

Revells Overcome Ditch Problems

"When we bought this place, the cropland hadn't been broke out very long and there were no ditches," said E. J. Revell, 28 miles northeast of O'Neill, a member of the board of supervisors of the Holt soil conservation district.

"But after a few years, ditches began to show up and as the years progressed they got worse and we wondered why."

"Now that we have our conservation plan on the land, and erosion well under control, we know the answer. Letting water run down hill unimpeded starts the erosion. Then as the years pass, taking much from the soil and returning little, especially in the way of organic matter, causes erosion to speed up."

Revell's place is rather sandy and includes 3,000 acres. The soil is subject to both wind and water erosion, but because of the tree protection that is the result of his efforts since his earliest days on the farm, wind erosion has been a much less serious problem than



Dr. Edw. J. Norwood, O. D., Optometrist, from Crawford, Nebraska, will be in O'Neill on MARCH 9 At the Hotel Golden Eyes Scientifically Examined Glasses Properly Fitted

water erosion.

He now operates the farm in cooperation with his son, Dale, and his son-in-law, M. E. Davis.

The present conservation plan on the farm dates from the organization of the Holt soil conservation district, when Revell got the help of the Soil Conservation technicians to work it out.

Now, part of the cropland is terraced and farmed on the contour with the terraces, and some is contour strip cropped. All is stubble-mulch tilled, using either subsurface sweep machine or a one-way plow, depending on the condition of the land and amount of stubble at the time of tillage.

The more serious of the ditches—"one was so big that an operator upset a grader in it," Revell said—have been bladed in, shaped, and seeded to brome-grass and alfalfa for grassed waterways. Two hundred acres of cropland that were shown by the SCS conservation survey to be unsuited for cultivation have been seeded to a mixture of brome-grass and crested wheat-grass. Some additional tree planting has been done, dams have been built, and some improvements have been made in the range management system.

"This has come at an opportune time, during my change-over from Hereford to Aberdeen-Angus cattle," Revell remarked. "You see, I've been understocked during the change, so grazing has been light. And don't think the native grasses haven't improved. Weight gains by the cattle have been excellent."

"Having the crested wheat-grass - brome-grass mixture has helped, too. This grass starts early—two or three weeks earlier than the native grasses. So the cows have good green pasture and produce lots of milk for the calves early. This, in turn, gives the calves a fine start. Also, the cattle can be kept in this grass until after the native grasses have made a good spring growth.

That helps a lot in keeping native pastures good. And last, the crested wheat-grass and brome-grass make fine late fall pasture.

The dams that Revell has built are far in excess of the needs for supplying water to livestock on the range. But he has another aim in mind, too; namely, to stop the flooding by runoff of his meadows which are on bottomland along a small creek.

A couple of large drainages that carry the water from a sizeable territory are the principal trouble-makers so far as the meadows are concerned. He is getting first-class help from For Knight and Joe Kubik, neighbors, who have built dams above Revell in these drainages. It is his hope, through the combination of a good cover on his land and the use of dams to hold back most of the runoff.

"Of course, it helps in grazing, too," he commented. "With plenty of watering places easily available, the stock don't bunch up. Instead, they spread out and graze the grass more evenly."

Ponds fed by runoff aren't the only ones on the farm, though. Revell has created three large ones with dams built in the live stream and where some sizeable springs flow. These are in the bottomland, and their primary purpose is to keep the water level in the stream up and thus prevent it from cutting back its banks.

But they have been made places of recreation, being stocked with fish, and furnish good fishing for the Revell family and their friends.

"Each pond has a drop-inlet to handle the flow of the creek or springs," he explained, "to keep the pond at the right level. But," he laughed, "the beavers and I have different ideas about where the water level should be, and I have to keep a close watch to prevent them from plugging

the drop-inlets."

Altogether, he has 150 acres of trees on the farm, most of which he planted himself. These plantings include a broad windbreak that protects the farmstead, trees around many of the fields and along just about all of the north side of the farm. Cedars make up a sizeable portion of the trees. Since the soil conservation district was organized, he has received some aid in planting added trees.

"These trees do a lot of good in helping to prevent wind erosion and protecting the crops from wind damages," he explained. "And they protect the livestock from the winds. One of the windbreaks is right through the pasture where we winter the cattle. It is fenced so that they can't get into it, but they can move from one side to the other to get out of the wind."

"The cattle did all right during the storms of the last two years. Sure, we had trouble because we had to go as far as three miles to get feed, but the stock were well protected from the storms and fared all right."

Mrs. Revell had a word to say about the trees. She said it was nice to have the birds around, and told of a bluejay that had become friendly and of the progression of the arriving birds each year—the red birds, the wrens, and so on.

Turning to his cultivated land, Revell explained the results of using contour strips and terraces. "The land we terraced was getting badly cut up," he explained, "and it seems that the terraces added to contour farming was just what the doctor ordered. There is little runoff from this land now, and the land has been smoothed up. Of course, it's not

so handy operating with terraces as on a smooth field without them, but it is easier than working the field the way it was."

Contour strip cropping is doing a good job, too, but he showed how soil was still being washed from the corn strips. It did not leave the field, because the grain strips stopped it. He is inclined to favor terracing this land, too.

The waterways are one of his prizes.

"Not only do these waterways produce good hay, where there used to be only unproductive gullies," he said, "but they make farming easier. They can be crossed anywhere; now, whereas before they were cutting the land up, it was necessary to go quite a way around them to get from one part of the field to another. And the trip around was getting longer because the gullies were growing."

Alfalfa is used in the crop rotation. This was started before the soil conservation district was organized, when Revell realized that he had to put organic matter and other fertility back into the land. He has over 200 acres in alfalfa at present, all of it starting from a handful of rangeland seed. He has grown his own seed and increased his rangeland alfalfa acreage to its present size.

But, he said, the measures to restore fertility don't accomplish much if erosion isn't controlled. Soil washed or blown from the fields carries much of this fertility with it.

"We're all interested in the effects of conservation on production, of course," Revell concluded. "Well, I can say from experience that it has paid. It has made productive the gullied areas that were becoming waste. It has con-

served moisture and soil, and improved crop and hay yields. It has resulted in better pastures, which means better gains in livestock.

"More than that, it has changed the direction. Instead of getting poorer as the years progress, the farm is improving because the soil is kept in place and the fertility improvement measures have a chance to succeed."

Make \$50 Payment Toward Hospital

The Riverside 4-H club held a regular meeting Sunday, February 18, at the Ed Boyle home. Eighteen pairs of skates arrived during the week and after the meeting they were distributed. The balance should arrive by the next meeting.

Edward Boyle gave a report and a few pointers on how to conduct a meeting that he learned when he went to Lincoln for the leaders' convention.

The club made the final payment on a \$50 share of the shovel for the St. Anthony's hospital and donated \$10 for the polio fund.

There are three new members: Leona and Roseanna Underwood and Stanley Price. The club now has 39 members.

Some of the members received their project workbooks. The rest will be here for the next meeting. The recreation committee entertained with games and served cookies. After the meeting a lunch of sandwiches, pickles, coffee and cool-aid was served.

The club rosary meets at the C. Belzer home March 6 at 8 p.m. The next regular meeting is at Matt Beha's on March 11.—By Mary Frances Vitt, news reporter.

On Extended Visit—

Mr. and Mrs. John A. Keller and Joseph Keller, of Humphrey, arrived Friday to visit Mr. and Mrs. J. L. McCarville, sr., and other relatives. Joseph Keller remained for an extended visit.

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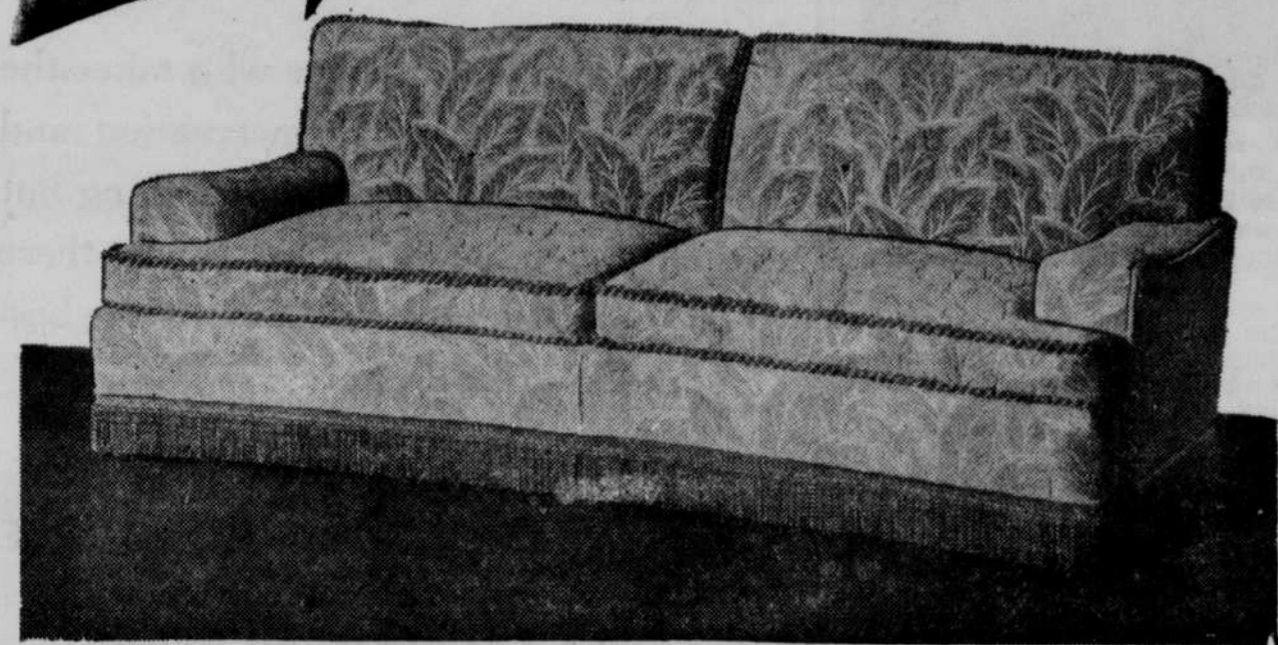
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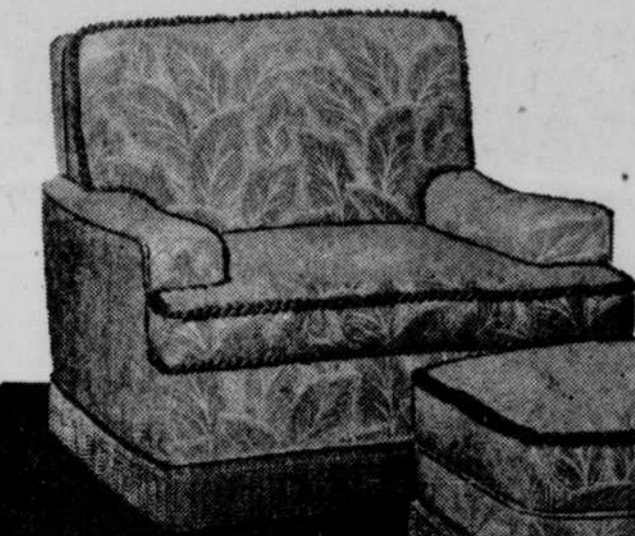
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