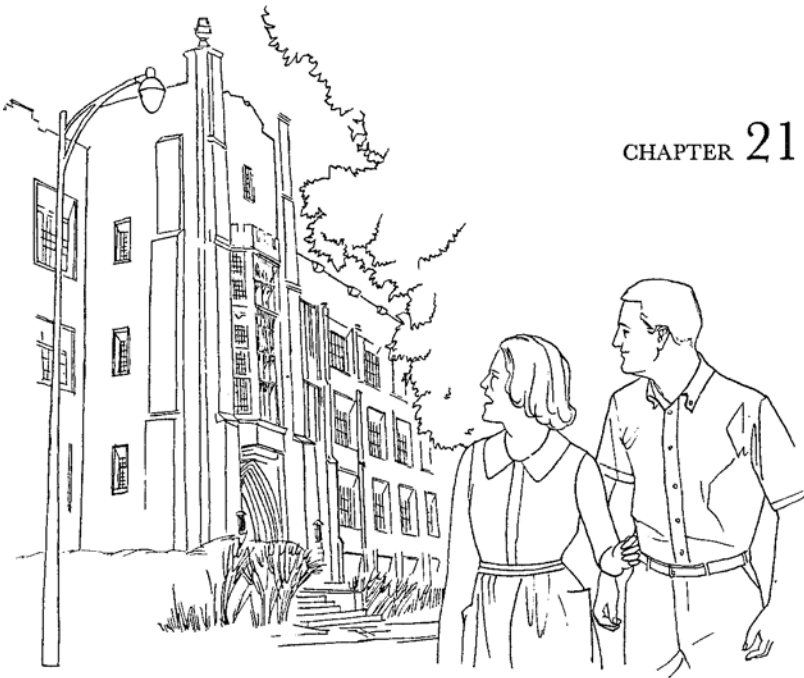


CHAPTER 21



CHAPTER 21

Cultural Growth and Adaptation: Education, Research, Writing, and Medicine, 1920-1960

IN A BROAD PERSPECTIVE the cultural development of the United States was an extension of that of Europe. American culture expanded European beginnings in a new setting. In turn, the new setting—the wilderness, free political institutions, relative isolation from Europe, the wealth produced by resources and human energies—influenced American cultural development by shaping the entire complement of social and cultural institutions: churches, schools, colleges, libraries, the search for new knowledge, the production of books and newspapers, and the provision of medical care.

Just as the cultural development of America sprang from that of Europe, so, too, did the cultural development of North Dakota derive from that of the United States. North Dakota was influenced by all of the national cultural currents of the 1920's, the Great Depression, and the postwar years. In the nation, schools improved, high school and college enrollments and

expenditures grew, research and the dissemination of new knowledge expanded, and medicine and the fields of hospital care and public health were revolutionized. North Dakota shared in all of these trends; it looked to the nation for standards, and the national standards stimulated the state's own achievements.

And just as the development of European cultural beginnings in America was shaped by the new setting, so also was the development of American cultural institutions in North Dakota influenced by the North Dakota environment. The sparsely settled country, the rural agricultural economy, the remoteness of the state, the ethnic make-up of the population—these influenced the establishment of schools and colleges, the support for research and the subjects which concerned it, the provision of medical care, and all other cultural activities.

In 1920, North Dakota had a population of 647,000 scattered throughout an area of 70,000 square miles. Most of the people were living on farms or in small villages; only 14 percent lived in the twelve urban centers with populations over 2,500. Outside such places, the population was only eight persons per square mile. Rapidly growing Fargo, the largest town, had a population of only 22,000 in 1920.

These factors determined the relative failure or success of all social and cultural institutions. Because there were only a few persons per square mile, schools and colleges, churches, libraries, newspapers, hospitals, and doctors had to serve large areas, an expensive and difficult business, or suffer from the lack of both people to serve and financial support. Yet in spite of these and other obstacles, their story is one of substantial cultural achievement.

THE RURAL SCHOOLS IN THE TWENTIES

Two things were true of the public schools of North Dakota. First, they were deeply influenced by the nature of the country, the sparseness and rural character of the population, and the uncertainties of the agricultural economy. Such conditions made it difficult for the state to meet the rising educational standards of the nation. Second, by every measure—mass participation, large expenditures, and vital goals—the schools were the state's most important cultural activity. Thus in 1920-1921 they enrolled 169,000 pupils, more than one-fourth of the population; they paid eight million dollars in salaries to 8,179 teachers; they sought to transmit the state's cultural heritage and to undergird both democracy and the free-enterprise system. Both the conditions confronting the schools and their importance demanded that North Dakota adapt the system to the environment in order to overcome the difficulties it imposed. Only by such adaptation could the state attain the standard values of American life.

Yet in the 1920's, though pioneering days were over, many of the rural

schools were weak. Almost half the pupils were enrolled in 4,335 one-room schools. The school term averaged only eight months; average daily attendance was only two-thirds of the enrollment; rural teachers were poorly trained and poorly paid. Many high schools were also weak. In 1921-1922 there were 630 high schools, but only 80 were rated as first class and only 146 were accredited. Of the 4,522 rural teachers in 1920-1921, only 2,876 were even high-school graduates and only 120 were normal-school graduates. Their average pay, soon to decline, was \$102 a month. In northwestern North Dakota, rural teachers were the lowest paid class of employees, below cooks and farm laborers, making only \$400 a year. Rural teaching, said an instructor at Mayville Normal, was "a last resort"; few normal-school graduates would take such positions. "It is tragic," wrote Professor W. E. Peik in his survey of the state's schools in 1930, "that almost two of three North Dakota rural schools have a new teacher each year, when the job is so difficult because it covers all grades, when supervision has to be inadequate at best, and when the teacher herself is so young."¹

Such weaknesses, however, were not found in the town schools, which had longer terms, good attendance, more adequate programs, and better trained and paid teachers. The school problem was a rural one. Everywhere in the nation difficulties sprang from sparseness in rural population and inadequate school systems; throughout the nation the rural child did not enjoy equality of educational opportunity. But in North Dakota and the other Great Plains states, the semiarid climate and the steadily increasing size of farms further diminished the farm population and made the problem more acute. Moreover, the inherited school system, created for common schools, could not provide adequate high school education in the countryside and the small villages.

In North Dakota the constitution made public education a state responsibility, but the legislature shirked it. After establishing school districts too small for high schools (not common in 1889) and setting up inadequate standards on the length of the school term, the certification of teachers, and the quality of equipment and instruction, the state turned its

¹ W. E. Peik, *The Training of Teachers in North Dakota: A Survey Report* (Bismarck: North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, 1930), p. 10. The principal sources on the schools are the files of the *North Dakota Teacher* (first published as *The Associated Teacher*); the biennial reports of the Department of Public Instruction; the *North Dakota Educational Directory*; the session laws and also compiled schools laws; North Dakota Tax Survey Commission, *A Report of North Dakota's Tax System and Its Administration*, Report No. 7 (Bismarck, 1936); and minutes and reports of the North Dakota Legislative Research Committee. There is much in the federal census reports and the *Statistical Abstract*.

responsibility over to the 2,250 local school districts. These rural districts, generally a township in size, were too small as tax units, too small as administrative units, and, with the coming of the high school, too small as attendance units. If the rural children were not to be cheated, the system would have to be adapted to existing conditions.

In the struggle to adapt, schoolmen took the lead. In 1921 the North Dakota Education Association (that name was not adopted until 1922) employed a full-time executive secretary, started a monthly, *The Associated Teacher*, and began to work for school legislation. It called for many reforms to give equality of opportunity to rural children: larger school districts with the county as the unit for management of the rural schools; a county board of education which would appoint the county superintendent, taking the schools out of politics; a state board of education which would appoint the state superintendent, removing him from the "field of political football"; better teachers by at first requiring one year and later two years of normal training for certification; and the equalization of school taxes by having the state pay a larger share.

In the 1920's the association's program met with no success. Rural North Dakotans, though hardy, ambitious, and hospitable, were also conservative, individualistic, and isolated from stimulating contacts. Bred in a materialistic society which only asked how many acres were farmed, how much profit was made, many of them thought little of schooling and were content to follow the ruts of tradition.

Moreover, many farmers, not very prosperous, were reluctant to pay school taxes. In 1922 in one Red River Valley county, 55 percent of the school districts levied less than 5 mills, but the town districts levied 20.5 mills. Tax valuations, school levies, and per-pupil expenditures varied widely from district to district. For example, in 1922 the school districts in Williams County had an assessed valuation of \$5,277 per pupil, levied average school taxes of 17.7 mills, and spent an average of \$10.53 per pupil per month. The districts in Walsh County had an average assessed valuation of \$10,906 per pupil, levied an average tax of 4.1 mills, and spent an average of \$10.71 per pupil. The county averages, of course, concealed large differences between districts, many of which could easily have afforded more than they were spending.

Yet there was constant pressure to reduce spending for schools. The North Dakota Taxpayers Association secured repeal of the teachers' minimum salary law in 1922 and in 1923 persuaded the legislature to reduce the valuation of property for taxation from 100 to 75 percent of its value. That fall, the president of the association told the state teachers' convention that farmers and businessmen must have relief from extravagant expenditures for schools.

North Dakota did spend more on schools proportionately than most of the states in the nation. In 1928 it ranked eighth in per capita spending and second in percentage of income spent on public education. But it ranked thirty-fourth in average teacher's salary, itself an indication of poor quality. The low rank was caused by many schools with small enrollments; only a few pupils per teacher meant expensive education, even though the teacher was poorly paid. Thus sparseness of population, small school districts, and schools with few pupils brought a poor quality of education. Larger school districts and schools and larger units for taxation, equalizing the burden, would soon have brought about better paid and trained teachers. But such a reorganization of the system would require transportation of pupils for considerable distances. In the 1920's, although North Dakota had no hard-surfaced roads, it was making rapid progress in grading and graveling the rural roads and had 183,000 automobiles by 1930, one for every 3.7 persons. Transportation was available for school reorganization.

There was, however, no reorganization, although some changes came in the 1920's. Public-school enrollment grew to an all-time high of 176,000 in 1923. Then, as the number of children from five to nine fell off, it declined to 169,000 in 1930. Enrollment in parochial schools, which had risen from 1,000 in 1910 to 8,900 in 1920, declined to about 8,500 in 1928. Public high schools grew rapidly. In 1920, 144 classified high schools enrolled 11,600 students; in 1930, 191 classified high schools enrolled over 20,000, and others were attending some 400 unclassified high schools. While teachers' salaries increased rapidly in a prosperous United States, they remained low in a not-so-prosperous North Dakota. In 1920 the average in North Dakota was \$728, in the United States \$871; in 1928 the average in North Dakota was \$837, in the United States \$1,364.

The state also lagged behind the nation in the preparation of its teachers. In 1920-1921 some 1,400 teachers were not even high school graduates; in 1921, however, a law required teachers to be high school graduates. But through the 1920's (in fact, until 1949, when, surprisingly, the requirement was reduced) the state gave teachers' certificates upon the completion of a meager twelve-week summer normal course. By the end of the 1920's only one percent of the teachers were not high school graduates, yet two-thirds of the rural teachers had less than a year's normal training.

The school term did not increase, averaging 167 days (less than eight and one-half months) in both 1920 and 1930, but children stayed in school longer. In the 1920's the number of eighth-grade graduates increased by 33 percent, the number graduating from high school by 132 percent. In 1929, 36 percent of those who had enrolled in the first grade eight years earlier finished the eighth grade; 57 percent of those completing the eighth grade four years before graduated from high school. By 1930 about one-fourth of

the students graduating from high school were going on to college, and another one-sixth to normal school.

THE SCHOOL CRISIS OF THE THIRTIES

After the modest progress of the 1920's, the plight of the schools became desperate in the 1930's. Years of drought, depression, and tax delinquency brought many school districts to insolvency. In 1932 an initiated measure, sponsored by the North Dakota Taxpayers Association, reduced the valuation of property for taxation from 75 to 50 percent of its value. As assessed valuation and hence returns from local school taxes fell off, some 1,800 rural schools could levy less than one thousand dollars annually, the estimated cost of a standard school.

The crisis forced state-equalization payments to the schools. In 1935 the legislature passed a 2 percent sales tax to raise money for welfare and education and created a state-equalization fund, appropriating nearly four million dollars for it. It ordered that the fund be distributed, first, on a basis of need to school districts which could not pay for a minimum program; second, to pay tuition for nonresident high school students; and third, to all schools on a teacher-unit basis. The law also set up a high school correspondence division by which students living too far from a high school could do high school work by correspondence, attending a one-room school and receiving some supervision from the teacher.

Later legislatures changed details in the law and appropriated about three and one-half million dollars for each biennium. In 1940, initiated measures made it a settled policy that all sales-tax money should go for welfare and education, divided five-twelfths for welfare and seven-twelfths for education. The emphasis was upon aid to rural districts which did not maintain high schools. It helped them pay their teachers and keep their schools open. At first, most of the money went to the western counties, the ones hardest hit by the drought. In 1940, twelve western counties received 52 percent of that part of the appropriation to be distributed on the basis of need. State Superintendent Arthur E. Thompson called the equalization law "the most important school law ever passed in our state." By 1937 the state was paying 27 percent of the cost of the public schools, compared to 8 percent in 1929.

But the equalization fund did not solve the schools' problems, even the problem of support. The legislature refused to tie equalization payments to higher standards, as Thompson urged, or to equalize differences in taxable property between districts. In the late 1930's more and more school districts became insolvent; school boards cut salaries and hired uncertified teachers.

During the crisis, the teachers bore the brunt of hardship. Some went unpaid for months; others received warrants which they had to sell at a

discount. In 1937, two-thirds of the rural teachers had salaries under \$500 a year. Some 60 percent of the rural teachers—disgusted with poor salaries, heavy teaching loads, and inferior professional status—changed schools every year. Yet in 1937 the people of North Dakota, who spent only \$10,500,000 on schools, were spending \$23,300,000 on cigarettes, snuff, hard liquor, beer, and amusement parks.

While the state faced a crisis in its school system, it could not or would not make the changes that were needed. Calling a conference of county superintendents and school officers in 1938, Governor William Langer asked: “Why should the school children in the one-room school house on the prairie not enjoy the same privileges of education as those that are more fortunate by living in the larger cities in the state?” The answer, though Langer apparently did not realize it, was found in an unsuitable system of taxation, administration, and attendance for the schools. The system inevitably produced many one-room schools and many small high schools with a low teacher-pupil ratio. The inescapable result was wretched salaries and poor schools, although even in 1935-1936, a time of disaster from drought and depression, North Dakota was still spending more per pupil than the national average.

There was little support for the reorganization so badly needed. In 1937 the legislature turned down significant reforms proposed by the North Dakota Education Association. The association asked for a four mill county equalization fund, the county as the school district with a board of education and an appointive superintendent, and decent salaries for teachers. Equalization was badly needed, for one district had an assessable valuation of only \$731 per pupil, while another a short distance away but with railroad property had an assessable valuation of \$7,000 per pupil.

In semiarid North Dakota, with its widely scattered population, distance was a major problem. The elimination of small schools, implied in the county-wide district, would require the transportation of pupils. The *North Dakota Teacher* declared in September, 1939: “The problem simply resolves itself into a question of maintaining rural and small high schools in every nook and corner of the state on a starvation basis for both teacher and pupil, thus giving each child at least a meager opportunity, or through certain combinations make better supported and better schools.”

In many rural schools, poor teaching, poor attendance, bad roads, absences for farm work, and a short school term took a toll. In 1929, Stanford standardized achievement tests showed that rural pupils in grades 6, 7, and 8 were three-quarters of a year behind the national norms and that rural pupils were a year behind city pupils in the same grade.² In 1940 the

²Robert D. Cole, *Educational Achievement in North Dakota City, Town, and*

average urban dweller over twenty-four in North Dakota had completed 9.8 years of school, the average farm dweller 7.9 years.

There were at least some changes, if few improvements, in the schools during the 1930's. As the population grew older, enrollment fell from 169,000 pupils in 1930 to 140,000 in 1940. During the same years the number of high school graduates increased 38 percent. The average school term declined by a day. The average of all teachers' salaries, including superintendents, fell from \$956 in 1929 to \$569 in 1935, then rose to \$719 in 1939, about half the national average. As the countryside lost population, the number of one-teacher schools declined from 4,336 in 1929 to 3,655 in 1939, but the number of school districts increased slightly. The total annual cost of the public schools fell from \$15,800,000 in 1929 to \$10,300,000 in 1939.

POSTWAR SCHOOL PROBLEMS AND REFORMS

Some of these trends continued into the Second World War and the postwar years. Public-school enrollment fell steadily until 1948, when it reached 113,000. It then began a steady rise, reaching nearly 136,000 in 1960. Enrollment in parochial schools, after remaining nearly stationary at about 8,000 for twenty-five years, grew rapidly after the war, reaching some 20,000 by 1960. As farms became larger and the farm population smaller, the number of one-room schools continued to decline. There were 3,043 in 1945 and 1,143 in 1960. With wartime prosperity, teachers' salaries rose to an average of \$1,303 in 1945 and continued upward after the war, reaching \$2,018 in 1949 and \$4,121 in 1960. In 1958 salaries ranged from less than \$2,500 to \$8,950; many janitors, working twelve months, had a higher yearly income than the teachers, working nine months. Total expenditures for the public schools rose spectacularly, especially in the 1950's: from \$13,900,000 in 1945 to \$21,400,000 in 1949 and to \$51,500,000 in 1960. From 1949 to 1960, school expenditures increased some 140 percent, but the personal income of North Dakotans increased only 63 percent.

Larger expenditures and better salaries, helpful as they were, did not in themselves solve the problems of the schools. Many reforms were needed. The teachers and superintendents, acting through the North Dakota Education Association, pressed them upon the legislature. Before each legislative session, the N.D.E.A. policies commission prepared a program. It was ably aided, of course, by the superintendent of public instruction, the Parent-Teacher Association, and the investigations of the Legislative Research Committee, many of whose members were stalwart supporters of

The education lobby was the strongest at the capitol. Often meeting much opposition in the legislature (its proposals, if enacted, frequently would have aroused the hostility of many voters), it was never entirely successful. Yet the schoolmen managed to secure notable reforms: in 1947 a school-district reorganization law, a better minimum-salary law, a continuing-contract law, and improvements in the teacher-retirement system; in 1949 a county equalization fund; in 1953 and 1957 higher teacher-certification requirements; in 1959 a minimum high school curriculum and a foundation program of state and county support.

One persistent weakness was poorly trained teachers. For many years persons with only twelve weeks' training beyond high school were entitled to a second-grade elementary certificate. In 1949 the legislature, alleging a shortage of teachers, took a step backward by permitting a second-grade elementary certificate to be given to a person who earned twelve quarter-credits in an eight-week summer session. To the disgust of the professional teachers, the law made it legal for the ill-trained to compete with the well-trained. Indeed, many teachers had no certificates at all; for years some boards had made it a practice to hire such persons, paying them poor salaries. In 1951-1952, out of 2,697 rural teachers, 399 had no training beyond high school, 1,062 had less than a year of college, and 724 had only one year of college; 1,287 held second-grade elementary certificates, and 545 had no certification of any kind. The number of uncertified teachers was actually increasing (651 in 1952-1953) in spite of the low requirements and the \$300 rural-teacher-training scholarships which the legislature began to offer in 1949. Paul Dalager, executive secretary of the North Dakota Education Association, said that the state's teaching standards were among the lowest in the nation.

Under pressure from Dalager and his fellow lobbyists, the legislature finally made the long-called-for reform. In 1953 it abolished the second-grade elementary certificate; in 1957 it abolished the first-grade elementary certificate (one year of college training), making two years of college training, the requirement for the second-grade professional certificate, the legal minimum beginning in September, 1960.

The preparation of teachers improved rapidly. By 1959-1960 there were only 3 teachers without certificates, but 629 rural teachers, more than half the total, had one year or less of college training. The level of training improved greatly the next year, but there were still 245 teachers with as little as one year of college training.

The county superintendents, leaders of the rural schools, were themselves not too well prepared. In 1957 the legislature required them to have had a four-year college course, but did not make the law retroactive. In 1960 only

sixteen of the fifty-three county superintendents met the requirement; the remainder were serving under the grandfather clause.

North Dakota had trouble keeping well-trained teachers, especially in the small high schools. Superintendents in other states, offering much higher salaries, sought teachers in North Dakota, where the small high school, with many diverse preparations for the teacher, old and limited equipment, and the isolation of village life, was unattractive to many. In 1958 the placement bureau at the University of North Dakota had requests for 3,133 high school teachers from 770 superintendents in 26 states. By the late 1950's, from one-half to two-thirds of the current college graduates prepared for teaching were taking positions outside the state. As a result, almost half the teachers in North Dakota were married women who had left teaching and later returned to it.

Teachers, of course, influenced the quality of schooling, but so did size. Most of the high schools were small and unable to offer much of a program—little in science and mathematics and almost no foreign languages. Gradually, many of the smaller ones were closing. In 1946 there were 433 high schools (compared to about 600 in 1930), but only 261 were accredited, although accrediting standards were low. Two teachers instructing in their majors and minors and a minimum of twenty-five pupils allowed minor accrediting. In 1960 there were 352 high schools, of which only 199 were accredited. By then a minor accredited high school had to have a minimum of three teachers instructing in their majors and minors and twenty-five pupils; a fully accredited high school needed only four teachers in majors and minors and forty-five pupils. Only 137 high schools were fully accredited.

The accrediting standards were much too low. Dr. Clair Blikre, superintendent at Stanley, thought that in order to offer a good program a high school should have a minimum of two hundred students and a dozen teachers. But in 1958-1959 only 42 high schools enrolled two hundred or more students; only 117 had more than one hundred students, and 157 had fewer than fifty. About 45 percent of the students attended high schools of two hundred or more; about 66 percent attended high schools of one hundred or more. That is, from one-third to one-half of the students were attending high schools too small to have a satisfactory program. State Superintendent M. F. Peterson called the small high schools “a weaker link in North Dakota's educational chain than the little elementary school.” What, he asked, can such schools “offer in terms of the needs of our boys and girls in their preparation for life?”

Moreover, the smaller high schools generally cost more per pupil. Paying the best salaries and offering the best program, Fargo Central High School, the largest in the state, had a per-pupil cost of \$316 in 1958-1959; high

schools with enrollments under one hundred pupils generally had per-pupil costs running over \$400 and sometimes from \$500 to \$700. Dean Martelle L. Cushman of the College of Education at the University of North Dakota, an expert on school reorganization, told an assembly of state legislators: "You must recognize that the smaller the school the more meager its offerings and the higher its cost." He added: "The easiest way to improve the quality in a small school is to increase its size."³

THE EQUALIZATION REVOLUTION IN SCHOOL SUPPORT

The condition of the small high schools pointed up the need for reform. The basic trouble was the small school districts—about twenty-five hundred of them at the end of the Second World War. They could give neither the needed financial support nor adequate educational opportunities; many had fewer than two dozen children of school age. Inequalities between districts with regard to assessable property, caused largely by differences in the amount of railroad property, required that financial support be equalized by levying school taxes over a larger area, such as the county or state.

From the early years of statehood, taxes levied by the local districts had not provided all of the school funds. Income from the school land grant of two sections in each township was substantial. In 1960 it paid \$2,600,000, or nearly 5 percent, of the cost of the schools. From the 1890's to 1948 a county levy, sometimes a mill and sometimes a half mill, was made for the schools. From 1899 to 1933 the legislature granted state aid to schools which attained certain standards, appropriating some \$600,000 per biennium for this purpose through the 1920's. After the war the state equalization fund, using sales-tax money, was paying some 19 percent of the cost of the schools.

The cost of high school education was most unfairly distributed. Beginning in 1935, the state equalization fund paid tuition for high school students attending classes outside the districts in which they lived, but these payments did not nearly equal the cost to the high school district. Since only about a fifth of the districts operated high schools in 1946, a large part of the people were not paying taxes to support high schools.

Such conditions finally produced equalization of school financing—the equalization revolution in the school system. The first step came in 1949 when the legislature created a county equalization fund based on a ten-mill levy on all property. The fund, aided by money from the state equalization fund, was to make large payments to all elementary schools in the county

³M. L. Cushman, "[Some Factual Bases for Improving Elementary and Secondary Education in North Dakota](#)" (Hectographed copy of an address to the North Dakota Legislators School, Grand Forks, November 26, 1960), pp. 20, 23-24.

on a teacher-pupil basis; the state fund was also to pay each high school ninety dollars per student. In 1949, before the law went into effect, state and county aid paid 27 percent of school costs; in 1950 such aid paid 41 percent.

The second step in the equalization revolution was a county-wide tax for high schools; for the first time, all property would bear taxes for high schools. The legislature established a county high school equalization fund with a one-mill levy in 1951, raised it to three mills in 1955, and to four mills in 1957.

The third and final step in the equalization revolution came in 1959 when the legislature established the Foundation Program. For it the legislature created a new county equalization fund based on a 21-mill levy. Aided by moneys from the state equalization fund, the new county fund was to pay each school 60 percent of the average cost per pupil, exclusive of the cost of physical facilities, transportation, and indebtedness. The basic payments were to be \$198 for each high school student and \$187 for each of the first twenty elementary pupils per teacher. One-room schools were to be paid more (\$225 per pupil), larger elementary schools less (\$150 per pupil). The law also provided half a cent per pupil-mile for transportation. The Foundation Program taxed all property for schools and equalized the burden between districts. But the legislature did not find new revenues, urgently needed, for the state equalization fund, and it did not use the Foundation Program to raise the standards of the high schools or to force school-district reorganization.

These failures were significant. The Foundation Program cost the state equalization fund \$9,200,000 in its first year and \$10,400,000 the second. The state fund supplied an average of 42 percent of the amounts paid the districts from the county equalization funds—10 percent in Slope County, 65 percent in Sioux County. The range showed that uniform assessments, a reform long debated but not yet enacted, were imperative. In 1961 the state equalization fund had money for only 80 percent of the payments to county funds required by the law.

THE SCHOOL-REORGANIZATION REVOLUTION

The equalization revolution in financing the schools was accompanied by a reorganization revolution in their administration. The latter came about through revisions which eliminated many of the small school districts. Involving sweeping change, it was more difficult than the equalization revolution and hence less successful.

Both revolutions stemmed from a growing realization of the inadequacy of the state's small yet costly schools. In 1951 1952, North Dakota was spending 3.2 percent of its people's income on schools, ranking third among all the states in this measure of school support and eighth among the states

in per capita expenditures for schools. Yet in the percentage of its elementary teachers who had four years of college, it was forty-seventh among the states, and in the Korean War, 13 percent of North Dakota draftees failed the armed-forces qualifications tests, as compared with only 2.2 percent of Minnesota draftees.

A number of investigations of the schools from 1945 to 1960, many articles in the *North Dakota Teacher*, and statements by the state superintendent of public instruction emphasized the need for school reorganization. They also generated a desire for reform among many citizens. Thus a state committee reported:

Large numbers of boys and girls, men and women in rural sections all over the state are being robbed of opportunity for suitable education. Citizens are getting a low quality of education for their tax dollars in many places. Why? Because the school districts through which they buy education are too undersized and anemic to deliver a full measure of modern educational goods.⁴

Such conditions were common throughout the nation, and a national movement for school-district reorganization developed in the postwar years. Joining the movement, the North Dakota Legislature passed the state's first reorganization law in 1947. It provided for county committees to make plans for school-district reorganization, for a state committee to approve the plans, and, finally, for the submission of the plans to the voters of the districts concerned. Incorporated villages voted as a unit, as did rural territory; approval required a majority in both incorporated and rural territory.

The legislature, beginning the reorganization revolution with caution, provided neither reward for reorganization nor penalty for failure to reorganize. The 1947 law gave no aid for the transportation of pupils, set no minimum standards for the new districts, withheld no state equalization money from districts which failed to reorganize. Such deficiencies, reflecting the legislature's reluctance to force the issue, were understandable. Reorganization would generally mean not only increased expense for the transportation of pupils but also the closing of some schools. Economic interest opposed the first, community pride the second.

Yet there was immediate progress. From the spring of 1949 to June, 1951, there were 42 elections reorganizing more than 220 districts. One of the notable successes was the merging of 42 rural districts in Williams County

⁴Clair Blikre, "[The Positive and Negative Factors Involved in Successful and Unsuccessful School District Reorganization Proposals in North Dakota](#)" (Unpublished Ed.D. dissertation, University of North Dakota, 1960), pp. 152-153.

into New School District No. 8, with a taxable valuation of \$4,800,000. The new district continued the one-room schools, but painted the buildings, bought new equipment, and hired better teachers, paying them the best salaries in North Dakota and giving them free teacherages. Twenty-seven reorganization plans were defeated, generally by the rural vote.

In 1951 the legislature, responding to rural opposition, virtually stopped reorganization by an amendment to the 1947 law which required a majority in each district for any reorganization plan. From 1951 to 1957 only twenty plans were approved and forty-four were rejected, although 60 percent of the voters favored them. In Emerado, for example, reorganization lost through a tie vote in two districts, yet 75 percent of the voters favored reorganization.

Then in 1957 the legislature began to remove some of the obstacles to reorganization. That year, it required districts not maintaining high schools to pay nonresident tuition to the schools its students attended, removing an economic penalty for reorganization. It reinstated the provision that in voting on reorganization plans, incorporated areas should vote as a unit and rural areas as a unit; a majority in each brought approval, not a majority in each district. In 1959 it provided state aid for transportation of pupils, a definite encouragement to reorganization.

But the legislature steadily refused to force reorganization by tying it to either standards or equalization payments. It apparently judged the temper of the state correctly, for in November, 1958, the voters defeated an initiated measure requiring any district not operating a high school to become part of such a district within three years. The measure carried only four counties.

The legislature did show a growing concern for the small high school. In 1959 the Legislative Research Committee reported: "Some high schools have such limited course offerings and poor quality of instruction that they are high schools in name only, which in effect cheats the students who believe they are obtaining a high school education." After hearing that report, the legislature established, for the first time, a minimum program for an accredited high school. After July 1, 1961, an accredited high school had to offer a minimum of twenty-two units in four years: four of English, three of mathematics, four of physical science, five of other required units, and six of electives.

Although there was no penalty for failure to establish the minimum curriculum other than loss of accreditation, reorganization did make much progress under the changed method of voting and the aid for transportation. From July 1, 1957, to June 30, 1961, voters approved 151 plans, rejected only 29; the number of school districts was reduced from 2,271 in 1947 to

about 1,000 in 1961.⁵ And rapid highway construction in the postwar years made reorganization more feasible. In 1945, North Dakota had only about 1,600 miles of hard-surfaced roads; by 1960 it had more than 5,000 miles.

Still, reorganization often brought a bitter struggle between people favoring change and those willing to allow things to remain as they were. Persons favoring reorganization felt the urgent need for better schools; their opponents acted from a variety of motives. In some places, strong parochial schools seemed to be an obstacle; in others, such nationality groups as the German Russians seemed to favor the status quo. Some feared tax increases, for many districts levied nothing or almost nothing for schools. In Walsh County, for example, thirty-seven districts were not maintaining schools in 1960-1961. Reorganization would mean taxes and bond issues.

Antagonism between rural and town residents was also a knotty problem, for almost all plans meant the merging of rural districts with a town district. Many feared the deterioration of the community if the local school closed. Very few plans called for the combining of two or three villages into one district with the elimination of some small high schools. Indeed, some plans were defensive, designed to forestall just such an elimination through the formation of a still larger district. Some thought the small high school was adequate; others disliked the long distances the children would have to travel to school.

Where reorganization was successful, it was usually a result of the vigorous, courageous leadership of a county superintendent. Thus Miss Florence Rasmussen of Grand Forks County and Mrs. Luba E. Johnson of Rolette County compiled notable records. Stepping on the toes of objectors and ignoring the loss of votes, Miss Rasmussen, aided by many schoolmen and school officers, led Grand Forks County from 111 districts in 1947 to 34 in 1961 and was planning an early reduction to 5 districts in the county. Two of the victories were Larimore and Midway. Larimore united 24 old districts and had a high school of 275 students. Midway Special School District No. 128, a veritable model of reorganization, combined the high schools of Gilby, Inkster, and Forest River. It had a guidance counselor, a speech therapist, and a band-and-chorus instructor, as well as several teachers in science, mathematics, business education, and other subjects. Cass County, lacking such vigorous leadership, had twenty small high schools in 1961, many of them within a few miles of each other.

Many other counties made little progress, but even where changes were made, the results were often unsatisfactory. When a subcommittee of the Legislative Research Committee held hearings on reorganization in the

⁵[Department of Public Instruction](#), "School Reorganization in North Dakota" (Mimeographed; [Bismarck], n.d.).

summer of 1961, it heard much blunt criticism from schoolmen and school officers. The state had three or four times as many high schools as it needed and eight or ten times as many school districts, for the schoolmen told the committee that a reorganized district should have a minimum taxable valuation of two or three million dollars and a minimum of 150 to 200 high school students.

Most reorganizations did not even come close to such minimums. They did not substantially increase the size of the high school; that is, they did nothing to eliminate the some two hundred high schools which would have to be closed before every student had an opportunity for a good high school education. Thus the schoolmen criticized the State Board of Public School Education (established by the legislature in 1955) for approving inadequate reorganization plans. Such approval, they said, was generally followed by the construction of new buildings, which would make further reorganization very difficult. The board felt, however, that if it disapproved plans acceptable to the people involved, it would block any progress.

Many schoolmen felt that the state should assume a more active role in matters of education and tie state aid to accreditation. They believed that it should formulate a state-wide plan for school-district reorganization based on an unbiased study and should then force acceptance of that plan. But such a revolution, taking high schools away from a large number of the 249 incorporated towns with less than 500 population (a population in that range would have less than three dozen high school students), would clearly mean political suicide for the legislators and other elected officials who attempted it.

By 1961 the reorganization revolution begun by the law of 1947 was under way but far from completed. The goal of an opportunity for a good high school education for every student was yet to be achieved. Adaptation of the educational institutions to the conditions imposed by North Dakota's physical and political environment, painful and difficult as that would be, would have to be made if the state were to give its young people the education they needed.

HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE TWENTIES

Like the public schools, higher education in North Dakota was profoundly affected by the fluctuating fortunes of the state. In providing higher education, the state struggled with the problems of too many institutions, inadequate support, and poor quality. Such difficulties, of course, were not peculiar to North Dakota. Many states had too many small schools, inadequate funds, and low standards, and even at the largest, richest universities of the nation there were serious deficiencies. Whatever the problems, the colleges and universities in North Dakota and in the nation

did grant opportunities and perform services which were of the utmost importance, not only to the young people who attended them but also to the state and nation. In North Dakota the 1920's were a time of rapid growth in enrollment and considerable expansion. The depression of the 1930's seriously handicapped higher education, but then in the postwar years, prosperity brought more students and money, enlarged programs and facilities, and higher standards.

When the 1920's began, North Dakota had ten institutions of higher education. One was a private, church-affiliated liberal arts school, Jamestown College, sponsored by the Presbyterian church and headed by dynamic idealist Barend H. Kroeze. A Netherlands-born graduate of the University of Michigan and McCormack Theological Seminary, Kroeze had taken over the abandoned institution in 1909 (it had been closed since 1893). He ran it until his resignation in 1946 at the age of seventy-eight. Winning support with his confidence and enthusiasm, Kroeze secured gifts, gathered a faculty, and constructed buildings. He won accreditation from the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools in 1924, when the college enrolled 378 students.

Of the nine state institutions, only the University of North Dakota at Grand Forks and the Agricultural College at Fargo offered four years of college work in 1920. The other seven offered only two years, as well as much high school instruction. Five of them were normal schools (Mayville, Valley City, Minot, Dickinson, and Ellendale) which trained rural and elementary teachers. The School of Forestry at Bottineau was really little more than a business college, although it had a tree nursery, and the School of Science at Wahpeton was largely a trade school offering work of less than college grade. In the 1920's the total enrollment of the ten institutions doubled, rising from some three thousand to about six thousand. Throughout the decade, the university and the Agricultural College, by far the largest institutions, had about half the state's college students.

The university, growing from some one thousand to sixteen hundred students in the ten years, was headed by Dr. Thomas F. Kane, a tall and dignified yet ingratiating classical scholar who had built up the University of Washington before coming to Grand Forks in 1913. Under Kane, the legislature provided money for Merrifield Hall and the law-school building. Fraternities and sororities built houses which still grace University Avenue, and students and alumni raised the funds for Memorial Stadium. Kane, however, was soon involved in a bitter feud with some of the best men on his faculty: energetic and respected William G. Bek; rotund, florid John M. Gillette, often called the "father of rural sociology"; tall, scholarly Orin G. Libby, an authority on North Dakota history; and others. The university did not advance as rapidly as the Agricultural College in the 1920's.

The Agricultural College grew from some six hundred students in 1920 to over fourteen hundred by 1929, the largest increase enjoyed by any of the institutions. This was a tribute to the able leadership of Dr. John Lee Coulter, who served as president from 1921 to 1929. After growing up on a Minnesota farm, Coulter had graduated from the University of North Dakota, took a Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin, and followed a varied career in education and government service. He was dean of the School of Agriculture at West Virginia University and director of its experiment station when, at forty, he accepted the presidency of the Fargo institution. There he not only increased the enrollment but also built up the staff, added two major buildings (Morrill Hall and the field house), broadened the programs offered, and raised academic standards. Coulter brought the world's leading scientists to the campus as guest lecturers. Speaking everywhere, he built up good will throughout North Dakota and made "Our State is Our Campus" the slogan of the college. He was effective, for, a farm boy himself, he spoke the farmer's language and could do the farmer's chores, a fact he liked to demonstrate as he traveled over the state.

Coulter's speaking activities were a part of the sharp competition for students among the state institutions. All needed to grow, for even the largest were small for their class, and increases in enrollment would mean increases in appropriations. To attract more students, all of the institutions lived under a strong compulsion to expand their offerings. In the 1920's the university established the School of Commerce, separated the School of Education more distinctly from the arts college, and organized a graduate program. Offering a Ph.D. as it did was then a questionable step, for the university had only a limited library (seventy-five thousand volumes), a heavy teaching load for its faculty, and few distinguished professors.

The biggest expansion of the decade, however, was the transformation of the two-year normal schools into four-year teachers colleges. The legislature authorized the move in 1921, and one after another, starting with Valley City in 1923 and ending with Dickinson in 1931, they made the transition and began to grant the bachelor's degree in education. With the change, they stopped admitting eighth-grade graduates and dropped much of their high school work. As they started training high school teachers, they also began to give college work to students not preparing for teaching. In both programs they were competing with the university, the Agricultural College, and Jamestown College, which were already meeting these needs and were much better equipped to give such work.

The competition for students and the accompanying expansion helped some institutions more than others. In 1929 the teachers college at Minot, serving a large area in the northwestern portion of the state, outstripped Valley City, until then always the third institution in enrollment. In 1931,

Dickinson, the smallest of the institutions in 1920 except for Bottineau, outstripped Mayville by growing nearly 500 percent in a dozen years.⁶ Minot and Dickinson grew rapidly because they served large areas and populations without competition from nearby institutions.

Expansion in enrollment and the number of courses offered was not, however, accompanied by an increase in appropriations. The legislature appropriated some three million dollars for the state institutions for the 1921-1923 biennium and only four million dollars for the 1929-1931 biennium, although enrollment had doubled. As appropriations lagged behind, the institutions were unable to secure or retain faculty members with the proper training. Even at the university, salaries in the 1920's were below those in similar institutions in the nation, and there was a large turnover, averaging thirty resignations a year. As the normal schools became teachers colleges, they needed to upgrade their faculties, but they found that nearby states were paying salaries from 10 to 50 percent greater than they could offer. So they often had to tolerate inadequately trained instructors.

Part of the problem was that too many small institutions offering too many types of courses meant too many small classes, especially in advanced work, where there were only a few students majoring in each department. In 1929, for example, some 26 percent of the classes had fewer than ten students. When Professor W. E. Peik of the University of Minnesota made a thorough study of the state institutions for the Board of Administration in 1930, he pointed out that only Maine had more teachers colleges and normal schools in proportion to its population than North Dakota. He concluded that the excessive number of small institutions doomed them to mediocrity. North Dakota was suffering from the Too-Much Mistake in higher education, just as it was in the public schools.

A CRISIS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

In the depression of the 1930's, the colleges and the university suffered even more severely. The legislature cut appropriations for all institutions, and the problem of faculty training and salaries, with its influence on the quality of instruction, became more acute.

New leaders at both the university and the Agricultural College took charge in the crisis. At the latter, Professor John H. Shepperd succeeded John Lee Coulter as president in 1929. After training at Iowa State College and the University of Wisconsin, Shepperd had joined the faculty in 1893.

⁶See table on enrollment in North Dakota Legislative Research Committee, [*Report, 1953*](#), p. 38. Aside from the items described in the Bibliographical Essay, the sources on higher education are the session laws, the reports of the Board of Administration and later the Board of Higher Education, and reports of the Legislative Research Committee.

A specialist in animal husbandry, he was in 1929 an honest, sociable man of sixty with a gray Vandyke beard who entered happily into the social activities of the students and faculty. He was not as successful as the new president of the university in wrestling with the problems of the hard years.

At the university, Thomas F. Kane's opponents forced his resignation in 1933, and John C. West became president. Then forty-seven, West had grown up on a Minnesota farm, taught rural school, graduated from St. Cloud Normal and Fargo College, served as superintendent of schools at Sauk Center and Bemidji, Minnesota, and earned a doctorate at the University of North Dakota. He was superintendent of the Grand Forks schools when he became the choice of university faculty leaders, such as Dean Bek and Professor Gillette. Gillette wired Governor William Langer: "West absolutely straight. You can trust him implicitly. Best prospect." West accepted the presidency at a reduction of nearly 50 percent in salary, a sacrifice which revealed his interest and loyalty. A sandy-haired man with homespun humor and pride in his craft as an administrator, he had a talent for storytelling and a readiness to conciliate and harmonize. He liked to call himself "a politician." He made friends with students, parents, and legislators, explained the university to the state, and in some way brought the school through the dark days of the depression.

It was a difficult task. In 1933 the legislature cut the appropriations for all institutions of higher education for the biennium to \$1,600,000 (they were \$4,000,000 in 1931). The university took a 55 percent cut, the Agricultural College a 59 percent cut. At the university the salaries of professors were reduced from \$3,650 to \$1,914, instructors from \$1,943 to \$1,322. Yet the state, as the *North Dakota Teacher* pointed out bitterly, paid poolroom and hotel inspectors \$2,400 a year. Although salaries were raised 7.5 percent in 1935, North Dakota paid its college faculties the poorest wage of any state in the nation. Many, of course, left; the Agricultural College lost fifty-seven from 1930 to 1936. Many of those who remained became embittered, and so the faculties deteriorated, falling behind in academic training and scholarly production. By 1936-1937 only 30 percent of the faculty at the university held doctorates, compared to 49 percent for public universities in the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools.

The depression convinced many people that North Dakota had more colleges than it could support. In 1933 the legislature ordered the Board of Administration to "eliminate all unnecessary duplication of courses"; in 1935 it called for "a thorough study of the feasibility of either consolidation or closing of some of these institutions." In 1936 the Tax Survey Commission found fault with the colleges' tendency to expand their programs and pointed out that North Dakota had more state-supported colleges than thirty-three other states. It concluded, however, that

duplication was like the weather: everybody talked about it, nobody did anything. Although the distribution of many small institutions over the state had disadvantages, it did bring more young people into college classrooms. In 1937-1938, North Dakota had 105 college students for each 10,000 of population; it ranked a respectable twenty-fourth among the states in this matter. The counties with institutions had by far the most students in college.⁷

The depression hurt accreditation. In the 1920's the American Association of Teachers Colleges had warned the schools at Minot and Valley City that they must make improvements or lose their membership. In the 1930's, accrediting associations dropped several departments at the Agricultural College, and the Council on Medical Education and Hospitals of the American Medical Association announced that the University of North Dakota no longer had "an acceptable medical school"; it was allowed to continue, however, on a year-to-year probation. Then in 1937 the North Central Association took away the accreditation of the Agricultural College because of political interference in its administration. The action came after the Board of Administration, dominated by Governor William Langer, fired President Shepperd and seven veteran faculty members, four of them deans, without making any formal charges or giving them a hearing. Many people believed that the firings were an effort by Langer to build up a political machine by securing control of the extension service and the experiment station. These branches of the college employed some 3,200 persons and had a payroll of a million dollars a year. They also distributed some twenty million dollars annually to North Dakota farmers for compliance with the federal agricultural program.

Repercussions were immediate and significant. Angry students burned four members of the Board of Administration in effigy. Dr. A. F. Yeager, the famous plant breeder, resigned in disgust, lashing the board for wrecking the college. The alumni association started a petition for a constitutional amendment to remove control of the colleges from the Board of Administration and place it in the hands of a nonpolitical board of higher education. The amendment passed in 1938, and the new board, appointed by Governor John Moses, took over on July 1, 1939. Before that time, Moses had secured the reinstatement of both the Agricultural College's accreditation and the fired faculty members.

After this crisis, conditions improved. The North Central Association investigated the university but gave it a clean bill of health as free from political interference, and Phi Beta Kappa decided to leave its chapter on

⁷University of North Dakota, Department of Sociology, "Cost of Higher Education in North Dakota" (Mimeographed; [Grand Forks], n.d.), Tables iii, ix.

the university campus. Dr. Frank L. Eversull became president of the Agricultural College in the summer of 1938. A native of Ohio and an ordained Presbyterian minister, he was the head of church-affiliated Huron College in South Dakota and a vice-president of the North Central Association when appointed president of the Agricultural College. Under Eversull, a hard-working idealist, the school took on new life. Enrollment rose, and even athletics improved when in the fall of 19313 Ernie Wheeler led the Bison to a football victory over the university and its great Negro star Fritz Pollard. One long-standing problem persisted, however. In 1940 the Board of Higher Education reported: "The most serious problem... is the trying one of securing qualified members for the faculties. Young and inexperienced instructors can be found willing to serve for a year or two to gain experience." But they were not what the institutions needed.

POSTWAR EXPANSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Enrollment in the state institutions increased to more than 7,000 by 1939-1940, only slightly more than it had been at the end of the 1920's. It fell off sharply during the Second World War, down to less than 1,900 in 1943-1944. After the war, however, the colleges enjoyed their greatest boom. Enrollment rose to a peak of 7,800 in 1949-1950, fell off a couple of thousand in the early 1950's, and then rose steadily to more than 14,000 in the fall of 1961. Appropriations shot up, from \$3,600,000 for the 1945-1947 biennium to \$24,000,000 for the 1959-1961 biennium.

New leaders took charge. Dr. Fred S. Hultz, a 55-year-old Iowan with a doctor's degree in animal husbandry, became president of the Agricultural College in 1948. Eager for more ample funds, the new president bluntly told the legislature that "of the land-grant colleges in the United States, he didn't know of one as ill-equipped and so run-down as that of North Dakota." Aided by postwar prosperity and greatly increased appropriations, Hultz launched a ten-year plan for expansion. Though skillful in handling the budget and dealing with the legislature, he gradually began to make important decisions, such as establishing a graduate division, without consulting the faculty. The result was a bitter quarrel, the firing of four faculty members in 1955, and the blacklisting of the college administration by the American Association of University Professors. Hultz's greatest triumph was changing the name of the school to North Dakota State University of Agriculture and Applied Science by means of a constitutional amendment approved by the voters in 1960. That year, four land-grant colleges in other states made similar changes.

At the university, Dr. John C. West retired in 1954 after serving as president for twenty-one years (longer than any other president of the university and longer than any other state-university president then in

office). In his later years, when new buildings were transforming the campus, he liked to call himself a “brick-and-mortar president.” His successor was Dr. George W. Starcher, a farsighted, 48-year-old mathematician who had been dean of the arts college at Ohio University Athens. “The mission of the University,” Starcher said in his inaugural address, “is to prepare men and women for life in a changing dynamic society.”

Under West, Hultz, and Starcher, as well as the heads of the other colleges (O. A. DeLong at Mayville, Charles E. Scott at Dickinson, R. L. Lokken at Valley City, George W. Haverty at Wahpeton, and Casper Lura at Minot), the institutions of higher education moved forward in many ways. From 1947 to 1957 the legislature appropriated money for twenty major college buildings. In addition to these funds, bonds issued in anticipation of revenues built dormitories and student unions.

Stocky, white-haired, philanthropic Chester Fritz, a former Buxton boy who had prospered in the China trade, went into investment banking, and was living in Switzerland, gave a million dollars for a library building at the university, the largest contribution ever made to a North Dakota institution up to that time (in 1962, Edmond A. Hughes made a bequest of a million dollars for a fine-arts building at the university). Choking a bit with emotion at the dedication of the new library, Fritz said: “It means more to me to give with a warm hand.” A former university student, Fritz got idealism and his interest in the university in part from his aunt (now Katherine B. Tiffany) and her husband, Neil C. Macdonald, the crusading schoolman who died in 1923 after being pilloried as a socialist. By 1957, with much of the building still to come, the physical plants of the state colleges were valued at more than thirty-three million dollars; their value had been only five million dollars in 1932.

More colleges were established. Bismarck Junior College opened in 1939 and Devils Lake Junior College in 1941. Assumption Abbey at Richardton expanded the junior college and theological school it had begun in 1900. In 1956, Benedictine nuns began to hold the classes of Mary College at St. Alexius Hospital (Bismarck) and moved into the new priory at Apple Creek in 1959.

Bismarck Junior College prospered. After 1959 it benefited from a legislative subsidy of two hundred dollars per student. By the early 1960’s it had a one-million-dollar building overlooking the Missouri River, plus six hundred students.

All of the institutions gradually expanded their offerings. Soon after the war the teachers colleges at Minot and Valley City began to give liberal arts as well as education degrees. At the university the one-mill levy for a medical center, passed in 1948 with a campaign slogan “Vote Yes for More

Doctors,” provided funds for a better medical school, a division of nursing, a program in medical technology, and a rehabilitation center. After the discovery of oil at Tioga, the university’s geology department expanded rapidly, and in 1958 the university resumed the training of elementary teachers.

There was also much expansion of graduate work, both at the university and the Agricultural College. The university granted 15 master’s degrees and a single doctor’s degree in 1945, the last year of the war; in 1961 it granted 153 master’s and 12 doctor’s degrees. For all years before 1954 the Agricultural College had given only 18 master’s degrees; it gave 69 in 1958 alone and had 310 graduate students enrolled in the fall of 1960.

The struggle for quality continued. Higher appropriations and higher salaries helped. Professional associations accredited departments at Fargo and Grand Forks, and by 1960 the North Central Association had accredited four of the teachers colleges. New libraries at the Agricultural College in 1950 and at the university in 1961 provided opportunities for a more active intellectual life. Many research grants (\$800,000 for the 1958-1960 biennium alone at the university) stimulated scholarly activity and publication. More scholarships (especially the Maxwell Upson and Chester Fritz scholarships at the university) and vigorous recruitment attracted better-qualified students. There was a general tightening of academic standards and a steady effort to improve the faculties. At the university, President Starcher stressed honors work for the most promising students. At the teachers colleges, the number of juniors and seniors increased greatly.

Yet the old deficiencies and difficulties held on stubbornly. Faculty salaries and hence the level of staff members’ training remained below the averages for institutions of the same class in the nation. At the university, for example, 36 percent of the faculty held doctorates in 1958, while the national average for universities was 48 percent. That year, a study by the United States Office of Education criticized the state’s institutions for employing unqualified instructors, having an excessive number of small classes, and giving high school courses.

For all the deficiencies, the institutions did much for the state. They gave the young people an opportunity for a higher education at a lower cost than in most of the states. Many have taken that opportunity. By 1960 the Agricultural College had granted more than 10,000 degrees, half of them in the 1950’s. By 1961 the university had enrolled over 50,000 students since its opening and had granted more than 18,000 degrees. The graduates served the state in many ways—as farmers, doctors, lawyers, teachers, legislators, judges, congressmen, senators, and governors. Many of them left the state to pursue distinguished careers in many fields. Moreover, the institutions themselves were stimulating centers of intellectual life, communities of

scholars and ambitious young people, in which the state's cultural heritage was transmitted, the skills and professions of the modern world were learned, and the bounds of knowledge, especially knowledge of the state itself, were extended.

RESEARCH AND WRITING

The value of the institutions of higher education centered on the teaching, research, and writing of their faculties. That was their vital part and leading role in the intellectual life of the state. Many at the university made notable contributions in the 1920's. Dean Joseph Kennedy, retiring in 1932, was remembered by the *North Dakota Teacher* as "the greatest and best loved teacher in North Dakota." Upon his death in 1937, it wrote: "For fifty years he served as counselor and guide... and his influence moulded the lives of thousands of teachers who have in turn had a definite part in making the history of this state."

There were many others. Orin G. Libby, editor of the State Historical Society's *Collections* and later the *North Dakota Historical Quarterly*, performed an outstanding task in preserving the records of the state's early years. Arthur G. Leonard, head of the university's geology department, wrote more than fifty articles and long reports. He made a significant contribution to knowledge of the geology of the state by mapping lignite and gravel fields and possible oil resources. John M. Gillette, called the "father of rural sociology," was president of the American Sociological Society in 1928. Other stars of the university faculty were warmhearted, sharp-eyed William G. Bek, dean of the arts college and professor of German; sentimental, hotheaded Vernon P. Squires, a dean of the arts college and an inspiring teacher of English literature; the capable lignite researchers Earle J. Babcock, Alfred W. Gauger, and Irvin Lavine; German-trained economist Ezra T. Towne, first dean of the School of Commerce; and industrious Howard Simpson, the expert on ground water who awakened the state to the need of conserving its artesian waters.

The 1920's saw some decline in the scholarly output of the university faculty from what it had been in the days of President Frank L. McVey, when it had averaged two and a half books a year against a book a year under President Thomas F. Kane. The 1930's saw a further decline; some of the old faculty members retired or were past their productive years, and the stoppage of the *Quarterly Journal of the University of North Dakota*, the *Law Review*, and the *North Dakota Historical Quarterly* cut down opportunities for publication.

The depression brought in federal money for a mineral-resources survey and more research on lignite, and the United States Bureau of Mines established a gasification pilot plant on the university campus in 1944.

Nearly every department benefited from federal research or survey projects as a part of the relief and recovery program. There were some thirty approved between 1935 and 1938 alone.

The postwar years saw many able members of the university faculty engaged in a variety of research enterprises. Indeed, the expansion of research at both the university and the Agricultural College was one of the notable aspects of the postwar years. At the university the completion of the Charles R. Robertson Lignite Laboratory by the United States Bureau of Mines in 1951 added to research facilities. With the discovery of oil, the work of the North Dakota Geological Survey under Dr. Wilson Laird became of major importance in the state at large, with an appropriation of \$330,000 in 1957 and a staff of twenty full-time employees.

Dr. William E. Koenker, head of the university's Department of Economics, and Arlyn J. Larson made a study of *Equitable Highway Cost Allocation in North Dakota* (1956) for the Legislative Research Committee. Dr. Koenker and Dr. Glenn W. Fisher, associate professor of economics at the Agricultural College, prepared a study of *Tax Equity in North Dakota* (1960), also for the Legislative Research Committee. Both were published by the Bureau of Business and Economic Research of the university's College of Business and Public Administration. Born in Regent on the Missouri Slope, Koenker was a graduate of Dickinson State Teachers College and held a Ph.D. from Ohio State University. He was one of the most productive scholars at the University of North Dakota, and his ability as a teacher was recognized by an Alumni Award for Distinguished Teaching in 1958. In 1962 he became vice-president in charge of academic affairs at the university. Another outstanding teacher and recipient of the Alumni Award was Dr. Erich Selke, a professor of education widely known and respected by schoolmen.

Most research, however, was in science and technology and was supported by funds both from within and without the state. From 1950 to 1957 the medical school, which had done nothing in research before 1948, received \$650,000 in research grants. Between 1948 and 1957 the students and faculty in medicine published 170 articles in professional journals. Dr. William E. Cornatzer, head of the biochemistry department and a specialist in liver disease, published more than forty. His work was aided by gifts of \$85,000 from Mrs. Guy L. Ireland for a cancer-research laboratory. This was matched by \$96,000 from the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and the American Cancer Society.

There was much other activity. Albert M. Cooley and Arthur Koth worked on lignite; George C. and Jeanette Wheeler published *The Ants of North Dakota* (1963); and Dr. Louis G. Geiger established the Orin G. Libby Historical Manuscripts Collection in the university library in 1951. The

papers of William Lemke were the first significant contribution to the collection. Geiger himself wrote *University of the Northern Plains: A History of the University of North Dakota, 1883-1958* (1958) as a part of the 1958 celebration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the university.

A number of other faculty members produced books: Richard Beck, *A History of Icelandic Poets, 1800-1940* (1950); Robert P. and Wynona H. Wilkins, *God Giveth the Increase: The History of the Episcopal Church in North Dakota* (1959); Melvin E. Kazeck, *North Dakota: A Human and Economic Geography* (1956); Bernt L. Wills, *North Dakota: The Northern Prairie State* (1963). In 1954-1956 the university received more than \$230,000 in outside research funds, in 1958-1960 over \$800,000 in such funds. Graduate students at the University of North Dakota wrote many excellent theses and dissertations. Notable examples in history were Charles N. Glaab on John Burke, Jackson K. Putnam on the Socialist party in North Dakota, and Hiram M. Drache on the Amenia and Sharon Land Company, published as *The Day of the Bonanza: A History of Bonanza Farming in the Red River Valley of the North* (1964). Edward C. Blackorby's dissertation, *Prairie Rebel: The Public Lift of William Lemke*, was published by the University of Nebraska Press in 1963.

The activity at the university was matched by that at the Agricultural College. There, research had an even more direct bearing upon the well-being of the state. The Agricultural College was really three interrelated institutions: the college proper, which instructed students; the experiment station, which conducted research; and the extension service (established under the federal Smith-Lever Act of 1914), which disseminated knowledge through county and home-demonstration agents and leaders of boys' and girls' clubs. Dean Harlow L. Walster, one of the college's dynamic leaders, was dean of the School of Agriculture from 1924 to 1954, director of the experiment station from 1934 to 1954, and director of the extension service from 1933 to 1937. The research conducted by the experiment station contributed mightily to the welfare of the state. Indeed, until after the Second World War, it conducted the bulk of the research done in the state. The legislature gave it \$323,000 for the 1921-1923 biennium and about \$2,000,000 for the 1957-1959 biennium. By that time it had a professional staff of more than one hundred. From 1891 to 1960 the experiment station published 430 bulletins and 73 circulars reporting the results of its research.

The outcome was impressive, being, as the *Fargo Forum* wrote in 1948, "so intimately enmeshed with the economics and social welfare of the people of North Dakota." As early as 1920 the *Fargo Courier-News* estimated that the services of the Agricultural College had meant a saving of seven million dollars to the farmers of the state. Working in laboratories,

greenhouses, and test plots, Lawrence R. Waldron developed new varieties of wheat—Ceres, Komar, Rival, Vesta, Mida, and Premier—in the years after 1916. By 1949 these Waldron wheats, resistant to rust, were grown on eleven million acres, or 62 percent of the acreage in the United States planted to hard red spring wheat. They contributed greatly to the huge crops of the war years and added millions of dollars to the income of North Dakota farmers. In the 1950's, Waldron's successor, Dr. Glenn S. Smith, a graduate of the Agricultural College, produced durums resistant to stem rust. Before 1916, Henry L. Bolley, the "conqueror of flax wilt," had developed varieties of flax resistant to both wilt and rust. Such varieties as Sheyenne, Victory, Norland, and Bolley made flax a surer crop. Dean Walster, appraising Bolley's services, called him "a fearless trail blazer who cut deep and lasting 'blazes' in the forest of ignorance about plant diseases."

Bolley's colleague, Orin A. Stevens, a botanist and distinguished teacher who had come to the college in 1909, wrote two books after the Second World War: *Handbook of North Dakota Plants* (1950) and *Wild Flowers for Your Garden* (1952). A. F. Yeager, called "the plant wizard of the north," was a horticulturist who acquired an international reputation while at the experiment station. Before he left in 1937, he had developed Sunshine and Golden Gem sweet corn; Bison and Red River tomatoes; Buttercup squash; Pixwell, Perry, and Abundance gooseberries; Dryweather Everbearing strawberry; Zephyr cantaloupe; and Red River crab apple.

After the Second World War a new generation began to take over in agricultural research. They developed a malting barley (Traill), corn hybrids, new durums, potatoes (Norland, Nodak, Snowflake, and others), the pelleting of barley for better feeding of pigs, a vaccine for listerellosis in sheep, a drench for the control of worms in sheep, a method to control sugar-beet root maggots, soil tests for phosphorus availability, and new varieties of soybeans, grass, and sweet clover.

The results of the experiment station's work were carried to North Dakota farmers by the extension service. Its county and home-demonstration agents helped to evolve a more productive agriculture and a more satisfying farm life. In the 1930's they aided in combating grasshoppers by developing and supervising the use of poison bait. They ameliorated the ravage of drought, preventing a great deal of suffering, and helped to administer the federal wheat program. After the war they helped farmers to make adjustments to new conditions. The 71 extension agents and assistant agents, located in every county of the state, gave assistance to 9,966 farmers and 20,359 farm families. Livestock feeding, sponsored by the extension service, increased farm income. As a result, in five years North Dakota farmers raised their average net income by 16 percent over the 1949 and 1950 levels, and did it on 10 to 12 percent fewer harvested acres.

The Agricultural College contributed to intellectual life in other ways. In the years after the war, Rainer E. Schickele wrote on agricultural economics, Glenn W. Fisher on income and taxation, and Courtney B. Cleland on rural sociology. William C. Hunter produced a scholarly history of the college—*Beacon Across the Prairie: North Dakota's Land-Grant College* (1961). In 1950, Dean G. Ernst Giesecke, aided by H. Dean Stallings, Leonard Sackett, Rudolf Ottersen, and others in the School of Applied Arts and Sciences, established the Institute for Regional Studies to encourage research and writing on North Dakota. The institute gathered books, maps, and manuscripts (its most notable catch was the records of the Chaffee bonanza farm) and published books and pamphlets; by 1961 it had eight books to its credit. The institute also sponsored exhibitions of regional art. An earlier cultural contribution was made by Professor Alfred G. Arvold, who had come to the college as professor of speech in 1907. In 1914 he established the Little Country Theater on the campus as a laboratory to show what people in small towns might accomplish in dramatics. He wanted to make the theater a means of enjoyment and enlightenment for the masses.

A number of contributions to North Dakota culture were made by persons who had no connections with the university or the Agricultural College. Some forty-two novels had North Dakota settings. Mostly written after 1920, they dealt with frontier adventure or farm life. Many were historical, treating such popular subjects as Lewis and Clark or Custer, but the pioneering-spirit theme ran through even those concerned with the contemporary scene.

A successful North Dakota novelist was Zdeňka Trinká of Lidgerwood. Of Czech stock and educated at Valley City State Teachers College, she first won international recognition with *Jeník and Marenka of Czechoslovakia* (1938), which became a juvenile classic. The book brought her an invitation to visit Czechoslovakia as a guest of the government. President Eduard Beneš gave a garden party in her honor at Hradcany Palace; then, as the Nazis seized the country, she fled on the last train which left Prague. Miss Trinká had a warm feeling for the Badlands (she had been a librarian at Dickinson) and in 1940 published *Medora*, a novel about the Marquis de Mores. After the war, *A Little Village Called Lidice* (1947), concerning the Czech village destroyed by the Nazis, brought her acclaim. Her books were translated and published abroad.⁸

The best novel on North Dakota farm life is *The Bones of Plenty* (1962), by Lois Phillips Hudson. Mrs. Hudson was born in Jamestown; her book deals with a wheat-farming family in the 1930's.

⁸Harvey K. Jacobson, "[A Study of Novels About North Dakota](#)" (Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of North Dakota, 1956), pp. 13-23.

Closely akin to the novels were the half-fictionalized accounts of growing up in North Dakota. Two examples were Dorothy de St. Clement's *White Gumbo* (1951), recounting her childhood on a sheep ranch near Dickinson, and Margarethe E. Shank's *The Coffee Train* (1953), describing her life as a young girl in Fessenden during the 1920's. Probably the best of this kind of book was Aagot Raaen's *Grass of the Earth* (1950), telling of the struggles of a pioneer Norwegian family on the Goose River. More unusual was *American Daughter* (1946), in which dark-skinned, athletic Era Bell Thompson told what it was like to be a Negro girl on a North Dakota farm, in the town of Bismarck, and at the University of North Dakota. From such beginnings Miss Thompson became managing editor of *Ebony* magazine in the 1950's.

Such books add an emotional, human touch to the understanding of North Dakota life. Of a different sort entirely were the studies made at universities outside the state. There, graduate students, often from North Dakota, sometimes worked on North Dakota subjects. For example, at Columbia, Alvin S. Tostlebe wrote *The Bank of North Dakota* (1924); at Johns Hopkins, Paul R. Fossum wrote *The Agrarian Movement in North Dakota* (1925); at Chicago, Alfred W. Bowers wrote *Mandan Social and Ceremonial Organization* (1950); at Minnesota, Robert Morlan wrote *Political Prairie Fire: The Nonpartisan League, 1915-1922* (1955) and Alvin C. Gluek, Jr., wrote *Minnesota and the Manifest Destiny of the Canadian Northwest* (1965); at Yale, Howard R. Lamar wrote *Dakota Territory, 1861-1889* (1956).

By far the most important book on the region, however, was the work of Carl F. Kraenzel, a mature scholar and rural sociologist at Montana State College. Kraenzel had grown up at Hebron, North Dakota, and had graduated from the University of North Dakota before doing graduate work at Minnesota, Harvard, and Wisconsin. His book *The Great Plains in Transition* (1955), a seminal work, looked at the problems of the region in a new way.

Much of the new knowledge of the state worked out by scholars was not generally available, for many of the doctoral dissertations were not published. Thus at Wisconsin, Gilbert W. Cooke wrote on the North Dakota state industries and Stanley N. Murray on the economic development of the Red River Valley; at Minnesota, John Harnsberger wrote on the Northern Pacific Railroad and Robert H. Bahmer on the economic background of the Nonpartisan League; at Ohio State, William E. Koenker wrote on North Dakota banks; at Colorado, Paul W. Morrison wrote on North Dakota senators and foreign affairs; at Missouri, William W. Phillips wrote on Asle J. Gronna; at West Virginia, Robert P. Wilkins wrote on North Dakota opinion and the First World War; at Chicago, Ross B. Talbot wrote on North

Dakota farm organizations. Such works, based as they were on thorough research, made significant contributions to knowledge about the state.

They did not, however, reach the wide audience that Bruce Nelson's *Land of the Dakotahs* (1946) did. A tubercular young newspaperman in his thirties, Nelson had set type as a boy for the *Flaxton Times*, worked as a harvest hand, and wrote editorials for William Langer's *Leader*. He wrote the book on a regional writing fellowship from the University of Minnesota. An interesting, colorful account, it was widely read, but Nelson himself died after a long illness at the age of thirty-eight.

Although none had Nelson's narrative skill, many persons wrote worthwhile books. Courtly, genial, enterprising Colonel Clement A. Lounsberry drew upon his third of a century in the state to put a wealth of information into his *Early History of North Dakota* (1919). Though weak on organization, it was the first substantial history of the state. A better book is Lewis F. Crawford's *History of North Dakota* (1931). A Missourian from the Ozarks, Crawford had earned B.A. and M.A. degrees from Harvard and came out to Dickinson as superintendent of schools in 1899, just as a new boom in settlement was getting under way. Before long he was a spare, square-jawed rancher and banker at Sentinel Butte and later, as his reputation grew, a member of the board of regents of the institutions of higher education and superintendent of the State Historical Society. (One of his sons went to Oxford on a Rhodes Scholarship and joined the faculty of Harvard.) Drawing upon his own experience, Crawford made a real contribution to knowledge in his chapter on ranching.

After Crawford, those who wrote on North Dakota did not attempt a complete history. Big, burly, outspoken Usher L. Burdick added historical writing to his career in law, politics, and ranching. Out of his love for the adventurous old days and the Indians (he spoke a Sioux dialect) he gathered a personal library of some twelve thousand volumes on the West and wrote many articles, pamphlets, and books, including his own reminiscences and such items as *The Life and Exploits of James Goodall* (1931) and *The Last Days of Sitting Bull* (1941).

More research went into Roy P. Johnson's writing for the *Fargo Forum*. Quiet, thoughtful, and unassuming, Johnson was a reporter with the instincts of a scholar. His many articles—those on the siege of Fort Abercrombie and on Jacob Horner of the Seventh Cavalry, which were reprinted in *North Dakota History*, are good examples—added new historical lore. With the large circulation of the *Forum*, Johnson reached a much wider audience than any other writer on the history of the state.

Other professional writers did well. Vera Kelsey, graduate of the University of North Dakota and writer of travel books and mystery stories, put solid research into *Red River Runs North!* (1951). Slender, idealistic

Erling N. Rolfsrud, a graduate of Concordia College who had taught rural school in McKenzie County, increased appreciation of the state with his readable *Lanterns over the Prairies* (1949-1950), biographical sketches of heroic North Dakotans. He also wrote *The Story of North Dakota* (1963), a history for young readers. Marion J. Piper, an enthusiastic North Dakotan and the director of the Dakota Territory Centennial Commission, published an outstanding collection of photographs in her *Dakota Portraits: A Sentimental Journal of Pictorial History* (1964). Sturdy, painstaking Ray H. Mattison, a historian with the National Park Service, was stationed at the Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park in the early 1950's. His articles on Roosevelt's ranching days and on the military posts and Indian reservations of the Upper Missouri contributed much to knowledge of the region. Some of Mattison's articles and many others as well—those by staunch Dana M. Wright, the authority on early North Dakota trails, and the young Benedictine Louis Pfaller at Assumption Abbey were examples—were published in *North Dakota History*, the quarterly of the State Historical Society.

Dr. Orin G. Libby of the university reorganized the North Dakota State Historical Society in 1903; in 1905 he persuaded the legislature to make it a trustee of the state. Federal Judge Charles F. Amidon was its first president, and Libby served as its secretary until his retirement in 1944. The society secured some small rooms in the basement of the old capitol, and Herbert C. Fish took charge as the first curator of its growing collection. Soon Libby and Fish were gathering stone hammers, Mandan pottery, Chippewa pipes, books, and papers and were doing field work on Indian village sites. The collection was enhanced by a law of 1905 which required each newspaper in the state to file two copies of each issue with the society. Its newspaper files thus became a storehouse of information on North Dakota history. In 1906, Libby edited the first volume of the society's *Collections*, more than five hundred pages of articles and documents dealing with the history of the state.

Although Libby himself was fascinated by the Indians, he and his friends were interested not only in collecting and preserving historical documents and museum specimens but also in acquiring historic sites. By 1919 the society had six such places as state parks, including Fort Rice and Fort Abraham Lincoln. Meanwhile, in 1916, Dr. Melvin R. Gilmore had succeeded Fish as curator. A trained botanist, he became an authority on Indian uses of native plants, and built up the museum's natural-history collection. It was a mark of honor that Gilmore was adopted by the Arikara tribe.⁹

⁹George F. Shafer, "Dr. Orin Grant Libby," [*North Dakota History*](#), XII (July

When Gilmore left in 1923 to join the staff of the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, Lewis F. Crawford became curator. The next year, the society moved into spacious quarters in the new Liberty Memorial Building. In 1926, after putting out seven volumes of the *Collections*, it began to publish the *North Dakota Historical Quarterly*, also edited by Libby.

In 1930, Crawford was succeeded by Russell Reid, a young man of thirty who had begun working for the society while still in high school. Rather shy and retiring, quite tall, an outdoor man, Reid was an excellent photographer of wildlife and an expert ornithologist. Determined to do his best by the state and the society, he visited eastern museums, reorganized the society's collection, prepared dioramas and otherwise raised the museum to a high level, built up the library (under the charge of Mrs. Florence Davis for many years and then cared for by Miss Margaret Rose), wrote many scholarly articles, and edited the quarterly after Libby's retirement, renaming it *North Dakota History*.

Reid also took the lead in the great expansion of the state parks in the 1930's. The camps of the Civilian Conservation Corps, a federal relief agency, were in need of outdoor work for young men, and the legislature appropriated funds for more parks. Reid bought acreage to expand the existing parks or to make new ones, and the C.C.C. boys made roads and trails, reconstructed military posts and Indian earth lodges, and built museums, recreational buildings, dormitories, picnic grounds, and bathing beaches. Reid's largest purchase was some 48,000 acres for the Theodore Roosevelt parks in the Badlands, made between 1934 and 1937. In 1947 they became the Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park through the efforts of Congressman William Lemke. By 1960 the society held six state parks, six recreational parks, forty-nine historic sites, and five archaeological sites.¹⁰

With its parks and historic sites, its unexcelled library on North Dakota, its *Collections* and quarterly, its museum, and its archaeological work in cooperation with the Smithsonian Institution and the National Park Service, the State Historical Society was educating North Dakotans in the state's

1945), 107-110; State Historical Society of North Dakota, *Illustrated Handbook* (Bismarck, 1937); Russell Reid, "[Museum of the State Historical Society of North Dakota](#)," *North Dakota Teacher* (February 1949), pp. 14-15.

¹⁰Russell Reid, "[The Annual Report of the Superintendent of the State Historical Society of North Dakota](#)," *North Dakota Historical Quarterly*, V (April 1931), 166-171; Russell Reid, "The State Park System," *North Dakota Historical Quarterly*, VIII (October 1940), 63-78; Dale J. Strand, "[The History of the Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park](#)" (Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of North Dakota, 1962), pp. 8, 64-66.

history. A good deal of the understanding of that history was the result of the efforts of George F. Will, a Bismarck seedsman and president of the State Historical Society from 1942 until his death in 1955. Will was born in Bismarck in 1884, the year his father founded a pioneer seed house, Oscar H. Will and Company. Oscar Will gathered corn and vegetable seeds from the Mandan Indians, propagated them, and selected the best for his customers. In doing so, he played an important part in the introduction among the white settlers of early-maturing native plants adapted to the Northern Plains environment.

As George Will grew up, he joined his father in the seed business, became acquainted with the Indians (frequent visitors to his father's store), saw the significance of adapted plant life, and went off to Harvard to study botany and anthropology. In the summer of 1905, young Will and three Harvard classmates (one of them was Herbert J. Spinden, who was to have a distinguished career as an anthropologist) excavated the Double-Ditch Village site on the Burgois farm fourteen miles north of Bismarck. It was the first such archaeological work in North Dakota. Will's and Spinden's report on the summer's work, *The Mandans: A Study of Their Culture, Archaeology and Language*, was published the next year by the Peabody Museum of Harvard University. That year, 1906, Will received a B.A. and went back to Bismarck to help his father run the seed business.

Although Will worked with the business the rest of his life, as president after his father's death in 1917, his interest in adapted plant varieties, Mandan archaeology, and the early history of the Upper Missouri Valley continued until his death. He was a quiet, modest, stocky, ruddy-faced man who liked to take long Sunday walks over the prairies around Bismarck. Will also played an important role in Bismarck civic life, arranging for the painting of murals of native scenes by his friend Clell G. Gannon in the new Burleigh County Courthouse, and serving as a member of the school board for thirty-nine years. He kept in touch with the work of neighboring experiment stations (at Mandan and Fargo, North Dakota, and Morden, Manitoba) and distributed their newest and best varieties of seed developed for cold weather and a short growing season.

Will did much scholarly work. In 1917, with George E. Hyde, he wrote *Corn Among the Indians of the Upper Missouri*, an important book dedicated to his father as the person who first saw the value of native varieties and who "began the work of selecting and breeding them to the lasting benefit of the farmers of the Northwest." He translated from the French both General Philippe-Régis de Trobriand's journal at Fort Stevenson, published as *Army Life in Dakota* (1941), and the North Dakota portion of a biography of the Marquis de Mores. He compared the growth rings of a bur oak, cut near Bismarck, with those of timbers taken from

prehistoric Mandan earth lodges, dating the timbers as far back as A.D. 1406. Before his death, a list of his published books, articles, and book reviews on Indians, botany, archaeology, and history numbered 117 items, an astonishing record for a man conducting a large business enterprise.

PROGRESS IN HEALTH AND MEDICAL CARE

North Dakota, with its cool, dry climate, has always been a naturally healthful place. Even in the 1880's pamphlets booming settlement had boasted of the low death rate. Doctors came in with the settlers, and before long a few hospitals were established. In those early days typhoid fever was the great scourge. As settlement was completed, the number of doctors reached its peak, with 604 in 1918.

In the 1920's, however, villages in both the state and the nation began to lose their doctors. In North Dakota, as in all rural areas, the sparsity of population tended to concentrate physicians in the larger towns, and the total number declined. As a result, where 268 towns and villages had doctors in 1918, only 194 places had doctors in 1930, only 161 in 1942, and only 99 in 1960, when the state had 109 towns of more than 500 population. Moreover, the number of physicians had declined. By 1960 about half of the state's 451 doctors were in the four largest cities; Fargo had 73, Grand Forks 56, Bismarck 51, and Minot 44. Still, all the larger towns had doctors, and more than half of those with populations of 500 to 1,000 also had them. Even some places with less than 500 population had physicians.¹¹

Yet many people became concerned as the villages lost their doctors. Most of the graduates of the two-year medical school at the University of North Dakota did not return to the state after completing their training elsewhere. By 1950 only 111 of 660 graduates were practicing in North Dakota. Some people believed that if medical students could complete their training at the University of North Dakota, more of them would remain in the state to practice and more of the villages would have physicians. That belief led to the establishment of a state medical center at the university in 1945. The law, drafted by Harold Shaft of the university alumni association, required the center's advisory council to make plans for the improvement of public health and for the "means of bringing about the

¹¹H. E. French, "The Number and Distribution of Physicians in North Dakota," *Quarterly Journal of the University of North Dakota*, XVI (November 1925), 39, 47; *American Medical Directory, 1918*, (6th ed.); 1958 (20th ed.); Lee O. Lantis, "Distribution of Physicians in North Dakota," *Quarterly Journal of the University of North Dakota*, XXI (Summer 1931), 339; North Dakota State Medical Center, "North Dakota Medical Facilities" (Mimeographed; [Grand Forks, 1960]); pamphlets in the office of Dean Theodore H. Harwood, School of Medicine, University of North Dakota.

complete training of adequate numbers of qualified physicians and surgeons for the people of North Dakota.”

The next step was securing funds. In 1948 the voters (asked to “VOTE YES FOR MORE DOCTORS”) approved a constitutional amendment providing for an annual one-mill levy on all taxable property for the medical center. The income from the levy, about \$500,000 a year, was expected to finance expansion of the university’s two-year medical school to four years and thereby supply more doctors for rural areas. In 1951 and again in 1953, the legislature passed resolutions that the four-year school should be put in operation “with all possible dispatch.”

But the four-year school did not materialize. Many of the state’s physicians doubted that North Dakota had adequate clinical facilities for teaching third-year students or that it could afford a four-year school. However, the Medical Center did build a new medical school and enlarged its faculty; the school regained full accreditation in 1952. The center also began to train nurses and medical technicians, built a rehabilitation center, and established a blood bank.

The revitalized School of Medicine began to train more doctors, and more of them began to come back to the state to practice. By 1957-1958, North Dakota had more first-year medical students in proportion to its population than all but two of the states (Utah and Nebraska). A North Dakota youth, for example, had one and a half times more opportunity to go into medicine than a Massachusetts youth. In 1957 the legislature authorized the Medical Center to lend a student up to \$2,500 a year. If he returned to practice in a North Dakota town of less than 3,000, his debt would be canceled at the rate of \$1,000 a year.

Other developments improved medical care in the postwar years. Even though more of the state’s doctors were located in the larger centers, the large increase in the number of hard-surfaced highways made them more accessible to the whole population. Four principal medical centers (Fargo, Bismarck, Grand Forks, and Minot) and seven lesser centers (Williston, Rugby, Devils Lake, Harvey, Dickinson, Jamestown, and Valley City) cared for the larger part of the medical needs of the people. All of them had well-equipped clinics, with specialists in group practice, and well-staffed hospitals. Thus the Fargo Clinic had 30 doctors, the Quain and Ramstad Clinic (Bismarck) 28, and the Grand Forks Clinic 24. The number of physicians rose from 416 in 1950 to 451 in 1959. That year, 241 of them were specialists, many of them licentiates of the American boards. Practically everybody in the state lived within one hundred miles—a two-hour drive—of one of the eleven medical centers. Many smaller towns also had good doctors, often in group practice. With good roads, telephones, and automobiles, every North Dakotan was within easy reach of medical care,

although he might live many miles from a doctor.

Yet 169 villages which once had a doctor were without one. Feeling deprived, some of them worked hard to attract a physician. They commonly offered a new medical building, with modern facilities at free or low rent, and sometimes even money for X-ray and other equipment, as well as the prospect of a profitable practice. Some of the new clinics were empty in 1960, when seventeen towns without a doctor were seeking one.

Many small towns built hospitals in the postwar years. The Hill-Burton Act (1946) gave them federal funds, and by 1960 it had aided in building, replacing, or enlarging twenty-three general hospitals, adding 749 beds and 90 bassinets. Federal grants also helped to construct a nurses' residence (St. Luke's, Fargo), two chronic-disease hospitals (Valley City and Minot), a mental-hospital unit (Jamestown), two rehabilitation centers (Grand Forks and Jamestown), and five nursing homes. The total cost was over \$23,000,000, of which \$7,500,000 was federal money.¹²

Other hospitals were built without federal aid. At Grand Forks in 1952, Deaconess Hospital spent \$750,000 enlarging its facilities, and the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet dedicated a new \$4,000,000 St. Michael's Hospital with two hundred beds. At Fargo, St. Luke's made a \$500,000 addition. By 1960 the state had sixty-one hospitals and nineteen nursing homes. In the early 1960's the Good Samaritan Hospital Association, an organization of thirty-two Lutheran congregations in the Rugby area, was carrying out a \$1,600,000 program to modernize and expand Rugby's medical facilities.

Medical care was also advanced by the formation of large health districts, a notable adaptation to the sparsity of the population. In 1943 the legislature authorized counties to unite in order to form such districts, thus pooling their limited resources. By 1959, thirty western and northern counties with a population of 290,000 had united in five health districts. These employed fifty-five full-time and twenty-six part-time nurses, technicians, and doctors, numbers which would have been far beyond the means of the counties if they had acted individually.

There were other improvements in public health. By 1959 some 69 percent of the urban population was drinking water treated with fluoride, twice the national average, and fluoridation was decreasing tooth decay. The public milk supply was being handled in more sanitary ways. In the

¹² Materials from [State Health Department](#): "Summary of Federally Aided Hospital and Medical Facilities, October 27, 1960" (mimeographed); "Facts about the Health of Children and Youth in North Dakota, July 31, 1959" (mimeographed); *North Dakota Health News* (State Health Department, Bismarck), March, 1954, December, 1954, September, 1959: reports of the State Health Department.

1950's, stream pollution declined rapidly as 66 communities installed new sewage systems; 41 others replaced out-dated treatment works. A total of 179 towns and villages had sewage collection systems by 1960, although only 109 of them had populations of more than 500. Thirty-two communities installed new water-supply systems. Thirty-four built swimming pools, bringing the total to 78 pools in 1960.