

County Agent Personnel Changes of Era

Jack Keenan resigned his position as Grant county agricultural agent on January 15, 1934 to take a position with the Federal Land Bank at St. Paul, Minnesota. A temporary replacement in the person of Adrian H. Cole was hired for the succeeding period up to July 1, 1934. Cole was retired assistant state Extension director from Madison.

Ben Walker was then hired to begin work on July 1, 1934 and he served as county agent until December 31, 1938. Walker was immediately followed by W. C. Voskuil who began on January 1, 1939, coming to Grant county from Madison, South Dakota, where he had been employed as a county agricultural agent.

Soil Improvement Work

Testing Continues

Testing of soil and the testing of limestone samples continued as a service to the farmers of Grant county. In 1935, screens were purchased by the Grant county agent for the testing of "fineness of grinding" of lime samples. By then, the Teacher's College of Platteville was testing lime samples for purity analysis as well as the University of Wisconsin Soils Laboratory.

New Soil testing equipment was also purchased for use by the county agent's office in 1938, enabling the county agent to test soils for Potash as well as for Calcium and Phosphorus. Following the purchase of this new equipment, a series of soil testing meetings were held throughout the county by county agent Ben Walker. In addition to the educational nature of these meetings, many soil samples brought by farmers to the meetings were tested on the spot. The total number of soil samples tested by the county agent grew to 2,039 in the year 1941. Analysis showed that sixty percent of the samples were in need of lime, ninety percent were low in phosphorus and seventy-five percent were low in potash.

Soil Conservation in Ernest

Three Soil Conservation Associations comprising a total of 300 farmers were organized in 1935. This same year, a 28,000 acre soil erosion demonstration area was approved and started northeast of Fennimore. This became known as the Fennimore Branch area.

In 1938, a series of four meetings on the "Story of Conservation with Trees and Soil Fertility Problems" was held at Fennimore, Bloomington, Montfort, and Platteville, in cooperation with the Soil Erosion Service at Fennimore. O. R. Zeasman, Extension specialist in soils and Cummings and Gee of the State Soil Erosion Service, assisted in a meeting at Dickeyville to explain the new Wisconsin soil conservation district law. In July, a tour of farms in the Fennimore Branch Area was sponsored by the county agent, and in September the county agent, the County Agricultural Conservation Association and the Soil Erosion Service of Fennimore worked together on a Soil Conservation Day program at Fennimore which included a tour of conservation practices in use on farms of the area.

Among the practices now being put into use on Grant county farms were strip cropping, contour furrowing, buffer stripping, terracing, pasture renovation, legume and grass seeding, gully control and soil saving dams.

The Grant County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution in May, 1940, declaring Grant county as a Soil Conservation District. Peder Lund was put in Grant county in the spring of 1940 as the first district conservationist. According to policy, the County Agricultural Committee was to act as Soil Conservation District supervisors, a duty which they have up to the present day. Five hundred Grant county farms were under soil conservation plans by the year 1941, under the new Soil Conservation District.