

## Building For The Future

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class construction and dimensions built for agriculture to include farm machinery, livestock, or other exhibits. A second, new large arena of spectacular scale for the largest or smallest of animals and their competitions. Another new barn to expand our ability to provide housing for livestock shows being hosted by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, such as the All-American Dairy Show, the Keystone International Livestock Exposition, and the Pennsylvania Farm Show itself.

An upgraded area to host exhibitions and conventions and conferences and dining events. A new look for the Small Arena that includes individual seats, auction block, and three sky boxes. A 4-H and FFA dormitory. A new, two-tier concourse that connects new construction and the existing facility with convenient and safe passage for animals, handlers, machinery, and visitors. Easy access and movement around the spacious and expansive complex. Air conditioning that makes the complex a comfortable, 12-month facility.

When I became secretary of agriculture it was my goal to obtain the necessary financial resources to build new facilities at the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. A new greenhouse complex. A new Livestock Evaluation Center. A bigger and better Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex. And, recently funds were approved to build a new biosecurity laboratory for animal agriculture. The same is true of funds to develop another on-site park-

ing area on an adjoining land parcel near the Farm Show Complex.

When I became secretary of agriculture I did not want to just "clip coupons" for agriculture. I wanted the people of agriculture to have the experience of "cutting ribbons" on behalf of their industry.

There has been tremendous support of these goals on part of the Governor and state lawmakers. I greatly appreciate their enthusiasm for these important agriculture projects. Historic construction on several fronts. It has been an unprecedented team effort.

While it is proper that we herald the physical magnificence of the new features at the Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex, and the other projects too, we should also proclaim what principles are at the foundation of all this historic construction. It is about providing places for competition, friendship, fun, reflection, innovation, determination, and goals. It is about agriculture. It is about the values found in the rural towns and townships of Pennsylvania. It is about the vitality of our ag economy. It is about the social and civic contributions of people in agriculture.

It is about the generations of families — past, present, and future. It is about grandparents, mothers and fathers. It is about our sons and daughters.

They who follow years from now will not know us. But they will know what we did.

They will know we were building for a good agriculture. They will know we were building for the future. They will know we were building for them.

## Bigger, Better Farm Show Complex

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how big that construction is — take a walk down memory lane.

Before TV, before video games, before the Internet, crowds would gather in the Small Arena — jam-packed with visitors from all over the place — and (believe it or not) watch a horseshoe contest.

Or women with the latest fashion hats, men with fedoras, businessmen with trenchcoats, and kids in bib coveralls would flock from far and wide to get a taste of what American — Pennsylvanian — agriculture was all about.

Lancaster Farming's special Farm Show Showcase Section looks back on the past century. We'll see where Farm Show came from, how it evolved, and what happened along the way.

### Pa. Farm Products Show Until 1937

Several books have been written about the Pennsylvania Farm Show. One of the best, and earliest, was published in 1937.

That volume was titled "History of the Pennsylvania Farm Products Show," compiled by historian Dr. George Fiske Johnson.

The Pennsylvania State Farm Products Show Commission (now simply called the Farm Show Commission) published the book.

Governor at the time was George H. Earle who worked with the well-known Secretary of

Agriculture J. Hansell French.

According to the book, in 1935, French thought it was time to put together an historical record book detailing the Farm Show at its 20th anniversary, Jan. 20-24, 1936.

The book notes information was fragmentary. So Johnson had to speak to a lot of men, about six that he named in 1936, and including additional members of the commission.

Johnson made note of a lot of things, including the very begin-

about 10 acres in use for five days, attended by about a quarter of a million people. Compare that to 27 acres today with about 350,000 people attending.

But how did Pennsylvania Farm Show begin?

The Johnson book dates the story of Farm Show to about July 18-19, 1809, when the Pennsylvania Society for Improving the Breed of Cattle conducted a cattle show at Bush Hill in Philadelphia. Interesting note: premiums amounting to \$900 were paid that year for cattle and sheep, except the Merino sheep breed.

Why single out the Merinos? Well, they did not "think it worthwhile to offer a premium for Merino sheep, as the public ought to be fully aware of their importance," according to the book.

The rest of the country followed with similar cattle shows. In 1820, movements began in the Pennsylvania to "reward" people in agriculture and "domestic manufacturers" for their skill and industry. The General Assembly enacted legislation to form county societies to promote agriculture.

The act promoted the first agricultural exhibition arranged by the Philadelphia Society for Promoting Agriculture, on June 4-5, 1822, near Philadelphia, according to Johnson.

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The meeting of 1917 proved a turning point, and 1917 could be considered the beginning of the Farm Show we know today. (Opening day was Jan. 23, a Tuesday.)

nings of what we understand as fairs and farm shows.

The world's first "fair" was conducted in 1783 when the Highlands and Agricultural Society of Scotland was formed to advance "agricultural meetings with a general show of stock, implements, farm and dairy products, to be held in a number of towns in Scotland." The government appropriated 10,000 pounds (about \$3 million today) for the organization's use.

A lot happened along the way toward promoting large, state-based agricultural fairs and expositions.

But at the time of the book's print date, in 1937, the Farm Show Complex space totaled

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## on the successful completion of the PA Farm Show Showcase!

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