

EARLY DAYS

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ANNIVERSARIES mark the passing of the fleet-footed years. It is hard to realize that thirty years have elapsed since the Northwest Experiment Station was established and that twenty years have passed since the Red River Valley Farm School, the Northwest School, first opened its doors.

A thorough-going history of this institution will be written some time in order to present in an orderly manner what manner of men and women conceived the idea which resulted in its establishment and its contributions to the state.



THE SCHOOL IN 1906

All that can be accomplished in this brief statement is to set forth in bold outline the primary steps that were taken, one after the other, in the gradual development of the institution.

The history of the Northwest School and Station is intimately bound up with the agricultural development of the Red River Valley. The Valley's earliest need before it

could become a great agricultural region was drainage. It was this need that led to the establishment of the experiment station near Crookston.

The names of James J. Hill and Professor Willett M. Hays are intimately linked with the steps that were taken to secure the state's cooperation in this venture. Col. R. A. Wilkinson, one of the Red River Valley's pioneers, assisted in creating favorable sentiment locally.

Many were disappointed when Mr. Hill's free offer of three quarter sections of land, lying in a slough two miles north of Crookston, was accepted by the Board of Regents.

"Why that was my favorite duck-pond," Thomas Morris, of Crookston has repeatedly said.

It afforded, however, everything required for a good experimental drainage project. The first superintendent, Torger A. Hoverstad, soon found this out. A drainage system was not established until 1908, twelve years after the station was established in 1896. These trying years nearly killed the Crookston Station. Mr. Hoverstad's annual reports to the dean of the agricultural college are inspiring as messages of hope and idealism. His faith in the Red River Valley was sublime, but the outlying unit of the University was an unwanted waif. It was the state's "white elephant."

Mr. Hoverstad was both missionary and apostle. He preached dairying and poultry, and talked crops, even if it was impossible to raise crops at the station, or even to drive there, during the frequent wet years. He organized the Red River Valley Dairymen's Association in 1903. At the twentieth anniversary of this organization celebrated at the Northwest School, in 1923, he was present as a guest of honor, who had lived to see his dreams come true and visions realized.