

Pageantry In America Today

What's The History & Relevance?

Pageantry in America was born, for all practical purposes, in Atlantic City, NJ when a business-man offered his idea of a way to extend the life of the tourist season. Ironically enough, women were granted the right to vote just one year earlier.

H. Conrad Eckholm pitched the idea to the Business Men's League to hold a fall frolic festival after Labor Day, which was to include a bathing beauty contest. The media took hold of the idea and dubbed the winner "Miss America". In September 1921, nine contestants from as far away as Ohio donned their bathing apparel and tried gracefully to put their best foot forward on the hot, sandy beach in Atlantic City. Twenty-four hours later, Miss Margaret Gorman, a sixteen-year-old from Washington, DC was named the very first Miss America.

Pageants today remain a source of fascination, anticipation and excitement, not only for the contestants but for the viewing audience as well. It is a source of viewing entertainment that has proven to be very successful, drawing audiences around the world in numbers that have surpassed the Super Bowl and stumped the rating companies. Unlike the Super Bowl however, it draws a broader base of sponsors, as families gather together around the television with anticipation, cheering on their state contestants from their very own living rooms. It is the ending of the ultimate fairy-tale, as someone is crowned a queen. In today's world however that "princess" has responsibilities to her subjects. She will juggle a very busy schedule of charitable appearances and motivational speeches. Her crown in the outward symbol of the responsibility that she accepts as a spokesperson and role model.

Although pageantry will always remain a source of anticipation and excitement for the contestant, it also affords them the opportunity to learn valuable life skills. They learn poise, self-discovery and self-confidence. They also learn interview skills, proficiency in public speaking and goal setting. In addition, they learn early on to take an interest in society, recognize the current and long-standing social problems of today and how their volunteer work can benefit society as a whole.

"I think the crown is as relevant as the individual who wears it. If you, through your actions and words, use the crown to focus attention on issues of substance and concern, then you contribute something of relevance and significance. The crown is a tool to be able to focus attention on something that is important. If you crown someone who has a passion and a conviction and has a real dedication to using it as a symbol to focus attention on issues of concern, that's when you achieve the relevance."

Erica Harold
Miss America 2003

Coronet Productions



2111 Sardis Fire Station Road
Farmerville, LA 71241

Phone: 318-368-0074
Fax: 318-255-8918
director@missplusamerica.com
www.missplusamerica.com