By 1940, the shadow of impending war again was being felt. A Winter Shows speaker was John Metcalfe, the leading investigator for the Dies Committee on Nazi, Fascist and Communist problems in the U.S.

Summer brought lighter moments. The Robertson Hall parlor was the scene of the first campus wedding, when Dorothy Foker married William Montague of Crookston. Miss Foker’s father was A.M. Foker, an instructor in engineering, and she had lived on Northwest School grounds since childhood.

The Northwest Station celebrated its 45th anniversary in June, coupled with an alumni reunion. Pioneer farmers and businessmen, instrumental in the founding of the experiment station in 1895, were given special recognition. The first station superintendent, T.A. Hoverstad of St. Paul, was on hand to take part.

For a short time, life moved smoothly, with grain threshing clinics, homecoming, a student Christmas play and sports events.

The theme of the 1941 Winter Shows events, however, was “World Affairs.” Topics included “What Happened in Norway—The Nazi Threat” and “Will the South American Republics Go Nazi or Go With the United States?”

Faculty Row.

At the Northwest School, where Armistice Day programs were well-attended and past events were solemnly remembered, war clouds did not seem as far away as they had a generation before, when Northwest students had joined in the “war to end all wars.”

Another war (1941-1945)

In the fall of 1941, 362 students registered at the Northwest School. In addition to the freshmen, juniors and seniors, there were 67 students in the advanced class. The Crookston Aggies were conference champs in football, and were co-champions with Morris for basketball. In November of 1941 the first “Faculty Variety Night” was held, patterned after the traditional Student Variety Night. All students reportedly enjoyed the event immensely.

Then in December Pearl Harbor was attacked, and the threat of the U.S. again being involved in war became a reality. In the foreword to the 1942 annual, student editors wrote, “In the critical days of the spring of 1942, many of us are in doubt as to what the future may bring into our lives. All of us shall be called upon to make sacrifices and to alter our way of living in the days that are to come. It may be that in these days of crisis a school annual seems a more or less unnecessary expenditure of time and energy. Yet, faced with the uncertainty of the future, some may feel that only the past is secure. Thus, perhaps more than in any other recent year, THE AGGIE is important to us. For in it we find a record of the still relatively carefree days of our youth when our duties and responsibilities were comparatively light. In it, too, we find our classmates, friends and teachers who may be widely scattered before many months have gone by. The past with its memories of the joys which have come to us, the work we have accomplished and the friends we have known cannot be taken from us.”

Northwest Superintendent T.M. McCall echoed the fatalistic attitude. “We had hoped in 1918 that your and future generations would never have to experience the horrors of war. You have reached the age when you no longer need to be shielded from the grim realities of life. You have served your apprenticeship; you have qualified for service; you have won your stripes and we are sending you into the front lines in the battle for preservation of our democratic way of life . . . We trust that the spirit of the song, ‘Fight, Northwest Aggies,’ will carry you on to victory in all your worthwhile endeavors.”

Co-eds learned about tractor operation in the ‘40’s.
The blizzard of 1943 hit so fast. People didn’t stay in their cars. Some made it to the dorms, but others went in the opposite direction into the fields and that’s what caused the loss of so many lives.

Livestock judging members, 1943.

Living with the war in Europe and its effects on the Red River Valley became of utmost importance. Students were required to leave their sugar ration cards at the school in order to adhere to government regulations that books be deposited at any hotel, school or institution that served 12 or more meals a week to an individual. There was no football program in 1942. The schedule was curtailed to save on gas and rubber. At the one football game played, the Homecoming game against Morris, former students and graduates on leave from service were admitted to the Homecoming dance free if in uniform. School training was geared so students should learn all phases of agricultural production for all-out production of food for the “war effort.” R.J. Christgau, instructor and athletic director for 13 years, became field director of recreation for the American Red Cross. The major theme of the Winter Shows dealt with the war.

In the Northwest Monthly, it was stated that shortage of farm labor in the Red River Valley pressed home “the advantage of the six-month school year for farm boys and girls.”

The large murals were installed at Kiehle Auditorium in 1942, a gift of the class of ’32. The life-sized murals were painted by John Martin Socha of St. Paul, and depicted the signing of the treaty near Huot in which the Indians signed over the Red River Valley for settlement by white men, “The Old Crossing Treaty.” The other mural was “The Discovery of America by the Norsemen.” The murals are still at Kiehle, along with smaller ones also painted by Socha.

T.A. Hoverstad, first station superintendent, died in March of 1943 at the age of 75. During that year, the annual alumni reunion was postponed until Homecoming because of the gas and labor shortage.

At the 1944 Winter Shows, war bond records were set when donated animals were sold at auction and brought a total of $1,378,011. By September of that year, eight alumni were counted among the war casualties.

In 1945 the unimaginable happened. For the first time in 35 years, Winter Shows activities were canceled. The action was taken to conform to the denial of a permit from the National Committee on Conventions and Meetings in Washington, D.C. It was denied because the Winter Shows did not “contribute directly to the war effort.” Livestock, poultry and crops shows were held as scheduled, however, because the Show’s Board of Managers felt agricultural production did contribute directly.

Victory came in Europe that spring, and McCall wrote in the Northwest Monthly, “As I look across the campus this morning on Tuesday, May 8, with President Truman’s V-E Proclamation still fresh in my thoughts, I see Old Glory at half-mast in memory of our fallen Commander-in-Chief, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. To those of us at the Northwest School, the flag at half-mast also honors the 14 Northwest School boys who have given their all for the right of people to live without oppression.”

During the summer there were more Northwest alumni casualties. Two died in July, one in August. But changes were taking place, gearing the country for the unsettled peace that was coming. The Russian food commissioner visited the Red River Valley and toured typical farms in the area with Superintendent McCall. He spent a great deal of time at the Strickler Brothers’ farm near Euclid and at the Florance farm near Northcote. He wanted to see how Americans farmed so he could implement some of the techniques for Russian farmers.

The 50th anniversary of the Northwest Experiment Station was observed during 1945. Ironically, earlier that year A.D. Stephens, pioneer resident and banker in Crookston, died. The former state senator had been instrumental in getting the first state appropriation from the legislature for the establishment of the Northwest School of Agriculture. The first, and largest, dormitory for boys was named in his honor.

By the end of 1945, the four long years of war were officially over. Farmers’ Week and Winter Shows activities were again being planned for 1946. The evening speaker would be Congressman Walter Judd. His topic was “Peacetime Uses of Atomic Energy.”

There are families who have sent second and third generations through school here. Some are continuing that tradition with their sons or daughters attending UMC.