

History of the Northwest School

Three Decades of Progress

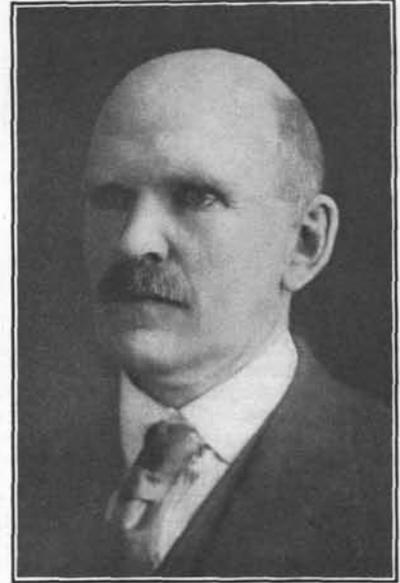
By Superintendent A. A. Dowell

The Northwest School was established by the Minnesota State Legislature in 1905 on the site of the Northwest Experiment Station, two miles north of Crookston, Minnesota. This action was taken only after years of effort on the part of Professor Willett M. Hayes and William Robertson of the Central School of Agriculture, Representative B. S. Bennett, Senator P. M. Ringdal, Senator A. D. Stephens, Superintendent T. A. Hoverstad and others who were keenly interested in the agricultural development of the Red River Valley.

As stated elsewhere in this issue of the Red River Aggie, Superintendent Hoverstad took charge of the newly established experiment station on July 1, 1895. For ten years he worked in and out of season to improve the swampy land, to develop the experimental work, to interest the farmers of this region in the work of the station, and finally to secure the support necessary for the establishment of the school. Although Superintendent Hoverstad resigned in 1905, one year before the school first opened its doors to the young men and women of the Red River Valley, it was due largely to his pioneer work that the school was finally established. It is, therefore, highly fitting that this issue of the Aggie, in which a brief history of the school is presented, should be dedicated to the first superintendent of the experiment station—Torger A. Hoverstad.

During the summer of 1905, Professor William Robertson of the Central School was placed in charge of the experiment station. Earlier in the year the state legislature, under the leadership of Senator A. D. Stephens, had appropriated \$15,000 for the first school building which was to serve as a combination class, library, office, dining hall and dormitory building. As no funds had been appropriated for faculty or equipment, Superintendent and Mrs. Robertson secured loans totaling \$2,500 from Crookston citizens to carry through the first school year.

The school building, now called the Home Economics Building, was completed during 1906 and the first term opened on October 1. Thirty-one students were in attendance during the year 1906-07. The brilliant leadership of Superintendent Robertson is indicated by the remarkable progress made during his brief term. In 1907 the state legislature, again under the leadership of Senator A. D. Stephens, appropriated funds for the erection of two additional buildings, Stephens Hall and Owen Hall. These buildings were erected in 1908. During the same year, a comprehensive open ditch and tile drainage system was completed. Though the legislature had appropriated \$5,000 in 1903, and \$4,000 in



WILLIAM ROBERTSON
Superintendent 1905-1910

1905 for drainage purposes, these amounts were found to be inadequate to meet the needs of an efficient experiment station. The completion of the drainage project in 1908 was, therefore, essential not only to the development of the experiment station, but to the beautification of the campus. In 1909 the state legislature approved a request for two additional buildings—Robertson Hall and Kiehle Building. Thus, three successive sessions of the legislature provided funds for five of our present major buildings, for the completion of the drainage project, and for the necessary additions to faculty and equipment.

Superintendent Robertson's leadership was also reflected in the rapid growth in enrolment which increased from 31 students during the first year to 129 in 1909-10. His untimely death in January 1910 was a heavy loss not only to the Northwest School and the Red River Valley, but to the entire state.



Home Economics, 1906

