Sometimes we get better objectivity in thumbing through the pages of the past. This thought occurs, as I recall the events of the next seventeen years. On July 15, 1935, my successor, Superintendent A. A. Dowell, arranged a program for the observance of the fortieth anniversary of the establishment of the Northwest Experiment Station. I was asked to participate.

The exercises were held in the auditorium seating about 800, recently formed by uniting the former auditorium, completed in 1910, with the former gymnasium then located across the hall. It made a splendid room. Symbolical murals had been provided by the W.P.A. It seemed glorious. When I came to the school in 1910, the “auditorium” was a regular classroom, seating perhaps 50 or 60 at the most, located on the second floor of what is now the Home Economics building.

I said on this occasion, “Two main objectives were firmly implanted in my purpose when I accepted the position at Crookston twenty-five years ago this month. First, to help build an outstanding School of Agriculture for Northwestern Minnesota. Second, to help promote greater diversification on the farms in the Red River Valley.”

“I had been officially informed by the president of the Board of Regents of the University that they would give full and undivided support to me, the faculty and staff in building the School and Station. I had this pledge. Without it, I am very certain I would not have been interested in the position.

“Four University presidents (Northrop, Vincent, Burton and Coffman) and three deans of agriculture (Woods, Thatcher, Coffey), including the distinguished scientist, scholar and leader, Dean Walter C. Coffey, who now occupies that responsible position, and is here today, at all times and with sincerity maintained that pledge. Without this cooperation, the task would have been impossible.”

2.

The first three years were not easy ones. The school was located two and a half miles north of Crookston. Our means of mass conveyance was a covered “bus” drawn by a team of farm horses. Our faculty took this all in stride. It was just like living on a farm. If the top-heavy conveyance tipped over in a snow-drift, well and good. It was sport. If the weather was minus forty degrees with a sharp breeze heralding arctic cold, well just bundle up, that’s all.

I often said there was no barrier or mountain chain between the North Pole and the Northwest School. Even so, in those halycon days I enjoyed walking to or from Crookston, being always mindful of the direction whence came the icy blasts. I would walk with the wind and ride against it.

Water from two deep wells was adequate for a time. In mid-winter, one year, one of the wells ran dry. The dormitories were three-story structures. No water reached above the first floor. This created an emergency. Fortunately, the Legislature was in session. Quick action came in providing funds for a new well.

The lawmakers, also, at my urgent suggestion, provided funds available the next summer to install a water main from the campus to connect with Crookston’s water
supply. Until the new well was completed, however, I was in constant dread. School was in session. The dormitories were filled. The students were under strict discipline as to fire-drills and precautionary measures. I retain a vivid memory of this crisis.

3.

It was necessary at the start to secure faculty members adequately trained for the different departments. Expansion of the School's curriculum and placing the Station work on a firmer foundation necessitated securing additional staff members. On one of my trips to confer with Dean Woods I mentioned it would be necessary to secure an almost entirely new faculty for the second year of the school. He smiled and said, "I expected that. I did not wish to make any suggestions as to your staff. You will be held responsible. You will form your own faculty."

It was thus throughout my tenure. I sought the best teachers and Station staff members procurable. Most of them were young but they were well prepared. They grew in stature with the years. To them is due full credit. The work was hard. During the early years salaries were low.

The Legislature provided homes on the campus for the married men. The others lived in the dormitories and had supervisory duties there in addition to full-time teaching schedules. I estimated they as well as myself worked overtime. There were no regulations against this during the early years. It was accepted as a part of the job.

The members of the staff all know they were held in highest esteem by their students, their colleagues, myself, the dean and the president of the University. They knew they were doing important work. They knew, also, it was appreciated by the students and the people all over the Valley. There was that indefinable something which bound them together in the great task of building a "School of Service," for the Red River Valley.

4.

The first important task centered on securing a "campus plan." An experienced firm undertook to prepare such a plan which would indicate the locations of future buildings. To do so it was necessary to visualize future growth. Dean Woods proved to be almost a seer in this respect. Early in 1911 the firm presented a plan that was approved by the Regents and has been followed with minor modifications to this day.

I referred to Dean Woods' vision. He was deeply interested in country life. He fully recognized the place of what he termed Technological Schools of Agriculture and Home-making.* Without his guidance and wise judgment our plans might have proved far inadequate.

It became necessary to move nearly all of the Station buildings to new locations to provide space for future expansion of the school campus. While this was being done in 1911 the entire campus was one vast scene of confusion worse confounded. It was a nightmare to me.

Adding to the disorder was a projected lake that presumably had been authorized the year before I arrived on the scene although I never found anyone who accepted responsibility for it. The vast hole had been dug. It didn't hold water. A layer of gravel was uncovered near it. This acted as a sieve. One of my first decisions was to order the hole to be filled.

*Manuscript article by Dr. Albert F. Woods, on Schools of Agricultural Technology, in author's library.
It was the custom during the early years for the Legislature to vote specific sums for each project at the various state institutions, as for example, "$200.00 shall be appropriated for a poultry-house." The estimates for moving farm buildings and other needs proved to be too low. Wet weather hampered operations. The first summer in the Red River Valley was far from being an idyll.

The next important improvement was the establishment of a new flood-water outlet to Red Lake River to facilitate drainage particularly of the fields on the east half-section of the Station. Farmers living south and east of the Station joined in petitioning for this new ditch which was soon established. This completed the Station drainage project with the exception of providing protection during a flash flood. This was remedied in time by making a connection with the recently constructed sewer line from the campus to Crookston. So at long last the old bogey faced by Superintendent Hoverstad was laid to rest.

5.

The experimental work in agronomy under J. D. Bilsborrow, as Station agronomist, was established on a broader and more inclusive basis in 1912, with Professor Andrew Boss of the Central Station, as adviser. When Bilsborrow accepted a position at the Illinois Agricultural College, Otto I. Bergh became agronomist at Crookston. Both of these men were born in the Red River Valley, Bilsborrow near Wolverton and Bergh near Hendrum. They lost no time at all in getting projects started. An excellent state-wide plan was inaugurated unifying experimental work throughout the state and encouraging original planning with respect to regional problems. This assured such problems both attention and support.

It has been interesting to follow this development during the past four decades. Many will recall that President George E. Vincent and Dean A. F. Woods laid great stress upon the necessity of viewing all problems from the standpoint of the state at large. "The state is our campus," declared Vincent. "We who are connected with the University are servants of the state. We must fit our projects together so all in the state benefit." I fully adhered to this lofty view. There should be no room for small views and narrow objectives.

Demonstrational and experimental projects at the Northwest Station soon increased to include farm crops tests, soils work, rotation trials, control of weeds and of plant diseases, production of wilt-resistant flax varieties, potato culture, sugar beet growing, alfalfa and sweet clover tests, pasture mixtures, live stock and poultry feeding projects, vegetable varietal tests, growing fruits, and ornamental trees, shrubs and flowers.

In response to demands of farmers on peat lands, a "peat-farm project" was established at Golden Valley, near Grygla, in eastern Marshall county, bordering on the Red River Valley. Dean Woods had brought Dr. F. J. Alway to Minnesota. Work at Golden Valley was undertaken with the Northwest Station agronomist, R. O. Westly, acting as Dr. Alway's assistant. The experimental work of the Station was greatly extended during the administrations of my successors, Superintendents, A. A. Dowell (1927-1937) and Thomas M. McCall (1937-). Were Professor Hays alive today he would joyfully acclaim that his dreams had come true.

The Northwest Station early developed herds of registered Shorthorns and Holsteins, a flock of purebred Shropshire sheep and usually two different breeds of swine. Percheron mares were used for Station work. Later, feeding and breeding experiments were carried on in cooperation with the Central Station and still later
in very important swine breeding experiments with both the Central Station and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The poultry department was functioning before 1910, the year I came to Crookston. Since then numerous reports and bulletins attest to the splendid work carried on by that department. This work has been under the direction of A. M. Pilkey for many years.

The work in the farm mechanics department has been of great value to the farmers in the Red River Valley. It included a large number of projects carried on by Thomas R. Sewall and later by A. M. Foker who is the present head of the department.

6. Alfalfa growing has become important in the Red River Valley as well as in the state. Superintendent Robertson began varietal tests of alfalfa at the Station in 1908. After five years' trial Minnesota grown Grimm alfalfa produced highest yields, followed closely by Grimm alfalfa seed produced in South Dakota.

There was in 1914 a small acreage of alfalfa being grown for seed production by Johannes Lade, on his farm near Fosston. I tried to secure seed from him but all he could spare had been promised to his neighbors.

The Station tests proved conclusively alfalfa would grow in the Valley. In 1914, I went to A. D. Stephens' bank and requested a personal loan to pay for a carload of Grimm alfalfa seed* grown in South Dakota. Quotations had previously been received as considerable alfalfa seed was produced in that state at the time. Mr. Stephens agreed to make the loan and a carload of seed (41,000 pounds) was ordered.

In a very short time 629 farmers bought this seed in lots varying from ten to one hundred pounds which was the maximum that could be ordered. With the seed went instructions regarding preparation of the land, scarifying the seed, seeding and care. Also, blanks to be filled out and sent to the Station's Agronomy Department during the succeeding five years.

The seed was sold for twenty cents a pound. It was purchased for fifteen cents a pound at the point of shipment. Freight and cost of handling and postage amounted to $0.25 cents a pound. Oscar L. Buhr, my secretary, refunded to each buyer $0.25 cents a pound, doing this work mainly on his own time, as he was greatly interested in the project. Many farmers wrote to him this was the first refund they had ever received.

The reports received during the next three and four years indicated 98 percent of the growers reported success in their trial seeding. It was not necessary to continue this demonstration. Alfalfa had won the recognition it deserved.

7. Sweet clover was first grown at the Station in 1896, according to Superintendent Hoverstad's report. It was quite generally introduced after having been successfully grown by Reverend Mr. Solum on his farm near Halstad for many years. The Northwest Station has carried on many projects with both alfalfa and sweet clover, greatly extending knowledge concerning them.

I later found myself talking about a record made of using sweet clover as a pasture crop. The speech was made at the annual meeting of the Minnesota Dairymen's Association held at Brainerd on January 19, 1926 where I called it a wonderful

*See appendix for story of Grimm's alfalfa.
crop. I quote from this address which was published in the proceedings of the Association.

"During 1924 we had at the Northwest Station, Crookston, a 28-acre field of sweet clover. We first planned on using all of it for pasture for 32 cows. We thought we would need that 28 acres for 32 cows. I came from Fillmore County and down there we used to figure we needed about one acre per head.

Well, just about the 20th of May we took a look at this field. The sweet clover was up eight to ten inches, and it was growing so fast you could almost see it grow. The live stock man at the Station said he did not think we needed the whole field for the summer's pasture. He suggested that we fence off one third of the field and have about nine acres or so for hay and the remaining for pasture.

About five days later the live stock man again inspected the field. He thought possibly it would be all right to put the fence in the middle of the field and leave 14 acres for hay and 14 for pasture. This was done. On that day he asked me to go there with him to take a look at the field again. This was about the 29th of May and the sweet clover was so high I thought the 32 head could never eat what would grow on the 14 acres, so he divided the field into two parts, leaving 7 acres for pasture and 21 for hay.

On the 17th of July, Professor Andrew Boss and Dean Walter C. Coffey came to make us a visit. We went to see the sweet clover pasture. The 32 head had been in there since the 31st day of May. When we entered the field Prof. Boss remarked the cattle had eaten it down pretty closely at that particular place. I agreed they had, but that we had better walk to the south part of the field, also. On that day, the 17th of July, when we reached the south part of the field we were in sweet clover up to our knees.

The cattle remained there until about the 25th or 26th of August. They had had nothing else except that seven acres of pasture the entire season. I challenge any state to produce a better record. Almost five head of full-grown cattle pasturing on one acre during an entire season. And this is what is taking place in the Red River Valley. We have the largest acreage of sweet clover per farm in the State of Minnesota, or any other state."

I am a little amused now over what I said, but it reflected optimism that was justified. I had great faith in the Red River Valley and was accustomed to set forth its advantages on every occasion. Love your work and esteem your fellow-workers. Encourage them to do their best. Good results follow.

8.

The members of the staff of the Northwest Station early were concerned with the huge toll taken annually by the black stem rust of wheat. The Minnesota Red River Development Association composed of farmers and business men lent their efforts to enlisting the aid of the Federal Government in a campaign to eradicate the common barberry bush as one means of circumventing the rust menace. A nationwide campaign to this end was given strong impetus at a meeting held in Crookston. P. K. Haselrud and Joseph Ball were among the leaders. It was followed by a delegation being sent to Washington to enlist the support of the United States Department of Agriculture.

I was delegated to represent the Station and the Valley at that conference. Dr. H. L. Bolley, of North Dakota Agricultural College, Dr. E. C. Stakman of Minnesota and Dr. Melhus, of Ames, were the other members. The Grain Exchanges of the
Middle West joined in this movement. Gradually the campaign attained momentum. Dr. Stakman became a leader in this work. He gradually attained the highest distinction and became an international authority on wheat rust and other plant diseases. Very soon the Central Station intensified its work in plant-breeding, looking towards development of rust-resistant wheat varieties under the leadership of Dr. H. K. Hayes. Eminent success was attained.

9.

A major project at the Northwest Station has been the production and distribution to farmers of purebred seed grain and hardy varieties of seed corn. The local part of this work was started by the first agronomist and has increased in volume and importance throughout the years. The Station was located in a Valley adapted to grain-growing.

Thousands of farmers have benefited greatly by procuring their pure seed stocks produced at the Northwest Station. Varietal tests in rows and plots, and later in "increase" fields carried on by the agronomy department, in cooperation with the Central Station, brought out varieties peculiarly adapted to this area.

A. M. Christensen was Northwest Station’s first pure-seed specialist doing extension work. He was an enthusiastic worker and soon made notable progress in his work. He moved to Minot later and established a commercial seed firm there in which he attained success. E. R. Clark followed him at the Northwest Station. R. S. Dunham became head of the agronomy department and these two staff members made a great team.

Soon the Red River Valley Crops and Soils Association was organized consisting of farmers who raised purebred seed. This association worked closely with the Minnesota Crop Improvement Association. It would be difficult to over-emphasize the results attained. Mr. Clark, after spending many years at the School and Station became a member of the staff of the U.S. Department of Agriculture where he has attained enviable recognition. Professor R. S. Dunham is now agronomist at the Central Station, St. Paul.

10.

The head of the horticultural department, Mr. Thomas M. McCall, was one of the first scientists secured for the enlarged staff of the Northwest Station, in 1911. He is a graduate and post-graduate of Iowa State College, Ames. Superintendent E. C. Higbie, of the West Central School and Station, established in 1910 and I went together to Ames. He was looking for an agronomist and I, a horticulturist. What we accomplished that day was to invite two future farm leaders to venture into Minnesota. Mr. Higbie secured Paul E. Miller and I secured T. M. McCall. Mr. Miller became superintendent of the West Central School and Station, Morris, when Higbie left for Columbia University to study for his doctorate.

Mr. McCall became superintendent of the Northwest School and Station, in 1937, following Dr. A. A. Dowell, who succeeded me in 1927. Later Mr. Miller became director of Agricultural Extension Division of the University’s Department of Agriculture. It is but a human trait to be rather pleased over the subsequent success of persons appointed to responsible positions. I proudly confess to harboring that trait.

For twenty-six years McCall directed the program of the horticultural department brilliantly. For a time, also, he was in charge of the field work at the Station. During Mr. Dowell’s sabbatical year he was named acting-superintendent of the School
and Station. A great deal more could be written of his service record and fine character.

The work of the horticultural department, as well as of the other departments, has been fully reported from time to time in the Station reports and in special bulletins. Space does not permit making a full list. In particular, the horticultural department gave early attention to potato growing. The Red River Valley has attained eminence in this field.

Experimental tests with sugar beet production developed the fact that in Red River Valley soil could grow superior sugar beets. In 1926, the American Beet Sugar Company began operating its plant at East Grand Forks. A second factory is now being built at Moorhead.

Mr. McCall has had charge of the campus planting ever since he joined the Station staff in 1911. In addition great impetus has been given to farm wind-break plantings and to aiding the Red River Valley Horticultural Society which owes its origin to him.

Of the present members of the staff O. M. Kiser, animal husbandman and Arnold M. Foker, head of the farm mechanics department and superintendent of Buildings and Grounds have served continuously over thirty years. Alvey M. Pilkey, poultry man at the Station when I left has continued in that capacity since. He has also been active in connection with the Northern Minnesota Poultry Association which was organized in 1908.

Former State Senator John Saugstad, Crookston, was an enthusiastic leader of this group. The Association is a cooperating member of the Red River Valley Shows. Others who were at the School when I left in 1927 include Miss Retta Bede, Miss Fae Hughbanks and Miss Kate Bedard, accountant. All rendered signal service.

11.

The Red River Dairymen's Association which was organized in 1903 held annual meetings. Professor T. L. Haecker, famous for his original work on feeding dairy cows, was a speaker at its seventh annual convention held in Crookston, 1907. He said, in part on that occasion.

“In 1904 I came to the Red River Valley for the first time. I was very anxious to see it. I had wondered what kind of a place it was. I gave a little talk, as I remember it, over at the Opera House on the subject of The Management and Feeding of Dairy Cows.”

“What do I see today? A wonderful change. Sentiment is different. Education is beginning to show its influence. It is the impression this School of Agriculture is making upon this valley.” Much is due Professor Haecker for his work in the state.

Another person comes to mind when I recall the early years of the dairying industry in the Red River Valley. He wielded a potent pen and spoke with charm and persuasiveness. He was a young man, A. J. Glover, by name, who later became editor of Hoard's Dairyman published in Wisconsin. Mr. Glover spoke often in the Red River Valley. In fact, it could be said he had for many years a permanent place on the program for the annual "round-up" and convention of the Red River Dairymen's Association. I counted him among my most cherished friends.

In 1916, as president of the Red River Valley Dairymen's Association, I presented figures showing the growth of dairying in the valley. In 1914, there were 137 creameries, with 19,292 patrons receiving $2,478,206.23. In 1860, the census reported
only 1932 head of cattle in the valley counties. In 1910, that number had increased
to 337,587 of which 45 percent were dairy cows.

I mentioned the Valley’s great wealth of soil. After the last glacial streams had
slowly withdrawn to the north, a fertile prairie sprang out to meet the sun, the winds
and the gentle rains of heaven. What a heritage! Men and women of the Red River
Valley, do you realize the wonders of it all? Do you know the potent powers of this
soil and the wonders it can perform? It will respond richly to your labors. It will
grow grains to feed you and millions besides. Its fields will welcome herds of brows­
ing kine and grow more productive as they graze over them.

All the secrets of the Red River Valley are not yet ours. Nature demands her
own way to unlock her treasures, but you may be sure the key is not hidden away.
We are the stewards for a short time. Shall we use these treasures wisely and honestly,
or shall we waste and destroy? We come to the annual meetings of this Association
to renew our faith in ourselves, to gather information that will aid us and to get
added inspiration for our work. In cooperation with each other, the greatest results
will come.

This Association celebrated its twentieth anniversary at an evening meeting held
in the Opera House, Crookston, in the fall of 1923. The founder, former Superin­
tendent Hoverstad was the guest of honor. Nothing short of a pageant would do for
such an occasion. I was commissioned to write it, the fee would be paid in coin of
appreciation if the venture proved a success. It did. It was a colorful event. The
Opera House was filled.

The teaching staffs of the Northwest School and of Crookston high school,
students of both schools and representatives of clubs and groups in Crookston co­
operated enthusiastically in putting on this pageant.