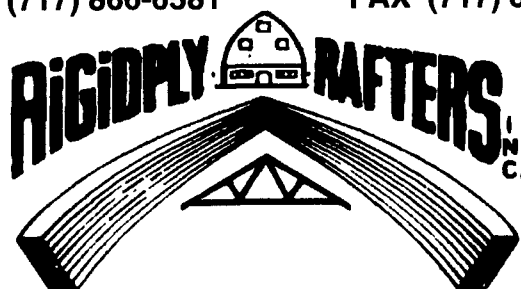
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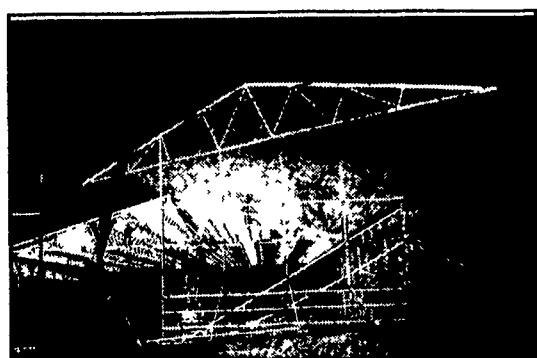
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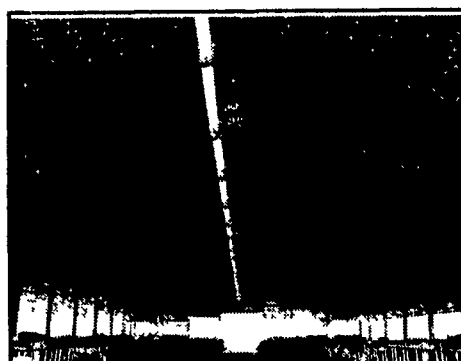
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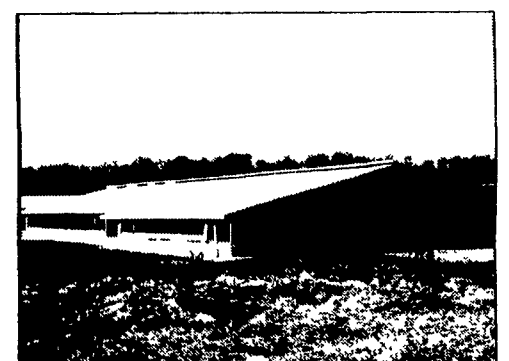
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