

History of Agriculture (continued)

1980

Farmers 3.4% of Labor force

1985

U.S. Food Security Act lowers farm subsidies on dairy, wheat and feed grains

1986

Country singer Willie Nelson organizes Farm Aid concerts for indebted farmers

1987

Clover Hill farm, the last working farm in the City of Manassas, sold to developers



1990

Farmers markets become popular way for small farmers to reach consumers directly

1994

Farmers begin using satellite technology to track and plan farming practices

1996

U.S. agricultural exports reach a record \$60.4 billion

1997

PWC has 39,876 acres of farm land, a 21% increase over 1992 in acreage, with 344 farms



2000

2006

First new winery in 50 years opens in PWC

2006

Paul House, Nokesville dairy and crop farmer named "Virginia Farmer of the Year"

2007

PWC has 32,816 acres of farm land with 345 farms

2007

Census of Agriculture notes that one of every 10 farms in U.S. run by women



Further Reading

A Kind of Fate: Agricultural Change in Virginia, 1861-1920 by G. Terry Sharrer, 2000.

From Cotton Fields to Skyscrapers: The Transformation of the South in the Twentieth Century, 2008, an online lecture by Paul A. Levensgood at http://www.vahistorical.org/news/lectures_levensgood2.htm

Once There Was a Farm: A Country Childhood Remembered by Virginia Bell Dabney, 1990.

Under the Blade: The Conversion of Agricultural Landscapes by Richard H. Olson and Thomas A. Lyson, eds., 1999.

Virginia's Cattle Story - The First Four Centuries by Katherine Brown and Nancy Sorrells, 2004.

Educational Opportunities 2009-2010

September 10, 2009: Hon. Robert S. Bloxom, Secretary of Virginia Agriculture and Forestry talks about the change from agriculture to urban development in the Northern Piedmont region.

October 3, 2009 - May 15, 2010: *From Cows to Condos* exhibit features changes in agriculture and land use in Manassas and Prince William County in the 20th century. Journey through a Soil Tunnel to look under the ground and learn about soil functions. Group tours for all ages.

October 24, 2009: Farm Heritage Day. Workshops, demonstrations, and hands-on activities for all ages that focus on the history of farming in Manassas and Prince William County, agricultural education, and environmental impacts on farming today.

Coming Events, To Be Announced:

- *Farms Forever, Forever Farms—the Prince William County Fair Celebrates 60 Years* by Lou Ann Ladin. Author's presentation and book signing. Meet founders of Virginia's largest county fair.
- Unveiling of Clover Hill Farm historical marker

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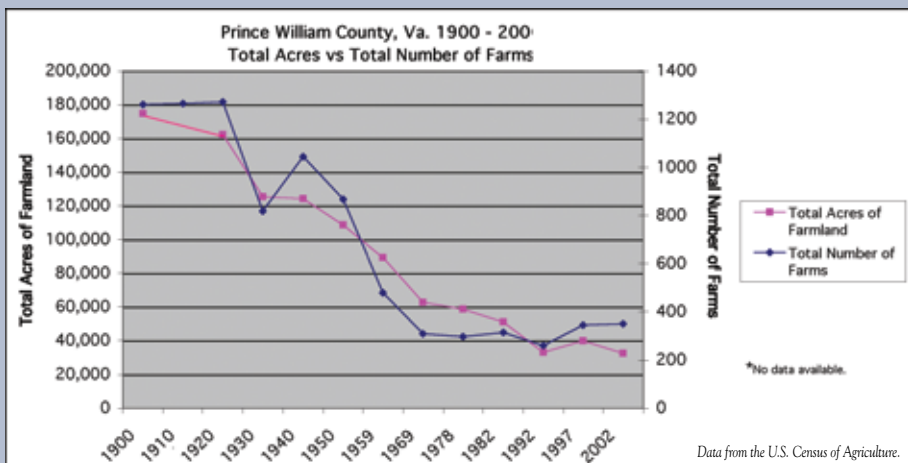
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2009 - 2010



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Statistical History of PWC Agriculture

The 1920 collapse in agricultural prices after World War I led to an agricultural depression that was compounded by the Great Depression of the 1930s. However, milk production increased and the gas powered tractor – a transformative force on family farms – was introduced. The number of farms decreased while average farm size increased slightly between 1950 and 1980. In the 1950s, farmers returned to specialization and Prince William County concentrated on dairying. At the same time, the county experienced a Post-World War II building boom. In the mid-1990s, the number of farms in the county rose, but they were smaller, specialty farms, raising Angus beef, organic fruits and vegetables, wine, and other niche products.



Especially for Kids

October 13, 2009: Toddler Tuesday focuses on children ages 2-5 as they learn about farming through songs, crafts and play.

Educational Travelling Trunk: *From Cows to Condos* trunk offers hands-on learning through reproduction artifacts, activities, lessons and selected readings. This trunk is available for loan to school educators and homeschoolers.

Children's agriculture reading list available at the museum.

Contact the museum to schedule a group tour or rent the travelling trunk. For more information on programs and updates to *From Cows to Condos*, go to www.manassasmuseum.org.

The transition of Manassas and Prince William County from an agricultural to a suburban community during the 20th century affected land use, community heritage, and identity. *From Cows to Condos* offers a wide range of programs, interactive learning, and a special exhibition to explore how rural heritage has influenced policies and decision-making and to examine the challenges for today's farmers. This brochure introduces the project with a timeline of agricultural history and a list of educational and entertaining activities.

Prince William County (PWC) Condensed History of Agriculture

1900

Farmers 38% of labor force

1900

First corn club for boys (forerunner of 4-H clubs)

- Scientists identify protein, fat, and carbohydrates as the basic nutrients in food
- Clover Hill Farm apples win prizes at the Paris Exposition

1906

Passage of U.S. Pure Food and Drug Act

1908

The Virginia General Assembly establishes agricultural high schools

1908

Manassas Agricultural High School organizes a farmers institute for students

1909

Wright Brothers demonstrate the airplane



1910

1910 – 1915

Large, open-g geared gas tractors used in farming

1913



Tomato canning club for girls started in Manassas

- Milk-testing and corn seed selection taught in PWC schools

1914

Smith-Lever Act establishes Cooperative Extension Service to aid agriculture

1914 – 1918

World War I. Area population growth in wartime spurs demand for local farm products



1920

1920 – 1929

Nokesville Fair at Whitehall Farm

1921

Federal government increases aid to farm-to-market roads as truckers move more perishables and dairy products

1922

Manassas Poultry Club organized for education and cooperative marketing of eggs

1923

Virginia Seed Service, the future Southern States Cooperative, founded in Richmond

1926

Manassas Chapter, Future Farmers of Virginia founded

1928

National Future Farmers of America founded

1929

Hoof-and-mouth disease eradicated from the U.S.

1929 – 1939

Great Depression



1930

1930

First Piedmont Dairy Festival held in Manassas, continues until 1936

1932 – 1936

Drought and dust-bowl conditions develop in U.S.

1933

U.S. Agricultural Adjustment Act subsidizes farmers to reduce crop and livestock production: PWC agent puts wheat, hog and other controls on farms

1935

Low-interest federal rehabilitation loans available to Virginia farmers

1939 – 1945

World War II



1940

Farmers 18% of labor force

1941

National Victory Garden program launched

1944

New community cannery at Brentsville High School

- “Heifers for Relief,” forerunner of Heifers International organized to provide livestock for poor and developing countries. Many PWC farmers participate



1945

Change from horses to tractors raises productivity

- 1,117 farms in PWC. Soybean, barley and hay increases and corn, oats, wheat and rye decreases

1946

National School Lunch Act provides public school meals and uses farm surpluses

- PWC residents process 50,000 cans of vegetables, fruit, and meats at county canneries in Manassas, Occoquan, and Nokesville
- First completely automated frozen food locker plant in Virginia opens in Manassas
- Town of Manassas passes zoning ordinance with one commercial district, the rest residential

1949

Prince William County Fair begins as a one-day dairy show by the Veterans Farm Club

1950

Trucks and barges offer better farm product shipping rates as railroad rates rise

1952

Japanese beetles invade PWC, destroy crops

1954

Number of tractors on farms exceed number of horses and mules for the first time

1956

National Interstate and Defense Highways Act builds Interstates 95 and 66, with major impacts on PWC transportation and real estate development



1960

Farmers 8.3% of labor force Soybean acreage expands, replacing other crops

1962

Silent Spring by Rachel Carson is a best-seller, warning of pesticide overuse

1966

Orville and Mabel “Granny” Hersch open their “Fun Farm” providing children in the Metro Area with hands-on farming activities; admission was a donation to Heifer International

1967

IBM purchases 485 acres of farm land to build manufacturing plant in Manassas

1967

Census Bureau makes Prince William County part of Washington D.C. metro area

- Town of Manassas sees 108.6% growth from 1960

1970

1970

U.S. Environmental Quality Improvement Act requires farms to protect the wetlands on their acreage

1973

Manassas changes governing structure from Town to City

1979

American Agriculture Movement stages “tractorcade” protest in Washington D.C. to protest production and price controls



History Continues →

Focus on Farms



Clover Hill Farm

Joseph B. Johnson (b.1925) at Clover Hill Farm around 1960, with his purebred Jersey cows. In the Johnson family since 1770, the 382-acre Clover Hill Farm was the last working farm within Manassas city limits in the 1970s. Sold in 1987 to Northern Virginia developers, the Wellington development in Manassas occupies most of the land.

Smith Family Farm

This farm in Gainesville encompasses over 2,000 acres of pasture land and crop fields. It is the county’s only Century Farm (has been in operation for at least 100 consecutive years). Shirley and Bradley Smith specialize in grass-fed cattle, and pastured poultry and pigs. The farm is certified as a Virginia Quality-Assured Beef Producer by the Virginia Department of Agriculture.

