Thomas Goodheer is a Perry "Dutchman"

BY BETH HEMMINGER
Staff Correspondent

Perry County's Thomas Goodheer is a Pennsylvania "Dutchman" in every sense of the word This German-born hog producer was raised in Holland for eleven years before making his home on a farm in Blain, near the heart of Pennsylvania's "Dutch" country.

Goodheer's life and love for farming began in 1959 shortly after his mother made a daring escape from East to West Berlin during the construction of the city's famous "Wall." But Goodheer was not to know his natural mother who, he later found out, made her living as a farmer, for soon after his birth he was placed in an adoption agency

There, the young boy with curly-blond hair and blue eyes was an irresistible sight for two United States missionaries who were living and working in Holland. The Goodheers adopted Thomas and took him to live with them near the Netherland's seat of government, The Hague, where he lived for eleven years.

The Goodsheers, first generation Americans, were quite at home in the Netherlands, a country twice the size of New Jersey bordering the North Sea with West Germany as its eastern neighbor and Belgium on its southern side. It was young Thomas' adopted grandfather who, many years before, had made the venture from his native Holland to the United States in search of a brighter future As a young man he made the trans-Atlantic trip and settled in New Jersey

After their 11-year stay in the Netherlands, the missionary family returned to the United States and settled in West Chester, Pennsylvania. That was when young Thomas got his first glimpse of a full-fledged dairy farm He recalled how living near The Hague, a metropolitan area, left little opportunity for him to see the farmer's life in Holland Consequently, he was intrigued by the dairy operation and the gigantic machinery used by a neighboring farmer

"It didn't take long until I was hanging around the farm across the road and then finally I got a job there doing odd things in the summer and after school," he remembered

Thomas' childhood fascination for farming blossomed during his college years His love of the agrarian way of life became intertwined with his love for a fellow student at Northeastern Christian Junior College

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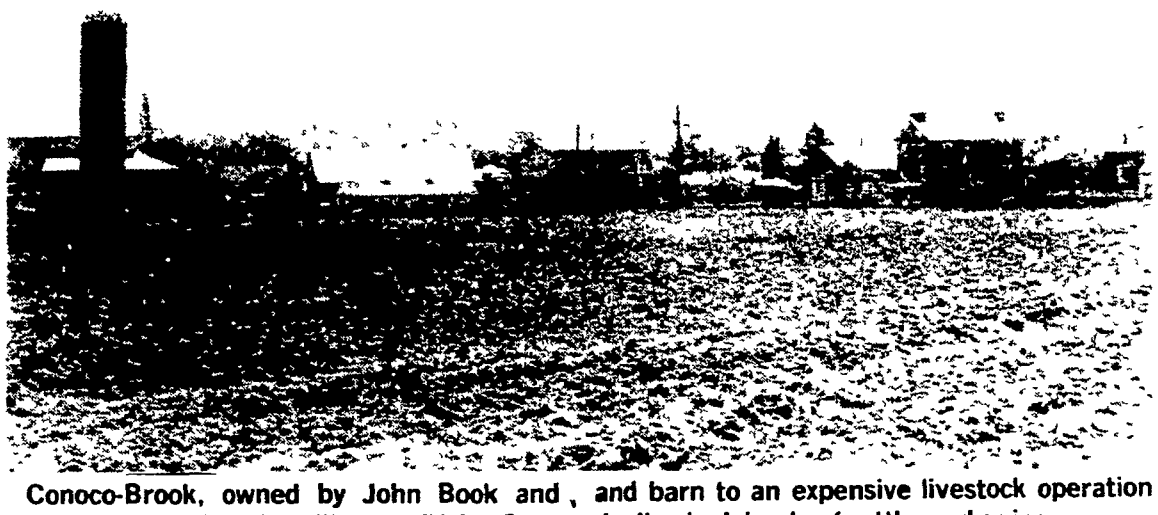

Conoco-Brook, owned by John Book and family, is nestled in the village of Blain. Over the years, the farm has grown from a house and barn to an expensive livestock operation dealing in dairy, beef cattle, and swine.

Being born in West Germany and raised in Holland gives Thomas Goodheer an appropriate title of Pennsylvania Dutchman. The young hog producer, now a U.S. citizen living in Perry County, says he likes "best" his life on Conoco-Brook Livestock Farm, where he lives with his wife and in-laws.

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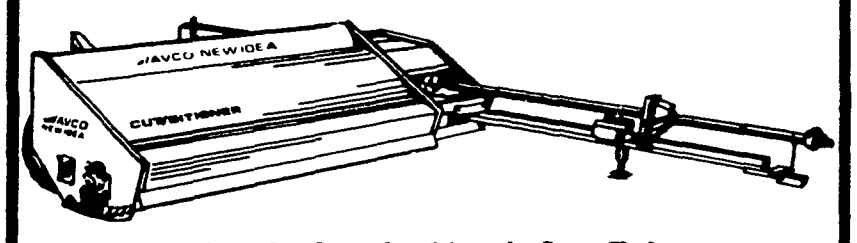

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