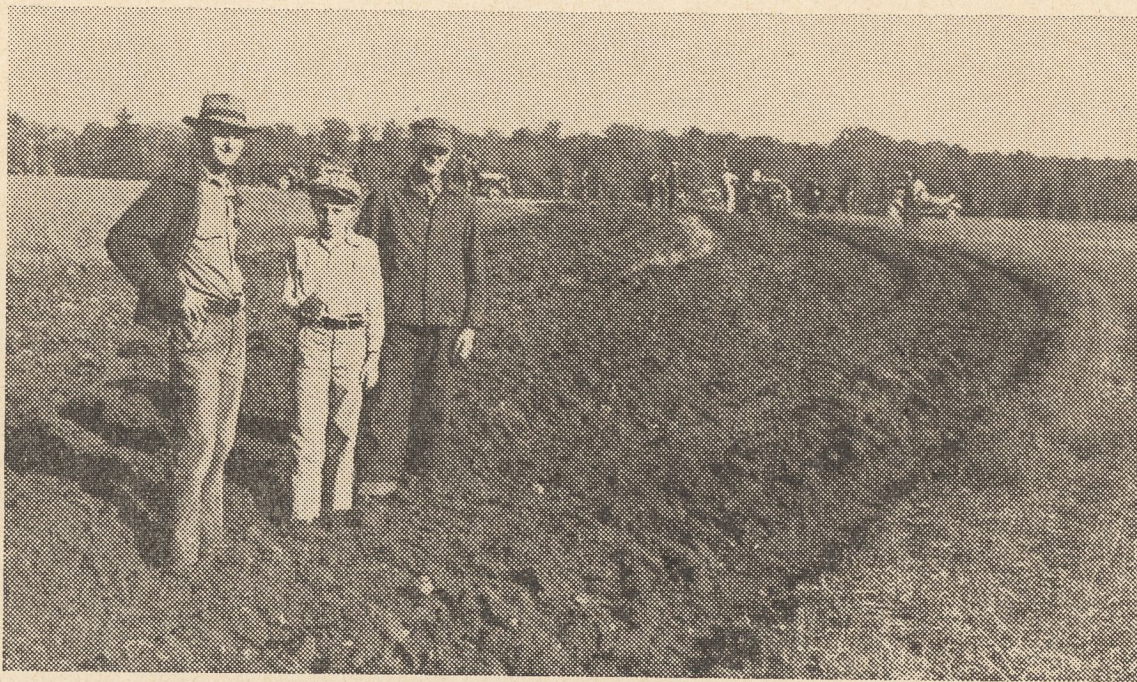


Soil Conservation In Lincoln County



Oscar Schultz, his son, Wayne, and his brother, Walter, standing in the center of a terrace being built on a contoured plowed field at the recent Soil Conservation demonstration held on the two Schultz Brothers' farms, Pine River. Three hundred interested spectators from eight counties attended the demonstration, the first and largest of its kind held in this section of Wisconsin.

One Sunday afternoon three years ago this fall, Oscar Schultz, town of Pine River farmer, looked gloomily at 32 inches of top soil that had washed off a 3% slope and now nestled against a pasture fence. It suddenly dawned on Oscar that here was the answer to why this field has been declining in crop yield. He probed into the injurious effect of erosion on other fields which had been farmed for some thirty years and found that as little as five inches of the original 11 inches of top soil remained. This bit of research convinced Oscar it was high time to do something about keeping this pay dirt on his fields where it belonged.

Oscar Gets Busy

It was too late to do anything that fall and it took Oscar some time to make up his mind, but from the spring of 1943 and through the fall plowing season of 1944, Oscar was a busy man converting his farm into a show place, where recently a record crowd of 300 agricultural experts, farm machinery men, county board members and farmers from eight counties traveled miles to see and learn what this Lincoln county farmer had done to keep his top soil from oozing off his farm.

These visitors were well repaid for the time they spent at this soil conservation demonstration, which turned out to be the largest of its kind ever staged in north central Wisconsin. They heard County Agent Gus Sell explain the new practices Oscar had undertaken in soil management. They saw soil managed fields that had paid Oscar extra cash dividends up to almost 50%. They saw the black earth on an adjoining farm glisten in the sun as seven tractor-powered plows raced across a field leaving graceful contours in their wake, then see-saw back and forth to gouge a terrace along the contours. Factual comparisons were made with terraced and unterraced fields.

First Results

Mr. Schultz terraced his first field in the spring of 1943. The yield was so uniformly good that Oscar decided not only to expand his terracing operations but to keep more accurate tab on per

acre yield. The second field on the Schultz farm was terraced in the fall of 1943. After harvest in 1944 results were compared with a parallel unterraced field. The terraced field produced 48 bushels of oats per acre; the unterraced field, 26 bushels per acre. The net gain through terracing amounted to 22 bushels. These figures projected into dollars and cents amounted to an increase of \$16.75 per acre. Digging deeper into economic facts, it cost Oscar \$2.00 per acre to terrace, giving him a net profit of 8 to 1 on his investment.

An explanation of how this stepped up income was obtained is found in a more complete analysis of Oscar's second terraced field. Before terracing, the lower wet section of this field had produced 40% less than the top area, due to insufficient drainage. Terracing balanced this condition during the past growing season. The former wet section produced 30 bushels per acre this year, while the top area produced 24 bushels per acre, a difference of 6 bushels instead of the 40% spread of the year before. Control and utilization of the water that fell on this land put wet soil to work, at the same time completely reversing the productive structure of the field. The odd fact that the bottom land out-produced the top area is due to excessive run off onto this section from a neighbor's field.

Side Light

Back of these demonstrations on the Schultz farm there is an interesting side light that reveals the trend of thinking among our farmers of tomorrow. In fact, it points up the fact that it was not Oscar's initiative alone that won him over to a soil conservation program that is now mapped through 1947. In the spring of 1942, when Gus Sell called in representatives of the District U. S. Soil Conservation Service to draw up a soil conservation plan, Oscar began to hedge a bit over what some of his neighbors might call "new fangled ideas." It took his young son, Wayne, eleven years old at that time, to decide the matter, when he popped the \$64.00 question, "If we don't do it, Dad, is there going to be any good land left for me to farm when I grow up?"

More Productive

Today the big factor that concerns Mr. Schultz and his new project is the definite assurance that his land, instead of being farmed out, is becoming more productive through terracing. Oscar has found out that terracing can mean the difference between a half crop and a good bumper yield. Years ago it was felt that soil conservation was practical for southern Wisconsin only, but had little to do with the day to day job of farming in northern Wisconsin. Today these basic factors are the foundation of the new agriculture which is spreading over America.

New Movement

Oscar Schultz' experience has added impetus to this great movement in the north, and now eleven of Oscar's neighbors up and down the county trunk road that runs past his farm, have indicated their keen interest by inaugurating soil conservation programs for their own farms. The first neighbor to adopt this program was his brother, Walter, and their farms are now divided by a newly-built grass waterway. Oscar says his program has just started. He now has 29 acres terraced and is proving that there will be plenty of good land to farm when young Wayne becomes old enough to farm it.

Through action taken by the County Board at the November meeting in 1943, Lincoln county is now in a soil conservation district of its own, under Joe Jackelen. This program is under the direction of the agricultural committee of the county board, who supervises policies and working procedures. Since last April when the program went into effect, 20 Lincoln county farmers have undertaken terracing jobs. The U. S. Soil Conservation Service is strictly a service agency. When called upon, it works out definite plans to fit each particular farmer's needs. No charges are made for this service. Mr. Jackelen's office is located in the Court House and he works in close connection with County Agent Gus Sell, in this progressive movement to protect Lincoln county's top soil for the new generation of Lincoln county's farmers of tomorrow.