

## THE NATIONAL GRANGE OF THE ORDER OF PATRONS OF HUSBANDRY

The Grange was organized in 1867 as a result of Oliver Hudson Kelley's trip through the south to assess the agricultural situation after the Civil War. Seeing the need for both an economic and social organization to improve the lot of farmers, Kelley and six others formed the organization. They took the name "Grange" from the Latin word for "grain," which is also related to the word "granary." Early meetings were patterned after popular fraternal groups of the times such as the Masons. The organization soon became an advocacy group for farmers, growing to over 800,000 members all over the nation by 1875. This growth was in part spurred by the economic crisis of 1873, but also because farmers were subject to the whims of the big railroad monopolies who had grown powerful with the construction of the transcontinental railroad and who were arbitrarily setting shipping rates and controlling track-side warehouses.

The concerns of the Grange, however, were not limited to railroad rates. They supported a number of Progressive Era initiatives and goals, including women's suffrage and direct election of senators. The Grange, in fact, treated both women and youth fairly, requiring that four of the sixteen elected positions be held by women. In addition, the Grange had active Youth or Juvenile Granges. Over the decades, the organization lent its support to the establishment of Rural Free Delivery (of mail), the establishment of the Cooperative Extension Service, and the Farm Credit system.

Membership has gone up and down over the over 150 years of Grange existence. Since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the numbers have dropped by about forty percent and as of 2003 totaled about 300,000. The drop in numbers is in large part due to the fact that just two percent of the US population are farmers.

The Fairport-Perinton Grange #467 was founded in 1883 with twelve charter members: John Zollman, Fred Warner, Addie Perkins, George Bahler, Edgar Phelps, George Schlegel, H.S. Dickens, A.F. Perkins, George March, Amelia Zollman, Eva Warner, and Amanda Dickens. At their first meeting on February 24<sup>th</sup> of that year, it was decided to meet on alternate Saturdays. They voted to "meet at Brother Warner's for the purpose of sawing wood for hall stove" and to "pay twenty-five dollars a year for use of room." In August, 1883, it was noted that they had "rented rooms from Mr. Hawkins for five years; for fifty dollars per year, the grange to fit up the rooms at their own expense." They also established a committee to look into forming an organization for the "apprehension of, and protection against, horse thieves." They were obviously successful, because such a group was indeed established.

The local Grange has drawn members from not only the farming population, but also from business people and village residents. Some families have been active Grangers for four generations. Family names of members that have been part of Perinton for generations include Pickering, Bown, Ellsworth, Osburn, and Marvin. Both the 50<sup>th</sup> and the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations drew over 150 participants. They met regularly in various places in Perinton and Fairport, including the Potter house and the Osburn Hotel, until they purchased the old Egypt schoolhouse on Pittsford-Palmyra Road in 1955.

While the Grange Hall on Pittsford-Palmyra Road was sold in 1997 due to declining Grange membership, twelve to fourteen members continue to meet regularly in a restaurant once a month. The organization donates to many area charities from the Grange Hall sale proceeds. Among their many recipients are Advent House, Dollars for Scholars, the Senior Bash, and other Grange groups, including the museum in Cortland, junior Grange programs, and founder Oliver Kelley's farm in Minnesota. Each year the group gives five hundred dictionaries to Fairport's third graders. The knitting group supplies baby hats and chemo hats to both Thompson and Unity Hospitals. Although small in numbers, the Fairport Grange is anything but small in its dedication to the community.



*Fairport Grange 2000*

Front Row (l to r): Marcy Ellsworth, Iona Diedrich, Fannie DeMuth, Esther Michelson  
Back Row (l to r): Charles McCarthy, Mary McCarthy, Harold Michelson, Jim Smith (Perinton Supervisor), Beverly Marvin, Letitia Pickering