

THE LANGDON STATION: SERVING NORTHEASTERN NORTH DAKOTA FOR 75 YEARS

John Lukach & J.J. Feight

The Langdon Branch Station was established during the 10th Legislative Assembly of North Dakota in 1907 as part of North Dakota State University. Many farmers were interested in developing the quality of crops so several farmers and businessmen offered to purchase a tract of land and then donate it to the state.

Those who were instrumental in securing and donating the quarter section for the Langdon substation were Robert Meikklejohn, John Mahon, A. Lindstrom, B. E. Groom, Menno Liebeler, Ed Evans, William Stevenson, D. F. MacDonald, Alfred Padden, Walker Hamilton, Emanuel Myers, James Lindsay, Tom Finerty and many other whose names were not available.

Edward Darrow Stewart has hired as the first substation superintendent when the station was organized in 1909 and continued until 1919. During his tenure as superintendent, the Langdon substation became recognized as the leader in the field of durum wheat research.

Stewart was one of the first promoters of durum as the crop was particularly suited for the climatic conditions of northeast North Dakota. At the time, Kubanka was the leading durum variety.

The original plot of land was without buildings. During 1909 and 1910, the house, first barn, seed house, chicken house and hog house were erected. A second large livestock barn was built in 1922.

One of Stewart's problems to solve was what to do with gumbo sloughs which was about 10 percent of the land in the Langdon region. He discovered that sweet clover reduced alkali and relieved the gumbo conditions. Stewart also developed a Shorthorn herd and worked in the area of selecting a good brood mare and developing her progeny.

Louis Jorgenson was named superintendent in March, 1919, and continued until September, 1925. Studies were done on crop rotation and fertility. Because of lower appropriations, there was little activity at the station.

Victor Sturlaugson became superintendent in September, 1925. During Sturlaugson's tenure, 44 years, activity gradually increased at the station.

Research established was large small grain and potato breeding nurseries, extensive fertilizer trials and variety trials.

In 1935, the experimental farm was temporarily discontinued because of lack of funds. On his own initiative, Sturlaugson continued doing some experimental work in cooperation with Fargo and served as caretaker until 1939. He was then reappointed superintendent when the station was re-established by legislative appropriation.

For the first time in 1940, the buildings were all painted the same color, white. According to Sturlaugson's annual report, the general public was



Dr. Marcia McMullen, extension plant pathologist, checks for leaf spot in winter wheat at the Langdon Field Day.



The late Vic Sturlaugson, center, long-time superintendent at the Langdon Experiment Station, observes small grain harvesting by thresher for the last time.

pleased over the change in appearance this made. In 1945, electricity was installed on the station.

The substation, which had operated on a single quarter section of land since it was established, was doubled in size in 1953. An additional quarter section of land, west and southwest of the original experiment station tract, was purchased from Joe Dumas, Langdon.

A small fruit orchard was planted which consisted of 40 fruit trees, 20 varieties in 1952. Eighty woody ornamentals were planted in 1964 east of the orchard.

A modern seedhouse was built for processing, storage, and distribution of breeder and foundation seed in 1961 and 1962. The playground equipment was donated to the station by the Manilla School District in 1961.

Victor Sturlaugson retired in 1969. Vic durum, released in 1979, was named in his honor.

Robert Nowatzki became superintendent July 1, 1969. Nowatzki was a key researcher in no-till crop production.

During Nowatzki's tenure, major emphasis was placed on testing and demonstrating alternative crops useful

in more intensive crop rotations and extensive research on tame mustard was done.

Through Nowatzki, off-station testing began in 1972 with the first plot in Pembina County near St. Thomas on what was known as the North Dakota State University Sugarbeet Research Site. In 1974, two more plots were added, one at the Walsh County Farm at Park River and one at Garske. The Pembina County site has been moved a few times and is now by Walhalla. The purpose of these plots are to supplement regular station data. They aid in making crop variety recommendations for those areas.

Nowatzki resigned in June of 1981. Robert Wagner served as superintendent from July, 1981 to May, 1982.

John R. Lukach, the present superintendent, began June 1, 1982. Lukach initiated a farmer advisory committee which held its first meeting in October, 1982. The advisory committee consists of two members from each of the nine counties in the northeast North Dakota and one representative from the city of Langdon. The committee's objectives are to assist in directing and developing the station's research programs and aid in developing the station's budget to meet the needs of the station's program of work. During the last legislative session, the advisory committee played a major role in

securing a second professional position and another technician for the Langdon station.

The additional manpower had enabled the station to increase its crop production research program to better serve northeast North Dakota. The increased work load includes many smaller trials as well as four major areas.

1. The addition of off-station variety testing research sites in Nelson and Towner counties.
2. The addition of crop production research at all five off-station sites. In 1984 soybean rowspacing, plant population, inoculation and an early maturing variety trial were added.
3. Increased emphasis on the testing of corn, sunflower, and bean varieties and production practices which

aid in combining early maturity with high yield.

4. The station has joined the NDSU Department of Soils in a research project on management and reclamation of salt-affected soils.

In addition to the newer projects, the station is continuing its major effort of supporting the plant breeders' work. Over 25 acres at Langdon are devoted to plant breeding nurseries each year. Research on specialty crops is also a major effort with tame buckwheat now being the crop with the most emphasis. The station also continues in its function in producing foundation seed. Presently the station is growing 12 to 14 varieties and producing 5,000 to 6,000 bushels of seed each year.



Dennis Kopp, extension entomologist, left, and Bob Fanning, extension farm safety specialist, right, help demonstrate the necessity of proper sprayer calibration at the Langdon Experiment Station summer field day.