

Where AMERICAN AGRICULTURE Is COMING OF AGE



ENTERING LITTLE TRAPPE
FARM IMPROVEMENT AREA
VISITORS WELCOME

What Little Trappe Has Learned Means a Lot to Other Farm Folks

They started from scratch, made good farms for themselves when it hardly seemed possible.

"Had to do something or get off," says Walter Kufahl (His farm was pretty well worn out by 60 years of raising hay for the ox-teams of the logging camps.) Mike Krubsack's father advised him to go somewhere else if he wanted to farm. (Little Trappe soils had become almost unfit for farming.) Now Mike says that because of the work done by the Little Trappe organization, the farmers in Little Trappe "can keep up with the best of them." He doesn't plan to leave.

In other parts of Wisconsin and all over the country are farms and neighborhoods with problems of worn-out soil, declining crop yields, uncertain young people.

What Little Trappe did, other communities can do. How it can be done is perhaps the most valuable lesson Little Trappe teaches. Let Oscar, Walter, Elmer, Mike and the rest of them tell it in their own way.

(about all-around planning)

"Each program helped the others . . . We should never have had the results in any one of them without the others. They didn't preach lime and fertilizer alone, or terracing and drainage alone, or any one practice alone but all together."

(about people working together)

"One man could plow around here for six years and get nowhere unless the rest put their shoulders to the wheel."

". . . the best thing out of this organization is a closer relationship of people."

"They were three men who worked together; there wasn't any envy or jealousy."

(finding out what's going on in other places)

"We want information for our community and we feel too that we have something to offer as well as gain."

(about getting results)

"I've farmed all my life . . . and just now am beginning to enjoy it,"

"One thing leads to another."



Where American Agriculture is Coming of Age

By

ROSSLYN WILSON

Collaborating with

W. M. LANDESS and FORREST TURNER*

★ *WORKING WITH NATURE and with each other, Little Trappe farmers are projecting a pattern of enrichment into farm and community life. They offer hope that agriculture may some day join, as an equal partner, the other organized groups of our democracy.*

IN PINE RIVER township American agriculture is coming of age.

It is coming of age because Oscar Schultz and a group of his neighbors in Little Trappe are assuming their responsibility to so relate themselves to their natural environment that the soil is enriched and its productivity increased and maintained.

It is coming of age because this group of farmers is recognizing its responsibility to relate agriculture to its economic, institutional, and government resources so that the farmer can grow to full stature in mastering and conducting efficiently the agricultural affairs of our nation.

It is coming of age because this group is recognizing that people are the final crop of our land; that as our soils grow or perish, so grow or

* Mrs. Rosslyn Wilson and W. M. Landess are staff members of the Division of Agricultural Relations, Tennessee Valley Authority. Forrest Turner is associated with the Wisconsin College of Agriculture as Extension Field Crop specialist and state supervisor of test-demonstration farms.

perish the physical, mental, and spiritual abilities and opportunities of people in our democracy.

Nobody told the farmers of the Little Trappe Farm Improvement Association these things in so many words. Many of them perhaps do not even yet realize the full implications of what they are doing. They will tell you that they are just a small group of dirt farmers banded together to do something about the fertility of their soil—and finding themselves in an increasing number of other affairs that directly or indirectly affect that fertility. Yet in so doing, they are bringing to new maturity the muscular giant of American agriculture who is trying to cradle a whole hungry world in its arms, yet who has been subjected to an increasing amount of parental control by influences far removed from the farm.

Their action comes at a time when our entire nation is becoming concerned with the foreboding implications of our declining soil fertility. With growing awareness that the vigor of all our people, the very quality of our national existence, depends not only on whether or not we can maintain present fertility levels of our soil but on whether or not we can build those soils to new heights of continued production, we have begun the search for ways to develop this basic resource.

Building for Themselves—and Their Community

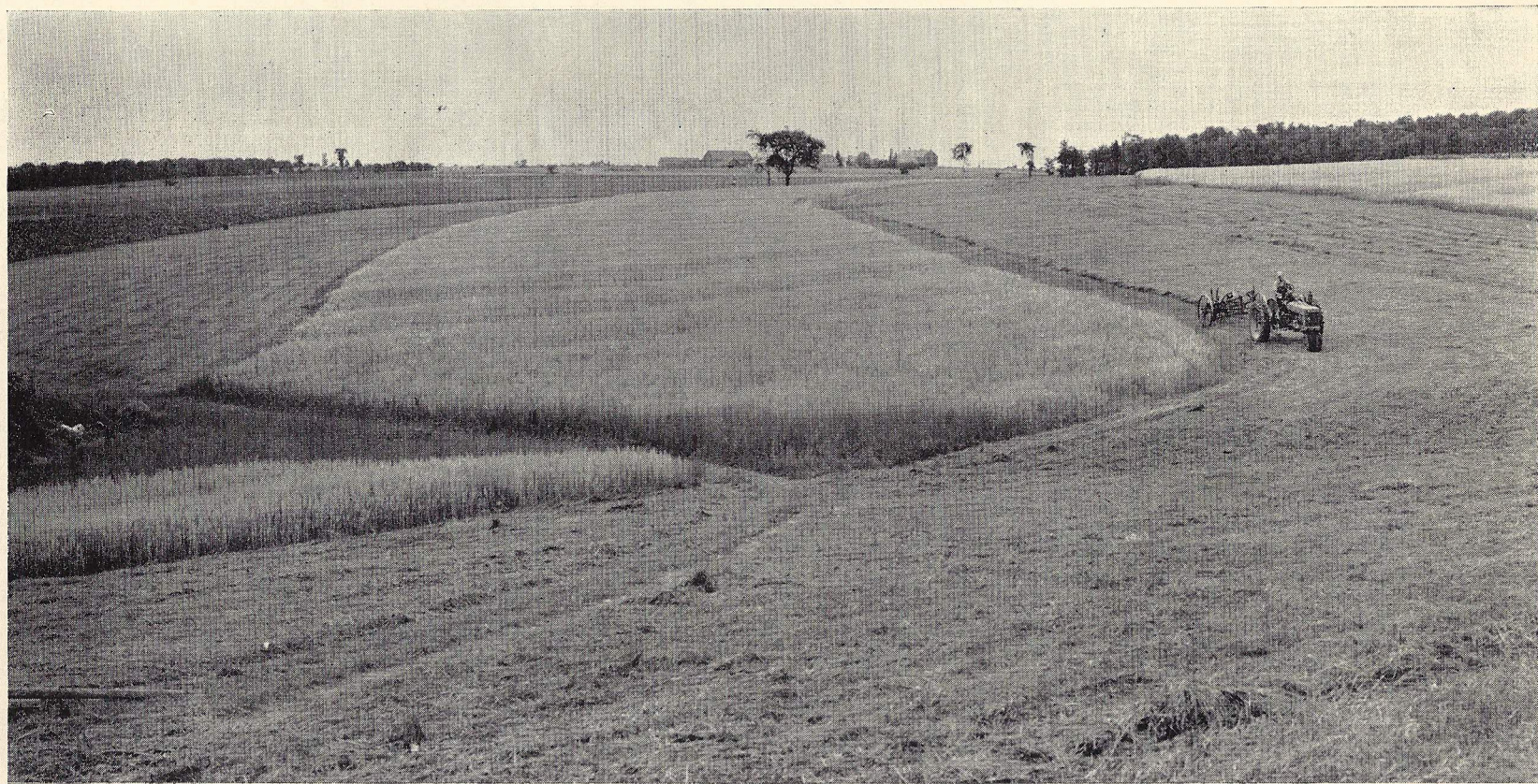
The Little Trappe group is finding its own answers to this problem—and finding them in a way that is developing its members to new competence in the affairs of their farms, their community, and their county. By working together, these farmers have begun to double, triple—and more—the production of their individual farms. They are building fertility where there was little or none. They are learning that they are farmers of the sun, wind, rain, and snow, as well as of the soil; and that they can use these tools of creation to produce new abundance from the land. And in the process of learning the fundamental pattern by which their land can be built to new production, in the process of fitting their lives into this pattern, they are developing new abilities and new confidence in themselves. They are finding that as a group they can use more efficiently the technical and educational services set up to help the farmer; that they can create opportunity for development of ability, knowledge, and talent of the individual as he takes part in community affairs; that here they can set the pattern to train their members to take competent part in town, county, state, and national affairs, affecting the farm family's ability to build the soil and live from it in growing abundance.



THE PROBLEM ★ *Soil washing and weakening, crop yields discouragingly low*



THE PEOPLE ★ *Meeting together, they set out to solve their problems*



THE PAY-OFF ★ *Erosion checked, fertility restored, crops yields greatly improved*

LITTLE TRAPPE is a small community in Pine River Township, the southeastern corner of Lincoln County, Wisconsin. Of the 18 farms in the Farm Improvement Association, the average is perhaps 120–130 acres. It is a dairying community—90 percent of the county's farm income is from dairying—and oats and hay are the major crops. Rainfall is usually adequate during the growing season. The soils in their natural state are wet, heavy, and poorly drained; slopes are long and, generally speaking, gentle.

There are some 3,000,000 acres of this type of soil in Wisconsin, so the work done by the Little Trappe Association has a statewide significance from that standpoint alone—aside from the national significance of a group of farmers assuming responsibility for fundamental resources of national concern and proving themselves capable of planning and providing for the development of those resources to both individual and public advantage.

The Little Trappe Farm Improvement Association was organized in 1945. As Marcus Krubsack says—"Mike" is the young bachelor vice-president who is man-of-affairs enough to need the briefcase he carries—"It didn't come up; it accumulated." The farmers themselves aren't quite sure just how it did begin, but they are unanimous in their declaration that Oscar Schultz and his farm have been a major influence in its development.

Oscar Schultz has been president of the association since its beginning. Slight of build, sandy-haired, he speaks carefully and inspires confidence that his opinions are considered and based on fact. He and his son Wayne, a senior in high school, operate a 120-acre dairy farm. Both convinced of the value of their organization to themselves and their community, they put in considerable time on association activities, considering them a part of successful farming. This is the general attitude of all the members.

Seeds of Organization Sown Years Ago

Oscar and Walter Kufahl made what some of the farmers feel was the first step in the train of events that led to the community organization. Back in 1915 the two young men attended a winter short course in livestock feeding arranged by the county agent and conducted by specialists from the university. This was the beginning of extension work in the county; work which has from the start encouraged learning by doing, informed and inspired farm families to action—not acted for them, and tried to develop the capabilities of people to do their own work more effectively. Oscar tripled his milk production by feeding methods he learned at this course, and he and farmers in the community got their first concept that there were influences outside their township that could help them do a better job of farming.

This realization, however, didn't result in any overnight transformation of farming in Little Trappe. Individual action rarely progresses that

rapidly. It was not until the '20's that what might be termed the next step was taken. Walter Kufahl, whose farm was pretty well worn out by some 60 years of producing hay for ox-teams in the logging camps, "had to do something or get off," he says. At the recommendation of the county agent, he started using lime and fertilizers to see if he could raise the 7 to 10 bushels-to-the-acre grain yield he averaged in 1928.

During the next ten to fifteen years he stepped up grain and hay yields five or six times; as one of his neighbors declared, "Once he couldn't feed a span of mules; now he threshes more than anyone else in the community." But Walter points out that since he kept no yield or cost records nor left any check plots, his results didn't convince his neighbors that they could follow suit to their advantage.

Farm Situation Becomes Critical

In the meantime, Oscar Schultz was watching production decrease on his own farm as well as those of most of his neighbors. During the '30's both yield and quality of crops declined. Mineral deficiencies also began making their appearance in the livestock in cases of rickets, goiter, and cases of aborted calves. "Clovers disappeared from our meadows and attempts at reseeding were failures. Our herds' health did not improve, nor did our soils improve, as fields then supposedly in grain failed to grow anything and were victims of erosion." He tells of 32 inches of dirt and manure deposited at the bottom of one of his slopes from a plowed field after a single rain.

The entire community was going down the same road, Oscar says. "Our feed bills were mounting steadily, and our labor income dropped. We increased our acreage in roughage trying at least to supply our live-



The Schultz farmstead—typical of thousands over the land



Oscar Schultz . . . a major influence

stock needs in this way. By this time we had used all the available cropland in our endeavor to keep from buying both roughage and feeds. We rented pasture—and still we had to buy hay for our stock. Our farm business was definitely declining, the problems mounting to the point where it looked gloomy for the future of agriculture in our community. Farms were being sold, quite often to a neighbor who was making a last ditch stand by increasing

his acreage to offset the crop yield decline. It was only a temporary relief, and in a few years we would again find ourselves with the same problem to overcome in a greater measure.”

These symptoms of depleting soils Oscar thought then were his problem and that of his neighbors. So they were. But throughout the nation these symptoms were and are appearing in increasing numbers and in increasingly widespread areas. Soils we thought were endlessly fertile are losing their strength. Just as Oscar’s uneasiness over his own land grew, national alarm is spreading as we become more aware of the unbreakable relationship between the strength of our soils and the vigor of our people, the strength of our nation.

Would Another School Help?

Casting about for some way out of this dilemma, Oscar approached Gus Sell, then county agent, with a suggestion that a farm school be held in Little Trappe. From his experience with the school he and Walter Kufahl had attended he felt that such a school might help both him and his neighbors find the answers to their present situation. Accepting responsibility for his own farm, he wanted to learn what was needed so he himself could do it—he wasn’t looking for someone to do his job for him.

By that time, agricultural specialists were feeling that the soils in the Little Trappe area were almost unfit for farming. Mike Krubsack says that his father, dissatisfied with things as they were, advised him to go somewhere else if he wanted to farm. In 1941, Oscar Schultz says his labor income—his total income after deduction of expenses and interest on capital investment—was only \$41.

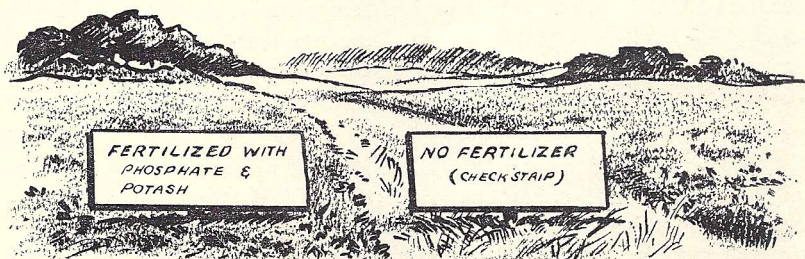
Test-Demonstration Work Begun

That year Oscar was selected as a test-demonstration farmer by the county agricultural committee. In this capacity he was to work with the Wisconsin College of Agriculture and the Tennessee Valley Authority in testing and demonstrating the use of mineral fertilizers on Wisconsin soils in a program of soil building for better living. TVA was to provide the necessary phosphates—one of the minerals most deficient in soils of this area—from its experimental plant at Muscle Shoals, Alabama. The extension service, through the county agent, was to guide their use in a whole farm and family approach to farm problems, beginning with building the soil and carrying it on up through plants and animals to the home and the farm family itself. The family agreed to follow recommended practices, buy lime and other minerals needed by the soil, keep detailed records of action and results, and allow the farm to be used as a demonstration of results from such an approach. The establishment of test-demonstration farms like this is, in effect, a broadening of extension teaching, a further bridging of the gap between the latest in scientific findings and the farmer on the land.

So began the work that Gus Sell was later to term "easily the most satisfying experience in my 30 years of extension work." From that time until he left the county in 1948 to enter vocational work, Gus worked very closely with Oscar as one of the test-demonstration farmers, and with the Little Trappe group. He had as much influence on its work and development as perhaps any other one person outside the group.

Tests and Check Plots Reveal Needs

On the Schultz farm, Oscar began to apply lime and fertilizers as indicated by soil tests made by an extension specialist. Of these test, Oscar says, "the results were amazing. There was little plant food left in the soil. We had a complete rebuilding job to be done." In applying the



On test-demonstration farms, results from fertilizers are measured against a check-strip on which no fertilizer is used



Members meet regularly to report on experimental work each is doing. Outside speakers are often invited to help arrive at solutions to problems

recommended amounts of plant nutrients, check strips were left to evaluate the results. Strips were left where phosphate was used alone, where potash alone was used, and where nothing was used. Grain samples were later taken of these plots. "The results were all the inspiration necessary to start the soil building program now being used on our farm," Oscar declares.

In doing this work, Oscar had accepted a responsibility to his community that was brought out for the first time when Gus Sell made arrangements for the first field day to be held on his farm that year. All the farmers in the county were invited, and several of the neighbors who were later to join in the Little Trappe Association came to see results. "This was probably the first gathering of some of the members of the present association where soil fertility was discussed," Oscar says. The visitors saw treated portions of Oscar's fields outyielding untreated plots by as much as 20 bushels of oats to the acre. "Our new clover seedings under the TVA program looked as promising as we had seen them for many years." These check plots and the careful records Oscar was keeping showed farmers convincingly just what caused the differences, Walter Kufahl points out. As Oscar became convinced by his own work, so did his neighbors who came to see.

The soil building work gradually brought to bear on Oscar's farm all the scientific and educational forces available to the farmer. In considering the farm and the farm family as the operating unit, with expanded opportunity for the farm family the ultimate goal, each problem that concerned it was treated in its relation to the whole picture. As Oscar's work progressed to emphasize the needs of different phases of his farming, Gus Sell called in from the college specialists in such things as

pasture renovation, crop varieties, livestock, dairying, feeding, poultry, farm records, and many other fields. Each of these men found the work in his special field being fitted into Oscar's farm program, with its relationship to the development of the entire farm and family carefully considered. Each was brought in to contribute the knowledge of his field to the perfection of the whole unit—the Schultz farm. Oscar was learning the latest thinking in each of these fields as it applied to his own particular situation.

The first results from the lime and fertilizer application brought out more clearly the problem of water in its relation to soil care and crop yields. An extension soils specialist was called in. His tests showed a loss of from 25 to 50 percent of the topsoil from areas of the farm. Also the Glandon and Auburndale Silt Loams that composed most of the Schultz farm and other farms in the community had a tight subsoil, and as a result seepage was a problem on the lower areas of the long slopes. The specialist suggested terracing to help combat the topsoil loss, with only a half-formed idea that it might help the seepage problem as well.

Son's Future Deciding Factor

At first doubtful about such a major change in his farming, Oscar was spurred on into taking this step by Wayne, then only 11 years old, who had been watching the tests and listening to the conversation with more than a child's ordinary interest in adult activities. "Dad," he said, "if so much of our topsoil is already gone, will there be any farm left for me when I grow up?" Oscar, who was hoping that Wayne *would* take over when he grew up, started terracing the following spring. Wayne, seeing a new world open up to him as the entire farm started up the ladder of fertility, took increasing interest year by year.

These first terraces added another technical service to the rounded-out farm plan, as they were built in the spring of 1943 with the help of Ed Hill, district soil conservationist from Wausau. These terraces were of the plow-built, narrow-base type, and Oscar had so much difficulty getting his farm machinery over them that summer that they were rebuilt



"Dad, will there be any farm left for me when I grow up?"

that fall with a broader base and gentler slope. As a result of Oscar's experience, the broad-base terrace is now in general use in the county, one indication of the influence farmers like Oscar can have on recommendations made by our technical services.

The check plots on this first terraced field the first season showed a definite increase in yield over unterraced fields, and much to the surprise of everyone—the specialists as well as Oscar and his neighbors—the terraces corrected the seepage problem and increased yields considerably on the lower slopes. Partly as a result of the interest created by Oscar's work, a Soil Conservation district was formed in Lincoln County that year and a technician was sent in to work with these problems throughout the county.

The state law making possible the establishment of Soil Conservation districts in Wisconsin is unique. It provides that the conservation districts shall be county units, and that the members of the local agricultural committees established by earlier law to supervise in each county the operation of the entire agricultural program shall also be the supervisors of the conservation districts. This makes it possible for the technical service to be tied in with and used as an integral part of the over-all agricultural program in progress.

Changes on Oscar's farm were taking place at an accelerated rate as all factors affecting the farm and its production were taken into account. In 1943, he says his hay yields increased $34\frac{1}{2}$ percent over untreated plots, with clover again predominating. "As more fields were being treated, we could reduce the acreage needed to supply roughage, releasing acreage for grain, and eliminating the need for buying hay or renting any pasture." Life on the Schultz farm was taking on a brighter outlook.

Farmer Teamwork Takes Form

That winter a series of vocational adult classes were begun at the school, partly as a result of Oscar's continued requests for such teaching. Most of the future members of the association attended these farm classes. Martin Burkhardt, the vocational teacher, is frank to admit that by the time he got the school started the Little Trappe farmers were always one jump ahead of him. "What they had seen happen on the Schultz farm had aroused their interest to the extent that our first classes were spent bringing out answers to the questions they already had," he said.

There is no question in his mind that the Schultz farm experience promoted greater interest in the vocational classes than otherwise would have been obtained. He and Gus Sell and Joe Jackelen, SCS technician in the county, coordinated their work very closely in dealing with Oscar and the Little Trappe group. As Walter Kufahl puts it, "they were three men who worked together; there wasn't any envy or jealousy." Gus had, of course, as representative of the established educational agency in the county, taken the lead in setting the pace for this kind of cooperation.

Martin and Joe both praise his constant attention to this detail in promoting the development of agriculture for the people in Little Trappe and throughout the county.

"Each program helped the others," Oscar says. "We would never have had the results in any of them without the others. They didn't preach lime and fertilizer alone, or terracing and drainage alone, or any one practice alone, but all together."

This means a lot to a farmer who is so often bombarded with any number of separate programs, all designed to serve him but separately creating confusion in his mind. And in Little Trappe, in conducting their own educational program under the wise guidance of Gus Sell, the farmers had grown so capable of fitting the different segments of their farming together in the pattern of the whole that these separate services were compelled to fit themselves together of their own accord if they were to contribute their maximum to any one farm or to the community.

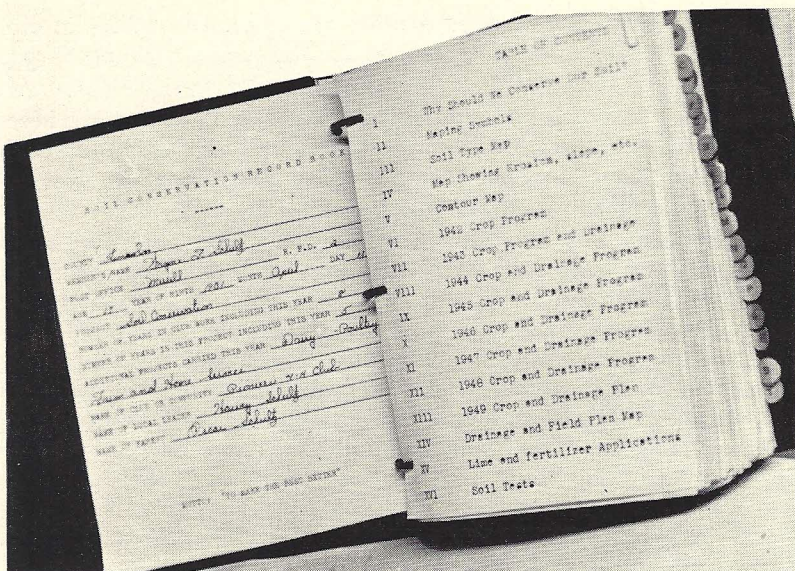
Co-operative Projects Emerge

As the farmers came together on Oscar's farm to see results of his work, and in the vocational classes to study their farm problems, they began to see the possibilities of united action. They organized a spraying ring that got orchard work done that would have been difficult or impossible for individual farmers to do. Incorporated under the cooperative laws of Wisconsin, the Pine River Fruit Growers' Co-operative bought a used power sprayer, and for the first year of its existence did what Conrad Kuehner, extension orchard specialist, said was the best first-year job he had ever seen.

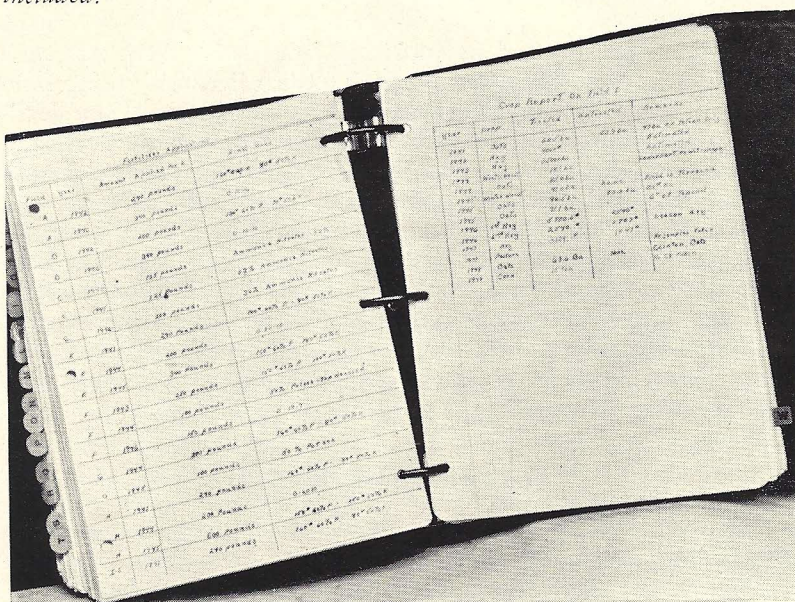
Little Trappe has had its vocational farm classes every year since 1943. They have covered such subjects as feeding livestock, raising fruit, farm records and accounts, soil conservation and management, new developments in agriculture, current problems in farm management. Burkhardt, now vocational director, says that "it's a post-graduate proposition with the Little Trappe farmers." He points out that as a result of Oscar's work and that of the association the entire group will keep check plots and records in carrying out the practices they study in class. "What they learn is thus proven out and made convincing," he said. These records kept by Oscar and the other Little Trappe farmers form the basis of teaching for many of the vocational farm classes in other parts of the county, and farmers attending these classes are often brought out to see the work going on in this community.

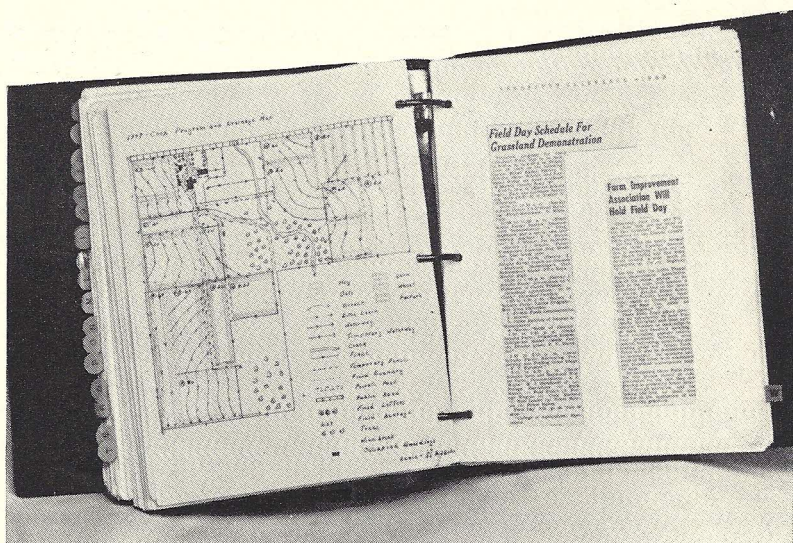
The Growth of People

By 1945, the practices started on the Schultz farm had spread to neighboring farms to the extent that Oscar and his neighbors were becoming the most visited area in the entire region. Oscar himself was



Shown here and opposite are pages taken from Wayne Schultz's 4-H Soil Conservation Record Book. This exceptionally complete record brought Wayne a scholarship to help finance his college education. In this book, faithfully kept since 1943, is a map, a record of soil treatment, crop yields, erosion control practices for each field on the Schultz farm. Lists of visitors, weather reports, news stories and photographs are also included.





beginning to be asked almost as many questions about agriculture as was the county agent. His growth in knowledge and understanding of the problems on his farm, his growing ability to put together his resources in a pattern that was speeding up the increasing fertility of his soil and the production of his farm, his exchange of ideas with the many visitors, were making him a man of growing stature in his community.

Joyce, the daughter of the family, and Wayne, both 4-H Club members, were finding opportunity to put their talents and abilities into this work. Joyce was keeping the financial records. Wayne had selected soil conservation as one of his club projects and was keeping a careful and most detailed record of the development of his father's farm. This work has won him state 4-H awards several years, and a trip to the 4-H Club Congress and a \$200 college scholarship, along with national honors in 1946. He also has won state awards for his Brown Swiss dairy project and county awards for his poultry project. Mrs. Schultz was seeing her husband's work prosper, her children's chances of college brighten, the well-cooked meals she served her family more assured of being nutritious since the food was coming from ever more fertile soil.

Farm Used as a Teaching Tool

Field days were becoming regular occurrences on the Schultz farm as Gus Sell arranged for its increased use as a teaching tool in helping other farmers realize and take advantage of their own opportunities. Hundreds of visitors from throughout the region and from neighboring states were coming to see how Oscar, by fitting together his resources of soil, sun, rain, and air, the educational and technical assistance available to

farmers, and his own family's desires and skills and abilities, could build a production on his farm that no one in the beginning had realized was possible.

"We gained a ton of hay and 20 bushels of grain per acre per year," Wayne reports. Oscar's 1945 harvest yielded between 1,500 and 1,600 bushels of oats from fields producing 80, 90, and 100 bushels to the acre. By 1947, his hay yields had tripled, corn yields quadrupled. That year his labor income was \$2134—*more than 50 times the 1941 figure!*

More and more of Oscar's neighbors began to use practices proven out on the Schultz farm. Walter Kufahl, Mike Krubsack, Harvey Schultz, Elmer Kahre, Ed Kautz, Ray Woller, Ernest Sparks, and others later to become members of the association were using lime and fertilizers, terracing slopes, improving rotations, using better seed, as a result of Oscar's pioneering. And as they did these things, question after question began to come up in their minds as to method, procedure, and detail of some of the things they wanted to do. They were reaching the point where they were recognizing their problems, identifying them in their relative significance to their farm life, and feeling confident in their own ability to find the way to their solution.

Some dozen or so of these farmers started meeting in different homes to talk over these problems. They called in the county agent, the SCS technician, and the vocational instructor frequently to help with these discussions. And since they found no definite answers to many of their queries as to what would best fit their own farm situations, they began to search for the answers by setting up experimental plots on their own farms. These were set up with the advice and encouragement of Gus Sell, as part of his work in enabling farm people to develop their own abilities and opportunities.

The Group Organizes for Further Action

The idea of organization on a community basis grew around these meetings. On February 22, 1945, when the group met at the Schultz home to analyze some of the findings on Oscar's check plots, the Little Trappe Farm Improvement Association came into existence. It was a significant night. Birthday of George Washington, one of America's first progressive farmers with the many experiments he tried at Mt. Vernon—a man who, along with other farmers of his day, gave agriculture a dignity since unmatched in the history of our country—it became the birthday of an organization that bids fair to point the way by which the farmer again can become capable of taking his rightful place in determining the course of our nation.

The group adopted as its slogan, "Better Farming through United Effort." It set as its purpose that of "promoting good soil management practices and a permanent agriculture in our community," through such

methods as studying and discussing mutual farm problems; investigating new seed stock and better farm management practices suggested by extension and soil conservation services and other agencies; testing and proving on members' farms such seed stock and better practices as look promising; evaluating and comparing results; and cooperating with other groups or agencies in promoting wider adoption of those practices proven, adapted, and successful. As Oscar says, "when you've got something, right before your eyes, you want to organize to get others to see it."

By-laws of the organization provided for each member to carry out research projects, and for the continuance of vocational classes in the community each year. A regulation for membership was that a soil conservation plan be in effect on each farm. FFA and 4-H Club members were invited in as junior members (Wayne is a junior member); and the county agent, vocational instructor, and SCS technician were asked to join as associate members—as were other interested farmers outside the immediate boundaries of the community.

In effect, this organization recognized the value of the pattern being developed on the Schultz farm in creating new wealth from the soil. It proposed to put this pattern into effect on as many farms as possible, and it recognized the possibilities of organized effort to do that job more quickly and more efficiently than it could otherwise be done. The association undertook to do on a community scale what Oscar and various of its members had been doing on a farm scale: fitting into a pattern of abundance all the factors affecting the agricultural situation of a given farm or community.

Progress Has Been Exceptional

The association has accomplished an amazing number of things in the way of farming process since its birth. George Raasch, head of the AAA office in Merrill, says that the practices for which the association members, who are 100 percent participants, receive AAA payment have changed in the past few years to emphasize more of the major soil building practices such as terracing, pasture renovation and reseeding, and strip cropping. Crop index ratings on these farms, which rated only a little above county average in 1942, have gone up 50, 60, and sometimes nearly 100 percent, he says.

Elmer Kahre, secretary-treasurer of the group, points out that his production has increased easily by 100 percent. Every member has a soil conservation plan in effect on his farm; nine of the fifteen dairymen have DHIA testing; such practices as herd improvement, use of proven strains of seed, use of subsoil plows, are common in the community. During its first two years of organization, the association's members built 16 miles of terraces, 17,000 feet of terrace outlets, 14,000 feet of drainage ditches, and 6,000 feet of diversion ditches. They strip cropped 43 acres, and put 82 acres in "bedding" designed to improve the land.

Some of the tests these farmers have conducted on their own farms, with results reported to the entire group, have been comparisons of rates of lime application, rates of fertilizer applications, and depth of fertilizer placement; manure vs. nitrate as a source of nitrogen; effect of terracing on yields; comparisons of yields of different strains of oats and barley; combinations of pasture growth; effects of topsoil depth on yields; and many others. The records they keep on these tests get down to such things as amount of increased yields, dollar-and-cents costs and gains, and specific reasons for results. Of course making these tests and keeping the records takes time.

Oscar says of the time Wayne spends at his association job of taking samples of the plots, that once he "tried to short-cut him, but he wouldn't



Mike Krubsack no longer has ideas of leaving the farm

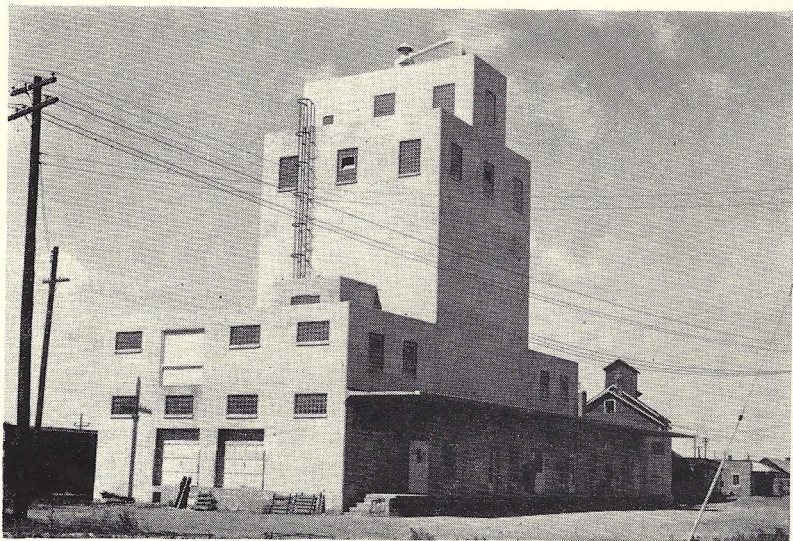
hear of it. Afterwards we were glad he wouldn't." When a farmer in this community tries out one of these tested practices, he knows already to a pretty certain degree just what is going to happen and what it will do for him. There isn't much wonder that recommended practices spread like wildfire in Little Trappe.

Mike Krubsack says that because of the work done by the Little Trappe organization, the farmers in Little Trappe "can keep up with the best of them," and he now has no idea of following his father's advice to leave. Since 1941, Mike has reduced his feed

bill for his Guernsey herd from \$1400 to \$900, and now has grain and hay to sell. In the 10 years before 1943 he averaged 26.6 bushels of grain to the acre; from 1944 to 1948 his average was 56 bushels. There's no question that Mike's future is looking up, and the changes on his farm are pretty typical of the entire group.

Organization Brings Returns for Time Spent

Oscar points out that the organization is proving "a way of voicing our needs to the various agencies, thereby receiving recognition more promptly." These farmers are beginning to feel confident enough to



Members of Little Trappe group participate in county affairs. Oscar Schultz is a director of the Consumers' Co-op Exchange, which has recently erected this modern feed, seed and fertilizer plant at Merrill, Wis.

express their needs and desires as a group to influence the character of the services they provide for themselves through their local, state, and Federal Governments.

For example, in 1946 the association proposed that the County Board buy a power patrol grader for its district, to be used first for farm terracing and then, during the farm off-season, for road work. The group invited the Board to a dinner meeting, at which various members presented colored slides and discussions of farm terracing, pointed out the significance of such work to both town and country prosperity, and altogether presented their case so convincingly that the Board voted unanimously to buy the grader.

The association "also furthers systematic distribution of community responsibilities through membership," by which each member is given opportunity to use his abilities and develop his talents and capabilities to the utmost. "It is an efficient method of representation through delegate members at all activities pertaining to rural welfare." Here in their own words these farmers show their interest and voice in activities in and outside their own community which directly or indirectly affect their farm life.

Members Fit Agriculture Into Total Economic Pattern

Little Trappe farmers are assuming a responsibility for the conduct of their own affairs that speaks well for the future of their area and their county. Experienced in fitting together those factors contributing to success on their own farms, trained in meeting the needs and problems of their farms and their community, they are reaching out into all affairs that affect the well-being of their land and their people. This is giving them a two-way channel with other organizations for the exchange of ideas, information, and points of view. This is what makes leaders in a community, in agriculture, in our national picture.

Oscar Schultz, in addition to his work as chairman of the association, is now one of the directors of the Consumers' Co-operative Exchange which handles feed, fertilizers, and seed for its members; like most of the Little Trappe group, he is a member of the Farm Bureau, DHIA, and the Pine River Fruit Growers Cooperative. In the interests of his registered dairy herd, he holds membership in the Brown Swiss Breeders.

Elmer Kahre, secretary-treasurer of the group, is on the town AAA committee, a director of the town Farm Bureau, and secretary-treasurer of the Fruit Growers Cooperative.

Harvey Schultz is a member of the County Board, town chairman, chairman of the county agricultural committee, member of the state organization of soil conservation district supervisors, president of the county fair association, member of the draft board. Ted Boettcher, associate member, is on the board of directors of Associated Cooperative Services, which supplies its members with coal, oil, gasoline, groceries, and farm machinery. Other members are on school boards, are 4-H Club leaders, officials of other farm organizations—wherever the group feels it will help their community to have representation, they have it.

As a group, the Little Trappe farmers take part in tours to experiment station farms; they sponsor all kinds of farm tours and demonstrations in Little Trappe; sponsor exhibits at the county fair; attend such things as a recent Congressional agriculture hearing at Madison; participate in panel discussions such as one on soil building at the Gleason Farmers Institute; and so on, ad infinitum. "We want information for our community, and we feel, too, that we have something to offer as well as gain," Oscar says. "We are thinking in terms of long-time agriculture in this region; not just today." And, as Elmer Kahre says, "One thing just leads on to another."

The Idea Spreads

Farmers in other areas have begun to organize on a community basis as a result of the Little Trappe Association's work. Gleason and Prairie River in Lincoln County, Sandy Creek in Marathon County, and a veteran's group at Wausau have all used Little Trappe experience to get their organizations started. The idea is catching on fast.

Farmers seem to like the idea of running their own show with a confidence born of knowledge and ability to see the road they want to go and set the pattern they need to follow it. Farmers, county agents, vocational students and teachers, FFA and 4-H Club members, businessmen, SCS technicians and supervisors, agricultural committees, visitors from throughout the state and from all over the country are coming to Little Trappe in ever-greater numbers. Last year Oscar's guest book recorded 600 names, and many of those in large groups didn't even register.

In Unity is Strength, Satisfaction—and Fun!

The Little Trappe group is enthusiastically aware of the advantages of working together. "One man could plow around here for six years and get nowhere unless the rest put their shoulders to the wheel," Walter Kufahl declares. Now the entire group *has* put its shoulders to the wheel, Oscar points out that, entirely aside from the farm progress that has been made, "the best thing out of this organization is a closer relationship of people." The challenge now, he says, is "to see how far we *can* go."

You get the feeling of this joy in "the closer relationship of people" from talking with any of the group. There is better cooperation among neighbors, they will tell you; a growth of friendliness, a lack of envy. "We have a lot of fun this way," they say. "I've farmed all my life," Ernest Sparks admits, "and just now am beginning to enjoy it." There's a new feeling of dignity in the profession of farming; a new zest for living in Little Trappe.

The women reflect this spirit, too. In firm support of the association, ready with the encouragement of good food to make home meetings pleasant, they readily talk about the changes the Association's work has brought about in their community. "Our standard of living has been raised," they say, and point out that by providing greater opportunity and enjoyment in farming the organization is helping keep the younger generation at home.

Little Trappe farmers would be the last to claim they have the answers to the ills of agriculture. "This is what we are doing here," they will tell you. "Maybe it will work for you." And you get the feeling that they consider their work merely a beginning in their goal of transforming agriculture and rural life in their community and county.

Looking Toward the New Agriculture

But these farmers are working with a hybrid growth that is something new in American agriculture. This cross-breeding between an integrated effort of farm service organizations on the one hand and a cooperative effort of farmers on the others, nurtured and stimulated by constant education aimed at the growth and development of people, has produced a group of farmers with growing ability to know the fundamental

issues of their own particular situation and obtain the necessary information, help, influence, or whatever it takes to do something about it.

For the farmers, it is finding a way to build their soils to ever-growing production; it is developing from among their ranks new and capable leaders who are becoming able to give agriculture a clear and equal place with other groups in the affairs of the nation.

For those who serve the farmer, it is developing more efficient channels for getting their information and help to the man on the land.

For Wayne and others like him, it is a new hope, a better hope, for the future.

For our nation, it is an example of democracy in growth and action.

Agriculture, first and most fundamental vocation on earth, has been slowest to mature into an organized entity.

In Pine River, it is coming of age.

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