During the World War I period additional duties were placed on the School and Station. I was appointed by the Governor to head the movement in the Red River Valley to help increase food production and a vigorous campaign followed. There is something tragic in this. The leaders of the nation urged increased food production and the farmers responded valiantly and patriotically. When the war was won those self-same leaders failed to recognize their duty to the farmers. They let the farmer down and I, with hundreds of thousands of others, felt this was nothing short of disaster. It did not happen after World War II which, in itself is evidence that the nation’s leaders had failed the farmers after World War I.

2.

There are events which leave so deep an impression that every detail is firmly etched. Such a one was the program held at the school when the service flag was dedicated. It was my duty to deliver an address at assembly. The days went by and I could not even outline my speech. Ideas simply would not come. All I saw was a sea of faces of the nearly two hundred students who were right at that moment on battle fields and in peril. What could I say? The night before the exercises I was still in the same condition. I could not even make any notes. Late that night perhaps in desperation I wrote “The Service Flag” which is printed in the appendix. It is not poetry. I am well aware of that. It is the outpouring of my heart to those boys.

3.

At the 1919 Home Coming Day program honoring returned soldiers, sailors and marines, many of them were in the audience. I sat next to one in the auditorium. I observed him as the program parts were given. I shared the emotion that shook him. He was living over again his experiences of army life. As a member of the First Division, he had been in the fiercest fighting in France. I shall never forget what I witnessed that memorable evening. We never gained even the faintest idea of what those boys suffered.

Letters were received on this occasion from the University’s President Marion Leroy Burton, Minnesota’s Governor J. A. A. Burnquist, the Ninth District’s Congressman Halvor Steenerson, General John J. Pershing and Secretary of Navy Josephus Daniels.

The following students told of their experiences: James Felber, Herbert Anderson, Martinue Stenseth (Brigadier-General, Air Corps, W. W. II), Walter Peterson, Magnus Spjut, Harold Borge, Conrad Clementson, Harold Schuck, Willard Johnston, Peter Ness and Clarence Lee.

4.

There was a two year’s delay in securing an appropriation for the dining hall building due to the Governor’s veto of several bills providing buildings on account of the country being engaged at war. It was voted, however, in 1919.
The problem of securing a concrete roadway from Crookston to the campus had been before the Board of Regents during this difficult period. Regent M. M. Williams, Little Falls, brought it to a head. He was chairman of the Agricultural Committee, and in that capacity usually paid the School a visit each year. One of his visits followed a heavy April rain which, of course, left the dirt roads practically impassable. 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 the cars landed in the ditch and had to be hauled out.

When we finally reached the school he said, “Why, that road is positively dangerous. I would never think of driving an auto on such a road”. I said we were accustomed to such road conditions. I heard nothing more of this until one day while at the University Comptroller A. J. Loeb said Regent Williams had at a recent Board meeting described dramatically his ride to the school. “We must do something about it,” he said.

It took some doing as they say, to secure action. The University was willing but the legislature would need to appropriate funds. On the route to the school there was an unpaved half mile of street within the city. There was a viaduct under the Great Northern Railway tracks that would have to be widened and strengthened. There were nearly two miles of roadway that would have to be paved. In all five groups must cooperate.

I am glad to state all did so. The County Board of Commissioners by a vote of 4 to 1 appropriated its share. The legislature voted $10,000.00 as the University’s share. The property owners on the unpaved street in Crookston voted nearly unanimously in favor of paving and the railroad company widened the viaduct. The roadway was completed in time for the dedication on October 5, 1920.

Paving the campus roads was done later. To secure the necessary funds was the problem. Those who have visited the campus know it is nearly as level as a floor. Vehicles of all kinds frequently “got stuck” and needed a tractor to pull them out. It was exasperating. The paving would cost about $40,000.00. I sent photographs of autos and trucks that were mired on the campus roads. Gravel surfacing was ineffective. The gravel simply sank out of sight after a few weeks. Paving was the only solution.

Finally A. J. Loeb, comptroller of the University came to the rescue. He reported to the Regents there was a sufficient sum in unexpended department funds for that year to defray the paving cost. There were many claimants for this money. Finally, perhaps to stop the “photograph” barrage, this fund was allocated to pave the Northwest School’s campus roadways.

Dedication Day exercises were held at the school on October 5, 1920. The exercises centered on the opening of the greatly needed paved road from Crookston to the campus, the dedication of the new $100,000.00 dining hall and the unveiling of the Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Memorial placed near the entrance to the campus. The $2200.00 for this memorial was raised by the alumni aided by the faculty and friends.

University Regent M. M. Williams in his address formally accepting the dining hall building for the Board of Regents gave a most interesting account of early days of the Valley and pointed out how marvelous had been its development.
Memorable Days

At the unveiling of the Memorial, Ole A. Flaat, 1916, president of the Alumni Association, following his eloquent appeal for loyalty and service in appreciation of the sacrifice made by the honored dead, pulled aside the veil that revealed the beautiful granite monument with its honor roll of 163 names recorded on a large bronze plate. President L. D. Coffman made the principal address and Honorable Fred B. Snyder, president of the Board of Regents, formally accepted the Memorial in a most impressive address eulogizing the men both living and dead who offered their all in service to their country. It was a stirring exposition of our national ideals and a call for a new and truer American patriotism.

After the day’s program I asked Thorval Tunheim, Northwest School, Class of 1916, then city editor of the Crookston Times to write the story of the day’s events for the school’s paper, The Northwest Monthly. Tunheim graduated from the University of Minnesota and then took up newspaper work. He was first with the Minneapolis Journal and then assistant city editor of the Pasadena Star News. Later he had his own paper in North Hollywood. His story follows:

Thousands of people from all sections of the Red River Valley flocked to the campus of the Northwest School of Agriculture at Crookston on Tuesday, October 5th to participate in the dedication of the Soldiers’ and Sailors’ memorial, the splendid new dining hall and the concrete paved roadway that will help to shorten the distance figuratively between Crookston and the school campus.

They came, they saw and they went—back to their homes and farms with a new respect for the Northwest School and its work. The old “grads” were there too, declaring that they would rather have missed ten years of their life than to have absented themselves from the campus on such a glorious day as the fifth
of October proved to be. Most of them expressed envy at the present generation of students, who as one "old timer" said, "were born with silver spoons in their mouths."

It was perhaps, the happiest meeting of the alumni of the still young "Aggie" school that ever took place. It was a real homecoming and one that they will not forget very soon.

Formal opening of the roadway came at 11:00 a. m., with the address of Marius Christianson, chairman of the Polk County board of Commissioners. "In ten years", he said, "Every county will have hard surfaced roads." He declared that the new road was the first hard-surfaced road in the ninth congressional district.

"The memorial", said President L. D. Coffman, of the University of Minnesota "is the product of loving hands. It is built from the contributions of students, former students and faculty. In the years to come it will bear silent witness to the patriotism of this school, to the fidelity and trust that the school has in the traditions and principles of true Americanism. It will be an inspiration as long as the school lives to thousands of students yet to come."

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Indian Chief from Red Lake Chippewa Reservation,
(Interpreter at right, standing.)

"His address was eloquent."
“Our country entered the war because she wished to preserve for future generations the ideals upon which this country is founded . . . . Americans have always been dominated by a high degree of idealism . . . . The war was for justice and liberty and right and fraternity.”

“The safety of this republic lies in the vigilance and active patriotism of its people. The boys who have come back to us will be a bulwark of strength these trying days. They have been, still are, and will continue to be, instrumental in bringing about a wise solution to many of the problems that lie ahead of us.”

Three representatives of a band of Indians living along the shores of Red Lake added interest to the occasion. The activities of the day, they said, had opened their eyes to the many wonderful things their white brethren were doing. They entertained the visitors with their dances.

I have said that pride and happiness swelled in the breasts of former students. They were “chesty” and made no “bones” about concealing that fact. And the faculty? They were more than pleased, Superintendent C. G. Selvig was no exception. Since 1910 when he succeeded the late William Robertson, he has dreamed of such a day. Ask any of the leaders of public affairs in Crookston — or in Minnesota for that matter — if he has not worked and worked hard, and they will probably point to the school as proof of that fact.

The growth of the school, they will inform you, from a mere handful of students and faculty and meager equipment when Mr. Selvig came, to more than 300 students and a thoroughly trained staff of specialists; equipment which includes three buildings for class and laboratory work; one for the offices, library, auditorium and gymnasium; three splendid dormitories housing 250 students; a newly completed dining hall and service building; several cottages for the faculty; and a complete set of experiment station buildings fully outfitted for permanent service to the young men and women of northwestern Minnesota was not the result of an accident. It required hard constructive work and a vision.

On the night of the fourth of October there remained much to do to get ready for the morrow. I made the remark to one of the members of the station staff that it would be impossible to get things in shape in time for the celebration. “We have had several ‘impossibilities’ at the school,” was the reply. “Somehow or other they became possible. I don’t know just how things are accomplished but they are.” Witness the fact that everything was in place in time for the dedication.

That the school plays a leading role in the valley is attested to by the fact that hundreds of addresses are made annually by members of the staff at institute, farm club and other meetings; that county fairs look to the school for judges and for men and women capable of conducting agricultural and home demonstrations; that the Red River Valley Dairymen’s Association, which was organized by the first superintendent of the station; that the school furnishes the president of two, the secretaries of two, and members of the directorate of others of the associations representing the valley horticulturalists, potato growers, pure seed breeders, live stock breeders; that the farm bureau of the northwestern part of the state looks to the Station for cooperation; that 85 percent of the students go back to the farm, brimful of enthusiasm, to put into practice what they learned and observed at the school; that the school started and fosters the great Farm Crops Show and Farmers’ Week meetings which are attracting attention everywhere.

Much has been said about these annual gatherings of real “dirt farmers”, but a
great deal more remains to be spoken. A $75,000 livestock pavilion has been built at Crookston by 2600 persons. It required more than two acres of space to house the livestock show and sales together with the farm crops show and poultry exhibits and every year means an increase. The 1921 show, it is expected will dwarf all the previous shows.

Crookston is interested in the school. The city is proud of it and more so now because the new road makes its so available. When your friends in Crookston take you for a ride, see if they do not strike for the campus. Crookston entertained on dedication day. It took a day off and came out to help officials of the agricultural school show the out-of-town folks a good time. It sent out its band on a magnificent float which headed a long parade of other floats and decorated automobiles — everything from “twin sixes to tin lizzies”. Warren and Fisher-Bygland sent their bands also.

Many alumni and former students “simply could not come.” They were in the midst of threshing, potato picking and other farm activities. Major Martinus Stenseth, a graduate of the school, who has the distinction of being Minnesota’s highest ace and who was to have appeared with his flying machine, telegraphed his regrets. He wired: “Hope this day will remain in lasting memory to the boys who died in the service of their country.”

To those who could not come an opportunity will be given to see in movie form the activities of the day. Two operators pictured the important events and these films will be scattered broadcast over the northwestern part of Minnesota and to a lesser extent over the entire United States.

The large crowd exhibited unusual interest in this feature. One old man came up to the truck that was carrying the two machines and asked one of the operators when the pictures would begin. Upon being told that they would start immediately he hurried into view of the cameras. At another place a group of young women begged to be “movied”. They were, and will no doubt eagerly await the appearance of the films.

The Dedication Day exercises were attended by thousands from all over the Valley. In the Northwest Monthly I wrote my appreciation and am including it here.

October fifth has come and gone. It was a beautiful day. Northwestern Minnesota had seen few more pleasant and inviting. The people who came to the Northwest School campus accepted the invitation that had been extended by the School and the Crookston Association of Public Affairs and so wholeheartedly seconded by the weather man. Never before had so many Valley folks spent a day together at an educational event. They enjoyed themselves thoroughly. From the opening of the roadway in the forenoon to the last play in the football game at dusk they filled the campus, a merry crowd of folks who seemed glad to be alive, and who radiated happiness to all they met.

It was an epochal day for the school. It is hard to realize that a real hard-surfaced roadway connects the school to the city and that one can really reach his destination there regardless of the weather. This may seem far-fetched to many but it is not so to those who have lived at the school. The school’s appreciation is due to the people of Polk county who through their Board of County Commissioners provided the paved roadway and to the city of Crookston for its part in providing paving on the streets that led from the roadway to the heart of the city.
The crowning event of the afternoon was the unveiling and dedication of the Northwest School Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial. It was fittingly done. It was an event that will not soon be forgotten.

As the memorial stands clear and white in the morning sun, or softly subdued in the light of the early evening it brings home to all the unselfish devotion of our brave boys. It will ever recall their bravery, their sacrifice. It will ever inspire the living to higher and nobler ambitions and a fuller reverence.

Walter C. Coffey was appointed Dean and Director of the University's Department of Agriculture to succeed Dean Thatcher. Coffey was ideally fitted for the position. He had had a distinguished career at Illinois Agricultural College and Experiment Station. His book on sheep-raising was a standard text in all states and countries. He was a man of broad interests, deep culture, Christian principles and sound judgment. The people of Minnesota soon acclaimed him as their leader in agriculture. After his retirement he succeeded Dr. Guy S. Ford as president of the University, a position in which he served during World War II. Like all the others who were fortunate enough to serve under his leadership he won my devotion and affection.

Minnesota has been fortunate in the caliber of the men who served as presidents of the University. Dr. Lotus D. Coffman succeeded President Burton when he went to Michigan. I had known Dr. Coffman well during his successful deanship of the University's College of Education. He had attained high rank in the United States as an educator and administrator. He set down principles in administering the high office to which he had been appointed. What was right, was right, in his book. Personalities were not permitted to displace principle. He made and retained friends.

After moving to California in 1934 I occasionally conferred with members of the staffs of U.C.L.A. and of Southern California University. I came to know the high regard in which President Coffman was held by University administrators and faculties. Many said he was the ablest of them all.

His labors as University president undermined his strength. He was in Phoenix a year but returned to his post too soon. I recall I attended the University graduation in June, 1937. At that commencement the honorary degree of Ph. D. was conferred my former history teacher and long-time friend, Henry Johnson, professor of history, Columbia University. As you will recall he was superintendent of Rushford High School during my junior and senior years. On the following morning my brother and I called on Dr. Johnson who was in Dr. Krey's office at the University. We had a heart-warming pleasant visit.

Then I suggested that we call on President Coffman whom I had not seen for a number of years. His secretary who in years past had often made appointments for me to see him cancelled one appointment so we could have a few minutes to visit before President Coffman went to a luncheon meeting. When I saw him I was immediately struck by his appearance. I said at once, "President Coffman you have been working too hard. You appear very tired." He admitted he was tired and mentioned he planned very soon to take a summer's rest at his Battle Lake cottage. Within ten days he passed away and our University, our state and our nation lost a notable leader.
When I was writing this tale of the period of growth of the Northwest School, I had the feeling I was the most fortunate person in the world. I was down right lucky. First, in my own stamina which bore up under hard work; second, in the woman I married; and, third, in our children. Also, that I had been given the opportunity for service tendered me by Dean Woods and President Northrop.

It was too much I often said when I visited with former state Senator A. D. Stephens, who secured his colleagues' votes for the first appropriation, in 1905, for the school. He was as enthusiastic as myself. It is fitting a building was named after him and that his portrait hangs in it for all to see. He has gone to the Great Beyond but is not forgotten.

At the 40th anniversary program he uttered prophetic words as to the future of the institution. There were many others all up and down the Valley and in the state who rendered valuable help during the early years. I feel I cannot complete this chapter without mentioning the names of A. A. Miller, Joseph Ball, Martin O'Brien, S. M. Sivertson, C. C. Strander, Charles Loring (now Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Minnesota), W. S. Lycan, Thomas Morris and Wm. E. McKenzie. This list is incomplete. Tomorrow, when it is too late, I'll be very critical of myself for not extending it further.

Before I close the school chapter there must be a few words about our former students and alumni. It is true that about 85 percent were farmers or farmers' wives. The work they have done gives eloquent tribute to them, and it is work done, and not conversation, that counts. There are several thousands of them now, most of whom reside in the Valley. Many entered the University or some college. Many have achieved distinction on the farm, in the home, in business and in the professions.

No list I could make would do justice to the group as a whole. Herman F. Skyberg now serves as a member of the University's Board of Regents. Oscar Knutson is an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of Minnesota. Ole A. Flaat served many years as the vice-president of Minnesota's Farm Bureau Federation. He has attained national prominence as a large scale producer of certified seed potatoes and annually shipped, not car-loads, but train-loads of seed to southern and western markets.

Harold H. Grandy who came to the Station one day from his home in Wisconsin looking for work stayed until he had completed the advanced course. Later he attended the University and art schools. He became a distinguished artist, specializing in commercial art. His firm serves some of America's largest firms today. Thorval Tunheim, already mentioned, succeeded in the newspaper field. Many others of the boys I knew at school, became Ph.D's. Prominent among them are Dr. L. J. Regiembal, Dr. Harold P. Morris and Dr. Iver Johnson. The latter won A's in all his studies at Minnesota's College of Agriculture.

There is one other event I must include. At the close of my service at the school in March, 1927, the Class of 1926 presented to the school an oil painting of myself and placed it on a wall of the building dedicated October 5, 1920.