SECURING THE LAND.

This tract of land remained in the possession of the General Government until March, 1878, when the ownership of this tract was transferred to the State of Minnesota, which in turn transferred it on the same date, to the St. Paul & Pacific Railway Company, now a part of the Great Northern Railway system. All of it had remained unimproved in the possession of the railway, excepting about fifty acres which had been broken, cropped, and filled with mustard and other weeds by trespassers, until 1895, when the University of Minnesota was given permission to use it for an experimental farm. In 1903 an agreement was made with the railway by which the University could become the purchaser of the land at any time at $25 per acre, but could have the possession of it free of charge so long as it was used for educational or experimental purposes.

BEGINNINGS IN 1895.

Work at the experiment farm began in 1895, when the city of Crookston and the County of Polk each gave $1,000, which was utilized for drainage and making of roads around and through the Northwest Farm. Prof. W. M. Hays was placed in general charge of the equipment and plans for experimental work, and Mr. T. A. Hoverstad was chosen assistant agriculturist, and was given the local management of this Northwest Farm, at Crookston, as Superintendent.

SOIL AT NORTHWEST STATION.

The surface soil at the Northwest Experiment Farm is a blackish color, usually about twelve inches in depth, although at places it becomes very thin, while at others the dark material extends in slender streaks for 18 to 30 inches down into the lighter subsoil. Two distinct types of soil were mapped on the farm. The larger portion is of Fargo clay loam soil, which contains a very large per cent of organic matter. This renders the soil loamy and easily cultivated, when in a dry condition; but when wet, it is sticky and tenacious, clods badly, and does not scour well, making plowing almost impossible. The other type of soil, called the Fargo fine sandy loam, is easily cultivated, and can be plowed much earlier in the spring and summer after heavy rains, than the heavy type of soil.

PLANS OUTLINED.

The plans outlined for the Northwest Farm included the production for dissemination of the best grains produced by the station; the testing of varieties of grains, roots, trees, and fruits; field management; tillage and weeds; pastures and meadows; forage and pastures from annual crops; prairie forestry; road making; feeding work horses and other stock; breeding animals; and dairying. All of these were to be studied with reference to conditions in this part of the State. These plans involved extended investigations to answer questions which could be properly studied only in this peculiar part of the state.

WORK OF EARLY YEARS.

The work from 1896 up to the installation of the drainage ditch, in 1909, was difficult and the results uncertain, on account of excessive rainfall and lack of drainage during the greater time of this period. The reports of the Northwest Experiment Farm present these difficulties very vividly. In the spring of 1896 the rainfall was so constant and excessive that the season for planting grain crops had practically passed before the seed could be planted. In 1897, floods just before harvest nearly ruined the wheat and oats. The need of an adequate drainage system was early recognized; but the problem was one requiring a considerable expenditure of money and the co-operation of several agencies, which it took some time to secure. A yield of 23 bushels of wheat to the acre is reported for 1897, with an average of 20.9 for three-year period. Oats averaged 47 bushels to the acre in a three year test, and barley varieties averaged from 26.6 bushels to 31.7 bushels to an acre. A considerable number of trees were planted which afford at the present time both windbreak and shade.