

PENNSYLVANIA HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY FORM PHOTO/SITE PLAN SHEET

Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission
Bureau of Historic Preservation
Box 1026, Harrisburg, PA 17108-1026

Survey Code/Tax Parcel/Other No.: 167 / 66 00 08278 00 8 Block-Unit #013-084

County: Montgomery

Municipality: Whitpain Township

Address: 1220 Wentz Road

Historic Name/Other Name:

SITE PLAN**PHOTO INFORMATION**

Number	Description of View	Direction of Camera
1	House – façade	
2	Barn	
3	Block Barn	
4		
5		
6		

Photographer Name: Robert Wise Date: 1999

Negative Location: Robert Wise Consulting, Station Square 1, Suite 104,
37 N. Valley Road, Paoli PA 19301

PENNSYLVANIA HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY FORM - DATA SHEET

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Bureau for Historic Preservation

89B

IDENTIFICATION AND LOCATION

Survey Code: 167 Tax Parcel/Other No.: 66 00 08278 00 8 Block Unit #013-084

County: 1. Montgomery 091 2.

Municipality: 1. Whitpain Township 2.

Address: 1220 Wentz Road Historic Name:

Other Name:

Owner Name/Address: Paul E. & Deborah W. Zimmerman P.O. Box 300 Wolfboro Falls NH 13896

Owner Category: Private Public-local Public-state Public-federal

Resource Category: Building District Site Structure Object

Number/Approximate Number of Resources Covered by This Form: 4

USGS Quad: 1. Lansdale 2.

UTM A. _____ C. _____

References: B. _____ D. _____

HISTORIC AND CURRENT FUNCTIONS

Historic Function Category: Subcategory: Code:

A. Residence 4,968 SF Land 4.22 Acre Dwelling _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

Particular Type: A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

Current Function Category: Subcategory: Code:

A. Multi-Family Residence Dwelling _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: A. _____

B. _____

D. _____

Exterior Materials: Foundation _____ Roof _____

Walls stucco _____ Walls _____

Other _____ Other _____

Structural System: 1. _____ 2. _____

Width 45 feet _____ Depth 30 feet _____ Stories/Height 2.5 _____

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Year Built: ___ ca. ___ Additions/Alterations Dates: ___ ca. ___ ca. ___
Basis for Dating: Documentary Physical
Explain: Tax records

Cultural/Ethnic Affiliation: 1. ___ 2. ___ Associated Individuals: 1. ___ 2.
Associated Events: 1. ___ 2. ___ Architects/Engineers: 1. ___ 2.
Builders: 1. ___ 2.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

PREVIOUS SURVEY, DETERMINATIONS

EVALUATION (Survey Director/Consultants Only)

Individual NR Potential: Yes No Context(s): _____
Contributes to Potential District Yes No District Name/Status: _____

Classification: This is an intact farmstead with significant architecture spanning two centuries. It is rightly classified as a Class I resource.

THREATS

Threats: 1. None 2. Public Development 3. Private Development 4. Neglect 5. Other

Explain:

SURVEYOR INFORMATION

Surveyor Name/Title: Robert Wise Date: 6/16/2000
Project Name: Whitpain Township Historic Resource Survey
Organization: Robert Wise Consulting/Whitpain Township Telephone: (610) 722-5818
Street and No.: Station Square 1, Suite 104, 37 North Valley Road
City, State: Paoli, Pa Zip Code: 19301
Additional Survey Documentation: n/a
Associated Survey Codes: n/a

PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL RESOURCE SURVEY FORM
NARRATIVE SHEET 89C

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
Bureau for Historic Preservation

Survey Code: 167 Tax Parcel/Other No.: 66 00 08278 00 8 Block-Unit #013-084
County: Montgomery 091 Municipality: Whitpain Township
Address: 1220 Wentz Road
Historic/Other Name:

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

This complex consists of a house, "miller" barn, a block shed, and quansit hut. The house is a 45 x 30, 2.5-story, three-bay, hipped roof house clad with stucco. Its probable date of construction is around 1920. The shingles on the roof are asbestos. There is a central dormer with a hipped roof and two windows. The windows on the first and second floors do not have shutters. There is an entry porch over the door that has a gable and is supported by brackets. The third bay is a tower-like element with its own hipped-roof on the rear. A rear addition has bay turrets and an enclosed porch.

Barn:

One of the buildings associated with this house is a large stone bank barn. A frame addition connects the barn to the carriage house/milk shed.

Miller Barn:

Another building on the site is a block and frame barn. This structure has a gable end core and an addition with a simple verge board ornamentation over the large doors. The barn was removed from a location on Skipback Pike and reconstructed by the present owner. Interesting features include the dual corn crib entrance on the northern end and an artist's studio on the upper floor.

Quonset Hut:

A third building is a corrugated steel Quonset Hut adjacent to the barn.

Classification: This is an intact farmstead with significant architecture spanning two centuries. It is rightly classified as a Class I resource.

The Zimmerman's of Silver Lake Farm

1220

By Blanche P. Zimmerman
Photography by George S. Peck

The Zimmerman family on Wentz Road is one of the few families in Whitpain Township, if not the only one, which still lives on and from the land which was acquired by their ancestors before the Revolution. The farm, known as "Silver Lake Farm," has the further distinction of having been operated under the same family name all this time, since the inheritance went in each generation to a son.

Silver Lake Farm is part of an original grant, which document the Zimmers have in their possession, of 5,000 acres given by William Penn to George Palmer in 1682. In 1685, George Palmer gave 500 acres of this grant to his son, William. Since the property passed through several other hands before the Zimmerman's bought it in 1775, this piece deals only with the Zimmerman's.

John Jacob Zimmerman, father of the Zimmerman's who emigrated to America in the seventeenth century, was born in the Duchy of Wurtenburg, Germany. He was a brilliant mathematician, astronomer and scientist, and was the author of many works on theology and astronomy. He was a Lutheran minister for many years but was dismissed because of his leanings toward mysticism. Following his years in the ministry, he was a professor of mathematics at Heidelberg University but his outspoken viewpoints about religion caused him to be expelled from Germany.

With his wife, Maria Margaretha, and their four children, Phillip Christian, Matthaus, Jacob Christopher, who was baptized in 1683, and a daughter, Maria Margaretha, John Jacob left his homeland to start to America. They went by way of Amsterdam where John Jacob fell sick and died. His family, with the help of the Quakers, continued on to America and arrived in Pennsylvania on June 23, 1694, then moved on out to Germantown.

The widow Zimmerman managed to acquire several pieces of property in Germantown before her death in 1723. In her will, which was witnessed by Christoper Witt, the noted botanist, she left property to her two older sons and gave money to the other two children. Since Jacob Christopher didn't inherit any land, he left the area and went north where he bought land in Von Bebber Township. This was in 1708 when he was twenty-five years old. In 1734, he was assessed as a landowner in Worcester Township, a new township which was a part of Von Bebber.



*Aerial View of Silver Lake Farm
Photo Courtesy Edward Canfield*

We have no date of Jacob Christopher's death nor do we have a record of whom he married. We know that he was married and that he had a son, Christopher, who was born in 1735 in Worcester Township.

Christopher Zimmerman married Deborah, daughter of Hance Supplee who was a well-to-do land owner in Worcester Township. It was this Christopher who bought the "plantation" in Whitpain Township from the estate of Charles Jolly, Esq., in 1775.

Charles Jolly, a man of means, had accumulated about 800 acres of land before his death in 1774. He was a man of influence in the township and traveled around quite a bit. To make it easier to get to the main roads, he had a road put through his whole property extending from what is now DeKalb Pike to Germantown Pike. This road still bears his name. After Jolly's death, his widow sold the land at auction and Christopher Zimmerman bought 212 acres of it.

Christopher didn't live to enjoy his "plantation" very long, since he died in 1782 leaving his wife and eight children. Deborah and her children lived on at the homestead (now the Mermaid Lake Swim Club) and Deborah, being a good business woman, continued to add to her holdings. At the time of her death in 1832 she owned around 300 acres.

William Zimmerman, born in 1781, was the third son of Christopher and Deborah Zimmerman. As in the previous generation, the third son received money as his inheritance instead of land. William took his money and went into the lumber business in Philadelphia where he did quite well. His older brother, Isaac, never married and continued to live at home. His brother, Jacob, married Mary White and they lived and produced a family where the present family now lives.

Jacob's sons didn't stay on the farm. Old deeds show that William bought the land from his nephews, Isaac and Jacob, and apparently inherited his brother Isaac's share since Isaac never married and William was next in line.

William Zimmerman married the former Esther Butler of Whitpain Township. They settled down on the farm which William had bought from his nephews and he began to buy back the property which his brothers had sold. At the time of his death in 1862, he had title to 293 acres consisting of the present Silver Lake Farm, what is now Mermaid Lake and the acreage between Silver Lake Farm and Union Meeting Road. This land joined the property of the old Union Meeting House, which was donated by the Zimmerman family. The Zimmerman's were very active in the little church and several family members are buried there.

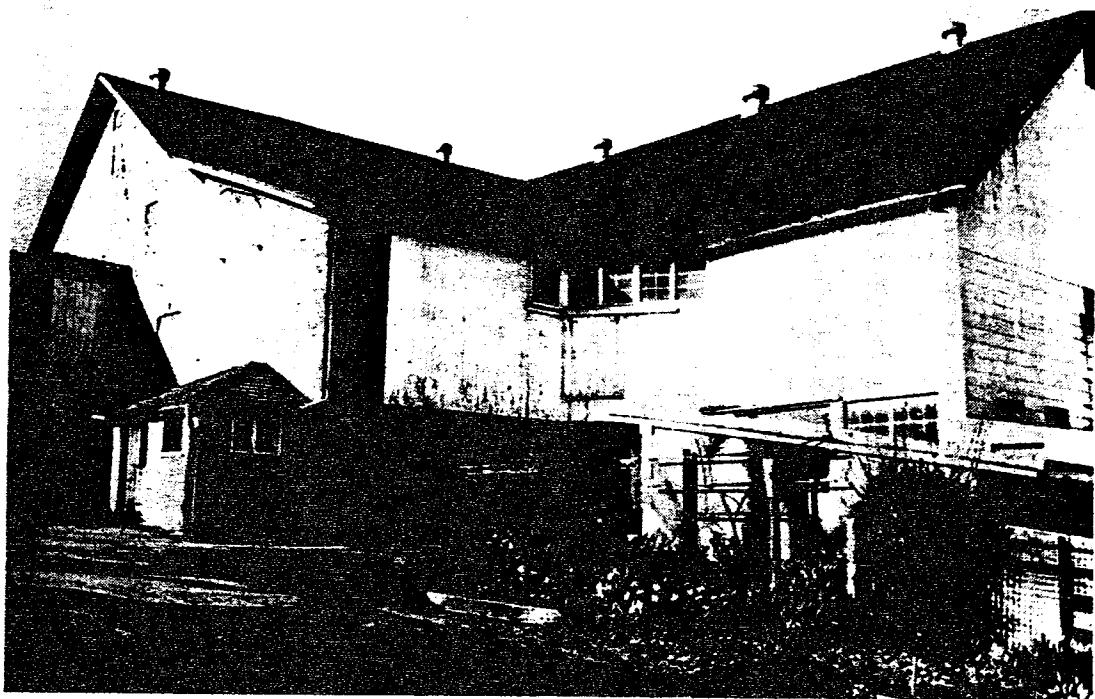
Three sons and a daughter were born to William and Esther: Sylvester, Franklin, Lorenzo and Cecelia. In his will, William divided the real estate equally between his sons and established a dowry for his daughter. Lorenzo was not happy with the piece he got for it was known to be the poorest of the lot. It is interesting that it is the only piece still in the family.

Lorenzo Dow Zimmerman was born in 1872. He married the former Anna Maria Dager of Springfield Township and to them were born two sons, William and George Streeper. Lorenzo didn't live out his life in the country. He had a nice brick house built for himself and his wife, at 1300 DeKalb Street in Norristown, and they lived there in retirement for a good many years before his death in 1918.

William Zimmerman, as his grandfather of the same name had done, left the farm at an early age and sought his fortune in banking. He had a very successful career in his chosen field as did his only child, Frederic Zimmerman. Fred Zimmerman, at 94, is the oldest living member of this line of Zimmerman's. He was, for many years, president of the Montgomery National Bank of Norristown and after that bank merged with the Philadelphia National Bank, was one of its vice-presidents.

George Streeper Zimmerman, grandfather of the present Zimmerman's, was born in 1857. He married Mary Hoover, daughter of a well-known Whitpain family. Hoover Road in the township was named for her family. When his father, Lorenzo, moved to Norristown, George and Mary bought the farm and continually sought to modernize and improve it. It was during their lifetime that electricity was brought to the farm and they were quick to take advantage of all the benefits that ensued.

Clarence Hoover Zimmerman, only child of George and Mary, was born in 1885. He married Edna Meschter Krieble, daughter of Hiram Krieble whose farm is now part of the Normandy Farms on DeKalb Street at Morris Road. Clarence and Edna continued to be progressive farmers and were among the first in the area to mechanize farming. Two sons were born to them, Clarence Edward in 1910 and Merrill Krieble in 1913.



Zimmerman Barn Built in 1804



Two-Family Home of the Zimmerman's

Edward and Merrill successfully carried on the tradition of farming set by their forebears. For many years they operated a dairy farm with an outstanding herd of registered Guernseys and won numerous awards for their cows and dairy products. At the same time, they were using and developing better methods of crop and grass farming and had a full line of modern farm machinery. In 1960, along with their wives, Blanche Perkins from Texas and Louise Everitt from Pennsylvania, they received the coveted Pennsylvania Master Farmer award. This award is given for excellency in farming combined with community service.

Edward and Blanche had three children. Their daughter, Mary Edna, was the first girl born into the family in over a hundred years. She lives with her husband, Richard Ott, and three children: Mark, Kimberly and Eric on Wentz Road. Their son, Paul Edward, is the last male to bear the Zimmerman name in this particular line. He is married to the former Deborah Tyson and is the father of two girls, Heidi and Heather. Mark Lorenzo, Edward's younger son was born in 1947 and died in 1969.

Merrill and Louise also had three children, all girls. Suzanne, married to Lee Powell, has three children, Steven, Gary and Kristin. Joan and her husband, Ronald Amey live on Wentz Road with their three girls, Jennifer, Patricia and Leigh. The only member of her generation to follow the family tradition of farming is Merrill's youngest daughter, Rebecca. She and her husband, Kenneth Schoenberg, are dairy farmers in Franklin County, Pennsylvania. They have two daughters, Kerrie and Gretchen.

The original part of the house in which Edward and Merrill live was built in 1752, presumably by Richard J. Morris, and still stands although the house was gutted by fire in 1931. The house had been added to several times over the years and two or three generations had lived in it at the same time, but after the fire it was rebuilt into a modern two-family dwelling. This allowed both Edward and Merrill ample room to live there with their families.

The large stone barn, built in 1804 by William Zimmerman with the help of his brothers, Jacob and Isaac, still stands. This is very old for a barn for barns so often catch fire, especially when they are used for storing hay.

The old parchment deed which William Penn gave to George Palmer has been mentioned. The Zimmerman's also have in their possession several old sheepskin and parchment deeds and indentures covering various transactions through the years. A copy of a letter written on April 25, 1682, and sent from William Penn to the "Emperor of Canada" raises some interesting questions. Who was the Emperor of Canada? Could he have been an Indian Chief? In the collection, there is a copy of the rather lengthy charter given by Charles the second of England to William Penn, son of Sir William Penn for the "Province of Pennsylvania" dated 1682.



Along with several old account books which the Zimmerman's have is a "Cipher Book" which William Zimmerman used in 1795, at the age of fourteen to learn all the rudiments of mathematics. It was also where he did his writing lessons. A mathematical problem runs:

"A younger brother received 158 S which was just $\frac{7}{12}$ of his elder brother's fortune and $5\frac{3}{8}$ times the elders money was $\frac{2}{3}$ as much as the father was worth. Pray what was the estate valued at?"

The following poem was one of the writing exercises:

"I am constrained to plant a grove
To entertain the girl I love.
This ample grove I must compose
Of nineteen trees in nine straight roes

And in each roe 5 trees must place
Or never expect to see her face.
Ye men of art send me your aid
To satisfy this curious maid."



