

# 3,000-Acre Sterling Farm Wins Battle Over Erosion

## Sordoni Believes Research Can Solve Farmers' Problems, Assure Profit

An experiment which may hold the solution to many of the problems facing farmers who have to till Pennsylvania's hilly fields for a living is being attempted for the first time this season at Sterling Farm, Harvey's Lake. This great farm with its 3,000 acres of rolling land, 30 miles of roads, modern barns, machine shops, hundreds of farm animals and 35 skilled farm hands is being put solidly behind the idea that farming can be profitable. It is being run to prove one man's honest conviction that farmers can make money if they will adapt their methods to their land and not try to adapt their land to conventional methods of farming.

"Sterling Farm is being run for profit—not for fun" those are the words of its owner, A. J. Sordoni. "It is being run to prove that business methods and attention to the little details are as important on a farm as in any other business"—and when A. J. Sordoni says that and backs it with his enthusiasm and his energy skeptics disappear.

This experiment is being carried out in the field of stock feeding, using grass ensilage instead of corn. Hundreds of acres are being devoted to grass, more are being prepared and still more will be prepared as wood lots are cleared to make way for grass and still more grass. As the grass is matured, three to four times a year, it is cut by modern mowers that stack it in piles. A fleet of four trucks and green hayloaders gather it almost as fast as it is down and take it to silos where it is put through chopping machines, mixed with molasses, and blown into storage. As a milk producer and cow feed this ensilage is unexcelled. It imparts a golden yellow to the milk, winter or summer. But its greatest merit rests perhaps in what it means to Pennsylvania farmers who year after year have watched their fertilizers, lime, seed and top soil washed off their hillside fields by heavy rains, those men who have watched their dollars and their existence carried away in swollen streams and their best fields gutted with a thousand rivulets.

### New Jersey Discovery

This method of stock feeding all came about through experiments carried on by the U. S. Department of Agriculture in cooperation with State Experimental stations. "A few years ago," says Mr. Sordoni, "the New Jersey Experimental station carried out a remarkable experiment." Three fields of equal size on a four percent grade were planted, one with corn parallel to the grade; another with corn at right angles to the grade and a third with grass. Measurements showed that 100 tons of top soil washed off the field with corn in right angle rows, but only one-tenth of one ton was washed off the field of grass. Where 10 tons of fertilizer is required to grow an equal acreage of corn only four to five tons is required to grow grass—and best of all the grass makes better feed.

We watched the progress of this experiment last Friday at Sterling Farm as we drove through great fields of grass with Andrew Sordoni in his open car that goes up hill and down gully wherever there's work to be done. We marveled at the enthusiasm and conviction of this man attired only in shorts and a pair of moccasins as he hurred his sun-reddened body out of the car to wade waist deep through fields of alfalfa and stand beside isolated clumps that reached his shoulders. "You can tell them," he said, "that you saw alfalfa four feet high. When this grass is cut we'll let these clumps stand, and save the seed for future plantings. We're going to get more grass and better grass every year."

Again as we passed a field on a neighboring farm that had been gutted by heavy rains, he leaped out of the car to run his hands

ter to his father in a field. We watched a groundhog as it darted across our path while the Senator hailed him as an old acquaintance, and the police dog attempting to snooze on the hot, leather cushions of the back seat didn't even sniff. "You know," said the Senator, "a lot of my friends think I'm crazy farming, but I like it. I grew up on the land. I don't know anything I ever started that wasn't without opposition . . . and I'm going to make farming pay. We don't do a thing on this farm without first getting Jim Hutchison's O. K. He is doing a great job for the farmer. If more farmers would consult their County Agent they would be running better farms than they are now. He twisted the wheel and turned the car into the driveway past the cow barn to a long, low building where he wanted to show what is being done with pigs.

### New Brand Of Pigs

Sterling Farm produces about 200 pigs a year. Most of this stock came originally from the famous DuPont farm in Delaware. Until recently Poland China hogs were bred exclusively with resultant fair-sized litters. But because this line is closely bred the Senator feels that improvements can be made. Recently he purchased a Durock boar, son of the Grand Champion of the United States in 1938. At two years of age the grand champion weighed 1,100 pounds. Now Poland China brood sows are being crossed with Durock and the resultant litters range from 12 to 14 lively spotted youngsters. "They look like leopards, but aren't they dandies?" the Senator asked.

In each brood pen the litter is clean and for the most part the pig house is as odorless as many cow barns. Brood pens are surrounded with low board shelters to prevent the sows from rolling on their young at birth. There is very low mortality at Sterling Farm from brood sows rolling on their young—a tragedy that many farmers still accept as inevitable. Young pigs are given two inoculations to prevent disease and are kept in special

quarters during the inoculation period. Wire enclosed ranges give the pigs plenty of opportunity for exercise out in the open.

### The Glass Barn

The glass cow barn has probably excited more popular interest than any other building on the farm. This low stone building, 206 feet long, with sides of glass brick bears little resemblance to the conventional cow barn, probably because it has no hay loft. It is 38 feet wide and only 10 feet high at the eaves. Its interior is as spic and span as any well-kept school room. Above its metal ceiling is a four-inch thickness of rock wool and an 18-inch dead air space covered by a metal roof over which there is a one-inch thickness of Celotex and a built-up roof. On both sides of the ceiling at nine-foot intervals are fresh air intakes. Four thermostatically controlled ventilators keep the temperature within a few degrees of constant.

On each side of the barn facing the glass walls are stanchions for 30 cows, 60 in all. Between each stanchion is a drinking cup for two cows, brimming full of piped spring water. The floor on which the cows stand is of corked brick. Twice each day the barn is scrubbed and no litter fills the long, clean drops. Each cow is washed, not once daily, but as frequently as needed and coats glisten from constant attention. Automatic milking has given way to hand milking, which in the opinion of Mr. Sordoni, is better for the cows and for profit. The men in charge of the milking wash their hands every time they milk a cow—and use a new paper towel which they discard every time they wash.

The daily output of each cow is weighed. So is the feed she is given. Any cow that fails to produce is promptly removed from the herd and sold to the butcher. Senator Sordoni will not permit an unprofitable cow to be sold to any local farmer.

"If she's a headache to me, she's a headache to the other fellow. We want to help the local man improve the quality of his dairy." The Senator plans to keep improving his own herd by careful breeding and selection of the calves raised on the farm. Producing cows and calves in excess of the number required for the herd will be sold to local farmers and others interested in raising their herd standards. But

non-producers go to the butcher no matter how pretty they look.

### Destroys Apple Trees

It is the opinion of Senator Sordoni that the salvation of local farmers who must make their living on hilly farms, lies in the improvement of their herds and in devoting their entire farms to the growth of grass ensilage. Let the specialists raise the other crops. In keeping with this theory he has destroyed all of the apple orchards on the farm, putting into action his belief that the man who is making his living from apple raising should be allowed to have the market without the competition of the man who raises apples only as a side line. He urges all who are not in the apple business for a living to destroy all their apple trees except those retained for personal use.

Probably the most famous animal at Sterling Farm is the junior bull, a registered Guernsey of the famous Langwater strain, which is "the best strain in the world." The grandfather of this bull sold for \$25,000 when he was two years old and 16 of his ancestors sold for \$190,000. But much as Senator Sordoni admires this animal he has an affectionate pat for View Kleibert as he walks down the long row of cows, for it is she who produces 26 quarts of milk a day. All of these top stock registered Guernseys have a placard over their stanchions giving their name, date of birth and the names of their dam and sire.

As we left the cow barn the Senator opened a gate, which like all gates on the farm is held open or closed by a special little pin that plugs into a slot in the wall.

"I designed it myself. It's a little thing," he smiled, "but it's the little things that need attention in farming." We noticed that the gate served two purposes when opened. It opened one gateway and closed another. There are many things like that gate on Sterling Farm, and it may be that Farmer Sordoni, like the gate, will close the spillways of farm erosion and open the gateway to farm profits for all Pennsylvania farmers through his experiments with grass feedings at Sterling Farm.

### Another New Home!

John Ayre of Dallas is building a new home on Lehman Avenue, Dallas, near the spot where his brother, George, also is building.

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<b>Haddock Fillets</b>		lb. 21c	

Fancy Woodside Roll or Fine Tub		<b>BUTTER</b>	2 lbs.	<b>57c</b>
Brer Rabbit Molasses (Green Label)		No. 1 1/2 can	13c	
Gorton's Shredded Codfish		4-oz. pkg.	8c	
Choice Ripe Tomatoes		4 No. 2 cans	23c	
Tasty Sandwich Spread		8-oz. jar	12c	
White Meat Tuna Fish		No. 1/2 can	19c	

Delicious Eveready		<b>Fruit Cocktail</b>	No. 2 1/2 can	<b>19c</b>
Chase & Sanborn	<b>COFFEE</b>	Asco and Advertised Brands	<b>MILK</b>	
lb.	<b>19c</b>	4 tall cans	<b>25c</b>	

Prim Pastry	<b>FLOUR</b>	12-lb. bag	<b>33c-24</b>	lb. bag	<b>65c</b>
Bonnie Oak Evap. Milk	10 tall cans	59c			
Cream White (Veg. Shortening)	3-lb. can	39c			
Hom-de-lite Mayonnaise	pint jar	18c			
Red Heart Dog Food	3 cans	23c			

N. B. C.	<b>SHREDDED WHEAT</b>	2 pkgs.	<b>17c</b>	N. B. C.	<b>RITZ CRACKERS</b>	lb. pkg.	<b>20c</b>
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Fancy Ripe	<b>TOMATOES</b>	2 lbs.	<b>15c</b>
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<b>SPINACH</b>	New Clean	lb.	<b>5c</b>

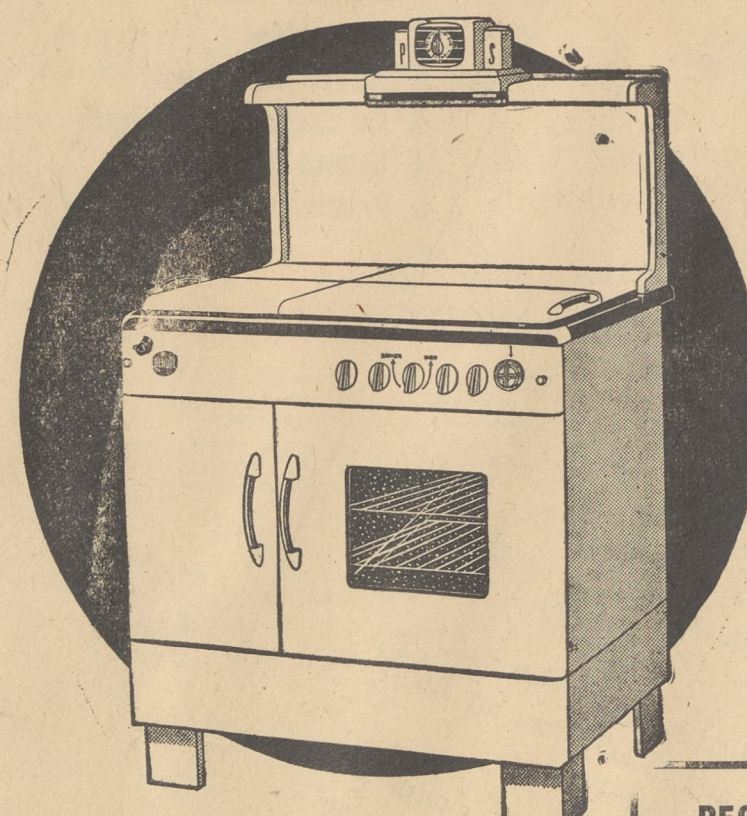
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