Spanning the Gap



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ART AND ARCHITECTURE

Designed with Nature: The Zimmermann Estate

Spanning the Gap
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One of the most imposing historic sites the recreation area is Marie Zimmermann Farm. Structures dating from the 1870's to the early 1900's, constructed in the various period revival styles of the day, stretch across a rolling landscape that is just part of an estate that was once much larger. The site was carefully landscaped with selected species of shrubs and trees and, of course, gardens with lots of flowers... enough to provide every room of the main house with flowers during the entire summer.

(Left, top to bottom)
Open House on Marie
Zimmermann
Commemoration Day, June
14, 2003; Marie
Zimmermann in her 20s;
Marie in her studio in
Gramercy Park N.Y. in 1926.



The tree-lined entrance drive, or *allée*, to the house.



A remnant of the garden by the house.

The elements have since taken their toll on many of these site features, however. Still, an impressive corridor of trees (*allée*) planted long ago to line the entrance drive is now mature enough to focus the attention of approaching visitors upon the estate's crowning jewel, the Zimmermann House itself.

The home was constructed for John Zimmermann, a manufacturer from Brooklyn, probably around 1912. The house combines both the Dutch Colonial Revival and the French Chateau styles to form a unique blend, and also exudes influences from the Richardsonian Romanesque as well as the Arts and Crafts styles. Architectural historians refer to such hybrid building styles as *eclectic*.



Eclectic is certainly a word that aptly describes the younger of Zimmermann's daughters, Marie. She is believed to have contributed to the house's design, with an architect of unknown identity most likely having translated her ideas into

construction drawings. But even more notable was her reputation as perhaps the most versatile artist of early 20th century America. She was a sculptress, a painter, a goldsmith and silversmith, a cabinet maker, a wood carver, a jeweler, and even a blacksmith! To master these diverse crafts took her more than 25 years, "with each day filled with 10 or 12 hours of work," she said. She maintained a studio in Gramercy Park in New York to create her designs.



The west facade.



The south facade.



A detail of the west facade.



By 1935 she had achieved recognition as a "female Cellini," with one newspaper article comparing her to that 16th century Florentine goldsmith and sculptor. So skilled was she at approximating the works of Old World craftsmen that her products were sometimes

mistaken for heirlooms of the Renaissance. By 1936, with her parents no longer living, and her brothers and sisters gone, she took sole possession of her family's house south of Milford, Pennsylvania.

By this time she had stopped producing her metal work, and now she proceeded instead to hone her marksmanship and hunting skills and to practice the art of fly-casting with an adeptness that few could match.

Currently the Zimmermann Farm buildings are mothballed. They contain no valuables, all of Marie's art work having been passed on to her heirs years ago. And while the site is closed to vehicles, it is accessible by foot.



The turret.



A detail of the southwest facade.