

A decorative border made of stylized, flowing lines surrounds the text. The lines are light gray and form a rectangular frame with rounded corners and intricate, swirling patterns.

**Charles County Fair,**  
**Inc.**

***1924 - 1973***

**50th Anniversary**

***La Plata, Md.***



A poultry exhibit at a 1922 farm products show organized by John P. Burdette, County Agricultural Agent. The site of the show was the porch of the Town Hall located where the Charles Theatre now stands. I am of the impression that a similar show was held in 1923 at the farm supply store of Robert V. Norris on St. Mary's Avenue. These shows may be called the forerunner of the present fair.

A few who helped build the Fair are:

Mr. and Mrs. X.W. Garner Sr., Mrs. Sayde Hayden, Mr. and Mr. Jos. S. Burch, Mr. Oden Turner, Mr. Walter H. Mudd, Mrs. P.D. Brown, Mrs. Harry F. Wood and W. Mitchell Digges.

We wish we had space to name many more. To all — thank you.

This booklet was compiled by P.D. Brown.

The following gave assistance in producing this publication:

W. Mitchell Digges, now president and dean of the Board of Directors; Gilbert Keech, Past President; Mrs. John C. Hancock, Mrs. J. Douglas Lowe, Mrs. Elizabeth Hart, Mrs. P.D. Brown.

## *... after 50 years*

The Charles County Fair, in its present form, was organized and incorporated in 1924 and will soon celebrate its 50th year of continuous operation.

Of the original incorporators and directors, only one, P.D. Brown, is still with the organization.

The first fair was held at Chapel Point which, at that time, was a bathing beach and amusement park owned and operated by the Catholic Church.

In 1925, the board purchased the present Spring Hill site. The only building then on the property was, appropriately, a small tobacco barn near the present main entrance. It was used for several years to house poultry exhibits. All other departments were housed in rented tents.

Electricity was unknown in the area and the fair used a generator operated by a farm tractor. "It was somewhat better than nothing," recalled one man.

In 1931, the fair, in search of entertainment, decided to choose one lovely local girl as Queen Nicotina. This was the first recognition of tobacco as a prime factor in the economy of Charles County.

With the exception of one year during World War II, Queen Nicotina was a trademark of the Charles County Fair.

During the depression years of the 1930's, the survival of the fair was sometimes in doubt, but with the increasing prosperity of Charles County, the fair survived and even prospered. Over the past 15 years, with the exception of one year of rain, the fair has operated at a profit.

The profits have been put back into the fair by the purchase of new equipment and the construction of buildings to house the exhibits.

The interest and participation of other organizations has been one of the strengths of the fair. Different groups have taken over the management of certain aspects of the fair. Thus the Lions Clubs take care of gate admissions, the Charles County Garden Club the flower exhibits, the Farm Bureau the garden and farm crops and the Port Tobacco Art Guild the art exhibit.

By state law, the fair receives state aid in financing the premiums paid to exhibitors and the balance of its income comes from the admission fees, sale of concessions and advertising in the fair catalogue.

The fair depends on volunteer labor and more is always welcome, the fair board says.

## PROGRAM

Tuesday, October Sixth

### SOUTHERN MARYLAND HOME COMING DAY

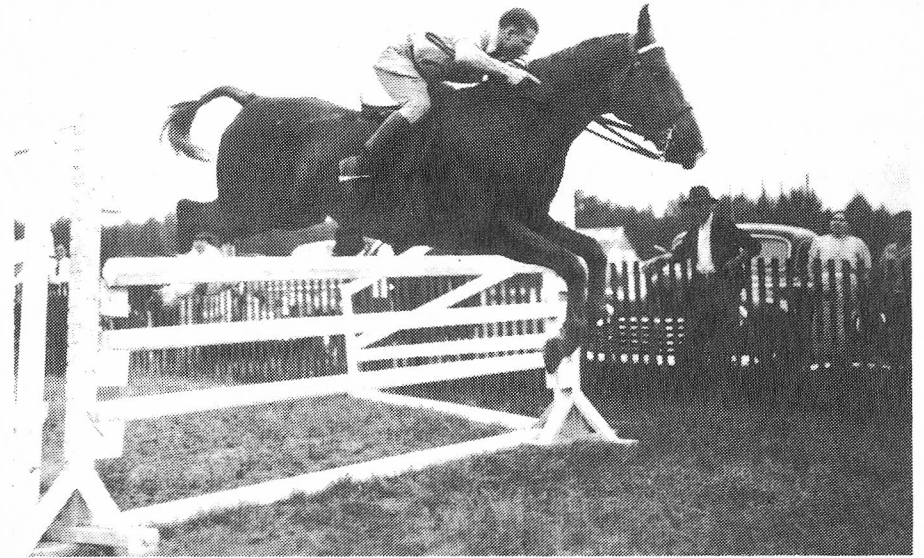
A special invitation is extended to all Southern Marylanders to meet their old friends on the Fair Grounds

- 10 A. M.—Judging of all exhibits except livestock.
- 12 M. —Dinner—Meals and sandwiches may be purchased on the Fair Grounds at reasonable prices.
- 2 P. M.—Southern Maryland championship tournament for 1925. Entry fee will be \$2; two classes—professionals and amateurs. Prizes in each class will be \$20, \$10 and \$5 for first, second and third places. In addition a championship cup will be presented by the Fair to the winning knight in each class. A queen and two maids will be crowned in each class. All entrants must be residents of Southern Maryland.
- 8 P. M.—Coronation in La Plata Town Hall. Dancing to follow.

#### Location of the Fair

This year the Fair is in its new home. The Fair Grounds are located a short ways south of La Plata on the Rock Point State Road. For those coming by train arrangements will probably be made to stop the train right at the Fair Grounds. Those coming by auto will readily see the Fair Grounds when coming either from the north or the south on the Rock Point Road.

A page from the booklet for the 1924 Charles County Fair.



The Fair produced many horse shows over the years and encouraged development of horsemanship.

## The formative years

After the first world war several of the interested farmers began to think in terms of a Fair for Charles County which would eventually own its own grounds with buildings and make it a real live County Fair.

Mr. Burdette retired as County Agent and George R. Stuntz was appointed in his place. Stuntz took over the job of getting a Fair organization underway.

With the help of the Farm Bureau a small group gathered at Causein Manor, Bel Alton to discuss the project. It included the late H.S. Swann, F. Brooke Matthews, George Stuntz, J.P. Burdette and P.D. Brown.

The decision of the group was to organize a stock company. Shares with par value of \$10.00 and sold to any interested party. To make no promises to pay any dividend but for the buyer to consider the purchase as a donation. The committee divided up a list of possible buyers and proceeded at once to canvas their list for purchase of shares. The committee to report back in two weeks.

The report showed sales of \$1200.00 and this was encouraging to the group so they decided to proceed with plans for holding a Fair in the fall of 1924 and to continue to sell stock to provide money for operation.

TEMPORARY OFFICERS OF  
CHARLES COUNTY FAIR, INC.  
1924

*President*

F. BROOKE MATTHEWS  
La Plata, Md.

*Vice-President*

J. P. BURDETTE  
La Plata, Md.

*Secretary-Treasurer*

P. D. BROWN  
Bel Alton, Md.

*Directors*

H. S. SWANN  
MRS. KATHERINE CHAPPELEAR  
F. BROOKE MATTHEWS

P. D. HOPPER

P. D. BROWN  
JOHN P. BURDETTE  
JAMES A. GRAY

*Program Committee*

H. S. SWANN

JOHN P. BURDETTE

GEORGE R. STUNTZ

*Executive Committee*

F. BROOKE MATTHEWS

JOHN P. BURDETTE

P. D. BROWN

*Publicity Director*

H. S. SWANN

*Superintendent of Grounds*

P. D. BROWN

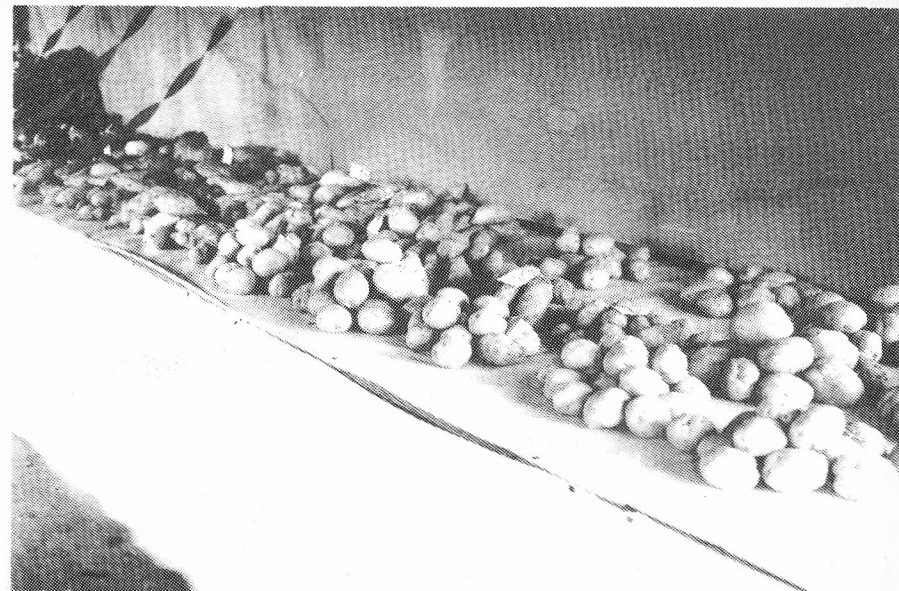
*Assistant Superintendent of Grounds*

J. NEAL HAMILTON

*General Secretary*

J. B. JARBOE

**A copy of the officers of the First Charles County Fair.**



**The fruits of the garden, field and orchard are on display and the exhibits are the showcase of the best.**

## What of future years?

Many civic and other organizations have come and then quietly passed away during the five decades of this Fair. With the population increase in the past 20 years and the projected population in the coming 20 it cannot miss. Someone willing and able must accept the burden of leadership. No one can truthfully say this is just for a few people, gate attendance the last few years disproves this.

The relationship between Fair and other agencies is best demonstrated. Working with the La Plata Methodist Church ladies, to provide food for the huge crowd. This usually results in a tidy sum for both organizations. The same is true in getting of advertising for the yearly catalog by the Children's Aid Society. These returns plus the gate and concessions provide the funds for the operation of the Fair. The money for prizes comes from the State.

The Board is at present making plans for a new building 40 by 80 feet. In a few years many of the older buildings must undergo major repairs or be replaced. This can be done more quickly by the sale of more stock. No dividend is promised. You are making an investment in the County.

It would be impossible to list the names of the directors and other workers. If some have been overlooked in this group please forgive us.

Among them is the late P. Reed Wills and W. Carlye Turner, President of the Southern Maryland National Bank, Mrs. X.W. Garner, one of the greatest women civic leaders, W. Mitchell Digges, prominent civic leader, the late Col. Peter Vischer, race horse breeder and owner of Habre de Venture, also Hon. James Craik Mitchell now judge of the fifth Judicial Circuit Court, W.W. Keech, Banker and Real Estate, Paul Nitze, owner of Causein Manor. The late Mr. Thomas P. McDonough, auto dealer, and the late Harold S. Swann and James W. Wills, Texaco Products distributors and the late Foster M. Reeder, retired National Cash Register Co.

## OUR THANKS TO ADVERTISERS

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In editing this issue of the Charles County Fair Catalogue, we wish to gratefully acknowledge the service rendered by the public-spirited business men in buying space that has permitted us to issue and mail this 2,000 edition at practically no cost to the Fair.

As the Charles County Fair is making its first public appearance, the support given it by the firms listed below is highly encouraging and we sincerely hope the advertising furnished them through this catalogue may prove as helpful as their co-operation has been to the Fair.

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Tidewater Lines, Inc.  
Maryland Tobacco Growers' Asso.  
Charles County Farm Bureau  
The Standard Lime and Stone Co.  
H. S. Swann  
J. Frank Campbell  
P. Mann & Co.  
The J. Bolgiano Seed Co.  
Wm. G. Scarlett & Co.  
J. C. Blacklock & Co.  
Bel Alton Garage  
J. M. Martin  
Causines Manor  
Leon Bailey  
Southern Maryland National Bank  
Mitchell Motor Co.  
Charles County Bank  
T. R. Farrall & Son  
Huntt & Ryon  
Orem Motor Co.  
Brentfield Farms  
Indian Head State Bank  
Peter Schroeder  
Louis Gough  
Indian Head White Barber Shop  
The Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Co.,  
Indian Head and Hughesville  
Stumble Inn (K. R. Clark, proprietor)  
H. Holland Hawkins  
J. L. Hamilton  
Hughesville Garage  
C. S. Long  
Bresnahan's Hotel  
Elizabeth Boarman

L. M. Hyde & Son  
McDonough School  
McDonogh School  
Carry Ice Cream Co., Inc.  
Eastern Shore Trust Co., Indian Head  
Southern Maryland Insurance Agency  
Thompson Brothers  
N. Auth Provision Co.  
Dr. J. W. Hughes  
Jameson, Lyon & Co.  
John A. Lyon  
A. C. Gardiner  
Rock Point Hotel  
R. V. Norris  
Plainfield Stock Farm  
Thos. P. McDonagh  
Matthews-Howard Co., Inc.  
P. S. Bowling & Co.  
Southern Maryland Creamery Asso.  
James B. Monroe  
J. M. Cochran & Co.  
Carpenter Auto Sales Co.  
J. Ely  
F. E. Mattingly  
Dutton & Wright  
Mrs. M. I. Robey  
Martin's Hotel  
Central Garage  
Herberts Garage  
Hughesville Savings Bank  
Hotel Benedict  
Jas. M. Bowling & Co.  
H. H. Lyon

**The business firms who supported the first Charles County Fair.**



**Meet your neighbor at the fair.**

## The growing years

During the depression in the thirties the Fair Board had a tough job just keeping a few steps ahead of the sheriff.

Prize money in most of the departments had to be curtailed. Gate admissions lowered and entertainment had to be found locally. I dare not say what year it was but I think '38 we were rained out completely and that was close to disaster.

We were floundering around trying to develop some local talent to produce an outdoor historical pageant, as well as develop a contest or contests that would draw the public. Finally we came up with the selection or election of a Queen to rule over the Fair. Tobacco being the life blood of the area the name of the Queen must be one that would symbolize the golden weed.

Nicotina: pronounced Ni-Co-Ti-Ana. This did not lend itself to easy pronunciation so the first "a" was dropped and the name became Ni-Co-Ti-Na.

Then also at this period there was no publicity regarding nicotine being detrimental to health. The next problem concerned someone with the time and energy to produce historical pageantry. And it must not be too expensive.

Nineteen hundred and thirty-two being the bi-centennial of the birth of George Washington and with all the country entering into appropriate celebration the Fair produced a pageant entitled "Neighbor Washington" a large part of the cast was from the schools. The writer and producer was Kathleen Read Coontz of Washington, D.C. Mrs. Coontz had been recommended for the work by the National Committee of the Bi-Centennial.

This set up a new form of entertainment. While not universal in appeal many Fair goers welcomed and enjoyed it.

The idea of a tobacco queen has remained the hallmark of the Charles County Fair.

## The growing years

For the 1927 fair we had our first building a 28' x 40' building used in the late years for the Art Exhibit.

Then over the formative years the livestock sheds were built, the buildings in the midway, the flower, home ec., the garden and farm crops and the commercial building and the lunch room.

The banks in La Plata have been most considerate and were always willing to provide any monies needed for operations and improvements.

Although some state aid on premiums was available during these formative years it was not until about 1928 or 29 before our fair was eligible to receive it. Eligibility under the law was that to receive state aid a fair must have either \$3500.00 in stock sold or that amount in property.

Other forms of entertainment over the years have been: tournaments, horse racing, dog shows, clay pigeon shoots, amateur contests, plays by the Port Tobacco Society Theatre group, track and field events for school children, fireworks, parades, contests for adults. Other interesting features were a cavalry from Ft. Myer, Army-Navy and Air Force bands and drill teams. Also 80 man Baltimore and Ohio Railroad as well as the large glee club of the Department of Agriculture.

During these growth years the Fair promoted and produced an area wide Tobacco pageant in cooperation with the other four tobacco producing counties. Queen Nicotina that year by selection was Maria Teresa Escalanti, the daughter of the Venezuelan Ambassador to the United States.

This met with a reasonable amount of interest, but was discontinued due to lack of support from the other counties. The music for the Queen's Ball was furnished by "Vincent Lopez."

New blood was elected to the Board of Directors and with improved economic conditions in the Maryland tobacco belt, plus the population explosion the Fair began a rapid growth in interest as a place to compete with and to see your neighbor and a cross section of the county. As more money was taken in more money went out in the form of increased premiums, grounds and buildings and improved facilities.

More cooperative volunteer help suddenly appeared and the Fair took on a new face. The Charles County Garden Club took complete charge of the Flower Show. The Port Tobacco Art Club assumed the burden of the Art Show. The Farm Bureau manned the Farm Crops and Garden show and the Homemakers Clubs the home economics exhibit.

On the grounds the Lions Clubs of the county look after the gate and admissions. The F.F.A. acted as cashiers of the carnival and the horse enthusiasts planned and carried through with the Horse Shows.

This wonderful cooperative volunteer help is best expressed by the message the President of the Fair the Honorable James C. Mitchell in 1953. A part of his letter asking for every citizen's help to hold a successful Fair. It is "The promotion of the Charles County Fair is an undertaking which requires months of preparation by many public spirited citizens who are moved by a sense of civic pride in contributing their time and effort." How true.



A Fair Dance is always an enjoyable evening. This picture proves the fact. Shown here are Director and Mrs. Thos. P. McDonagh, and Director and Mrs. P.D. Brown and in the other, fair officials James W. Wills, W. Mitchell Digges and P.D. Brown with Marie Escalante (Queen Nicotina, daughter of the Ambassador to the U.S. from Venezuela.)



# NARRATIVE OF DR. JAMES CRAIK - FRIEND TO THE NEIGHBOR

Impersonated by JAMES CRAIK MITCHELL

## PROLOGUE

Charles County ..... Miss Dorothy Harrison  
Wakefield ..... Alma Huffman  
Mt. Vernon ..... Betty Mitchell

## CAST

NEIGHBOR WASHINGTON ..... John Mudd  
Martha, his wife ..... Caroline Thompson  
Mary, his mother ..... Louise Matthews  
Augustine, his father ..... J. W. Wills  
The Youth George ..... Billy Swann  
William Nalley  
Dick Clark  
George Bond  
Merrill Fergusson  
George's Brothers and Sisters ..... La Plata School Children  
George's Schoolmates ..... La Plata School Children  
Jacky and Patsy Custis, the "Widow Custis'" Children ..... Floyd Cooksey  
Clarence McWilliams  
Dorothy Robey  
Charlotte Dutton  
Nellie and George Washington Custis, the grandchildren  
adopted by Neighbor Washington ..... Agnes Burch  
Frances Brown  
Katherine Garner  
Reed McDonagh  
Edward Digges  
Hobby the school master ..... F. B. Gwynn  
The Parson ..... Rev. R. B. Stevenson  
Lord Fairfax ..... M. M. Somers  
Lafayette ..... James Bigwood

### Chief of Staff

General Smallwood, of Charles County ..... H. H. Hawkins  
Washington's Physician  
Dr. Gustavus Brown, of Charles County ..... Nathan C. Moore  
Thomas Stone, of Charles County, Signer ..... W. Bruce Matthews  
Richard Hanson Harrison, of Charles County, Military  
Secretary to Washington ..... E. Lee Hanson  
Billy, Washington's body guard ..... Frank Barnes, Sr.  
Mammy Lou ..... Miss Lucille Bowie  
Indian Group ..... Nanjemoy School  
Folk Dances ..... Indian Head Community, Mrs. Gering, Director.  
Durham Vestry (1798) ..... Durham Vestry 1932  
Continental Troops ..... La Plata High School  
British Troops ..... Hughesville High School  
Townsppeople and Villagers ..... Sacred Heart School  
Presidential Festival ..... Notre Dame School  
Marse George's Maryland Farm Group ..... Glasva School  
Mt. Vernon House Servant Group ..... Waldorf School  
Racing Group in charge of ..... Beverly Barnes  
Statement, Friends and Neighbor Group ..... Charles County Citizens

# THE PAGEANT - SCENE BY SCENE PROLOGUE ..... Charles County

## EPISODE ONE—CHILDHOOD

Scene 1 A February morning in 1732  
Scene 2 The Christening  
Scene 3 School Days

## EPISODE TWO—THE YOUTH

Scene 1 Mt. Vernon 1748. George gives up his sea dreams.  
Scene 2 The Indian prophecy for the young surveyor

## EPISODE THREE—THE MAN

Scene 1 A spring day in 1758 at William's Ferry Virginia  
Romance comes to the Colonel  
Scene 2 Until Death do us part  
Scene 3 May Day with the Mt. Vernon Children  
Scene 4 Neighbor Washington dines at "Rose Hill"

## EPISODE FOUR—WAR 1775

Scene 1 Neighbor Washington offers all  
Scene 2 General Smallwood rallies his fellow countymen to the Cause  
Scene 3 Signing of the Immortal Document, July 4, 1776

## EPISODE FIVE—PEACE

Scene 1 1781. The Surrender at Yorktown  
Scene 2 Victory Ball at Fredericksburg 1781

## EPISODE SIX. NEIGHBOR WASHINGTON ONCE AGAIN

Scene 1 The Mt. Vernon household attend the races at Benedict  
Scene 2 "Marse Washington's People", welcome him to his Maryland farm.  
Scene 3 The Mt. Vernon household at Durham Church

## EPISODE SEVEN—PRESIDENT WASHINGTON

Scene 1 Mt. Vernon 1789. The Summons  
Scene 2 The son bids farewell to his mother  
Scene 3 The President-elect on his way to the Capitol  
Scene 4 The First President takes his oaths

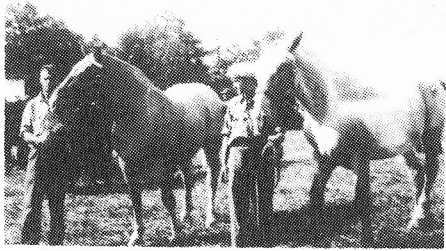
## EPISODE EIGHT—TWILIGHT FOR NEIGHBOR WASHINGTON

Scene 1 1797, The last Home Coming  
Scene 2 Fames Tribute  
Scene 3 Dr. Craik reads from the will of Neighbor Washington

## EPILOGUE—Charles County, Wakefield, Mt. Vernon.

## PAGEANT REVIEW

Stage Properties, Construction and Arrangements—F. HILL HAMILTON.



The draft horse was the principal source of power on the farm.



The canned food exhibited by the ladies is judged one against the other.



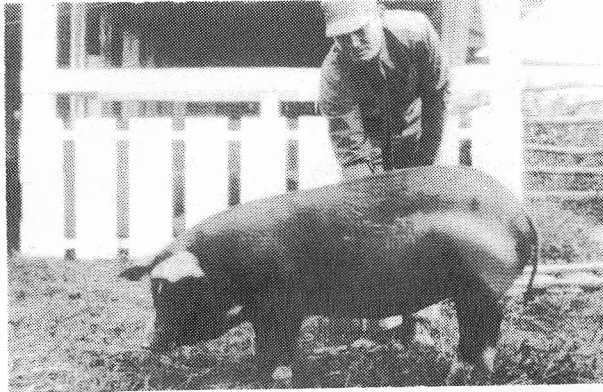
The grade of beef cattle improves as the years go by. The Fair can claim a part of this progress.



Over the years the Fair has endeavored to provide the type of entertainment the largest majority of Fair attendants would enjoy. Above the typical southern tournament.



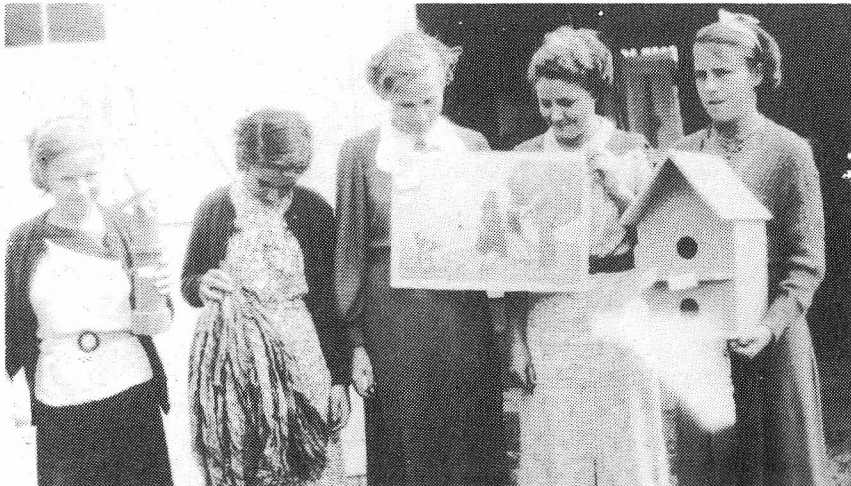
Samples of types of livestock at early fairs.



A well proportioned porker.



High class beef — Governor Herbert R. O'Connor looks them over.



The distaff side also display their handiwork.

## Queen Nicotina

Queen Nicotina has been the trademark of the Charles County Fair since 1934. The many talented and beautiful young girls who have been selected as Queen attest to the popularity of this feature.

Beginning in 1934 with Miss Ethel Martin, there have been 38 to reign over the Fair Festivities.

They are as follow:

- I. Miss Ethel Martin — Mrs. Richard Bowling, La Plata, Maryland (1934).
- II. Miss Leonore Garner — Mrs. Omar J. Jones, Ellicott City, Maryland (1935).
- III. Miss Eleanor J. Digges — Mrs. Calvin Harrington, Cambridge, Maryland (1936).
- IV. Miss Cecelia Burch — Deceased, Mrs. Ishral Farrell (1937).
- V. Miss Louise Jameson — Mrs. Wm. Highby, Pomonkey, Maryland (1938).
- VI. Miss Kathryn Edelen — Mrs. George Bonifant, Bryantown, Maryland (1939).
- VII. Miss Doris Groves — Mrs. Robert Murray, New York, N.Y. (1940).
- VIII. Senorita Maria Teresa Escalante, Daughter of Ambassador of Venezuela (1941).
- IX. Miss Mary Ross Edelen — Mrs. Frank Williams, Virginia.
- X. Miss Hilda Mae Dyson — Mrs. George Burch, Waldorf, Maryland.
- XI. Miss Edith Bowling — Mrs. Russell Mizell, Jr. Wash. Co., Maryland (1945).
- XII. Miss Betty Trotter — Mrs. Geo. W. Reeder, Waldorf, Maryland (1946).
- XIII. Miss Betty Greer — Mrs. James Schultz, La Plata, Maryland (1947).
- XIV. Miss Virginia Matthews — Mrs. Robert McAfee — California (1948).
- XV. Miss Elizabeth Hunt — Mrs. Tom Walker (1949).
- XVI. Miss Frances Wills — Mrs. Wm. Duncan, Arnold, Maryland (1950).
- XVII. Miss Barbara Farrell — Mrs. Carl Baldus, La Plata, Maryland (1951).
- XVIII. Miss Mary Douglas Cooksey — Mrs. Charles Nairs (1952).
- XIX. Miss Mary Lou Bowling — Mrs. Jos. McKay, Waldorf, Maryland (1953).
- XX. Miss Judy Mudd — (1954).
- XXI. Miss Betty Wood, La Plata, Md. (1955).
- XXII. Miss Elaine Howard — Mrs. Donald Peed, Waldorf, Maryland (1956).
- XXIII. Miss Jeanette Goldsmith (1957).
- Tercentenary Queen — Anne Cortney Mitchell (1958).
- XXIV. Miss Beth Addison, Marshall Hall, Maryland (1959).
- XXV. Lu Bowling (1960).
- XXVI. Louise Hindle (1961).
- XXVII. Ann Stonestreet (1962).
- XXVIII. Fay Abell (1963).
- XXXIV. Kay Bowling (1964).
- XXX. Sherry Murphy (1965).
- XXXI. Jane Linton (1966).
- XXXII. Clara Rose Epp (Hughesville VFD) (1967).
- XXXIII. Sue Shymansky, Cobb Island (1968).
- XXXIV. Janice Johnson (NAACP) (1969).
- XXXV. Laurie Blankeslee (1970).
- XXXVI. Laurie Weaver (1971).
- XXXVII. Susan Marie Farrell (Farm Bureau) (1972).



**FUN** — Whom is leading whom? The Fair is for young as well as adults.