Northwest School alumni were recognized for their leadership abilities again in 1960, when two graduates and three past students were recipients of the Valley Farmer and Homemaker Awards at the Winter Shows. Graduates Lawrence O. Peterson of Lockhart, '31, and Robert W. Larson of Crookston, '30, were honored, as were past students Laurence Ward, St. Vincent; Oscar Oswald, Newfolden; and Alfred Hallstrom.

Past school faculty member Retta Bede was honored in 1961, when the home economics building was named for her. Also that year, assistant professor and animal husbandman A.M. Pilkey retired after teaching at the school for 39 years. Past superintendent and professor emeritus T.M. McCall was busy in 1961 writing "The Centennial History of Polk County."

A new building housed the Red River Valley Winter Shows in 1962. Visitors during the week of the Shows totaled 29,733, breaking all previous attendance records. That year, too, the Experiment Station's annual Crops Day featured a Land-Grant Centennial program, remembering the act of 1862 that established Land Grant colleges, including the University of Minnesota.

Nine graduates out of a class of 20 attended the class of 1913 alumni reunion in 1963. Mrs. Nils Pederson (Teckla Erlandson) of Bejou was the only female in the class, and she was present 50 years later with her husband, also a 1913 grad.

Northwest alums continued to make news. Leonard Yutrzenka of Argyle, '42, was honored as King Agassiz IV during Winter Shows in 1964. Of the 11 county King Agassiz nominees, four were Northwest School graduates.

But times were changing. At one time, 118 schools similar to the Northwest School operated in the U.S., attaining peak influence during the 1920's. By the 1960's, only a handful were still in operation.

The trend away from county agricultural schools began after the initiation of the Smith-Hughes Act, which provided federal assistance for the teaching of agricultural extension and vocational agricultural classes in regular high schools. At the Northwest School, enrollment had lessened since transportation was no longer a big problem. It was unnecessary to board at schools after the development of the automobile and the improvement of roads.

Station-School superintendent B.E. Youngquist did an in-depth study of agricultural schools during the early 1950's, and concluded that schools of this type were outmoded. His study was published as a thesis, and it triggered subsequent studies by the University of Minnesota, and several governmental and private groups.

During the early spring and summer of 1963, the University of Minnesota Bureau of Field Studies made a study of the role of the Northwest School of Agriculture. Three principal recommendations were made. It was recommended that the Northwest Experiment Station be strengthened and expanded appropriately "to meet the needs of the evolving agricultural economy." The study also recommended that continuing education in the form of adult short courses for farmers and for persons who serviced farmers be expanded. Finally, the study urged consideration of the phasing out of the Northwest School and the launching of a college-level technical institute.

University President O. Meredith Wilson appointed an ad hoc committee to recommend plans for phasing out the high school and to recommend as specifically as possible the staff and facilities needed to open a technical institute.