The livestock research, grass and rangeland research and crop production research programs at the Dickinson Branch Station have followed a slow, steady and orderly pattern of growth during the past 25 years under the direction, encouragement and firm guidance of Director Arlon G. Hazen. Provisions for acquisition and improvement of physical facilities and equipment necessary to do the required job of research have also followed this same orderly growth.

The Dickinson station was established by the legislative assembly in 1905. The reasons for establishing an agricultural research station in southwestern North Dakota, as set forth in the enabling legislation of 1905 were for the purpose of: "making experiments with native grasses and other forage products as well as other agricultural products of the soil, with a view of improving and enlarging the supply of forage of said district and increasing the agricultural products thereof."

The Dickinson Press of April 29, 1905, summarized some expectations as follows: "One of the important epochs in the history of western North Dakota was the locating this week of the Dickinson Experiment Station. One of the principal objects of the Dickinson station will be to get forage plants adapted to this locality, meaning the entire country west of the Missouri River. Experiments will not be confined to grasses and grain crops alone, but will be extended to tree culture and finally to the feeding of stock."
In the beginning the original quarter section of land donated to the State of North Dakota by citizens of Dickinson and the surrounding region was adequate for the types of farming then being practiced and for much research into improvement of grassland management and forage production. However, the expectations for development of livestock work in this greatest of all ranching districts in the state, as mentioned in the 1905 Dickinson Press editorial were slow in coming.

Plans for expansion of the station to include research work with livestock were finally realized in 1945. The legislative bill creating the livestock addition states: "The agricultural experiment station, when enlarged, ***shall make experiments with livestock breeding, nutrition, management and diseases, and shall conduct such other agricultural research as may further contribute to the benefit of agriculture and livestock production of western North Dakota and the State of North Dakota in addition to the experiments now conducted***.

To accomplish this assignment the legislature of 1945 provided an appropriation to purchase a section of land upon which there was located an old farmstead which included several ancient wood frame buildings in varying stages of disrepair. Funds also were provided to build a scale house and corral and a pole shed large enough for four small cattle pens. Thirty-six head of Hereford cows constituted the entire herd provided for livestock research. This was a start, but it was far from what was needed to develop an effective livestock research program.

This, then, was the background and setting for the Dickinson Branch Station in the early 1950's. About this time Raymond J. Douglas, livestockman, was named superintendent of the station; Dr. Frederick B. Hultz, livestockman, was made president of North Dakota State University; and, Arlon G. Hazen was appointed, first as assistant to the director and later as director of the Agricultural Experiment Station.

The research program began to accelerate and grow, and there was a steady growth and improvement of facilities, land, equipment, livestock and personnel — the "tools" needed to do the work.

Grass, range, pasture and forage crops research, singled out as a high priority effort by the legislature of 1905, was continued as a high priority effort.

A firm working relationship was established with the Botany Department, NDSU and especially with Dr. Warren C. Whitman, botanist and range management specialist. Under his capable direction this program grew and flourished and, with the assignment of a botanist in residence at the station, continues to grow. Range and pasture research was developed which involved the actual use of livestock, a heretofore missing ingredient and one absolutely essential to an effective program.

Close cooperation was also firmly established with the Department of Agronomy and the Soils Department, North Dakota State University and the agronomic work, which had been under the combined direction of the experiment station and the USDA was modified and updated. Much of the old work which had been conducted over a period of 50 years by the Bureau of Plant Industry, USDA was terminated, and the results were published.

Development of the livestock research has been a major effort. The cattle herd had to be increased to provide sufficient numbers of animals to do the many kinds of work necessary in breeding, feeding, management and disease control. Year around cow herd management has had special attention. This has included several aspects of the management of the replacement heifer herd, as well as many things related to both the winter and summer management of the cow herd. Early spring grazing, supplemental feeding on pasture and pasture management systems utilizing introduced grasses in combination with native range are being studied.

The calf crop — the rancher's annual cash crop — is used in feeding trials. Supplements, additives and growth promotants have all been tried and evaluated along with all of the feedstuffs that are raised in North Dakota, either as feeds or as by-products produced within the State. The total program now involves the beef animal from breeding through pasture, weaning and the feedlot to meat on the table. Increased profit to the producer who will take advantage of the station's proven research is the goal.

Increasing the size of the cattle herd necessitated an increase in land to provide necessary pasture and hay as well as feed grain for feeding trials. At the time the livestock farm was added to the station a group of farmers, ranchers and businessmen donated an additional 100 acres. The total size of the station at that time was 880 acres. Over the years several parcels of that land have been sold to aid the development of the city of Dickinson. This included land for a refinery, a new high school, a new Dickinson State College stadium and right-of-way for Interstate 94. All funds from land sales have been used to purchase replacement land for added livestock research and these exchanges of higher-valued land for city development for lower valued farmland resulted in an appreciable increase in the size of the station. Except for the original purchase of the livestock farm in 1945, no appropriations from the State General Fund have been asked for or received for the purpose of land purchase at the Dickinson Branch Station. At the present time land holdings at the station amount to 2260 acres, an increase of 1360 acres since 1953.

While most of the early work was done with beef cattle exclusively, there was no intention in the legislation that livestock research be limited to cattle. With this in mind, a program with swine was developed which included breeding, feeding, management and disease research and in the process the station developed over the years one of the fine Yorkshire herds in the state. In addition to providing all stock required for research, the program provides an excellent seedstock source for North Dakota swine producers.

The firm guidance, advice, counsel and unfailing friendly encouragement provided by Director Arlon G. Hazen has been in very large measure responsible for the growth of the Dickinson station. And, while we all look to future opportunity for expanding effective agricultural research in North Dakota, surely we can look with great pride on the accomplishments of the past quarter century.