

MYSTERY FARM 68 IS

JOHN BALL, OWNER OF MYSTERY FARM NO. 68 NEAR SANDY HOOK, CULTIVATES YOUNG CORN IN FOURTH GEAR WITH A ROTARY HOE

The owner of Mystery Farm Number 68 says he just won't be without his rotary hoe which comes in so handy when cultivating corn.

Mystery Farm Home Number 68 is located a mile north of Sandy Hook on Highway 35 and is made up of some 200 acres. John Ball, owner of the farm, says he has lived here all his life, as this was his father's old home. His father is the late Jess Ball.

The old house burned a few years ago and a new one had to be built in about the same spot.

To the rear of the house, past the lot and at the edge of the pasture, is a large pond that has been stocked with fish. Mrs. Ball, the former Miss Crystelle Wells, says there are cat fish, bream, perch and trout in the pond.

Incidentally, Mrs. Ball and Mr. Ball both like to fish and said they caught a mess this week, although they were not biting too well. They also do a little squirrel hunting together, but fishing seems to be more important as a pastime than hunting.

Approximately 200 acres of the farm are in cultivation, with the balance being in pastures, improved and native, and timber.

The improved pastures are planted in Dallis and Bahia grasses. Crimson clover and oats and total about a hundred acres. Lime and 6-8-8 fertilizer have been put on the pastures.

Two years ago, Mr. Ball says, he spread a carload of oyster shell and a carload of lime on his farm and is still reaping benefits from it. He says he plans to test and apply more lime before long.

Timber is protected from fire and the stand is being improved. This year Mr. Ball estimates he planted about 40 acres of pine seedlings. He says he dug seedlings from around slash pine trees and replanted them. He says he has a good stand and a high percentage of living trees. Plans are to set out another 40 acres this coming planting season.

There are about forty acres to be planted in corn, Mr. Ball said Thursday morning when he came by the newspaper office to get his aerial picture of Mystery Farm Home Number 68, that he planned to begin planting Friday morning.



The cold weather had wreaked havoc with his fruit trees, including the Mayhaw trees that are shown near the pond at the right of the picture, but he figures it is late enough to plant corn at this time.

He plants his corn in little water-furrows. After the ground is plowed and levelled, he uses six-inch round shovels set 38 inches apart to lay off the rows. These shovels are run pretty deep, he says, and leave a little furrow in which he plants his corn.

After the corn is up and the grass begins to grow it is time to cultivate. This is done by pulling the rotary hoe behind his tractor, run-

ning in fourth gear. Mr. Ball says he doesn't know how many acres he could cover in a day, but it would be quite a few. He works a field a day, he said, and "takes out" when the field is finished.

"I wouldn't take anything for my rotary hoe," he said. It works fast, does a good job of cleaning grass from the corn and can be used the second time if the first trip over doesn't do the job completely.

Several colonies of bees around the pasture help to pollinate the corn.

The Balls have about ten acres of the new, improved POJ sugar cane that they secured seed for from Poplarville, where they say the ex-

periment station has developed this strain. There are a couple of acres in watermelons for sale, friends, neighbors and home use, they say.

Mr. Ball says he got his start off cattle by buying a couple of yearlings a year when he was growing Irish potatoes at four bits a hundred. He now has 90 head.

The horse on the farm has only been there a few days, since a mule was traded for him because all cultivating is done with the tractor. The horse is about a year and a half old and is to be used as a saddle horse.

The Balls are members of the Sandy Hook Methodist Church. They were married March 23, 1951.