CHAPTER XII.

THE CROOKSTON SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE.

By C. G. SELVIG.

A RED RIVER VALLEY INSTITUTION—NEW BUILDING DEDICATED—DEATH OF SUPERINTENDENT WM. ROBERTSON—THE SCHOOL’S ADVANCEMENT AND GROWTH—MOVING YEAR—SCHOOL FACULTY—EQUIPPING A TECHNICAL SCHOOL—THE SCHOOL’S GROWTH—ITS WORK OUTSIDE SCHOOLROOM DOORS.

The Crookston School of Agriculture must be considered separately from the Northwest Experiment Station, although they are located at one and the same place, and their work is carried on together. The Experiment Station had been organized and in operation for ten years before the School came into existence.

The Crookston School of Agriculture is also a part of the Agricultural Department of the University of Minnesota. It was created by an act of the Legislature in the session of 1905. An appropriation of $15,000 was provided for the building known as the School Building (now named the Home Economics Building), which was completed in 1906. No funds for maintenance were voted. In order to have school open that fall it was necessary to secure funds for salaries and expenses. A sum of $2,500 was privately subscribed by patriotic citizens of Crookston and vicinity. This fund, and assistance from the Northwest Experiment Station funds, made it possible to begin in 1906. Thirty-one students, all the school could accommodate in its cramped quarters, were enrolled. Their names were as follows: Emma Agusta Anderson, Hallock; Agnes Bjoin, Crookston; Henry L. Blackmore, Baggs, Wyoming; Carl Carlson, Kennedy; William Dewar, Crookston; Walter Dewar, Crookston; John Distad, Perley; Hans Forseth, Climax; Christopher, Lewis, and Molly Fossbakken, Foss-
Hall, a dormitory for boys, and the Industrial Building (later named S. M. Owen Hall). A modest sum was provided for annual maintenance, and the sum of $2,500 was appropriated to reimburse the private contributors who made the first year of the school possible.

The school is what might be classed as a technical agricultural school, and is intended to round out the education of the farm boys and girls after they have left the rural schools, fitting them either to go back to the farm or to enter the University, should they desire to take up professional work in the line of agriculture. Students attending the institution are boarded at the School, and are thus in a continual agricultural atmosphere, expenses being only the actual cost of living. The course of study includes farm botany, mechanical drawing, music, farm mathematics, poultry, English, agriculture, blacksmithing, carpentry, military drill, cooking, physical training, sewing, study of breeds, laundering, agricultural physics, dairying, fruit growing, farm accounts, stock judging, breeding, household art, agricultural chemistry, vegetable gardening, field crops, forestry, entomology, algebra, handling grain and machinery, veterinary science, civics, geometry, plant propagation, dressing and curing meats, feeding soils and fertilizers, home economy, domestic chemistry, domestic hygiene and meats, rural economics and sociology, and teachers’ training subjects.

As a result of the loyal support of the people of the Red River Valley, the school, early in its life, was well cared for in the way of current expenses, and in buildings. It was not long before, with its numerous attractive buildings and pleasant surroundings, and the practical work which it was doing, that the institution became a source of pride to the people of the Red River Valley.

**A RED RIVER VALLEY INSTITUTION.**

Many questions were raised as to the advisability of creating a school in the Red River Valley, or anywhere for that matter, when there was a great central school and experiment station at St. Anthony Park, between Minneapolis and St. Paul. It was not possible those days to prophesy just what work such an institution would find to do. Its justification lies in the fact that the agricultural problems of one part of the State differ from those of another part. The problems of the timbered country of the North are certainly not those of the prairies of the West. Likewise, the problems of the Red River Valley are not those of that part of the Mississippi Valley adjacent to the Twin Cities. Naturally, too, the problems of the Red River Valley cannot be worked out under the different conditions which prevail in the part of the Mississippi Valley named. The physical factors of farming are not portable.

Furthermore, the object of a technical agricultural school is to train young men so that they may go back to the land and cultivate it with success. Obviously, the thing to do is to train them on the kind of farm to which they are to return, or as nearly that as possible, and not on some other kind, where different conditions rule and different problems have to be worked out.

The Experimental Station, then, was established in the first place to work out the agricultural problems of the Red River Valley, and the school came later as a means of training young men from the Red River Valley farms, on a Red River Valley farm, in order that they might go back to Red River Valley farms to build them on sounder principles. This and more fundamental problems of agriculture are not at all neglected at the Crookston School, but it is simply to say that the special problems of the region receive the special attention they demand.

**NEW BUILDINGS DEDICATED.**

The fall of 1908 was an auspicious one for the new institution. Two magnificent buildings were ready for occupancy, and the School had gained a reputation for earnest efficient effort, and was rapidly forging ahead. At the time of the dedication of the boys’ dormitory, it was named Stephens Hall, in honor
of Senator A. D. Stephens, of Crookston, who represented Polk County in the State Senate during these years, and to whose successful efforts to secure funds for the school building and equipment, as well as adequate provision for its support, much credit is due. James J. Hill was present at the dedication exercises, and delivered a prophetic address.

Stephens Hall is a beautiful three-story brick building, a model of comfort and convenience. The two upper floors are used as a boys' dormitory, and the first floor for the dining club, with its dining room, kitchen, bakeshop, and other necessary quarters. The dining club quarters were installed temporarily, as a separate building is planned eventually to accommodate that department. Stephens Hall will then provide comfortable rooms for 150 young men. The industrial building provided the same year, now named S. M. Owen Hall, contains the blacksmith and carpentry shops, stock judging room, dairy room, mechanical drawing room, and a large addition constructed in 1911 provides commodious quarters for the farm engineering department.

One hundred and one students attended during the third year of the school (1908-1909), more than double the second year's enrollment of 41.

DEATH OF SUPERINTENDENT WM. ROBERTSON.

The year 1910 was one of many changes. Early in January occurred the very sudden and deeply regretted death of the first superintendent of the School, William Robertson. His death cast a pall of gloom over the entire School that could not be removed. His services and enthusiasm had been mighty factors in establishing the School and in outlining policies and plans. The School's pioneer days were passed under the direction of Prof. Robertson and his estimable wife, who was also his co-worker in all the numerous activities necessary during these early days.

THE SCHOOL'S ADVANCEMENT AND GROWTH.

The Legislative session of 1909 fairly outdid its previous record in the matter of having a larger vision regarding the School's future work and usefulness, both in the matter of providing buildings and equipment, and also in the very important matter of establishing an annual maintenance fund sufficient to permit the School to increase the faculty and extend the work. These buildings were under construction when the new superintendent came to Crookston. For this position the Board of Regents selected Mr. C. G. Selvig, whose work began August 1, 1910.

Two new buildings were completed in the fall of that year, viz.: Robertson Hall, named in honor of William Robertson, the first superintendent of Crookston School of Agriculture, and a girls' dormitory, which provides accommodations for 75 young ladies, and is a model home for girls attending the school. It is a three-story brick building, with beautifully tinted interior walls and with good architectural lines exteriorly. Climbing vines which eventually will cover the outside walls greatly add to its homelike appearance. The other building, the David L. Kiehle Building, was named in honor of former State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Regent, and University Professor, Dr. David L. Kiehle. This, the fifth of the school buildings, and one of the largest, is also one of the most useful on the campus. It contains a well equipped gymnasium and a beautiful auditorium (which is pronounced by all as one of the most beautiful rooms in the State, seating about 500), administrative offices, and the library.

MOVING YEAR.

The Experiment Station buildings were located on a tract of slightly elevated land near the northwest corner of the farm. It was found that the school campus required more room. During 1911, therefore, numerous changes were made. A class room building and minor station buildings had been provided by the 1911 session of the Legislature. In order to find a suitable location for this structure and others that the School would soon require, due to its rapidly increasing attendance, it became necessary to remove the horse barn, dairy barn, poultry house, and the farm
house to new locations on a permanent campus plan. Four cottages for married members of the station and School faculty were also built that year. The classroom building, which was completed in 1912, was named the Hill Building, in honor of James J. Hill, who was present at the dedicatory exercises. It is a fine three-story structure, beautifully finished in oak throughout, and admirably arranged to accommodate the various departments. With the horticulture and botany departments on the first floor, agronomy on the second, and English, agricultural chemistry, and physics, and normal training departments on the third floor, it made possible a degree of efficiency in actual school room work hitherto impossible at the Crookston School.

SCHOOL FACULTY.

The policy of building up the departments of the Agricultural School and Experiment Station by securing well trained and able specialists for each was given prominence by the new administration. Prof. C. E. Brown, in charge of poultry investigations and teaching, continued in his position. Prof. J. D. Bilsborrow became the Station's first agronomist, followed by Prof. O. I. Bergh, who in turn was succeeded by Prof. F. L. Kennard, the first two leaving to accept positions which lack of means and opportunity precluded the Northwest's station from offering them. In 1911, Prof. T. M. McCall came from Iowa State College, at Ames, to take charge of the horticultural and botany departments, a position he still holds and in which he has rendered very efficient services to the State. Professors F. H. Sargent and Robert B. Baxter carried on the dairy and animal husbandry work until 1913, when these departments were merged and put in charge of Prof. Wm. Dietrich, formerly of the Illinois Experiment Station, an able teacher and investigator. Prof. T. R. Sewall, the present head of the farm engineering department, came from the Central School at St. Anthony Park, in 1911. Prof. J. P. Bengston, now in charge of the boys' dormitories and who is also an instructor, resigned his position as superintendent of the Roseau City Schools, in 1913, to accept a position with this institution.

Miss Bess M. Rowe, Miss Laura Franklin, Miss Mabel H. Olsen, Miss Faith S. Brown, and Miss Grace B. Sherwood occupied responsible positions at the school, the latter having charge of the teachers' training department. The progress that the School and Station has made is due to the strong, earnest efforts of the faculty members and station workers. In this brief sketch it is impossible to state more fully an account of their services.

EQUIPPING A TECHNICAL SCHOOL.

The Legislature in 1913 continued its interest in the Crookston School, providing two major additions to the buildings, besides placing the annual support fund on a more substantial basis. A central heating plant was constructed in 1913, and a second dormitory for young men, in 1914. A greenhouse and a grain storage equipment, as well as other minor buildings, completed the station group on present basis of work. A spur track was constructed in 1911 which, with the completion of the new heating plant, produced decided economies in annual maintenance.

THE SCHOOL'S GROWTH.

We can look to the buildings and equipment, the school campus and grounds, class rooms, and other outward evidences which indicate increasing preparedness and efficiency, but no institution must be permitted to gauge its service by these things. The students of a school and its graduates must be sought out if a school's real history is to be written. The State Institution at Crookston is closing its tenth year at this time. Six hundred and eighty-one students have enrolled during the regular school terms, with 181 in its junior course, 835 in its summer course for investigators. Prof. T. R. Sewall, the present head of the farm engineering department, came from the Central School at St. Anthony Park, in 1911. Prof. J. P. Bengston, now in charge of the boys' dormitories and who is also an instructor, resigned his position as su...
laboratories, and shops, but of its work in creating power, in adapting itself to the social life one is to live, in meeting the fuller requirements of citizenship and of co-operative community life which must characterize the bountiful and full country life which all recognize is desired. The school is a dormitory institution whereunder men and women of poise, integrity, lofty aims, and high visions, the young men and women, acquire ideals of conduct that shall last as long as there is life. Sports, indoor and outdoor, social activities; music, in band, orchestra, glee club and chorus, piano and voice,—all contribute to the upbuilding of the individual and to increasing the joys and happiness of the group. Public speaking and debates are recognized as essentials in the courses and are required of all. At an agricultural school, where farmers are to be trained, the ability to think clearly, to write or speak easily, is an important work to do. Nothing can be said about the extensive courses in agriculture and home training, nor about the more recently organized courses in teacher training. Bulletins and circulars describe this work in detail.

ITS WORK OUTSIDE SCHOOLROOM DOORS.

The history up to the present time of the Northwest School of Agriculture and Experiment Station would not be complete without a statement regarding its work and influence outside of the class rooms and experimental plots. Reference has been made to the organization, in 1903, of the Red River Valley Dairymen’s Association, of which Superintendent T. A. Hoverstad was the guiding spirit. Prof. Robertson continued the interest of the station in this organization, and was followed by Superintendent C. G. Selvig, who is the present president. This organization has accomplished much in the interest of dairy farming and manufacturing. The Red River Valley Horticultural Society, under the leadership of Station men, is an active organization, its members being interested in tree and fruit growing. In these various organizations, the Station and School workers are simply the means which various committees may use in accomplishing certain things. The Farmers’ Short Course and Agricultural Exhibit, begun at the Agricultural School in 1911, was branched out and increased so much in magnitude that in 1913 it was necessary to hold the meetings at Crookston. The Farm Crops Show and Meetings have come to be annual clearing house for ideas and plans to make the Red River Valley not only more productive, but to make home and school, city and country, better and more fit to live in.

The Northern Minnesota Poultry Association, the Red River Valley Live Stock Breeders’ Association, and the Red River Valley Seed Growers’ Association are all broadly educational. They serve to increase the spirit of co-operation, to break down community distrusts and to realize more fully the possibilities and potentialities of that full and abundant life which is vouchsafed every one, in city or country.

This brief sketch of the Northwest School of Agriculture and Experiment Station can well close in testifying to the influence and service of farmers’ clubs and of community centers in consolidated schools of this great section of the State. The extension service of the institution sprang into existence in helping to organize clubs and to promote the organization of such schools. This service is justifying itself and those groups are increasingly finding their full value as agencies for action and service.