

1949 Historical Brief of the Northwestern Montana Branch Station (Now the Northwestern Agricultural Research Center, NWARC)

Quick Facts:

- Located on Route 35 in Creston, Montana, 12 miles east of Kalispell, in Flathead County
- Purchased by money raised by popular subscription for \$21,000.00
- Authorized by House Bill No. 371. Introduced by Atkinson, Haines, Armstrong, Wiedman, Foot, Rowe, Harlow, Page, and Taber – members of the 1947 Legislature
- The first experimental work on the Station was started in 1949
- The first public open house was held on June 15, 1949, with 300 visitors

The establishment of the Northwestern Montana Branch Station came about through the combined and coordinated efforts of the people of the area. After general recognition of a need for research designed to solve agricultural problems peculiar to the area, a course of action was decided upon, and pursued with vigor until the goal was reached.

An area or “Central” committee coordinated the efforts and activities of all groups. So effective was this coordination that all county and local groups, of which there were many, worked toward a common end, that of securing the establishment of a Branch Station in the area. Wisely, the selection and location of the Station were left to the Montana Experiment Station staff.

To attempt to give credit to all who helped with the project is similarly trying to give credit to all who helped with the war effort. Few indeed were the organized farmers of urban groups that did not actively support the Central committee, particularly in Flathead, Sanders, Lake, and Lincoln counties. County, city, and community committees were organized to assist the Central Committee, and all interested individuals found an easy outlet for the effort they desired to expend.

Nearly \$40,000.00 was raised by popular subscription for the project, nearly all during the winter of 1947-48. Much of this went for premiums to participants so that the net amount delivered to the Experiment Station for the purchase of land was some \$21,500.00.

The first requests for an Experiment Station came from Flathead County, to be followed in quick succession by the requests from Lake County, and actively supported by other county groups. The initial requests from Flathead County dated April 9, November 16, and

December 14, 1946, were quickly followed by thirteen requests from Grange and Farmers' Union groups in Lake County from December 26, 1946 to April 4, 1947.

As more and more groups joined in the movement, the idea evolved that a Branch Station to serve all in a large area would need a Headquarters Station, and from headquarters would need to conduct studies designed to find the answers to agricultural problems of whatever nature, and wherever in the area they might occur. On this basis, area-wide support in raising funds for the Station was secured. This fact should be kept in mind in developing the program of work and research.

Once the establishment of the Station was assured by adequate donations, serious consideration was given to selecting a suitable farm by the Station Site Committee. After visiting suggested sites in three counties, and careful study of the soil, topography, accessibility, and other pertinent factors, the present Creston location was decided upon as being the best available headquarters site.

House Bill No. 271, introduced by Atkinson, Haines, Armstrong, Wiedman, Foot, Rowe, Harlow, Page, and Taber, members of the 1947 Legislature, authorized the establishment of the Northwestern Montana Branch Station, authorized acceptance of donations, and stated the purpose of the Station.

The first Northwestern Montana Branch Station research work consisted of cooperative field trials in the summer of 1948, and were located in Lake and Sanders counties. The first plantings on the Station were made in the spring of 1949 ([see photos below](#)). The first open house was held on the Station on June 15, 1949, shortly after the first plantings came up. Nearly 300 people attended this first public gathering at the new Station.

One event, rather unique in Montana Experiment Station history, probably should be mentioned. That is the employment by the Extension Service of a man to be located in the Northwestern Area who is to extend the influence of the Station by taking the Station results to farmers. This procedure will be watched with considerable interest.

Potato Day 1949

