Although in 1935 “the darkest hours of the Depression” seemed to be over, the end was not quite in sight. Weather didn’t improve in 1936. The first seven months of 1936 had already broken all records at Crookston for heat, cold and drought.

A cold record was set at 51 below zero. January was the coldest January on record, and February was the coldest of all months recorded. For 45 consecutive days, the thermometer remained below zero. Snowfall was nearly twice the average, but little moisture was available from it. Heat also set records in 1936, with July being the hottest month on record. Temperatures of 100 or more were recorded for 10 days, and zoomed to 90 or above for 21 days. July was the driest ever recorded. Total precipitation since January 1 was 6.83 inches, about half the average rainfall through June.

Northwest School’s attendance record was broken in 1936 with 384 students enrolling. “With normal dormitory accommodation for 250 students and a present enrollment of nearly 400, it is evident that future growth of the school will depend largely upon whether or not adequate dormitory and classroom facilities are made available.”

Spring thaws brought campus flooding. This was a familiar scene in 1934.

Depression or not, changes were coming. Rural electrification was becoming a reality. It was estimated that over 1,600 of the 2,400 farms in Meeker County would be supplied with electricity before 1937. Red River Valley farmers were reported to be “keenly interested” in the developments.

One Northwest student who became especially well-known during this period was Edwin Widseth of McIntosh. Widseth attended the Northwest School from 1929 through 1933. He lettered in football each of the four years, and was commended for his scholarship and school activities. He went on to play for the U of M Gophers in 1933. In 1934-35 and 1935-36 Minnesota won the Big Ten and National championships. In 1936, Widseth was named co-captain of the Gopher team, the team was declared national champion, and Widseth was honored in numerous ways. He was voted the most valuable man on the team, and ranked sixth in sports writers’ and broadcasters’ votes for the most outstanding player in the nation. He played 410 out of 480 minutes during the season, leading the Gophers in playing time. He was named All-American Tackle by 11 national outlets, including the New York Sun, United Press and the Associated Press. He was named All-Conference Tackle by United Press and the Big Ten coaches. Widseth later played tackle on the New York Giants team.

Station-School Superintendent Dowell resigned in April 1937 to accept a position at the University Farm in St. Paul. During the 10 years Dowell was in charge, student enrollment increased one-third, and over 57 percent of the school’s graduates, through 1937, completed their course work during that period. T.M. McCall, horticulturist at the school for 25 years, succeeded Dowell as superintendent.

Home project work was important at the Northwest School. Each student selected a project to work on during summer vacation. Five credit hours of project work had to be completed before graduation. There were numerous projects from which to choose, including windbreak planting, rock or insect collections, seed plot projects and livestock production. Female students could choose from such subjects as canning, dressmaking and room furnishings.

Agatha Olson was crowned Red River Valley queen at the Red River Valley Historical Pageant. Her attendants were (l to r) Laura Hanson, Olive Steen, Evelyn Vilven, Lois Sargent, Esther Haugo, Helen Carlson, Irene Holst and Joyce Stamnes, all Northwest students.