In 1918, the flu epidemic raged. The fall term was cut short, and on December 16 it is mentioned that all senior girls were sick with flu except Olga Spjut, who went to classes alone.

A class history written by Verna Imsdahl includes the items, “In the fall of 1918 there was a remarkable change noticeable in the seniors who arrived. Although their number had been reduced to 24, they lived up to the old adage, ‘Quality not Quantity.’ They were handicapped at the beginning of the term because of the irregularity due to an over-supply of the well-known enemies, the flu germs, and also the absence of the class advisors who had joined the field of war work and did not return until after Christmas.”

A high point of the year was the legislative appropriation of $10,000 for a concrete road between the campus and the city of Crookston. Pictures of roads from that period testify to the deep ruts that made travel nearly impossible.

R.W. Thatcher, dean of the department of agriculture, congratulated Northwest students. “To be able to go ahead steadily toward a desired goal, even with such distractions as epidemics of disease and changes from war-time to peace-time condition, is an achievement which promises well for your future success as individuals and as a school.”

Other words from his letter to the class of 1919 sound familiar and modern. “Now, as never before, the importance of a prosperous, contented rural population as a national asset is generally recognized.”

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**Plans and problems (1920-1930)**

The world began to settle down to normal living again, but the war was not soon forgotten. A Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Memorial was proposed, and $2,200 was raised by alumni, faculty and friends to erect the granite monument. In the yearbook of 1920, the statement is made, “It is hoped that the road now leading into the campus from the bridge may be removed and two parallel roads be built in its place.” The monument would be erected between the roads.

Literally thousands attended the Dedication Day on October 5, 1920, when several special events took place. First, a new $100,000 dining hall was dedicated; the Memorial was unveiled; and the date signaled the opening of a paved road from Crookston to the campus.

![The War Memorial at the campus entrance.](image1)

The War Memorial had an honor roll with 163 named on a large bronze plaque. Included were the seven Northwest alumni who had lost their lives during the war—Herman Ecklund, Gilbert Kittelson, Arthur Layton, Edward Rud, Theodore Stalemo, Martin H. Dale and Clarence Brustad. The memorial was unveiled by Ole A. Flaat ('16), president of the Alumni Association.

Superintendent Selvig was delighted with the paved road, which was the first hard-surfaced road in the Ninth Congressional District. According to Selvig, much prodding had been done to get a paved road between the city and the campus, but little headway had been made. Then Regent M.M. Williams of Little Falls visited after a heavy April rain. Wrote Selvig, “When we emerged from the city’s paved streets and entered the gumbo highway to the school, Mr. Williams thought we should return. The car swerved from one side of the road to the other. It was necessary to avoid the pot-holes. It frequently happened that cars landed in the ditch and had to be hauled out.”

After the unnerving ride, Williams vowed to work for legislative funding. He did; eventually, the legislature voted $10,000 for the University’s share in improving the road.

During the early ’20’s, students chose a variety of topics for their special projects and presentations, including Future of the Draft Horse, Why You Should Choose the Guernsey Cow, Control of Sow Thistle in the Red River Valley, and Recreation on the Farm.
In 1921, basketball was a favorite sport on the campus, although "the small pox epidemic interfered with the carrying out of the scheduled list of games." Debating teams and music groups had good student participation, and on March 23, the senior class and 80-member chorus presented an operetta, "Twilight Alley." Two students that year were recipients of scholarships awarded by the Crookston Milling Company. Selection was based on "diligence and progress," and Iver Johnson of Crookston received $75, while Clayton Stageberg of Floodwood received $50.

Pageants became a popular diversion in those years, beginning with "The Valley Spirit Speaks" in 1921. The first pageant was written by Superintendent Selvig in honor of visiting delegates for the Northern Minnesota Editors' Association meeting held at the Northwest School. The pageant was popular, and was performed several times that spring. In 1923, the "Pageant of Prosperity" was presented for the 20th anniversary of the Red River Valley Dairymen's Association. About 200 persons participated in that production, which featured music, dances, special costumes and scenery, all relating to Red River Valley history and agriculture.

On November 2, 1921, senior boys and faculty women cast the first votes for president, again issuing in a new era—one in which women were allowed to vote. But in spite of pageants proclaiming prosperity, the years between 1920 and 1930 were not good ones for agriculture. Farm property value dropped, farm income dropped and many lost their farms. Equality for agriculture and farm relief were bitter topics. The farm situation spurred Selvig on to become interested in politics.

Selvig's words from more than 50 years ago sound as if they were lifted from today's newspapers. "The farmers' purchasing power is much below what it was in 1914. His farm debt has increased and he is unable, under present conditions, to reduce it. He buys in an artificially created market and is compelled to sell nearly all his products on a world market. Either the protective system must be extended to the farmer or it must be modified. Transportation, taxation, credit problems, land tenure and honesty in labeling food products are other problems that cry for amendment and change 'in the interests of agriculture . . . agricultural well-being is of fundamental importance to the cities, to the industrial East, if you please, as well as to us out here in the producing regions.'"

The 1925 class yell went like this: "Hoop la ra, Hoop la ra, Bestest class you ever saw. You'll admit that we're alive, Senior Class of '25."

The Northwest School of Agriculture's class of 53 years ago had 48 students, 24 men and 24 women. Total enrollment stood at 271, with 172 males and 99 females. The average age was 17.8 years. Students who came from farms totaled 247; town dwellers numbered 24.

The year 1925 marked the third decade since the Northwest Experiment Station had been established, and the 19th year of Northwest School history. Superintendent Selvig wrote, "During these 30 years the erstwhile 'duck pond' . . . has been transformed into an efficient investigational center . . ." Selvig added, "During these 19 years of the Northwest School, over 2000 young men and women have here received training and inspiration for their life's work."

Each student was required to present a thesis or demonstration before graduation. Such topics as "Windbreaks," "Protection and Care of Wild Birds," "Muffin Making," and "How to Choose a Becoming Hat" were chosen. Over the years, the thesis had given way to demonstrations. "Usually students gain a great deal of value by giving this form of thesis because they learn to explain their theme while actually demonstrating with their hands," yearbook writers noted.

By 1925, most women wore their hair bobbed and waved tightly. Dresses were shapeless and mid-calf length. Men's hair was usually brushed severely back or parted in the center.

The 1925 Homecoming game gave the school a 34-0 victory over Morris. Other activities during the year included debate, music, clubs and societies, class plays and YMCA and YWCA events. The school had a livestock judging team, which placed second in the first inter-school stock judging contest held during the Red River Valley Winter Shows week. Winnipeg placed first.

The first annual summer alumni reunion was held in June. Over 300 persons who had attended the school were
present, “in spite of heavy rains during the day and the roads which were almost impassable.” All classes except the 1910 class were represented. Ernest Erickson of Chauwin, Alberta no doubt came the greatest distance, but many others drove long miles over muddy roads to attend.

School enrollment for fall term reached an all-time high of 228 in 1926. In the Northwest Monthly school publication it was stated, “All dormitory rooms were taken the first week of school with a number of students living in Crookston. The enrollment would have been still larger could students have found room at the school.”

In February, three special trains were needed to bring visitors to the Red River Valley Winter Shows. The Northwest School held their traditional Farmers’ Week and Women’s Meetings in conjunction with the Shows. Selvig reported that thousands attended. “All of them expressed the same thought that it was the greatest educational week in the history of the Valley,” he said.

That 1926 Winter Shows meeting had an attendance that could not be accommodated. According to Selvig’s memoirs, the largest crowd of Winter Shows participants ever showed up to greet Governor Frank O. Lowden of Illinois. Governor Lowden first spoke at the women’s meeting. For his next engagement, it was obvious the armory could not accommodate all the people, so a loudspeaker was connected to the auditorium of the Methodist church. Lowden first spoke to the 900 people assembled in the church and he then spoke to the persons at the armory. It was estimated over 5,000 persons failed to gain admittance to the armory. The Red River Valley farmers considered Lowden, himself a native Minnesotan, a friend. The governor spoke about the plight of farmers and stressed constructive solutions.

Other farm-oriented events happened that year. For several years, there were farm club visiting days at the campus. At least 50 clubs came each year to hear extension speakers. Women who attended the meetings suggested having an annual farm women’s camp at the school. By the time they arrived, the women said, it was time to go home again. They wanted to “come, stay in the dormitories, attend classes, have fun, listen to speakers and entertainers, have meals in the dining hall and talk.”

The women’s camp began in 1926 and was held each June, with as many as 200 attending. The camp, too, became a Valley institution.

After considering what Selvig called “the plight of the farmers,” he decided to run for Congress. He had two goals: to encourage farmers to organize, and to concentrate on farmers’ marketing problems. In November of 1926, C. G. Selvig was elected congressman for the Ninth Congressional District.

Austin A. Dowell succeeded Selvig as superintendent on April 15, 1927.

Dowell had graduated from Iowa State College. He taught in Iowa, and then was the head of the animal husbandry department at the University of Alberta in Canada. From there, he went on to the University of Minnesota, working with the Extension Division.

Reference was made to women and the vote in the 1927 yearbook. A poem coined by “A Suffragette” was written in honor of Selvig.

“Once I was a Democrat, And thought it lots of fun; But changed like a chameleon, When you set out to ‘run.’ And now you are a Congressman, And I a woman true; No matter what your policies, I’ll always be for YOU!”