

STORIES of New Jersey

STRAIGHT ROWS AND SILT

For generations New Jersey farmers have felt deep pride in their rectangular fields spreading out over gentle slopes and hills--straight rows marching across valleys, up to the crests of the hills, imposing a rigid pattern on ever changing land. But the system of rectangular fields planted in uniformly straight rows also made the land more susceptible to erosion. Straight rows cultivated up and down the slopes, even where the incline is hardly noticeable, create natural channels along which surface run-off can flow with destructive speed.



*Up and down hill rows carry off
valuable soil*

Through Sussex and Warren Counties more than 100,000 acres of excellent soils have eroded badly, particularly those sown to corn. In the Highlands of New Jersey gentle slopes planted to crops have suffered greatly from sheet erosion. In the Piedmont section, which runs through the central part of the State, most of the topsoil has been washed away and in many places the infertile subsoil is now exposed. Dr. Linwood L. Lee of the Federal Soil Conservation Service reports that "in one location more than 2,000 acres in an almost solid block have undergone such degradation that the land now stands entirely abandoned for agriculture."