

A BRIEF HISTORY OF  
THE LA CROSSE COUNTY SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE AND DOMESTIC ECONOMY

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A Seminar Research Paper

Presented to

Dr. George Gilkey

Wisconsin State University at La Crosse

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by

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## ABSTRACT

A Brief History of the La Crosse County School of Agriculture and Domestic Science is a seminar paper written as partial fulfillment of the requirements for a masters degree at Wisconsin State University at La Crosse between the summer of 1964 and the summer of 1965.

The La Crosse County School of Agriculture and Domestic Science located in Onalaska, Wisconsin, was opened in 1909 and closed in 1925. The school was the fifth of its kind in the state of Wisconsin. Special instruction in agriculture and domestic science aimed at educating young men and women for intelligent and profitable living was the primary objective of the school. A number of courses including a two-year course, a four-year course, a one-year course and several special short courses and extension work were provided to accomplish these objectives. A total of two hundred and sixty-nine students graduated during the sixteen year history. Tuition was free to all La Crosse County residents. Six regular teachers and one principal made up the entire school faculty. The number of students ranged from one hundred and fifty-seven during the first year to a low of forty-nine during the 1917-1918 school year. A failure to enroll a sufficient number of students was the primary reason for closing in 1925.

This is the first written history of the institution. Through an investigation of school publications, county newspapers and microfilm, County Board Proceedings, in addition to personal interviews with former students of the school this brief history was written.

## PREFACE

To the best of the writer's knowledge, this is the only written historical account of the La Crosse County School of Agriculture and Domestic Economy. Partially, this was the motivational force which stimulated the investigation that ultimately resulted in the following accounts and description of the school. It is hoped that through this account, the reader will share with the author a greater appreciation of the heritage belonging to La Crosse County.

This seminar paper is a brief history of one La Crosse County institution. Many names and amusing diversions were omitted in an attempt to provide a more orderly sequence. Forty years have elapsed since the closing of the school and during that time records were lost and living memories have grown obscure.

With the relatively short period of time recorded, greater detail, organization and therefore clarity is achieved by using a chronological rather than a topical arrangement. At the termination of each five year period a brief summation paragraph is intended to lend interpretations and perspective to the history of the school.

The information used in this account was acquired through the use of school annuals and catalogs, news paper articles, County Board proceedings, and interviews with local citizens. Acknowledgement of these editors can be located in the footnotes and Bibliography. Particular gratitude is due to Mr. Ernest Otto, an authority on Onalaska history, and Mr. Edwin Berg, a member of the 1911 Agricultural School graduation class for their colorful verbal descriptions of the

school. For constructive and helpful advice concerning the entire history the writer is indebted to Dr. George Gilkey, professor of history at Wisconsin State University at La Crosse.

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## CHAPTER I

### FORMATION AND ORGANIZATION

Before the turn of the century schools of agriculture and domestic economy, at the secondary school level, were non-existent in the state of Wisconsin. Seeing the need for agricultural training at this high school level, the State Superintendent of Schools recommended to the State Legislature that two such schools be established on an experimental basis. In 1901 the State Legislature provided for institutions to be established in Dunn County and Marathon County. The Marathon County school opened first followed closely by the Dunn County institution. Winnebago and Marinette Counties established schools of agriculture and domestic science between 1902-1906. The school erected in La Crosse County at Onalaska in 1909 was the fifth of its kind in the state of Wisconsin.<sup>1</sup>

A group of farmers in the West Salem area provided the establishing impetus for the La Crosse County School of Agriculture and Domestic Economy. On December 27, 1907, county supervisor Hulberg of West Salem petitioned the County Board of Supervisors to establish an agricultural school. A committee headed by supervisor W. F. Baker visited the four schools in existence. The committee advised the board to establish a school. On March 26, 1908,

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<sup>1</sup>Proceedings of the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors, 1908,  
p. 52.



the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors voted in favor of establishing a La Crosse County School of Agriculture and Domestic Economy.<sup>2</sup>

On April 29, 1908, the committee advertised in several La Crosse County newspapers for possible locations from the interested cities, towns and villages. The committee visited sites offered by West Salem, Onalaska and Bangor but no final decision could be reached. The three communities then engaged in verbal struggle for the right to build the school on their site.<sup>3</sup>

The Onalaska proposal included an option on thirty-four acres of land on the southern city limits. According to the Citizens Progressive Association headed by F. D. Shane, F. L. Aiken and T. G. Aiken;

It is a beautiful location overlooking La Crosse, sufficient area for experimental work and plenty left well suited for an athletic field or other purposes. The location is accessible to both city and county. The site will be offered free if the school is built there. The close proximity to the railroad tracks would be attractive in reducing costs of construction materials.<sup>4</sup>

The West Salem committee proposed to donate the east ten acres of the County Fair Grounds. The West Salem committee including S. W. Brown, G. W. Dudley and F. H. A. Nye felt the agricultural school

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<sup>2</sup>ibid., p. 53.

<sup>3</sup>A News item in the La Crosse County Record, April 31, 1908 .

<sup>4</sup>Proceedings of the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors, 1908,  
p. 12-13.

was originally their idea and therefore the school should rightly belong in West Salem.

We are the central most spot in the county and therefore easily accessible to the greater farm populations. Among our many advantages include: fine black loam soils, second largest creamery in the state, and a stable and other farm buildings already on the site.<sup>5</sup>

The Village of Bangor offered five possible sites for the location of the school. The Commercial Club of Bangor, headed by supervisor R. W. Davis, promised to extend the water mains and lay cement side-walks to any of the eighteen acre plots. A sum of forty-five hundred dollars provided for partial costs of construction.

The competitive atmosphere which surrounded the struggle for the school site can be seen in editorials and letters to the editor of county newspapers of the day.

A rousing session was held today at the county supervisor's chambers in the county court house by the committee of supervisors and supporters of the agricultural school from West Salem, Bangor and Onalaska. Onalaska had the largest representation at the meeting, but Bangor and West Salem will swarm in this afternoon. One fact that was developed this morning was that Onalaska has the largest canning factory in the state. Among the Onalaska visitors that were on hand to make a strong bid for the agriculture school site were: Mayor Herman Rahn, President Shane of the Gedney Pickle Works, Treasurer J. W. Dalton, Messers. Sjolander, Dr. Lester, Aldrich and supervisor Moore and ex-assemblyman L. B. Cox. A strong fight is to be waged for West Salem and it is the general opinion around the court house that West Salem will get the school.<sup>6</sup>

The Saturday board meeting adjourned before any decision could be reached. With Bangor all but eliminated, Onalaska and

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>6</sup>La Crosse Tribune, April 17, 1908.

West Salem continued the struggle for another week.

The County Board of Supervisors selected Onalaska as the school site at a special session on April 29, 1908. By a sale of fifty one thousand dollar bonds sufficient funds could be raised. The bonds would pay five per cent per year on the face value until they came due in ten years. Two county newspapers advertised the bond sale to be handled by the county treasurer. On April 30, 1908, the Ways and Means Committee recommended passage of the bond issue. A school board of two was also elected on this day consisting of Mr. J. L. Pettengill and Mr. F. I. Bolle. A building committee was appointed and authorized to proceed with the erection of the school and purchase of equipment.<sup>7</sup>

This was a most exciting day for Onalaska when their city was awarded the County Agricultural School on the third formal ballot. The vote went as follows: Onalaska, nineteen, West Salem, seventeen, Bangor, one. Upon the announcement of the final vote a burst of enthusiasm came from the Onalaska delegation.

The news of Onalaska's victory was received here soon after four o'clock and all the bells in the city were soon put into motion. Young ladies and school girls soon formed a broom brigade and marched through the principal streets heralding glad news. Young men on horseback, followed by a group of youngsters made merry music with jingling bells, tooting horns, beating on pans and drums or whatever they could do to add to the excitement and commotion. The various brigades met the evening passenger train, bringing home the delegation of men who went to La Crosse to be present for the balloting. The din and clatter of bells, shouts and yells of school children and youth in every

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<sup>7</sup> Proceedings of the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors, 1908,  
p. 26.

conceivable manner of making noise was kept up for over two hours until supper. In the evening nearly the whole city turned out. The Onalaska band and Berg's Cadet's formed at City Hall and followed by a crowd, marched through the principle streets, stopping to serenade at business places, the mayor's home and other leading citizens' homes. Fireworks, bonfires, gun salutes, the singing of the national anthem and other songs gave evidence of Onalaska's proud pleasure over their aquisition.<sup>8</sup>

On June 8, 1908, the County Board advertised for plans and sketches for the school. The cost of the building was not to exceed thirty-five thousand dollars. The Board accepted plans submitted by the architectural firm, Parkinson and Dockendorff of La Crosse. On July 22, 1908, the County Board advertised for bids on the construction of the building according to plans and specifications. The first bidding was deemed too high and on August 27, 1908, a similiar advertisement circulated in the newspapers of the state. The contract eventually went to the Majestic Construction Company of Milwaukee on the basis of their low bid. The Majestic workers began ground excavations immediately.<sup>9</sup>

In January, 1909, the La Crosse County School of Agriculture and Domestic Economy Board of Education hired Mr. A. A. Johnson, with a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Wisconsin at Madison, as the school's first principal. According to Mr. Edwin Berg, whose father was influential in acquiring the school for Onalaska, and who was

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<sup>8</sup>News item from the La Crosse County Record, April 30, 1908.

<sup>9</sup>Proceedings of the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors, 1908,  
p. 52-3.

among those in the first graduating class, "Mr. Johnson was a man of exceptionally fine character and extremely well suited for the organizing of a school." <sup>10</sup>

October fourth marked the official opening of the school for classes. The school was advertised as being absolutely free to La Crosse County residents. Those wishing to rent textbooks paid a rental fee of two dollars. The school furnished the equipment used in the laboratory. Board and room in the city would be an added expense to students unable to commute. <sup>11</sup>

The school had been running only a week when the attendance jumped from 118 on the first day to 138 on October tenth. The school's six faculty members complained of their large classes and general lack of equipment. Practically all of the students resided within the county of La Crosse. During this first year of the school, the County Superintendent reported that:

The school was a national leader of similar institutions. Visitors from all over the country came to seek knowledge of the administration and building of such a school. The total enrollment of the school for the first year, 1909-1910, was 157 with a average daily attendance of 120. This was the best showing of any agriculture school in the state. <sup>12</sup>

The object of the school was to give special instruction in agriculture and domestic economy aimed to educate young men and women for good citizenship and intelligent, profitable living. The courses

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<sup>10</sup>Statement by Mr. Edwin Berg, Personal interview.

<sup>11</sup>News item from the La Crosse County Record, October 21, 1909.

<sup>12</sup>Proceedings of the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors, 1909,  
p. 73-7.

contained a minimum of theoretical material. Instructions enabled students to see the application of the work pursued so that they could make immediate use of their training. During the first four years the school offered only a two-year course. Because additional courses besides agriculture and domestic science were taught, the two-year graduates received credit for two years of regular high school work.<sup>13</sup> Among the subjects taught or offered as of August, 1910 were the following:

Dairy husbandry, soils, stock judging, carpentering, military drill, physical training, social culture, cooking, free-hand drawing, household chemistry, sewing, food study, arithmetic, elementary physics, English, spelling, dairy, bacteriology, gasoline engines, mechanical drawing, bookkeeping, laundry, needlework, textiles, blacksmithing, concrete construction, fertilizers, physiology, hygiene, millinery, drainage, farm machinery, botany, vegetable gardening, farm crops, pipe-fitting, principles of breeding, building plans, horticulture, physical geography, woodwork, felt lacing, drafting, power machinery, rope splicing, drying and curing meat, U. S. history, babbiting, feeds, seed germination, soldering, civics, dietary, food adulteration, home nursing, birds and insects, business forms, field agriculture, home decoration and music given daily.<sup>14</sup>

School began daily at 8:45 A.M. when the pupils congregated in the large assembly hall. Singing patriotic songs initiated each day in the assembly hall. The classes were divided into forty-five minute periods. After the noon hour the student again returned to the assembly hall for fifteen minutes of singing or other activities such as a guest speaker. Physical culture, military drill or band practice constituted the last

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<sup>13</sup> La Crosse County School of Agriculture and Domestic Science 1914-1915 Catalog, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> News item from the La Crosse County Record, August 12, 1910.

period, from 3:45 to 4:15 P.M. A football team was also organized with Mr. Johnson as the coach.<sup>15</sup>

In order to gain entrance to the La Crosse County School of Agriculture and Domestic Economy and to participate in the regular courses, certain requirements had to be fulfilled. According to a school catalog some of the requirements were:

- Students should be at least fourteen years of age.
- Students must be of good moral character and in good health.
- Holders of eighth grade diplomas or certificates will be admitted without examination.
- Students that have completed an eighth grade education in rural schools and others who have done equivalent work in other schools will be admitted upon presentation of work records.
- Applicants that have had only a part of the work and wish to graduate may make up the back work.
- Students having completed a high school course will be given credit as far as it will apply on the courses.
- Students under fourteen years of age may be admitted if thought advisable by the principal and parents.<sup>16</sup>

Before 1914 there existed only one course of study available for all students. This single two-year program proposed to give young men and women a general knowledge of agricultural and domestic sciences. An enlargement in the curriculum in 1914 provided a four-year program, a one-year course for the high school graduate, and a special short course planned to meet the needs of those students who wished only a brief study of a particular subject. The young farmers usually enrolled in this course during the winter months while farming was at a standstill.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>News item from La Crosse County Record, October 21, 1909.

<sup>16</sup>La Crosse County School of Agriculture and Domestic Science Catalog, 1912-1913, p. 13.

<sup>17</sup>ibid., 1914-15, p. 16.

This increased scope gave the school additional drawing power.

In addition to the general course work offered at the school, an extension program offered reached the farmers at home. Farmers would send inquiries to the school concerning their everyday problems such as balancing dairy rations, spraying fruit trees, testing seed corn, construction of silos, use of lime rock, how to install a ventilating system for barns and so on. The school instructors and students visited county farms upon the owner's request to treat grain for smut, plan drainage systems, test soils, or any matter where the school could help the farmer. The extension service held meetings in nearly every rural community in the county during the winter. The instructors of the school gave demonstrations and led discussions on a variety of topics of interest to the farmers. The farmer apparently appreciated this aspect of the school.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>La Crosse County School of Agriculture and Domestic Science Catalog, 1912-1913.



## CHAPTER II

### SEQUENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Because the cost for the first year was estimated primarily by guess, and because of the partially equipped building, the larger than anticipated attendance and rising costs, the first year resulted in a deficit. The excess expenditures occurred chiefly in connection with these three items; addition to the building, equipment for the Manual Training and Domestic Economy Departments and fuel for a very cold winter. This paper includes a financial account of the school at five intervals found in the Appendix<sup>1</sup>. The estimates for the first year and the actual expenditures can be seen there in detail.<sup>2</sup>

The second school year began October 3, 1910, with a staff of six teachers in charge. The enrollment tallied six less than the previous year. During the year the grounds were improved, with the purchase of new equipment and the erection of a combined stock judging pavillion and barn. "With a great deal of reluctance,"<sup>3</sup> the County Board of Education accepted the resignation of the school principal, Mr. A. A. Johnson. The Board hired Mr. Frank Balmer, a graduate of the University of Kansas, as his replacement to begin active duty on August 1, 1911. Other faculty members for the year were P. L. Johnsrud,

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<sup>1</sup>Appendix B, November, 1920, page 47.

<sup>2</sup>Proceedings of the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors, 1910,  
p. 75.

<sup>3</sup>News item from La Crosse County Record, March 25, 1911.

Miss D. F. Burnham, Miss F. M. Sutherland, Miss R. J. Reynolds and Mr. W. Spreiter. A financial statement for the year showed a balance of twenty-five hundred dollars as opposed to the deficit accrued in 1910.<sup>3</sup>

The school year 1911-1912 showed considerably less attendance than during the previous two years. Although the attendance dropped to eighty-three pupils the County School Board regarded the year's work as satisfactory.

The ability of these fewer students is greater than in the past. More time can be allotted for recitation and individual work is now possible.<sup>4</sup>

Mr. W. C. Morris, a graduate from the University of Wisconsin, replaced Mr. P. L. Johnsrud as the only faculty change besides the principal. Excellent crops of corn and oats were raised on the school farm. Successful experiments were also being made with alfalfa. On May 12, 1912, Principal Balmer addressed the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors relative to the necessity of purchasing stock and farm implements for use at the Agricultural School. His requests were granted and by June 1, 1912, the school had purchased a pair of horses, one cow and a calf. Six more cows and several calves were ordered in time for the school's opening in October.<sup>5</sup>

The Agricultural Extension work of the school during 1911-1912

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<sup>3</sup> Proceedings of the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors, 1911,  
p. 77.

<sup>4</sup> ibid., 1912, p. 34.

<sup>5</sup> ibid., p. 53.

came to be a very important and valuable part of the work done by the school. Among the year's accomplishments included nine farmer's institutes held in various parts of the county. Giving plans for the construction of silos and barns, and contests for sewing and corn growing constituted a good deal of time and effort. Various demonstrations made on county farms resulted in frequent consultation for expert opinions concerning insects, soil fertility, animal diseases and many other topics.<sup>6</sup>

A school census for the year 1912-1913 showed one less student than the previous year. The Board of Education reported that the students in attendance were of unusually high intelligence and gave two reasons for the decline in attendance.

It is difficult to get hired work on the farms and therefore parents are unwilling to let their children go off to school. Nearly every high school in the state is now attempting some of the work carried on by the County Agriculture Schools.<sup>7</sup>

Many county farmers received assistance from the Agricultural School through the extension process during the 1912-1913 school year. Correspondence, personal visits to the farms, and various meetings were some of the means used to carry on extension activities. Plans for fifteen farm buildings, twenty drainage surveys, corn growing

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 1912, p. 34.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 1913, p. 21.

and sewing conteats were provided. Miss Rachel McEldowney, a graduate of Stout Institute, replaced Miss Sutherland for the only faculty change of the year.<sup>8</sup>

The year 1913-1914 witnessed a drop in attendance from eighty-two to fifty-five. One of the most noteworthy items of the year was the turnover of one-half of the school faculty. Mr. T. H. Campion, a graduate of the University of Wisconsin School of Agriculture, replaced Mr. Balmer who resigned as the school principal. Mr. H. C. Ferguson, a graduate of Iowa State College and Miss Elizabeth D. Raht, a Stout State Institute graduate, replaced Mr. W. C. Morris and Miss Reynolds respectively on the regular school staff. The extension services were increased that year with more time available to the staff members with a decreased class load.<sup>9</sup>

School year 1914-1915 showed indications of progress for the relatively new school. A four-year course, one for the boys and one for the girls, was added to the regular two-year course which was offered from the beginning. According to Principal T. H. Campion,

This curriculum improvement was brought about in an attempt to compete with the high schools and ultimately reach a more efficient capacity in attendance.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 22

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 1914, p. 72.

<sup>10</sup>p. 2. News item from the La Crosse County Record, August 25, 1914,

About twenty new students enrolled in the four-year program in September of 1914, bringing the total enrollment to seventy. The County Board of Education still not satisfied with the attendance instructed Mr. Campion to send out literature from the school to all the newspapers of the county. Exhibits showing the work of the school were made at several local fairs. Mr. Campion also collected a list of the names of those students that qualified by age and training and sent them other material advertising the advantages of the school.<sup>11</sup>

It might be well at this time to summarize the first half decade of the school's existence. The school grounds had been made more attractive through planting grass, flowers, trees and general landscape improvements. The curriculum had been revised to place the school in active competition with most area high schools. Extensive advertising campaigns were constantly being circulated in an attempt to increase the enrollment. The extension services were proving their value to students and county farmers alike. Despite these apparent improvements, the enrollment dropped from one hundred and fifty-seven to seventy students at the close of the 1914-1915 school year. The students from the West Salem and Bangor villages continued their boycott of the school. A degree of discontent among West Salem supervisors could be heard among the County Board of Supervisors despite the fact that the school cost one thousand dollars less to operate.

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<sup>11</sup>Proceedings of the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors, 1915,  
p. 40.

than it did five years before. The inability of the school to maintain a faculty could be interpreted various ways. It might be added here that within a six-year period the school had undergone thirteen faculty changes, with the six teacher faculty. The job of principal had been occupied by three different men during this period. Still there seemed to be no question with regard to the continuation of the school after the first six years.

The year 1915-1916 brought more additions to the course of studies offered at the school. The Board of Education installed a course known as the winter short course of twelve weeks duration. The course began in January and served those students that would be unable to attend for the full year. Still another, a one-year course for boys and girls that had graduated from high school was also installed. Both courses had several students enrolled but the attendance still slipped to sixty-eight. The two additions to the course offering were made without any change or additions to the faculty and the budget balance sheet for the year can be found in the Appendix.<sup>11</sup> The school advertised in the newspapers throughout the county its willingness to participate in extension activities. A report on the school extension work included numerous evening meetings in rural school districts and farmer's homemaker conferences held at the school. Six one-acre experimental plots of alfalfa were sown in six different towns and help was given to county farmers in stamping out an epidemic of hog cholera. A stock judging team, made up of Agricultural

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<sup>11</sup>Appendix B, November, 1915., p. 49.

School students was sent to the State Fair. The team won first place and two hundred dollars in cash prizes. A part of the school herd was shown at the La Crosse Interstate Fair and carried off four first prizes and two seconds. The school set a record at Madison in February for winning four championships, two specials, nine firsts, six seconds, five thirds, four fourths and one fifth in the corn and grain show.<sup>12</sup>

Due in part to the success the school had at these various exhibits throughout the year the County Board appropriated two thousand dollars to build a representative dairy herd. It was felt that if they purchased a sufficient number of high grade cows the herd would soon be on a self-supporting basis.<sup>13</sup>

Attendance for the school year 1916-1917 dropped to sixty-five including sixteen enrolled in the winter short course. Mr. Campion assessed the accreditability and authorization of the school in a news item found in a La Crosse County newspaper.

The school is definitely on what is known as the accredited list of the State University. That means that the students graduating from any of the four-year programs of our school may enter upon some courses of study at the University and almost any other college as well, without examination and upon equal terms with graduates from the ordinary high schools.<sup>14</sup>

The year was not without criticism by the County Board of Supervisors. Supervisor Orrin Fletcher moved that a committee be appointed to investigate the advisability of discontinuing the County Agricultural School, and the establishment of a Bureau of

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<sup>12</sup> Proceedings of the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors, 1916,  
p. 97.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 1916, p. 97.

<sup>14</sup> News item in the La Crosse County Record, August 24, 1916.

Agriculture in connection with the State and Federal Departments of Agriculture. Board Chairman R. W. Davis appointed supervisors Fletcher, Dawson, and Elstad as an Agricultural School Investigating Committee. On March 5, 1917, the committee visited the school and inquired into the work being done, the attendance at the school and the results of the classroom work. The committee reported that the school faculty performed well to benefit students in attendance. The committee mailed about three hundred letters to the county taxpayers containing a questionnaire concerning the value of the school and the advisability of closing it. Out of the 195 replies received, a very large percentage favored closing the school. Many still favored the extension work carried on by the school. The committee requested permission for further investigation to improve the attendance and extension program and recommended the school be continued for the present. As a result of this committee, forty per cent of the annual budget was to be spent for the extension work and the remaining sixty for the maintenance of the school. The County Board also moved that the secretary of the County School Board should make a separate report on the extension services in addition to the annual report. The financial report showed the school spent \$1,185 dollars for extension work. The following quote taken from Board proceedings might explain that matter more adequately.

The past had the extension work and the school so closely interwoven that it is impossible in all cases to make a clear separation between them. Practically three-fourths of Mr. Campion's time last year was given to extension work and hence three-fourths of his salary or eighteen hundred dollars should



be charged to the extension account. About three hundred dollars of Mr. Spreiter's salary and the stenographer's salary should go to this account. These three items would increase the extension by twenty-four hundred dollars making the total close to thirty-five hundred dollars.<sup>15</sup>

Nine years after the opening of the La Crosse County Agricultural and Domestic Science School the attendance slipped to an all time low of forty-nine students including sixteen that were enrolled in the winter short course. The number of faculty members remained at six, including Mr. L. C. Hatch, a University of Wisconsin graduate, who replaced Mr. T. H. Campion as School Principal. The lack of farm labor accounted for this appreciable decline in attendance. Following America's entry into World War I, farm labor became very scarce and proportionately expensive.

According to a request to continue investigation on the advisability of continuation of the La Crosse County Agricultural School, a committee of County Supervisors sought expert professional advice concerning the matter. In November of 1917 the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors secured the service of Mr. J. L. McBrien of the Federal Bureau of Education under the direction of Mr. W. P. Claxton. According to a complete report recorded in the 1918-1919 Yearbook, Mr. McBrien spent several days in Onalaska investigating the records of the school and visiting with county farmers. Mr. McBrien entitled his report, "Problems in Attendance."

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<sup>15</sup>Proceedings of the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors, 1917.  
p. 13.

As already stated the only reason to warrant the continuation of the school in the work for which it was established, is a larger attendance of students. In the first and second years of the school's history, the enrollment was 157 and 151 respectively. In the third year, the attendance dropped to eight-three; in the fourth year to eighty-two; in the fifth year to fifty-five; with an average of about seventy for the sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth years in the life of the school. The enrollment for the present year was only thirty-seven when I visited the school November eighth, with only twenty-seven present. Since my return to the office, I have received a letter from Superintendent Hatch, saying that the enrollment has now reached forty-three. No doubt the war condition accounts for a great measure of the small attendance this year, but in spite of the war, I think, with the enrollment that is likely to come with the winter short course, that the total enrollment for the school during 1918-1919 will be about seventy, as it has been for the past three or four years. However, this is not sufficient attendance to warrant the continuance of the school in the work for which it was established. This does not mean I recommend the discontinuation of the school in the work. I do wish to urge upon students, beginning right now, and continuing until the school is filled to its highest capacity commensurate with thorough work. In my opinion the resources for students in La Crosse County are sufficient to give this school, as soon as we reach normal conditions in the after war period, at least two hundred bonafide residents in actual attendance within five years time. I can see no reason why the annual enrollments in this school will not reach one hundred fifty students within the next three years. If such a campaign is made, I believe that the annual enrollment after five years will be two hundred students. Let it be understood that this campaign for students must be a continuing proposition until the enrollment is reached and then continued to maintain the enrollment year after year.<sup>16</sup>

Following an extremely vigorous advertising campaign the 1918-1919 school year attendance increased to sixty-two for both the regular and short course. During this year, twenty students attended the evening classes and twenty-nine in regularly enrolled extension classes in addition to the above stated attendance figure. According to the County Board of Education Report all the activities of the school

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<sup>16</sup>McBrien, J. L., "Problems in Attendance," The Agric. 1918-1919 Yearbook, Volume 8, p. 45.

secured more efficient production and the record indicates this success.

The school carried on clubwork throughout the year with a total of 295 boys and girls enrolled in different clubs. The county was awarded first prize at the Wisconsin State Fair in pig club and corn club, third prize on canning club and fourth prize on calf club. The Agricultural School held five community fairs this past winter and over twenty had to be postponed because of the flu. A township improvement committee organized in each township of the county hoped to project the activities of the school into every township in the county.<sup>17</sup>

A school census showed sixty-one students enrolled for the 1919-1920 school year. Eleven students graduated in this year and one of them being the two hundredth to be graduated from the school. A new teacher of domestic science worked to organize and assist with sewing clubs and a girl's canning club. Her newly organized dyeing demonstration team won first place at the State Fair. In August, a Cooking and Sewing five-Day Short Course offered a social and educational opportunity for the area girls. Cots placed in the auditorium for sleeping quarters provided for the one hundred out of town guests. The course was judged a success from an educational and social point of view. Boys in the manual arts class made valuable equipment which they sold to farmers for the cost of materials. Some of the items included: eveners, neck yokes, wagon boxes, hog racks, top boxes, portable hog houses, hog crates, self-feeders for hogs and many more.<sup>18</sup> The La Crosse County Board of Education expressed their opinion of the school by making the following statement to the County Board at their

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<sup>17</sup>Proceedings of the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors, 1919,  
p. 71.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 1925, p. 37.

annual meeting.

La Crosse County has no superior natural resources; she is blessed with the same climate and rainfall that all other counties of the state possess; her soils are very similar to those of other counties; but La Crosse County leads the state in many agricultural activities and we confidently feel that this splendid record has been made possible through the activities of the school. We believe that there is no money spent by the county which yields larger dividends and which is more worthily spent.<sup>19</sup>

At the termination of the second five-year period the school had experienced some precarious situations with regard to her future. After a thorough investigation of the school, a school census of one hundred and fifty should now be a reality. The record shows an average attendance for the past five years to be sixty-one or less than forty per cent of the suggested enrollment. The school also gained another principal during this time. A new winter short course was added to the curriculum in an attempt to add to the usefulness of the school. The course proved to be very popular with the young area farmers. More emphasis was given the extension programs with the decline in classroom enrollments. The school managed to acquire a state wide reputation through their successes at the State Fair.

During this five-year period school costs increased from seventeen to twenty-five thousand dollars per year. Of this increase in disbursements the county appropriation went from eight to eleven thousand dollars. In 1917 Congress passed the Smith-Hughes Act and according to this act part of the cost for agricultural and home economics instruction

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 1920, p. 38.

was to be paid for by the federal government. For the La Crosse County Agricultural School this amounted to almost three thousand dollars. The animal husbandry department raised an additional thirty-two hundred dollars to help keep county costs to a minimum.

Sixty students enrolled for the 1920-1921 school year, including ten for the winter short course. During November the County Board of Supervisors instructed the Board of Education to build a porch over the blacksmith shop with a stairway to the ground. The complete interior of the building and the barn received a fresh coat of paint. A larger hotwater tank was also installed. The County Board of Supervisors appropriated eleven thousand dollars for the building improvement. The school maintained its high standard of winning at the State Fair by again carrying off one-third of all the bonuses which amounted to almost five thousand dollars in premiums. The Domestic Economy department was very busy establishing five homemaker clubs and planning a picnic attended by one hundred and fifty ladies. Girl's demonstration teams in sewing, canning, dyeing were trained and entered in the State Fair. The manual training department supplied wagon boxes, manure tanks, hammer handles, neck yokes and other wooded equipment. The engineering department repaired several gasoline engines and worked on several automobiles.<sup>20</sup>

In relation to the extension work being conducted by the

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<sup>20</sup> Proceedings of the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors, 1921,  
p. 17.

Domestic Science department of the County School, a county newspaper ran the following news item.

The ladies of the county appear more eager than the men to engage in extension activities of the school. The Homemakers Club has been a splendid success and we would like to propose that the school hire someone to officially organize such a group.<sup>21</sup>

The Animal Husbandry department of the school netted thirty-two hundred dollars during the 1920-1921 school year but the school still recorded a deficit of some seven hundred dollars by the year's end. A complete financial statement of the year can be found in the Appendix.<sup>22</sup>

The number of students enrolled in the regular and short courses increased from sixty of the previous year to ninety-three in September of 1921. This figure represents the highest enrollment recorded since the second year of operation when 151 attended. Some doubt might be reflected on the purposes for enrollment of many of the 1921-1922 students as the average daily attendance showed only fifty-six for that year.<sup>23</sup>

The extension work for the year 1921-1922 included the publication of the "Monthly Sales List".

We believe it to be very valuable to the farmers. It also furnishes us with a means whereby we can place suggestions in the hands of the farmers. Many farmers have expressed an appreciation for the publication.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup>News Item in the La Crosse County Record, August 22, 1921.

<sup>22</sup>Appendix B, November, 1920, p. 49.

<sup>23</sup>Proceedings of the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors, 1922, p. 43.

<sup>24</sup>News Item in the La Crosse County Record, May 21, 1922.

During the year 1922-1923 the total attendance increased from the previous year. A total of one hundred ten students enrolled in the regular and short course during the year and the average daily attendance increased to eighty-two. A complete inventory of the school building, equipment and supplies, farm building and land placed the school's value at 122,000 dollars. The Domestic Economy department initiated an active campaign to organize home maker clubs throughout the county. A total of twelve clubs had been organized during the year and staff members surmised county women saved thousands of dollars in garment making alone. The Animal Husbandry department conducted some effective work during the year, furnishing pedigrees and registration of some eighty animals.<sup>25</sup>

The year 1923-1924 brought a decrease in the enrollment to eighty-seven with an excellent average daily attendance of seventy-eight. Among other school activities, the "Monthly Sales List" was again published and distributed to the farmers of the county. Through this publication farmers found a market for their products and the school advertised for students. The home makers club activities spread throughout the entire county. The school was awarded second place for its booth at the County Fair. La Crosse County, working through the school, won the Grand Sweepstakes in the Farm Crops Department of the State Fair.<sup>26</sup>

According to the annual report of the County Superintendent of Schools to the County Board the extension department carried on as usual.

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<sup>25</sup> Proceedings of the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors, 1923,  
p. 46.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 1924, p. 72.

The faculty and school assisted in sixty school projects and programs during the 1923-1924 school year. The Animal Husbandry Department furnished thirty-five pedigrees, culled three flocks of poultry, tested one hundred and fifty samples of milk and cream, furnished balanced rations and made feed recommendations to thirty farmers. The same group also sprayed and pruned two orchards, assisted in purchase of twelve pure bred sires, and furnished registration and certificates for thirty-two animals. The Soils and Crops Department tested soil at fifty farms and distributed two hundred seventy bottles of soybean culture. The Manual Training Department engaged in making equipment for farmers at cost price and the construction of several tables for the school.<sup>27</sup>

The year 1924-1925 marked fifteen years since the opening in 1909. Heavy criticism with regard to poor attendance continued during the early part of this school year resulting in the eventual closing of the school at the termination of this school year. A more complete explanation for the closing of the school is found in the following section of this paper. The total attendance for the year dropped to fifty-nine including students enrolled in a cabinet-making course which met two nights a week. The activities of the school year were dominated by the extension services continuing a pattern for the past ten years. The extension division worked closely with a former staff member, Mr. W. E. Sprieter, the La Crosse County Agricultural Agent.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 1925, p. 99.



Mr. Spreiter gave a full report of those activities in his annual report to the County Board of Supervisors., then concluded:

The County School of Agriculture last year worked under the handicap of knowing that it was a defunct body. However, they made an effort and their work in cooperation with the farmers of the county is to be highly recommended.<sup>28</sup>

On June 4, 1925, members of the last graduating class of the La Crosse County School of Agriculture and Domestic Economy received diplomas. The twenty-three graduated in 1925 represented the largest four-year graduation class in the fifteen year history of the school. A total of 1,320 made up the fifteen year enrollment and 269 of these graduated.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> ibid., 1925, p. 99

<sup>29</sup> News item in La Crosse County Record, May 21, 1925.

## CHAPTER III

### CLOSING THE SCHOOL

With another decline in the 1924-1925 school year enrolment, a torrent of criticism issued by the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors and several area critics delivered the coup de grace. Supervisor Earl G. Staats resolved that the school be closed the greater part of the year and all teachers be released from their contracts with the school. He further suggested that a Home Demonstration Agent be appointed to share the school building with the County Agent. Short courses in agriculture and domestic sciences might be conducted by them in the building during the winter months. A committee of County Supervisors was appointed to investigate the Agricultural School in relation to the suggestions made by Supervisor Staats. Supervisors appointed to the committee were Chairman, V. S. Kepple, L. F. Altwater, William Egger, August A. Ranis, and Earl G. Staats.<sup>1</sup>

The school closing issue received considerable publicity in the La Crosse Tribune, West Salem Non Pareil Journal and the Sangor Independent during the weeks prior to the special County Board meeting date on December 29, 1924. Most of the arguments with regard to the school closing opposed the continuation of the school.

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<sup>1</sup>Proceedings of the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors, 1924.  
p. 126.

Any material that could be located in favor of maintaining the school was not written until after the historic decision made by the County Board on December 29, 1924. At a special meeting called on the Agricultural School question, Supervisor V. S. Kepple announced that the committee had a report concerning the school and would make certain recommendations based on their investigation.

Resolved that the La Crosse County School of Agriculture and Domestic Economy be and hereby is discontinued on or before August 1, 1925. Resolved further, that the committee be authorized and permitted to close the school at a prior date and to forth-with enter into negotiations to dispose all property, real and personal, now in the name of the La Crosse County School of Agriculture and Domestic Economy at a price and upon terms to be approved by this Board at this meeting.<sup>2</sup>

That same afternoon at two o'clock, Supervisor Guenther moved that the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors adopt the report and the resolution of the committee. The report and the resolution were both adopted by a vote of twenty-eight to seven. At the same meeting the Board of Supervisors endorsed the ability, integrity and industry of the faculty. According to Supervisor Earl Staats,

The fact that the school is about to close does not reflect in any way on the management of the school but on the non-support by the people and pupils of the county and the non-attendance of of the pupils for whom the school was instituted.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 148.

The Special Committee on the Agricultural School pointed out that a detailed report listing specific reasons for the school discontinuance would be completed in time for the March meeting date.

The news of the school's closing did not come as a surprise to the citizens of the county. Now the voice of the proponent for continuation of the school could be heard. Their propositions and arguments are well summed up in an editorial by R. I. Showers written in the La Crosse County Record which is published in Onalaska.

The County School had its enemies ever since it was established. In the first place there was a hot fight on as to where it should be located after the Board decided to establish such a school in the county. West Salem citizens were the first to propose such a school and were anxious to have it placed in their village. Bangor felt that it should also be given consideration as West Salem had one county institution at the time and made a great effort to have it located there. After considerable agitation the County Board finally decided to build in Onalaska. This action did not please West Salem and Bangor people and the school has been more or less a thorn in their side since it was built. Very few students from that part of the county have attended the Agricultural School, the attendance being largely from La Crosse, Onalaska, Holmen and this portion of the county and from Trempleau, Vernon, Buffalo and Monroe Counties. We do not pretend to know how successful the school might have been had the eastern part of the county given its support. There seems to be no doubt that the attendance would have been one-third more. Continual knocking of the school from time to time with threats by different members of the Board that the school would be done away with has not helped the attendance either. Place yourself in the position of a young man or woman who intends to take such a course as this school offered. Would you care to begin at this institution if you were given to understand the school might discontinue at any time?

There is no question but that the school has been a force for good in La Crosse County since it was established. Several young men have graduated from the school and have benefited by it. Not only have these young people gone back to their farms and profited by their training, but the school's faculty, through extension work, have done untold good for the farmers throughout the county. In our opinion the benefits to be derived from a school of this kind, or from any institution of learning cannot be estimated and in the long run far exceed their cost measured from many points of view.

Whether the school has been expensive or not the fact remains that it will be greatly missed and very few will notice any difference in their taxes after the school closes. Not many know that the school has cost about seventeen cents to a thousand dollars valuation. This means that a man owning property assessed at ten thousand dollars was paying a paltry one dollar and seventeen cents towards the maintenance of the school. Onalaska with a total valuation of about 800,000 dollars paid about 136 dollars per year for the County Farm School. As far as the expense of the school is concerned the City of La Crosse was shouldering the biggest part of the cost and very few were complaining. Most of the people there seemed to think the school was worth the money and were willing to continue it. Even as a county recreation spot it was worth the price. Many lodges and different organizations from La Crosse and the county in general, made use of the grounds whenever they wanted a picnic. The grounds are beautifully situated and are ideal for large gatherings during the summer months. They have also been used in recent years for a tourist park.

It hardly seems that this step of the County Board is in accord with the wishes of the majority of the county's taxpayers after erecting a school of this character and much expense. If the County of La Crosse is so poor that its taxpayers cannot spend seventeen cents on each thousand dollars for their evaluation to provide higher training in agriculture and domestic economy, how can they afford to pour about thirteen thousand dollars into the chutes at Lytles; ten thousand into the McGilvary Road and let it take care of itself; five or ten thousand for new buildings for the InterState Fair Association; eighteen hundred for a white way around the Court House in La Crosse, and other appropriations that seem wanton waste of taxpayers money?

What will the county do with the building now that it has decided to close the school? Onalaska needs a new high school building but can we afford to buy the County School building at any price? Two weeks ago last Sunday (December 14, 1924) Onalaska was unfortunate enough to lose her high school and grade school building by fire. Some members of the County Board seemed to think that this would be an opportune time to dispose of the County School building to Onalaska. The Special Investigating Committee appeared in Onalaska the morning after our school fire and held several meetings with members of the School Board and Common Council. The Committee assumed that the County School would be abandoned and Onalaska might buy the building and grounds for about twenty-five thousand dollars. The building is a long walk from the center of the city and it will be expensive to keep up. It is estimated that seven thousand dollars will be needed to remodel the school for a high school and graded school use. If the school costs the county too much to operate how will Onalaska shoulder the project alone?<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> R. I. Showers, "County Farm School Given Death Blow", La Crosse County Record, January 1, 1925, p. 1.

To be sure other county weekly newspapers also had opinions concerning the closing of the school. The West Salem Nonpareil-Journal, edited by Mr. J. C. Garlock, carried the following article on January 1, 1925.

The action of the County Board Tuesday in voting to discontinue the Agricultural School at Onalaska was proper. It takes more courage to abandon a lagging enterprise than it does to start one that is badly needed. Sixteen years ago when the school was first started, prospects for long years of future usefulness looked bright. The school was designed to fill a need to furnish a service. If it served that purpose it little mattered whether Onalaska, West Salem or Bangor furnished the site for its location. When the school was established its founders could not foresee that federal and state aid would someday be provided to encourage the teaching of agriculture in all schools. They could not foresee that West Salem, Holmen and Mindoro would build new high schools and make the teaching of agriculture and domestic economy among their strongest courses. They could not foresee that parents would rather send their children to their own school, even though its course in agriculture was not as broad as offered at the County School. Eventually these things came to pass in the most natural way. It is probable that except for the County School, the big high schools of La Crosse would offer a course in agriculture. These high school courses have just begun. Eventually they will be greatly improved and compare favorably with anything the County School could do.

In county, state and federal aid it has cost from three hundred dollars to four hundred dollars a year to give instruction to each student at Onalaska's County School. Tuition in the high school is limited to seventy-two dollars annually. The spread is too great. The duplication of school service at Onalaska resulted in the division of students there between the city and county school in a way that was good for neither. In the destruction of the city school by fire just before the holidays one of these institutions has been removed but Onalaska taxpayers now have an opportunity to take over the other at a very reasonable figure. They will probably grasp at the opportunity.

In the meantime, it is well to remember that the County School is well equipped for instruction in agriculture. Thousands of dollars have been spent there to give that instruction. That money will not be entirely wasted if this school continues to teach agriculture along with its other courses. In our judgement it is the job of the County Board under these circumstances and in the event of sale for public school purposes to require as a condition of its transfer, that a course in agriculture be given in the school.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>J. Garlock, "County Abandons Agricultural Instruction", West Salem Nonpareil-Journal, January 1, 1925, p. 1.

Of a similar nature to the foregoing West Salem expression, the Bangor Independent ran the following article on the same day.

By a vote of twenty-eight to seven the County Board voted to abandon the County Agricultural School. Most of the farmer members of the Board voted to discontinue the school, evidence that the farmers do not want the school that was forced upon them sixteen years ago.<sup>6</sup>

With regard to the charges that the school's cost were prohibitive, the school principal, Mr. L. C. Hatch authored the following article taken verbatim from the La Crosse County Record on January 15, 1925.

It has been circulated that the cost of instruction in the Agricultural School is four hundred dollars per year per student. I can't see how such figures can be secured. There are two teachers in the school who are hired for a period of twelve months. The combined salary for these two for nine months which the school is in session is 4,138 dollars. Two teachers are hired for ten months. Their combined salary for nine months is 2,970 dollars. The fuel bill for 1924 was 1,888 dollars. The actual cost of maintaining the Domestic Economy Department was 179 dollars. The actual cost of maintaining the Manual Training Department was sixty-seven dollars; allowing the full time of two janitors for nine months we have 1,530 dollars. This makes a total of 13,471 dollars. Our total enrollment for the year 1924 was eighty-seven. This makes the cost per pupil 154 dollars per year. This may be a little higher than the average cost of instruction in high school, but it is very little, if any, higher than the cost of agricultural instruction in any high school.

I wish to call your attention to several things in the above figures which should properly be deducted but are not. In the first place, the faculty of the school furnished sixty programs for community meetings, most of which were given during the nine months school was in session. We have not deducted our time given to this work. Then during the last semester each year two of our faculty have devoted one-half day each week to the instruction of normal school students which has not been deducted from the instruction of our regular students, nor have their numbers been considered in computing the cost of instruction per pupil. The normal school students who came to the institution were members of the Rural School Course at

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<sup>6</sup> P. I. Gessler, "County School Closes", Bangor Independent, January 1, 1925, p. 1.

the normal school and went to the country schools as teachers so the value of our service to them cannot be estimated.

You will also note that the whole cost of fuel is charged up to the institution. The fact is that the building was warmed all through the winter vacation and every Saturday in order that the County Agent's office might be warm and that other work pertaining to our annual corn and grain show might be done, the Christmas holiday vacation. I have also allowed the full time of a janitor service to be charged to the institution when in reality a great deal of the janitors time was taken in assisting with chores and doing repair work around the buildings and grounds and accommodating many of the picnic parties who come to the grounds for picnics in the spring and fall.

I have not allowed any charge for the books and laboratory supplies because we charge each student two dollars book rent and three dollars laboratory fees when they enroll, which takes care of these charges. I am not deducting any charge because of the time required to put on our annual corn and grain show which was held in January and the work of soliciting for and arranging the premium list and taking care of the show was all done while school was in session.

It has also been stated that the tuition at the high school is seventy-two dollars a year. I might add that the tuition to all county residents is free at the Agricultural School. According to law we cannot charge non-residents more than thirty-six dollars per year.<sup>7</sup>

At the March meeting of the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors, the Special Committee on Agricultural School presented their formal report with reasons for their recommendation to close the school. The Committee used the report given by Mr. J. L. McBrien of the Federal Bureau of Education as a guideline for their decision. The Committee studied the 1918 report very thoroughly and then held a meeting with the school principal, Mr. Hatch. They asked the principal what had been done within the past five years toward following the recommendations in the McBrien Report. Mr. Hatch suggested that everything possible had been done to increase the attendance and he had no other suggestions. Hatch also told the Committee that any reduction of the teaching staff

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<sup>7</sup>L. C. Hatch, "Principal Hatch Shows School Cost", La Crosse County Record, January 15, 1925, p. 1.



would make it impossible to offer the wide variety of courses available at the school. A check on the enrollment for this time was recorded at sixty students. The committee concluded that because the enrollment did not increase to one hundred fifty or two hundred in five years, as was suggested by Mr. McBrien, but had fallen to sixty, the school be discontinued. The committee visited the school and found a teacher of domestic science instructing a class of only two pupils; a teacher of mathematics teaching a class of three pupils; a teacher in the laboratory teaching a class of four pupils and another class of only five students. The average yearly cost of the school totaled about twenty-five thousand dollars with about twelve thousand dollars of that figure coming from La Crosse County and the remainder from state and federal sources. The committee found an average of 118 dollars per month paid to six teachers and at the same time only an average of fifty-seven pupils in daily attendance, or nine and one-half students per teacher. The committee found that the greater proportion of students came from the Onalaska or La Crosse area or at least within easy walking or riding distance. Very few came from the central or outlying parts of the county. In questioning the people from the unrepresented parts of the county great many of them indicated they never did favor the school as a place to send their children for an education. The committee also found that the Agricultural School had no rating with the State University and graduates received no more credit than those of any common high school. The committee also found very complete courses in agriculture taught in practically all of the county high schools and some complied with state

requirements and received state aids. The county high schools taught only three to four fewer subjects than the County Agricultural School. The extension work done by the school was judged to be a duplication of the work done by the County Agriculture Agent.<sup>8</sup> In the report by McBrien a precedent is seen.

The outside work done by the faculty of the school throughout the county is really derogatory to the building up of a school, as it takes the school to the farmer instead of bringing the farmer boys to the school.<sup>9</sup>

The committee unanimously adopted the report. Sentiment was also expressed that it might be more profitable to transfer the poor farm to the school area and sell the present farm. This matter received no action. At this same meeting the city of Onalaska expressed an interest in purchasing the school to replace their high school that burned in December, 1924. The Common Council of the city of Onalaska headed by Council Chariman, Vernon Dale, appeared before the County Board on that same day with the following proposal.

The City of Onalaska proposes to purchase from the County of La Crosse by deed of warranty conveying simple title without encumbrances or reservation all real and personal property on, in and about the building known as the La Crosse County Agricultural School and the land upon which the same is located excepting only the south five hundred feet of land, but including all equipment, furniture, tools and supplies on hand. For this property the city of Onalaska is prepared to pay twenty thousand dollars in twenty annual payments of eleven hundred dollars plus interest on January first of each year, 1926-1945.<sup>10</sup>

In the event the proposition would be acceptable the city offered to establish an agricultural course on the Smith-Hughes plan which would

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<sup>8</sup>Proceedings of the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors, 1925,  
p. 153-155.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 1925, p. 154.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 1925, p. 155.

be available to all or any agricultural students in La Crosse County. The city of Onalaska spent a great share of the money received from the fire insurance providing temporary classroom facilities. Because of a constitutional limit on bonding, which limits the city to five per cent of the total assessed value of property within that city, Onalaska was capable of borrowing only 37,500 dollars. The city had 6,400 dollars outstanding in water bonds so the amount was lowered to 31,000 dollars. The remodeling of the building would cost 14,000 dollars according to an architect's estimate, leaving 17,000 dollars for the purchase of property. The city did feel they could reduce the costs of repair by 3,000 dollars and thereby offered 20,000 dollars for the property as stated in the proposal. With this limited bonding power Onalaska could not undertake the construction of a new school to replace the burned structure. The County Board took no action on the Onalaska proposal until the District Attorney could be consulted with regard to the property sale.<sup>11</sup>

On May 12, 1925, supervisor A. N. Moore of Onalaska proposed a motion that would rescind the decision of the County Board of Supervisors to close the Agricultural School. A representative sent by the La Crosse Chamber of Commerce and supervisor Jollivette of the Town of Campbell, presented arguments in favor of maintaining the County Agricultural School. Not enough support could be rallied and by a vote of twenty-eight to ten the County Board reaffirmed their action of December 29, 1924.

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<sup>11</sup>News Item In La Crosse County Record, March 25, 1925, p. 1.

On June 21, 1925, the city of Onalaska, lead by Mayor J. E. Dolbier, made their second formal proposition to purchase the school site.

The city of Onalaska proposes to purchase from La Crosse County the building known as the La Crosse County Agricultural School and the land upon which it is located excepting the south six hundred feet of land. For said property the city of Onalaska proposes to pay La Crosse County upon delivery of deed and title, ten thousand dollars in cash and ten general liability bonds of the city of Onalaska each in the principle sum of twenty-five hundred dollars bearing interest of three per cent, one such bond due on March first on each of the years 1926 to 1935, both inclusive.<sup>12</sup>

The proposal was submitted to the Ways and Means Committee and they recommended that the offer be accepted and upon Board acceptance, that the Chairman and the Clerk execute and deliver the proper deeds of sale. The County Board of June 11, voted thirty to five in favor of selling the La Crosse County Agricultural School to the city of Onalaska for thirty-five thousand dollars. On June 14, 1925, a bonding ordinance passed in the city of Onalaska and on August 13, the bond issue became legal. The first payment was made to the County on August 3 and alterations on the building began on August 13.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Proceedings of the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors, 1925,  
p. 12.

<sup>13</sup>News item in the La Crosse County Record, June 11, 1925, p. 1.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CONCLUSION

Somended the brief, fifteen year record of the La Crosse County School of Agriculture and Domestic Economy. With the object of giving practical education to young men and women in the different branches of work necessary for farm and home life, the school made a determined endeavor. The school hoped that men and women trained in scientific agriculture and homemaking, return to their respective communities to become leaders in more productive and profitable farming, as well as, better community living.

With community pride threatened by antagonism and constant resistance from neighboring communities, the people of Onalaska experienced a degree of difficulty honestly evaluating the school. It is now more than forty years since the closing of the school and time has apparently resolved the differences of opinion which existed within the county. It might now be justifiable to assert that the school lived out its utility in less than the fifteen years of its existence. As time alone could prove, the general objectives of the school were economically and effectively executed by the area high schools and the County Agricultural Agent.

The passing of the school did, however, leave a social void in the city of Onalaska. The school sponsored a variety of activities usually held at the school, which created social stimulant for both the young and elderly of the city. Many men came to school in Onalaska and married girls

from the city and frequently Onalaska men were successful in finding wives among the students of domestic economy. Many of these couples settled permanently in the city and became civic leaders.

Most of the young men and women graduates located in La Crosse County. Several continued their studies in other more advanced institutions of learning. Many of the early two-year course graduates finished high school with another two years of study. The majority of the students went home to the farms of their parents and applied their technical skills. According to the former students, there was no doubt that the School of Agriculture and Domestic Economy enabled its graduates to become more successful farmers and homemakers. Besides the general farmers there were several teachers, many local businessmen, electricians, plumbers, carpenters and many allied skilled workers, among the male graduates. Because accurate records were not kept and most names were changed through marriage a follow-up on the female graduates is almost impossible. Several did continue their education to become teachers of domestic economy, but the majority married and became homemakers. According to Mr. Edwin Berg, class of 1911, and Mr. Reynold Sjolander, class of 1925, Elmer Moe and George Scarseth were two of the most outstanding graduates. Mr. Moe, class of 1911, attended the University of Wisconsin School of Agriculture and went to the Philippine Islands where he was a teacher of agriculture until his death in 1940. Mr. George Scarseth, class of 1917, was an honor student at Purdue University in the School of Agriculture. Following graduation he worked as an Agricultural Agent for a large food packing firm and his

work took him all over the world.<sup>1</sup>

Because the city was able to purchase the building for their new graded and high school, many of the citizens viewed the closing of the Agricultural School with mixed emotion. The local sentiment might best be described by the following poem written and delivered by Mrs. C. C. Coleman as a farewell to Mr. Hatch, the principal of the school.

There is always a sadness in parting  
With friends that have proven to be true.  
There is always a little heart aching  
When time comes to bid them adieu.

For friendship and love will grow stronger  
With the passing of each golden day,  
That we walk in life's pathway together  
And join in its labor or play.

The years since you first came among us  
Are filled with your kindness to all;  
And thoughtful and helpful you always  
Responded to each little call.

And if we say we shall miss you  
Those words are too weak to apply.  
We must say we have learned to regard you  
With affection that never can die.

You will always find friends who will love you,  
No matter where ever you go.  
But the ones you leave here will remember  
And think of you often, I know.

And so with bright hopes for the future  
We check our desire to sight,  
And cheerfully say, "May God bless you"  
And whisper, "Good luck and good-bye."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Statement by Mr. Edwin Berg and Mr. Reynold Sjolander, Personal Interview.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. C. C. Coleman, "Farewell", La Crosse County Record, July 30, 1925.

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A general record or journal of the business conducted by the legislative body of La Crosse County. These Proceedings are prepared as an annual report by the County Clerk. Presentation of petitions, remonstrances and memorials, complete reports by all committees, presentation of resolutions, voting records and any written correspondence taken up by the Board are all included in the publication. These booklets are bound in a hard, cloth cover from every five to seven years. A complete set can be found in the office of the La Crosse County Clerk.

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A source of general information about the school written for the purpose of advertising the school and sent to anyone requesting a copy. Entrance requirements, expenses, object of the school, examinations and graduation procedures are all covered in each booklet. A brief description of the courses and classes are included in addition to a number of photographs taken on campus.

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The Nonpareil-Journal is a weekly newspaper publication of West Salem, Wisconsin. The paper has been published from 1886 to date. Glen W. Garlock was the editor between September 1914 and June 1939.

## APPENDIX

# APPENDIX A

The following Statistics are taken from the annual report to the State Department of Public Instruction

School Year	ENROLLMENT DATA						
	Boys	Girls	Total	School Days	Average Daily Attendance	Number Graduating	Average Age
1909-1910	87	70	157	150			
1910-1911	88	63	151	160	123½	63	
1911-1912	48	35	83	160			
1912-1913	44	38	82	160			
1913-1914	36	19	55	160			18
1914-1915	46	24	70	160	56		18½
1915-1916	40	28	68	180	56		
1916-1917	39	26	65	180			
1917-1918	21	28	49	180	35		16
1918-1919	27	35	62	160	48		18
1919-1920	22	39	61	180		198	17
1920-1921	20	40	60	180			17
1921-1922	45	48	93	180			16
1922-1923	59	51	110	180			17
1923-1924	45	42	87	180		246	
1924-1925			59				

## APPENDIX B

Financial Statements for selected years, taken from the respective annual report to the County Board of Supervisors.

November, 1910

### RECEIPTS

Balance on hand, November 4, 1910	\$1,490.49
County appropriation	9,000.00
State Agricultural Fund	4,000.00
Miscellaneous Receipts	853.67
Interest	50.46
	<hr/>
Total	\$15,394.62

### DISBURSEMENTS

Building	618.23
Furniture	580.28
Equipment and Supplies	2,094.60
Addition to building	2,637.60
Architects fee	333.67
Field and grounds	672.91
Books and magazines	647.68
Teachers salaries	4,898.52
Janitor and labor in building	839.90
Stenography	115.23
Printing and advertising	256.98
Fuel: coal, wood, gasoline	1,283.34
Lumber	239.24
Office expense	105.44
Freight	162.71
Water - \$ 67.87	
Light - 93.51	
Telephone - 50.15	211.53
Gas machine	468.11
Incidentals	247.37
	<hr/>

Total \$16,413.75

November, 1915RECEIPTS

Balance on hand	\$ 1,976.18
County appropriation	8,000.00
State aid	6,000.00
Animal sales	670.42
Manual training sales	102.20
Domestic sales	84.59
Tuition	552.00
Book rent	132.00
Farm produce sales	126.00
Room rent	200.00
	<hr/>
Total	\$17,843.99

DISBURSEMENTS

Teachers salaries	\$ 8,124.98
Janitors salaries	1,301.25
Fuel and gasoline	1,186.99
Light, water, telephone	285.61
Domestic Science	452.22
Manual training	442.33
Farm machinery	51.80
General supplies	88.88
Farm labor	707.31
Freight and express	38.94
Books and magazines	280.95
Postage	154.34
Office supplies	91.78
Science department	136.26
Livestock	232.50
Advertising and printing	367.06
Furniture and equipment	309.48
Office work	265.32
Animal Husbandry department	63.76
Buildings and grounds	318.31
Extension work	471.34
Feed	756.53
Rent of land	65.00
Incidentals	536.70
	<hr/>
Total	\$16,729.46

November, 1920RECEIPTS

Balance on hand, November 1, 1920	\$ 386.64
County appropriation	11,100.00
State aid for year 1920	6,000.00
Federal aid (Smith Hughes)	2,883.34
Domestic Service department	168.15
Manual Training department	175.21
Flat and pavillion rent	250.25
Tuition and book rent	488.50
Animal Husbandry department	3,206.07
Miscellaneous	600.80
	<hr/>
Total	\$24,758.96

DISBURSEMENTS

Animal Husbandry department	156.84
Agricultural department	48.73
Building and grounds (repair equipment and supplies)	1,126.46
Books and magazines	114.63
Domestic Science department	358.20
Extension (mileage, alfalfa, rye, corn, etc. for farmers)	2,051.34
Farm labor	1,448.00
Feed for livestock	1,942.42
Fuel	2,300.18
Farm machinery	172.35
Horticulture department	9.95
Ice	90.00
Janitor service	2,043.00
Janitor supplies	108.17
Manual training department	403.58
Miscellaneous (annual, advertising, labor, etc.)	374.45
Office work and supplies	1,145.63
Postage stamps, envelopes and box rent	317.65
Poultry department	47.60
Refund	104.00
School and laboratory supplies	68.51
Teachers salaries	10,859.32
Telephone service, electricity, water	238.96
	<hr/>
Total	\$25,530.98
Total disbursements	25,530.98
Total receipts	24,758.96
	<hr/>
Overdrawn	\$ <u>772.02</u>



ESTIMATE OF EXPENSES FOR 1924-1925

Teachers salaries	\$ 12,000.00
Janitor salaries	2,000.00
Fuel and gasoline	1,800.00
Lights, water and telephone	300.00
Domestic Science department	300.00
Manual Training department	400.00
Agricultural department	200.00
Farm labor	1,600.00
Books and magazines	100.00
Freight and express	100.00
Postage	200.00
Office supplies	200.00
Printing and advertising	200.00
Furniture and general equipment	100.00
Office work	1,000.00
Animal Husbandry	400.00
Buildings and grounds	1,000.00
Extension work	1,500.00
Rent of land	200.00
Feed for stock	1,400.00
Incidentals	1,500.00

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Total	\$ 25,500.00
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## APPENDIX C

### GRADUATING CLASSES 1911-1925

The respective graduating classes have been taken from the Agric. the school yearbook, years 1911-1925, volumes 1-14.

#### 1911

Nellie Adams  
Warren W. Aiken  
John Anderegg  
Florence Anderson  
Eva Asselin  
Nina Bangsberg  
Edwin Berg  
Alonzo Briggs  
Emma Brown  
Elizabeth Brunner  
Emma Brunner  
William Brunner  
Earl Davenport  
Marie Ellis  
Nettie Fladlien  
Rudolph Freehoff  
Elmer Freng  
William Furlong  
Grace Gaarder  
Hulda Garbus  
Harry Grover  
Lulu Gullickson  
Henry Hanson  
Benjamin Hauser  
Ferris Hyatt  
Christian Jensen  
Harry Johnson  
Jessie Johnson  
Myrtle Johnson  
Thea Johnson  
Cleveland Jolivette

Joseph Jungbluth  
Pearl Kammerud  
Elmer Kommerstad  
Thomas Knight  
Marie Krickman  
Edna Larson  
Della Marcou  
Elmer Moe  
Byron Moore  
Sidney Moore  
Bernard Nelson  
Olga Neprud  
Reese Nichols  
Mable Olson  
Julia Pfafflin  
Charles Pierce  
Della Pierce  
Jennie Pierce  
Emma Pralle  
Katherine Pralle  
Clara Ruud  
Emma Schmidt  
Kenneth Scott  
Irene Snyder  
Lilah Storandt  
Arthur Werket  
Lovie Westeraas  
Herbert White  
Lester Willey  
Lena Wold

1912

Gene Atwood  
 Harry Bangsberg  
 William Barclay  
 Lillian Hasselbusch  
 Howard Hauser  
 Olive Holmes  
 Ida Kommerstad  
 Elmer Larson  
 Elmer Larson  
 John Lundemoe  
 Freeman Lupie  
 Mable Mulder  
 Harry Munson

Olive Otterness  
 George Paulson  
 Herman Paulson  
 Lucile Pobreslo  
 William Reid  
 Robert Roder  
 Florence Rood  
 Eda Semingson  
 Florence Simonson  
 Laura Smith  
 Jesse Stenberg  
 Lynn Winell

1913

Walter Ahlstrom  
 Helga Anderson  
 Catherine Brooker  
 Donald Carter  
 Mabel Finstad  
 Armin Ganz  
 Arthur Granning  
 Clara Hauser  
 Anna Holthaus  
 Haxel Hyatt  
 Howard Kinney  
 Catherine Mailer  
 Julia Miller  
 Lillian Nelson

Bert Otterness  
 Amelia Paulson  
 Selma Paulson  
 Grace Peterman  
 Mary Roddie  
 Lillian Roningen  
 Mabel Runnestrand  
 William Sheeley  
 Jalmer Slette  
 Orange Smith  
 Mae Solem  
 Wendell Todd  
 Adah Willey  
 Lydia Zeller

1914

Alfred Anderson  
 Edwin Evans  
 Ruth Evenson  
 Frank Gianoli  
 Thomas Gronna  
 Hal Herrick  
 Tracey Humphrey  
 Amanda Kittleson  
 Lila Langbard  
 Martin Wallen

Hulda Lier  
 Clarence Lindstrom  
 Ella Moe  
 Thora Moholt  
 Myrtle Moore  
 Wallace Parsons  
 Gilbert Paulson  
 Liela Sandman  
 Frank Sheldon  
 Rudolph Wallum  
 Enola Westerhouse

1915

Marie Berg  
 Richard Bibby  
 Grace Gaarder  
 John Helleckson  
 Mabel Larson

Ernest Nelson  
 Julia Peters  
 Herman Tappen  
 David Tucker

1916

Christian Conrad  
 Mabel Larson  
 Etta Loeffler  
 Stella Marcou

Mabel Mulder  
 Edna Shove  
 Orange Smith  
 Wendell Todd

1917

Lewis Neder  
 Herbert Faas  
 Robert French  
 Tillie Hasselbusch  
 Ella Helleckson  
 Lawrence Henderson

Christine Jorstad  
 Howard Lee  
 Erwin Molzah  
 Ernest Nelson  
 George Scarseth  
 Oswald Slette

1918

Walter Filler  
 Eugene Herried  
 Georgina Marcou  
 Bert Mead  
 Anna Johnson

Charles Roddie  
 Josephine Slette  
 Arvella Sorenson  
 Vilas Suttle

1919

Nellie Boyer  
 Christian Conrad  
 Grace Gilbertson  
 Louise Hauser  
 Mabel House

Hulda Johnson  
 Christine Jorstad  
 Hilma Jorstad  
 Milo Nelson  
 Nora Sather  
 Lillian Tracey

1920

Fred Bell  
Walter Filler  
Marie Keizer  
Harvey Larson  
James McGregor  
Archie Peters

Lillian Peters  
Alma Pralle  
Carl Rohrer  
George Scarseth  
Martin Wallen

1921

Alvin Arneson  
Allan Bibby  
Jewett Filler  
Grace Gilbertson  
Norma Granum  
Laura Herman  
Henry Husboe

Lloyd Larson  
Elsie Certel  
Viva Page  
Hulda Skogen  
Ida Staff  
Doris Walker  
Willard Wall

1922

Alma Pralle  
Alice Walker  
Llewellyn Wall  
Ernest Wall  
Gladys Small  
Laura Sheldon

Jesse Berg  
Inga Carlson  
Eriling Hokom  
Florence Hoeth  
Hilda Hoeth

1923

Hollis Bibby  
Hazel Fremstad  
Lionel Higgins  
William Page  
George Richmond

Vernice Richmond  
Walter Renstrom  
Harriet Staples  
Huldah Skogen

1924

Everette Bender  
Mary Bibby  
Josephine Deichelbohrer  
Gladys Ekern  
Mildred Figgie  
Katheryn Filler  
Ella Haas

Orrin Haeuser  
Dawson Hauser  
Esther Ingalls  
Orrie Olson  
Marguerite Pertzsch  
Mae Russell  
Esther Vollenweider

1925

Victor J. Arneson  
Wilhelm C. Arneson  
Mildred Bender  
Gerald J. Dolbier  
Clara L. Engaas  
Irvin M. Freeman  
Roy C. Evenson  
George Hermann  
Lucille E. Hoeth  
Clara F. Iverson  
Helen Jostad  
Mable Jostad  
Wenzel Koula

Alice Larson  
Elva McCaffery  
Inez Munson  
Valentine Pralle  
Bessie K. Roellig  
Reynold W. Sjolander  
Catherine Vogel  
Wesley H. Vollenweider  
Bernard Waldenburger  
Emma M. Wick