

Bigger, Better Farm Show Complex

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Secretary French and Farm Show commissioners. Twenty-nine statewide farm and allied organizations conducted meetings. Attendance topped the half-million mark for the first time.

During the week, according to Cresswell's interpretation of newspaper accounts, more than 100,000 autos were parked in the general area.

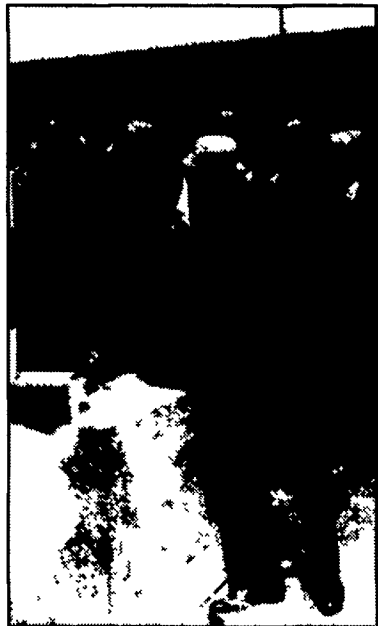
The Large Arena was dedicated in 1939, costing the state \$1.25 million. The Large Arena added 75,000 square feet of floor space to the complex.

But World War II lurked on the horizon.

The 1942 Farm Show was the last exhibition until 1947. In March 1942, a program made the main building the location of a training area for civilian repair and assembly of airplane motors.

After World War II, in 1946 the building was returned to the commission, including a steel warehouse added by the War Department (now housing beef cattle and horses during Farm Show).

In 1947, after the war, people were anxious to return to Farm Show. In 1947, despite "Farm Show weather," hotels were



In April 1930, Gov. Fisher lays the cornerstone for the new 10-acre Farm Show Building. The building was dedicated at the 1931 Farm Show. Photo courtesy Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.

booked solid and an estimated 545,000 people attended.

Visitors from around the globe began to flock to the fair, accord-

ing to Cresswell. In 1948, a log-sawing contest was started, and in 1947-1948, the appearance of the Pennsylvania Potato Blossom Queen paved the way for other Pennsylvania commodity representatives through the years.

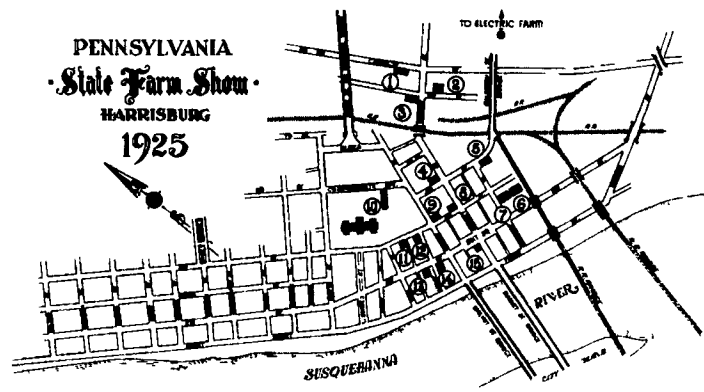
In 1951, the Farm Show conducted a gala in observance of the 100th anniversary of the first state fair, along with anniversaries of the Farm Show (35th) and the 20th anniversary of the Farm Show Building dedication.

The Farm Show continued to grow and add events, including safe driving of farm tractors, sheep shearing, horse pulls, and others.

The Farm Show continued to grow in number and variety of events. In a taste of things to come, in 1960, meetings of 35 farm organizations, noted Cresswell, emphasized "consumer demand." Attendance the following year: 645,000. Clearly, people loved the Farm Show.

In 1962, land grant colleges and universities saluted the show. In 1964, Gov. Scranton noted that 43 percent of employed people in the state depended on agribusiness for all or part of their income.

By the way: the "heaviest"



SECTIONAL MAP OF HARRISBURG SHOWING LOCATION OF SHOW BUILDINGS AND MEETING PLACES—1925

This map details the locations of the various events from the Farm Show in 1925. Reproduced from "The First Fifty Years of the Pennsylvania Farm Show," 1966.

Farm Show snowfall up to then fell at the show, from the opening day through Monday, when 18 inches covered the ground, closing most highways and stranding many workers.

(This was to be eclipsed at the same time in January 1996 when more than 30 inches of snow fell, literally stopping the Pennsylvania Farm Show for the first time in its history, stranding people and literally shutting down the state.)

At the 1964 show, a record price of \$4,940.80 (\$5.12 a pound) was paid for grand champion 4-H beef animal exhibited by William Rishel, 19, son of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Rishel, York. When bidding stalled at \$4 a pound, Cresswell noted, Mary Scranton, the governor's wife, entered the show ring to help Rishel. The crowd cheered when the final bid was a dollar a pound more than the previous year.

The 1965 Farm Show theme: agribusiness. By that time, 610,000 people attended and



Sam Hayes, state secretary of agriculture, left, and Gov. Mark Schweiker turn up the dirt at groundbreaking for the 2003 Farm Show Complex additions and improvements.

\$63,683 was paid in premiums, according to the Cresswell book.

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Officials Honor Contractors

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Hayes, Grumbine, and Merle Ryan, deputy secretary of Public Works, worked closely with the contractors in planning, designing, and building the facility.

Charlie Smith of Tennessee-based Bullock, Smith & Partners Inc., one of two architectural firms that helped design the complex, called it the premier facility of its kind on the continent.

"This is the best, state-of-the-art ag expo facility in North America," he said.

Bullock, Smith & Partners Inc. specializes in designing expo centers, with 30 such projects to its credit around the world.

Smith said one of the most impressive aspects of the new Farm Show exposition hall is the 120-foot span of the steel girders supporting the roof. In large buildings, girders usually don't reach more than about half that length. The advantage of this

wide span, Smith said, is that it eliminates the need for many support columns throughout the center of the hall, resulting in a more open and spacious venue.

The easy flow of animals and people between different areas in the new Farm Show Complex was one of the major goals of the construction, according to another chief architect working on the project.

Bradley Lambertsen of Hillier architectural firm, Philadelphia, said it was a big challenge getting about a million square feet of exhibition space under roof, including the new 172,000 square-foot exhibition hall, and joining all the different spaces.

"Once you have all these new pieces, how do you connect them?" he said.

That question has been answered in the new, completed complex itself. Lambertsen said the especially challenging task of

designing transition areas that allow livestock to move independently of people has been accomplished in the finished facility.

Lambertsen said another major challenge was making sure all of

the approximately 1,000 exhibitor spaces were brought up to a "point of sale operation." That means all exhibitor areas have the capability to run cash registers and credit card machines.

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