Raymond S. Dunham left the Northwest School and Experiment Station early in 1945, having been on the staff since 1921. He was appointed to a position in the division of agronomy and plant genetics at the Minnesota Experiment Station, University Farm, St. Paul. His heart was always at Crookston. After his death, his ashes were strewn over the research plots by airplane.

Dr. Olaf C. Soine succeeded Dunham as Station agronomist in 1945. Soine, who’s background was also involved with soils work, took a dual role at this time. Soine had received his M.S. degree in 1937 and completed his Ph.D. at the University of Minnesota in 1945. He had been a research fellow in the division of soils at University Farm, St. Paul.

There were a series of horticulturists following T.M. McCall. A. C. Vogel served from 1937 until 1939, followed by Robert E. Nylund, who was appointed in 1939.

An interim horticulturist had been appointed in 1944, Mrs. Violet Lundgren Clark of Savannah, Georgia. She was a graduate of the University of Minnesota’s horticulture department. She worked as a student assistant at St. Paul, and as a horticulture assistant consultant in raspberry investigations at the Duluth substation. Clark also had been employed by commercial floral and landscape companies in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Orrin C. Turnquist was appointed to the horticulture department at the Northwest School and Experiment Station in 1945. Turnquist, a Minnesota native, received a B.S. degree in forestry from the University of Minnesota in 1937 and his M.S. degree in horticulture in 1940. He served as a student assistant in the department of forestry and soils at St. Paul for a time. His first assignments at Crookston were involved with potato breeding and potato production.

50th NWES Anniversary

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. That site is now the location for the UMC’s Conference Center.

In the Station summary for that anniversary year, Superintendent McCall noted two decades of brome and meadow fescue grass research, more success in eradication of quack grass, and the success of Bokhara (sweet clover) once dropped because of it’s weedy nature. Sweet clover became the “plow down” crop of choice in the Valley, followed by summer fallowing ahead of sugarbeets.

Soine would show later that with proper rotations and fertilization, these idle acres were not necessary. It put thousands of acres back in use.

The Station had played an important part in early introduction and distribution of Grimm alfalfa. McCall reflected that in 1914 the Station had distributed 18,000 pounds of pure alfalfa seed to 521 cooperators. Further recall on this anniversary noted almost 50 years of potato research, including spraying tests, seed treatment, size of seed pieces, transmission of virus diseases through the seed piece, depth of planting, and testing of new breeding material.

Gardens and trees had been of prime importance for the early settlers on the barren prairies of the Red River Valley. The horticulture department had been a vital resource during the first 50 years of the Station. A wide variety of fruit production was researched. More than 400 apple trees of 11 standard varieties were planted, 350 crab apples of nine varieties, and 75 plums of 11 varieties were planted during 1910-17. In addition, raspberries and strawberries were tested in abundance.

Large numbers of sheep and herds of cattle were raised during the first 50 years. Shorthorn and Angus herds were kept in small numbers. Students regularly worked with these animals, raising and butchering them in classes. Swine work had come and gone over this period. Poultry feeding was a major research accomplishment in the long term.

Early self-propelled combine at the Station in 1945.