

## County's 4-H Youth Are Vivaly Interested in Soil Conservation

By A. NEIL DAWES  
Holt County Agent

Throughout this large county of Holt are many boys and girls who are enrolled in 4-H clubs and who are interested in all the things that surround them. They are not afraid to tackle problems that sometimes seem large to adults. They are striving to make their home and their community a more pleasant place to live. Through education in club work, the extension service has made these boys and girls conscious of the need of conserving our natural resources.

It is only through these boys and girls along with others that there is hope of developing and practicing a sound conservation program.

Did you know that there were definite soil conservation 4-H club projects? In these projects the members study the causes of soil losses and what they can do to stop the losses. They study native vegetation and the part it plays in holding the soil. While carrying this project they learn what is meant by land use capability, contouring, terracing, diversions and conservation plans.

Through the cooperation of the Soil Conservation district supervisors and personnel they may make arrangements to actually help put some of the various conservation practices on the land. As a part of the project they study their own place and after having decided what some of the problems are they undertake to correct them by applying soil conservation practices that apply to their area and conditions.

Soil Conservation district supervisors are anxious to see more 4-H soil conservation projects started. If you are interested or know of any boys who are interested, why don't you get in touch with one of the supervisors or the county agent and we will be glad to help them get started in a club.

Recently Elmer Allyn, of Stuart, who is one of the supervisors, succeeded in getting Fred Mitchell to lead the soil conservation project in the Cleveland 4-H club. He then got in touch with the county agent who arranged for Fred to go to Lincoln to a training meeting for soil conservation club leaders, all expenses paid. While at the college of agriculture, he was given help on materials to give to his club. He got acquainted with men who are working on soil conservation all the time and was given a chance to see the value of working with youth.

On Saturday, January 27, Marvin Strong, of Chambers, who belongs to the South Fork 212 4-H club, gave a talk at the 4-H public speaking contest. His topic was "Soil Conservation." He told how we must realize the need and to show others the need of conservation. He told of a dust storm he was in while in school

in Kansas. The authorities estimated that one inch of soil was blown away because there was no cover on the land.

Marvin brought out the fact that Nebraska was not a manufacturing area nor a mining area but was an area that had to depend upon the fertility of its soil.

"Therefore," he said, "we must save, protect and increase the fertility of the soil in order to support ourselves and help feed the many people of this and other countries."

Marvin's talk is another example of how 4-H club members are trying to promote soil conservation.

Murray Mellor, of Atkinson, has been active in soil conservation projects for a number of years and was the county 4-H champion in 1949 and 1950.

He has drawn a soil conservation plan on their land and has done such things as seeding down waterways, laid out contour lines, made pasture furrows, constructed diversions to keep water out of gullies.

In addition he and Benton started a grass nursery so as to study native grasses. His club, the Clover 4-H club, of Atkinson, made a collection of native grasses as did the Martha 4-H club and the Holt Creek 4-H club. These displays were put up at hay days in Atkinson and at the county fair. It helped to acquaint people of this area with the important grasses and to know their names.

John Obermire and LaVern Engler, both of Stuart, and Edward 4-H club, felt that people should know more about the value of grasses to prevent runoff and water erosion. They worked up a team demonstration on the amount of runoff from bare soil or cropland, over-grazed grassland and properly managed grassland. The results were amazing and the approximate 200 people who saw this demonstration saw the value of grass cover. John and LaVern represented Holt county at the state fair and were awarded a red ribbon. The Eagle Hustlers club, of Page, also gave a demonstration on water runoff at achievement day.

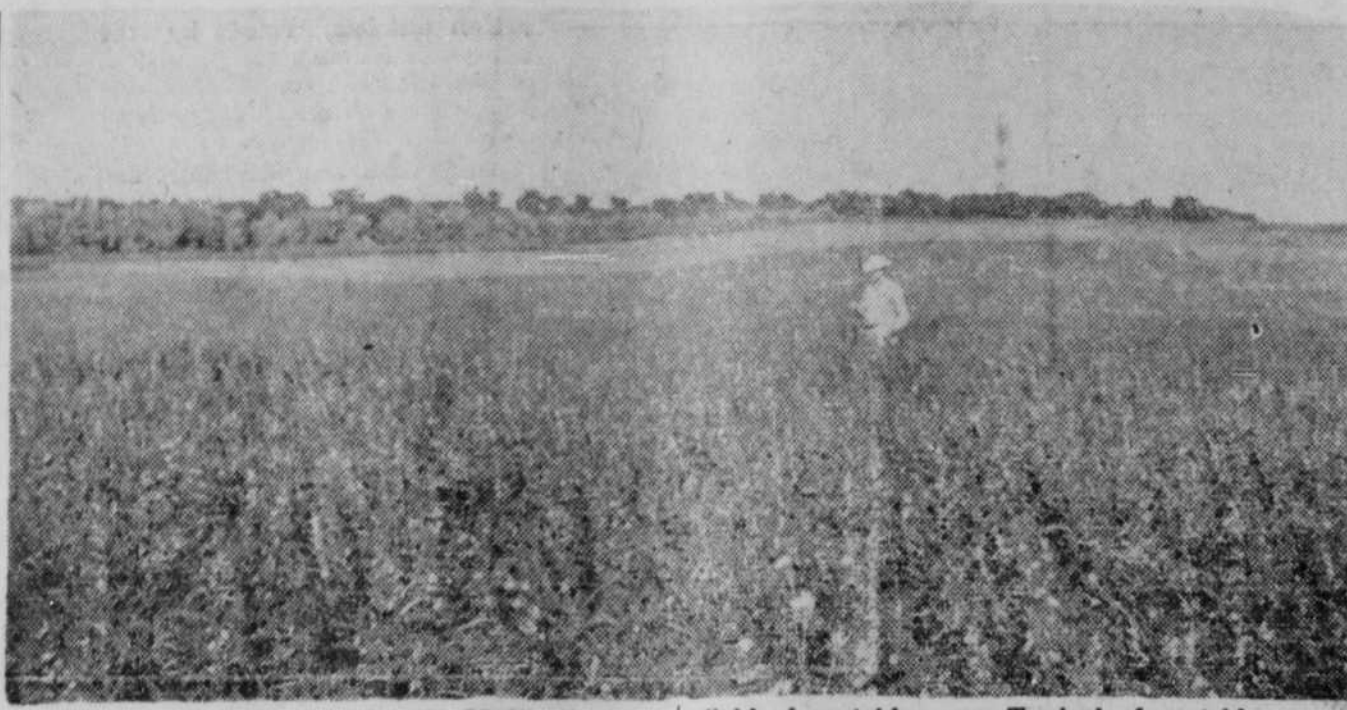
As these youths grow older and become members of the Rural Youth groups they bring into their education meetings soil conservation pictures and talks in order to know more about conservation practices.

Education of our youth is very important, not only in conservation of soil but in conservation of our American freedoms, privileges and individual responsibility.

Four-H clubs are helping and striving to "make the best better."

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Harley and Sheryl had the following as supper guests on Saturday: Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Beckwith and son; Miss Shirley Britnell, of O'Neill; Mr. and Mrs. Dean Beckwith and Gary, Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Beckwith and Miss Leona, all of Emmet.

"Voice of The Frontier" ... WJAG (780 k. c.)



Archie L. McMaster, former Holt county SCS technician, is shown (above) inspecting a field of partridge pea. Typical of partridge pea fields are those at the E. J. Revell, Louis Sobotka and John Dick farms.

## GRASS, TREES ARE BEST COMBINATION

Land that has been judged first-rate for growing cultivated crops may still yield greater returns in grass.

At least, that is what Leonard Juracek, cooperating with the Holt Soil Conservation District, has decided from his experiences on the 800-acre farm, 18 miles northeast of O'Neill, he bought four years ago.

Juracek's land is in two pieces—a section on which about 430 acres had been in crops, and a quarter-section of which only 70 acres had been cultivated.

Soon after he bought the land, he got the aid of Soil Conservation Service technicians to help work out a farm conservation plan. The conservation survey made by the SCS showed that virtually all of the land in the home section falls in capability class I—that is, suited for cultivation with very little danger of erosion.

Nevertheless, a system of windbreaks are planned, and Juracek decided to seed the land down to grass. The 430 acres of cultivated land on the home section was seeded to bromegrass-alfalfa, and the 70 acres of cultivated land in the quarter-section was seeded to native grasses.

He has fenced the land and put down wells so that he can follow a rotation grazing system, using the bromegrass-alfalfa in the spring and fall, and the native grasses which total 320 acres—160 acres each of the two parts of the farm—for summer grazing. His system is to buy calves in the fall and sell them about a year later.

Last year was the first that he used his bromegrass and then only about 70 acres. He bought 135 calves in the fall of 1949.

"The weight gains made by those calves figures out at 30 pounds of beef per acre for the 500-odd acres that were ready for use," he said. "They received nothing but hay that was cut on this farm and pasture. No cottonseed cake or range cubes—just bromegrass and alfalfa.

"But that's not the whole story," he continued. "I harvested 30,000 pounds of bromegrass seed, which I sold right from the combine, and pastured a few hogs. And I had a good reserve supply of hay left. I really doubt that crops would have yielded as much net income as the beef production and grass seed. The later seeded bromegrass-alfalfa will be ready for use this year and add that much to the farm's production. It wasn't grazed at all last year."

Tree planting done already includes a mile-long shelterbelt along the south side of the section, another a half-mile long in the quarter-section line. In this way, he points out, he is developing a quarter-section protected pasture in which to winter the cattle.

Besides that, he has established a farmstead windbreak north and west of the house and trees surrounding a 5-acre feed lot south of the farmstead, hauled accumulated manure that was in the barnyard when he got the place out onto the land, filled in and leveled the barnyard, and repaired all of the buildings and built new high-board-fence corrals.

"My experiences so far," Juracek said, "have convinced me that grass and trees together are the best combination we can get for conserving land. And I believe that year in and year out, the grass-alfalfa combination will pay more than cultivated crops.

"And if it becomes necessary to grow some crops? Well, the land will still be there, better than it was because of the grass and alfalfa and the manure the cattle will spread over the land."

He admits that he took some chances in going ahead so fast with his seeding program, and that if he were doing it again he would proceed a little more slowly.

"I was lucky," he concluded. "Seeding that much land costs quite a bit of money, but I went ahead anyway. Seasons were good, and I got good stands quickly. I'm glad now that I took the chance, because it has put the land under cover that much quicker and from the production so far, I don't see how I can afford to have the equipment and hire the labor to grow cultivated crops."

## Partridge Pea Is a Starting Point

There is really no need to let the fertility of the soil run down, according to Lewis Sobotka, who lives 2½ miles south of Inman, but is a cooperater with the Holt Soil Conservation District.

But where fertility is low and there is a reasonable amount of soil remaining, its fertility can be restored to a surprising degree through proper protection of the land from erosion, use of the right kind of crop rotation, and the use of barnyard manure.

He points to one field on his farm.

"When I got that land," he said, "it produced very little. Well, the first thing was to plant

a shelterbelt to help protect it from wind erosion.

"We continued to crop it using a corn, oats and sweet clover rotation. After the windbreak was tall enough to afford protection we did a lot of winter feeding on this field. This greatly increased the organic matter and fertility of the land. Before where it would hardly grow rye it will now produce 70 to 80 bushel of corn per acre. And as for a feeding place it beats a barn or a shed in many ways."

Sobotka has another field, bought recently, that was unproductive. In addition to cooperating with the soil conservation district in developing his farm conservation plan, he is cooperating with Dr. F. L. Duley, of Soil Conservation research, and J. C.

Russel, of the University of Nebraska, in trying out partridge pea and vetch on sandy, infertile land.

"My observations are," he said, "that partridge pea is the plant needed as the starting point in building up land as poor as that field is. The partridge pea took hold well, and provides a lot of organic matter. But the

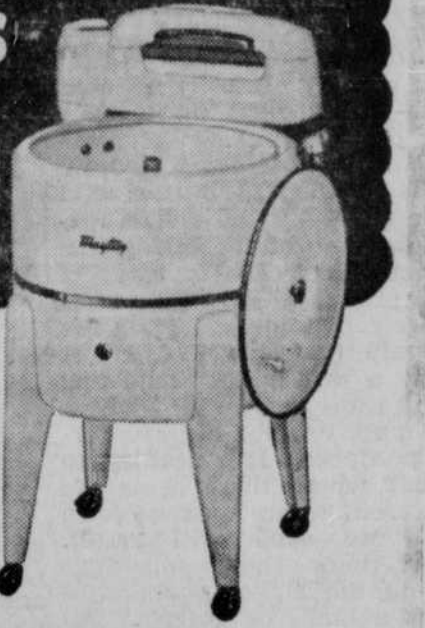
vetch planted there didn't amount to much."

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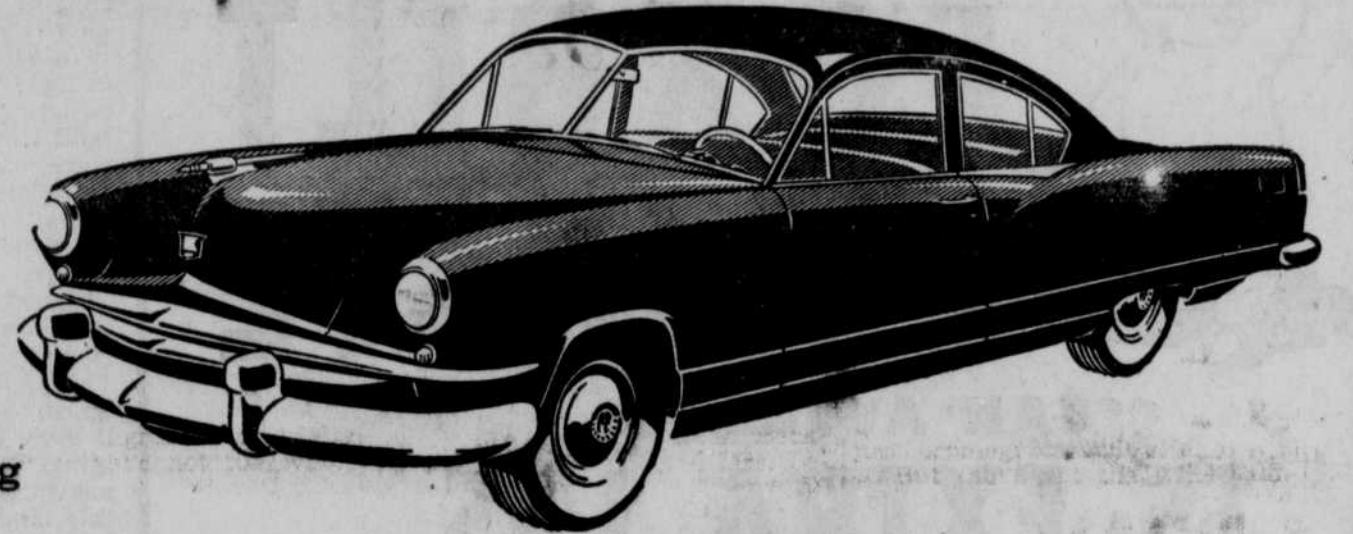
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