

Columbus Sanford Builds Pastures From Gullies On Mystery Farm No. 37 With Kudzu And Blackjack Oaks

Columbus Sanford has been living on Mystery Farm Number 37 for almost eleven years. Mystery Farm Home Number 37 is located about nine and a half miles from Columbus on the Gates Road.

Mr. Sanford says he moved onto this farm without any money and began buying it through what was then named the Farm Security Administration. Now he is ahead on his payments and almost has the farm paid out of debt. He says it has been a long road but he would travel it again.

When he and his family moved onto this farm there were many gullies and the land was pretty well covered with bermuda grass, briars and bushes. Today, the farm is in much better shape than it was. The soil has been built up and the farm is definitely worth more.

Mr. Sanford began cultivating this farm in row crops, but soon decided that much of the land was too steep for cultivating or was too gullied to allow erosion to be entirely stopped with terraces.

He began cutting blackjack oaks and setting them in the gullies and planting kudzu. He will vouch for kudzu's ability to hold top-soil, to build land and to grow hay. He put two tons of kudzu hay in the barn this year season.

Where once were gullies as high as his head, Mr. Sanford now has many of them filled in and covered with vegetation. He says he thought about hauling dirt and trying to fill them, but decided that would be too expensive. He let kudzu work for him.

Like many of the Marion county farmers, Mr. Sanford has turned to tractor farming. He uses a two-row tractor. Another year he will not be cultivating as much land as in the past because he is getting more and more into the cattle business and converting row crop land to pastures.

One reason this farm is growing into cattle production is because the price of cattle looked good when Mr. Sanford started getting into livestock, beginning with the two milk cows he bought a couple of years after moving to this farm.

Another reason he is changing to livestock is because much of his land was the steep, row-crop farming Seven acres of the 34 that were cultivated this year will not be row-cropped another year. The seven acres have been planted in oats. Four of the seven are planted in bahia grass now and the other three will be seeded in the spring.

This farm of 120 acres has about 30 acres in timber that is being protected from fire and selectively cut. Pastures take up 50 acres. Much of this is improved pasture. Crimson clover and Pensacola Bay, his have been used extensively. He has lespedeza and rye grass. Crimson clover seed has been sav-

ed and planted. Bahie seed was not saved last year because it was too late to save any when the combine got to Mr. Sanford's.

"Pensacola Bahie is one of the greatest things a cattle grower can have on his place," says how Mr. Sanford feels about this crop. Pastures are ahead of the cattle on this farm because it takes more pastures in dry weather than in wet and Mr. Sanford believes in feeding his cattle.

Mrs. Sanford was Miss Beesie Smith before she and Mr. Sanford were married in 1934. They have nine children. Bessie Ann is the oldest. She is a senior at Improve High School and belongs to the FHA and 4-H Club. George Leonard is working. Bobbie Nell, sweet sixteen, is a sophomore and a member of FHA.

Nathan is fourteen years of age and is a member of the 4-H Club. He is growing a calf to show in the spring livestock show. He is in the eighth grade.

Johannie is twelve and in the sixth grade. Christine, a year younger, is in the sixth grade and is getting a registered heifer ready for the spring show. She, too, is a member of the 4-H Club.

Patsy Ruth, 9, is in the fourth grade. C. C. is in the third grade.

Jack is helping his father make syrup. At the mature size of five he is the big boss around the house and the cane mill. Mr. Sanford says.

The Progress read The Columbian-Grand and listen to radio station WCJU to keep up with the news of the county and the country.

The windmill in the picture has been sold and an electric water pump installed. The windmill didn't furnish enough water. The 240 feet well makes an adequate supply of water more of a problem than if the well were not so deep. An electric stove was recently installed. Mr. Sanford says Mrs. Sanford is tickled to death with it. This family has a large electric refrigerator, though Mr. Sanford says he would buy a smaller refrigerator and a deep freeze, too, if he were buying again.

Another thing Mr. Sanford says he would do differently if he were moving back onto this farm again and had his present knowledge is that he would leave the bermuda grass alone instead of trying to destroy it. It makes good pasture, too, he says, and he would consider it an asset instead of a liability. He says he doesn't know just what

killed the bermuda unless it was smothered out with winter peas for cover crops that he left on the land as long as possible.

This land-owner gives much credit for his success to the agricultural agencies that have helped him. He says he has been helped by all of them. He uses well testing quite extensively in his farm program and is trying to get each acre into what it will grow best, which is pasture, on most of them.

There are about ten acres left on the farm that are almost idle as far as doing any good is concerned. Mr. Sanford says he is working toward getting all of this blackjack land into good pastures.

As these acres are cleared the soil will be tested before any fertilizer is put out. Pastures are fertilized by soil tests. Mr. Sanford says he will start back over his pastures this year and not let needed fertilization before adding anything.

Mr. Sanford says he will be glad to be out of debt but that he is also glad he was able to get in debt and buy this farm. He says he is thankful to be living in a country where a man can start up owning a good house and farm.



MR. FARMER —

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