

Managing the Noble Farms

How C. S. Noble Has Organized His 15,000 Acre Farm Business

It is not given to many men to manage a system of farms comprising over 15,000 acres, mostly devoted to crop production. There are men or companies, and too many of them, who have much more land than this in Western Canada. They are not farming it, however. They are waiting to farm the farmers who will come later and pay high for the privilege of working the land. Not so The Noble Foundation, Limited, of Nobleford, Alberta. Its president and managing director, C. S. Noble, commenced seeding operations last spring on a series of farms comprising 15,000 acres, most of which is under cultivation, and two out of every three acres of which is producing crop this year. He had 15 square miles of crop in this season, 11 square miles being under wheat. In 1916 he handled 150,213 bushels of wheat. This included 54,395 bushels from 1,000 acres, breaking the world's previous 1,000 acre record yield by 3,275 bushels. He also delivered to the elevator 93,237 bushels of oats and 2,442 bushels of flax. The 1916 bill for wages and horses was \$47,187.96. As many as 170 men were employed in the busy season, and 250 horses and 400 cows are on the farms constantly. The purchase of the Cameron ranch, east of Nobleford, in July, brings the total acreage owned up to 31,000 acres. It is the intention to bring as much as possible of this under cultivation as quickly as conditions will allow.

There might not appear to be much of practical value to the ordinary half section or section farmer in a study of the methods by which this colossal grain growing enterprise is managed. But the factors making for success on large and smaller farms are not so different after all. On each a good system of management must be followed to secure best results. Besides there are matters of general interest in connection with the Noble system of management as representing the machinery by which Canada's biggest grain farm is efficiently managed.

A System of Farms

The Noble Foundation farming enterprise is based on the unit system. The holdings are comprised of several farms of varying sizes. They are as follows:—

Farm Name	Acreage
Grandview Farm, East of Nobleford	5,760
Mountain View Farm, West of Nobleford	3,200
River Side Farm, Carmangay	1,760
Prairie Farm, Nobleford	1,600
Marquis Farm, Barons	1,280
Crescent Y. Ranch, Calgary	2,000

The whole system is managed from Mr. Noble's office at Nobleford. To assist in the office he has the secretary-treasurer of the company, M. C. Cranston, and a stenographer to help in the office work. Another bookkeeper has recently been engaged. Here a sketch of each farm with the fields numbered is kept. During the winter Mr. Noble maps out a plan of crop production and summer following for the farms for the following summer.

This plan is not absolutely final, but may be changed if conditions demand it. Each farm is charged with the amount of capital invested in land, buildings, and equipment. Annual charges for interest on capital depreciation, together with general running expenses are made. Each also has to bear its share of the overhead expenses, apportioned according to its acreage. Each farm is credited with all that is taken off it. If seed grain, for instance, is taken from one farm to another, it is credited to the farm producing it and charged against the farm to which it goes. So accurately are these accounts kept, that it is possible to figure the cost of production per acre on each of the farms.

To facilitate the management a private telephone line runs from the central office to each farm and also to the city of Lethbridge.

Distinct Farm Units

Each farm is in charge of a foreman, who is provided with an automobile. He is in supreme command on his farm, and is subordinate only to Mr. Noble at the central office. He has complete charge of the men and of the operations on his farm. The organization of the individual farms may be said to have three divisions. First there is the house in charge of a housekeeper, who keeps accurate account of the cost of feeding the men. Then there is the farm mechanic and a stable man. The other division comprises the men who are kept at work in the fields. A report of all the work done is submitted to the central office, and all orders for repairs, and other items of expense, go through this office. A monthly report is gotten out, so that a foreman is in a position to compare his operations with those of the foremen of other farms.

The problem of securing sufficient men might be thought to be a serious one, but no trouble has been experienced in securing plenty of them. Good wages are paid and poor or disagreeable men are not tolerated. The rate of wages is fixed at the central office, but the foremen have the right to hire or fire men as circumstances require. No provision is made for keeping married men, except that in some instances a housekeeper is secured in this way. It is put up to each individual man to work honestly and efficiently. He is put on his honor, and the poor men sorted out. No "pushers" are employed, except that in harvest time, head binder operators and stokers are selected and paid extra. Each man looks after his own team during the farming season, but the stable man keeps the stables cleaned out and looks after the feeding. In busy seasons, however, when more work is required and everyone is working at high pressure, the teams are cleaned, fed, and harnessed for each teamster, who when he comes in leaves his team in the yard. No Sunday work is allowed except in the stable and in the house, and then only what is absolutely necessary.

The regular men are employed by the month. A time sheet is kept by the foreman, and wages may be drawn at the end of each month, at which time



C. S. NOBLE



The Private Elevator at Nobleford



Harvesting scene on one of the Big Farms of the Noble Foundation, Ltd., of Nobleford, Alta.

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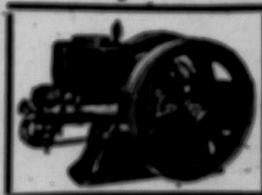


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