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Northern Research Farm History

Northern Research and Demonstration Farm

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Northern Research Farm History

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Northern Research Farm History

The Northern Research and Demonstration farm was the first outlying research farm in Iowa. The farm's association, which was organized during the Depression, serves as the model for research and demonstration farms throughout Iowa.

Organizers began raising funds for the farm in 1930, when farm foreclosures, bankruptcies and unemployment were the norm. Those economic roadblocks didn't stop farmers and businessmen in north central Iowa from moving forward with an idea to provide site-specific research.

In the late 1920s crop production in northern Iowa consisted mainly of barley, flax, sugar beets, and potatoes. W.H. Darrah, a field manager, and Earl Moore, manager, both with American Crystal Sugar Co. saw the need for research to help manage crop diseases in northern Iowa.

Darrah and Moore approached Charles Curtiss, director of the Iowa Agriculture and Home Economics Experiment Station and dean of the College of Agriculture, with an offer to find a farm near Kanawha for research. After the farm was found Darrah took the lead to raise funds to pay for it. The Kanawha Chamber of Commerce, farmers, and business owners in the area raised \$12,000 and purchased 85 acres and built both a laboratory and machine shed.

On May 4, 1931 the Northern Iowa Experimental Association was organized with the support of 350 shareholders. The association leased the farm to Iowa State University and the Northern Research Farm became Iowa State's first outlying research farm. Experimental work during those first years dealt with problems related to corn, wheat, oats, barley, sugar beets, flax, and potatoes.

The association also produced corn, flax, oat, and soybean seed. Cleaning and treating seed became a profitable enterprise for the

association that attracted members and profitable custom work. As seed became readily available from commercial firms the association seed business declined and the seed-processing equipment was sold to the Committee for Agriculture Development in Ames. Operation of the farm was transferred to Iowa State University Agriculture Experiment Station in 1965.

In 1946, the Clarion-Webster Experimental Association was organized and in 1952 it purchased an 80-acre tract south of Kanawha for research on drainage, soil fertility, and crop management. The Clarion-Webster Experimental Farm focused on soil drainage research, which was a problem in north central Iowa. Research at the farm focused on crops using different methods of drainage. Other experiments involved the study of crop management, fertilizers, and corn rootworm control.

The Northern Research Farm and the Clarion-Webster Farm were managed under one superintendent and research findings were shared in the annual progress report and at annual meetings. The farms are both located south of Kanawha in Hancock County about 1.5 miles apart.

In 1995, the two associations consolidated into the North Central Iowa Research Association. Research at the farm is focused on solving problems unique to the north central Iowa area with input from research association members and farmers from the area.

Superintendents who have served at the Northern Research and Demonstration Farm include:

Everett Hanson	1931–1945
Al Kemp	1946–1968
Sy Angstrom	1968–1979
Bernard Havlovic	1979–1987
David Rueber	1987 to present