

# Former Somerset Farm Boy's Mansion Becomes National Historical Landmark

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SOMERSET (Somerset Co.)**—

North of town, caught in a pocket between Routes 601, 281 and the Lake Road, sits a stately edifice on a hill. Its red brick exterior, marble columns and asymmetrical wings would hardly remind one of somebody's private residence. Yet, it once was.

It's the mansion built by the late Daniel Burnside (D.B.) Zimmerman, a former Somerset area farm boy whose fortune was amassed from business interests begun in his youth. The \$300,000 Georgian-Revival house built in 1915 was the only one in the area ever designed by Horace Trumbauer.

The venerable, 80-year-old mansion, in 1993 was officially opened as the Inn At Georgian Place, offering bed and breakfast accommodations. More recently, because of its architectural merit, the mansion was added to the National Register of Historic Places.

When D.B. Zimmerman, a man who enjoyed throwing parties, died in 1928, 13 years after having the magnificent house built, he left behind a success story that attested to his astute understanding of the coal and cattle industries.

Obviously, he lived by a sixth sense because at the age of 14, he dared to leave the family farm in Somerset County and head west for North Dakota. Probably he was called crazy by a few, and maybe his mother, if she was alive, was worried to death as she watched her son leave, but a magazine article he'd read had aroused his fancy.

In no time, the spunky teen-ager from Pennsylvania had made his first cattle purchase.

From there D.B.'s cattle successes spread much like a prairie fire. "Z" brands were soon grazing on ranges throughout the western United States, from the Dakotas to California. And every year, the growth of his financial assets coincided with the fattening of his cloven-hoofed critters. After all, the market was seeing some 40,000 head of Zimmerman cattle sold annually.

Folks knew about D.B. Zimmerman. By age 50, he was the largest independent cattle dealer

in the country.

Meanwhile D.B.'s "Midas touch" was working equally well in Somerset County where, at age 45, he was the county's largest independent coal operator. By 1907, he had acquired coal interests that totaled 140,000 acres.

Mines at Goodtown and later, in company towns called Wilson Creek, Ralphon and Zimmerman, were developed by the man in 1898.

Parties were popular with D.B. so the mansion was often lively with guests whom his daughter, Sally, acting as hostess, welcomed to these lavish fetes. Lizzie, her mother, opted out of the responsibility.

As D.B.'s spouse, the simplicity of life preferred by Lizzie must have seemed strangely out of balance with the rest of the Zimmerman household, because their son, Ralph also joined his dad in the business.

Lizzie enjoyed cooking in her large kitchen and directing the meticulous care of the house. Interior wood panels were oiled very frequently by a staff of servants.

D.B. had used native woods — oak, cherry, walnut, butternut and poplar, inside the mansion and for its nine fireplaces, Teakwood was chosen for the drawing room.

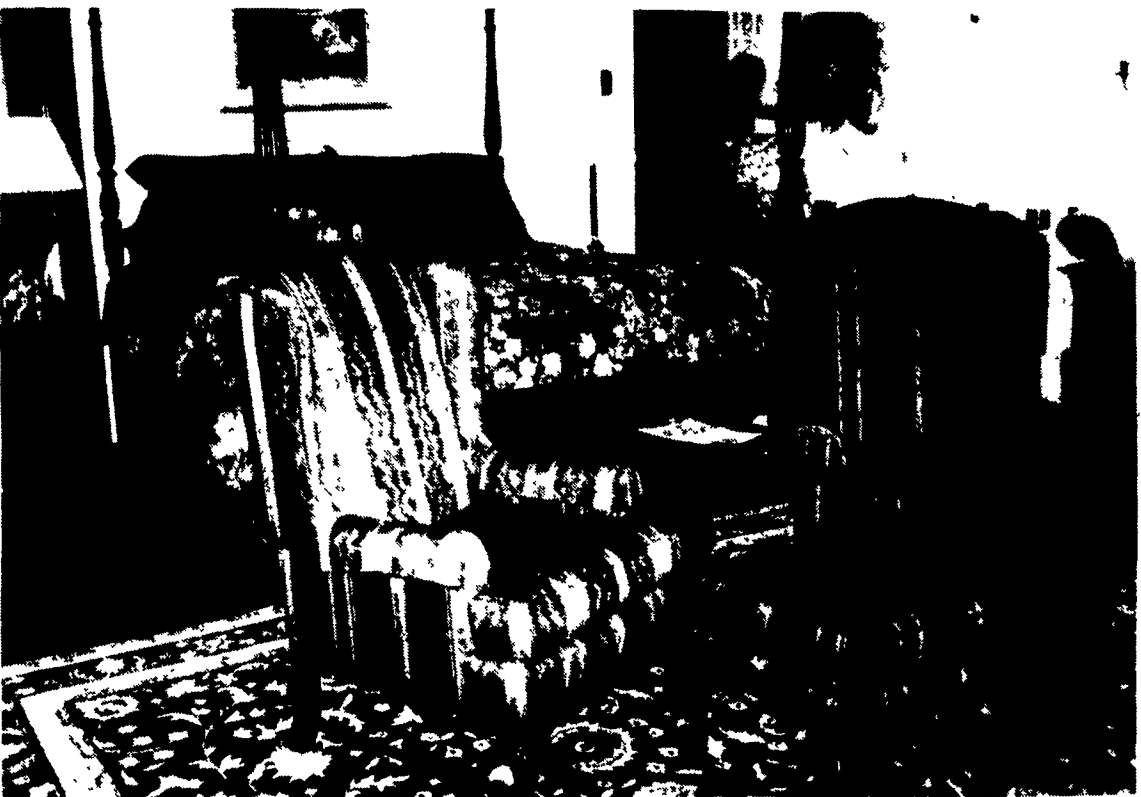
Were it not for Lizzie's appreciation of hearth and home, who knows if the beautiful house would have survived its later years of neglect after the last survivor, Sally, sold it in 1944 to a local coal operator. But despite years without occupancy, the paneling, grand staircase and Italian marble entrance hall have withstood the test of time. So have many of the original crystal and gold-leafed chandeliers, polished brass and silver wall fixtures still used in the mansion.

Records indicate that five years after Sally sold the house it was resold, at a sheriff's sale, for an incredibly paltry, considering its worth, \$30,500.

Inside of the 136-foot long mansion were living room, dining room, library, five massive bedrooms, den, three servants' rooms, three bathrooms, a library, breakfast room, kitchen, smaller rooms and nooks on the third level and



This Georgian-Revival-style mansion built by D.B. Zimmerman, a former Somerset farm boy, is on the National Register of Historic Places.



The Inn at Georgian Place offers bed and breakfast accommodations.

the south wing's tile-floored conservatory.

Restoration of the mansion took place in the early 1990s. Now tea and tours are a daily occurrence at the Inn.

Situated at a lower level and flanking the mansion are the shops of the abstract-shaped, Horizon, Outlet Mall.

For tours and other information call Jon Knupp at (814) 443-1043.



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## HOMESTEAD NOTES