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Donated home on the Susquehanna declared a heritage site

LAUREN WHETZEL *The York Dispatch*

Updated: 08/04/2010 11:08:08 AM EDT

John Zimmerman is proud of the historic home he and his wife, Kathryn, donated three years ago. If Kathryn were living, she would be "delighted to see the wonderful things being done with the home to better the community," said John, 86.

The home was built along the Susquehanna River in the 1700s. After restorations that took the home back to its original conditions, it was donated to the Susquehanna Gateway Heritage Area in 2007, John Zimmerman said.

The home at 1706 Long Level Road now serves as the John and Kathryn Zimmerman Center for Heritage in Lower Windsor Township. The center was recently named an official York County heritage site by the York County Planning Commission.



John and Kathryn Zimmerman restored and then gave away the Long Level Road residence.

In addition, The National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Office earlier this month awarded \$100,000 to the center for new visitor attractions, said Marie Cartwright, spokeswoman for the heritage area.

Improvements: The new improvements will include a floating dock for boats, a canoe and kayak launch area, a boardwalk and new trail head for the Native Lands County Park and Heritage Trail, which are part of the Susquehanna Heritage Park and Mason-Dixon Trail system, Cartwright said.

There will also be two interpretive pavilions built, which will provide shelter and educational signs to explain the site and river, she said.

The project is expected to be complete by June 2012.

Currently, the center is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, for tours of the home and to view its "Visions of the Susquehanna River Art Collection."

The 'project': The Zimmermans have resided in Mount Wolf for 63 years, but purchased the historic home in 1998 as a "project," one they completed in 2005, Zimmerman said.

"I was president of Historic York in 1960, so I knew the background of the property," he said. "I always had an interest in restoration and Kathryn was interested in interior decoration. It was something that we worked on together."

After "having a great experience finishing restorations in the home," Zimmerman said, none of his family were interested in living there, and he knew that the Susquehanna Heritage Trust was looking for a new office location.

"My wife and I met with the them (Trust) and agreed to let them use the home for a period of time, thinking we would share it with them," he said. "

The donation: Other than hosting a few Thanksgiving dinners at the home, the Zimmermans realized they didn't get much use from the home and decided to completely donate the home to the organization.

"They had a great objective in line with cleaning up the river that we decided to give the home to them," he said, noting it "worked beautifully" and the heritage area continues to do a great job with the home.

Shortly after donating the home to the organization, Kathryn Zimmerman passed away.

"It was important to her that we donated the home before she died, because she wanted to get it done while she was alive," Zimmerman said.

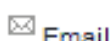
Zimmerman, who still visits the home frequently, encourages people to visit the home to grasp its historic beauty.

"Kathryn and myself felt we needed to save the home to maintain its historical value," he said. "The whole idea that it's been saved and is receiving money to better the property for people to enjoy would be very meaningful to her."

About the event

The Zimmerman Center, 1706 Long Level Road in Lower Windsor Township, will host an open house for visitors to learn more details about the improvements, as well as tour the facility, from 4 to 6 p.m. Saturday at the facility.

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