

## CENTENNIAL FARMS SPOTLIGHT

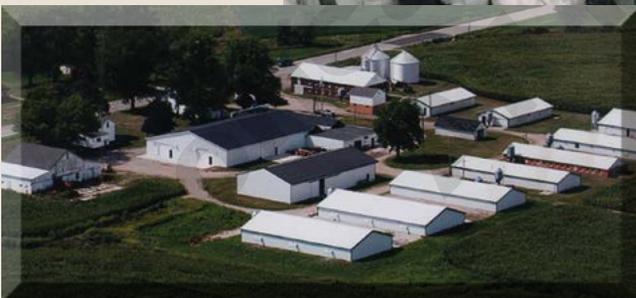
# JACOB AND ADA GEERLINGS FARM

## ZEELAND, MICHIGAN

### ESTABLISHED OCTOBER 25, 1913



*Above: The dryer, wet bin, and dry bins. Left: The house. Below: Jacob checking a leg band.*



*Above: An aerial photo from 2013. Right: The garage.*



Established in 1913 by Jacob and Ada Geerlings, Townline Poultry Farm is now in its fourth generation of family ownership and is located in Zeeland, Michigan, a community known in the 1920s as the “chick center of the mid-west.” The farm originally bred chickens to improve their quality and survivability and, in the process, create a better strain of chicken for the consumer. Because of their efforts in the leghorn strain of chickens, Townline won numerous awards for their work.

Passionate about his work, Jacob would enclose a personal letter with his catalog that he mailed to his customers. During the Great Depression, Jacob lowered his prices to help his customers afford his breeding stock. In the 1940s, Jacob’s son Henry assumed the management of the farm and continued with the breeding program.

The 1960s saw hardship because many of the hatcheries in Zeeland closed or moved south due to the climate or the lack of family interest in carrying on the farming tradition. Henry, with the help of his children, persevered and changed the focus of the farm from the raising of breeder stock to that of raising and selling chicks to anyone who was interested in raising chickens as a hobby or for profit.

The third generation of Geerlings became the owners and operators of Townline Poultry Farm in the late 1980s. The three sons—Jack, Richard, and Don—began to make changes to

the farm, reflecting the public trend of raising and producing your own food. To meet this demand, an additional hatchery was built, as well as more coops to house the nearly 40,000 hens on the farm. The farm also raises corn on 300 acres of land to use as feed.

This past year, the fourth generation of Geerlings assumed a managing interest in the farm. Jack Geerling's son John is now involved in the daily activities of the farm and plans on encouraging future generations of this family to carry on the tradition set forth by his great-grandfather Jacob. ☒



Left top: An aerial photo from 2000. Left bottom: Jacob on hatch day. Below: Henry posing with eggs.



*This Centennial Farm designation is sponsored by*

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