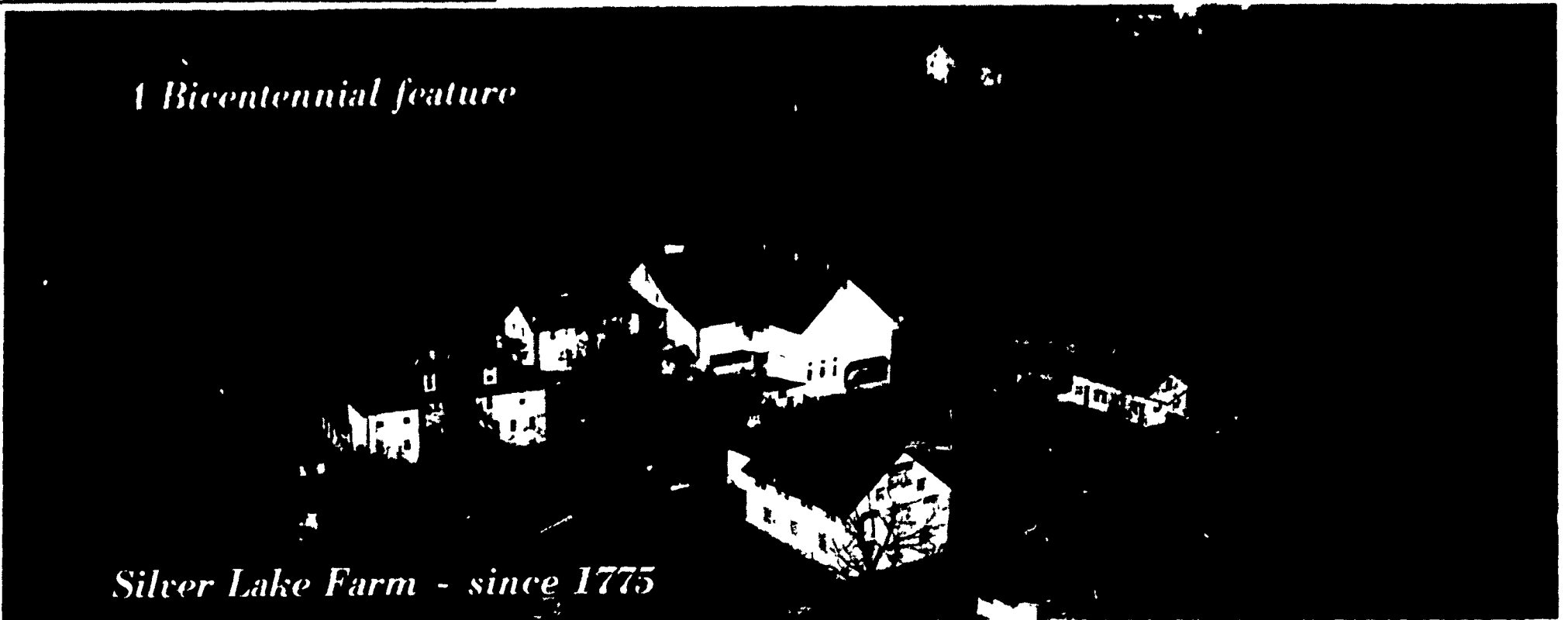


1 Bicentennial feature



Silver Lake Farm - since 1775

They're surrounded by history, urban sprawl

Editor's Note: This is the 6th in a continuing series of feature articles describing farms in southeastern-southcentral Pa. which have been in the same family for 100 or more years. It is LANCASTER FARMING'S way of recognizing and saluting agriculture - the foundation of civilization everywhere.

By DIETER KRIEG

BLUE BELL - Located just 18 miles northeast of downtown Philadelphia, the Zimmerman's "Silver Lake Farm" is hemmed in by developments, the northeast extension of the Pennsylvania Turnpike, and urban sprawl in general. It's one of the last farms in the area, and was THE last dairy farm to go out of business.

Purchased by William Zimmerman in 1775, the original farm contained as many as 830 acres according to some accounts. It has been whittled down to 98 acres. Two brothers, Edward and Merrill Zimmerman, and their wives, Blanche and Louise, are the property's present owners. Their large two-family house contains a section which was erected by the farm's first owner in 1752. Built of stones held together by a lime mortar, the walls are 18 inches thick.

History was in the making when William Zimmerman and his family moved to the farm. The Revolutionary War was in progress. Valley Forge is only eight miles southwest of here, Germantown is nearby, and Washington's Crossing is within easy riding distance. General Washington was in the vicinity and wounded Continental soldiers were treated within two miles of their house. But according to the Zimmerman family their ancestors didn't participate in the Revolution very much. Farming was their profession and they were needed to

provide food not only for their own families but for soldiers as well.

Up until six years ago the Zimmermans were still milking cows - a tradition which had started on a "business scale" in 1804. They were retailing their own milk from 1934 up until the time they closed down in 1970 as a result of economic and urbanization pressures.

Edward Zimmerman still farms the original homestead along with other acreages in this area. When the family had the dairy business, he farmed a total of 450 acres, he said. Now he boards a herd of dairy heifers in his old, well kept barn (built in 1804 out of stones and hand-hewn timbers) and raises hay. Most of his farming income, however, comes from custom work - something he has been involved with since the days when he first started farming. He fashioned

his own self-propelled custom silage harvester in the late 1940's and was one of only six men in the United States to have participated in the Farmers Exchange Program in 1956. The program is for farmers interested in world affairs and provides such men with opportunities to visit foreign agricultural communities. Zimmerman visited Denmark, Venezuela and Italy.

Although Merrill Zimmerman is no longer a full-time farmer, he is a partner in the "Silver Lake Farm" operation and shared the "Master Farmer" award with his brother in 1960.

The Zimmerman family came to the United States as a result of religious differences which arose between John

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Edward and Blanche Zimmerman check through an old ledger book listing prices from late 1800's.



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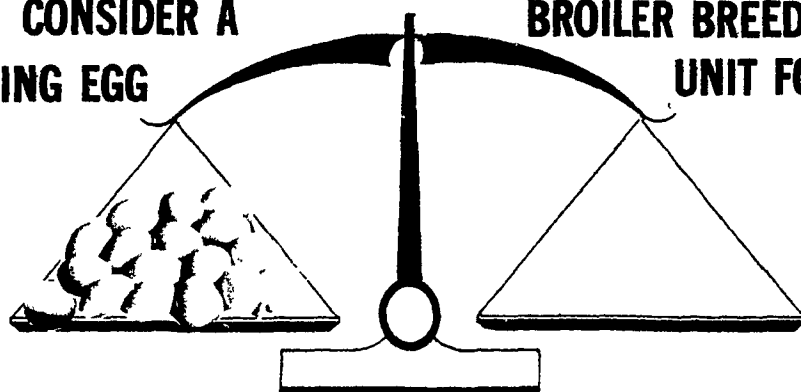
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