



# *The St. Lawrence County* **Chronicler**

Vol. 24, No. 2

## *The Grange: A Farmer's Fraternity*

**S**eventy-five years ago many children in St. Lawrence County went to meetings where they would use a secret code, wear a special sash and after the meeting eat pie or donuts and cider. They were members of the Grange, a group for farmers and their families.

The Grange, or Patrons of Husbandry,

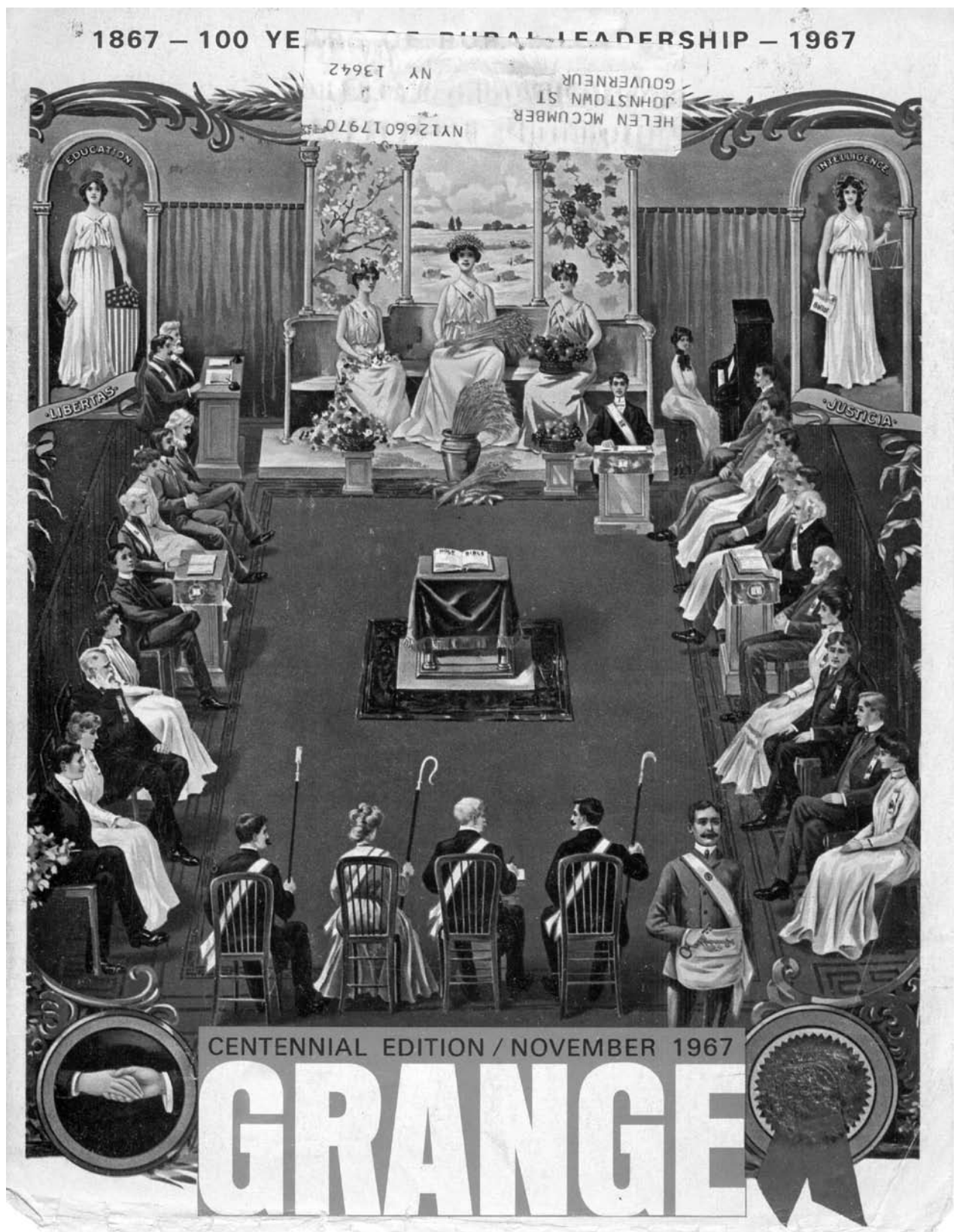
began after the Civil War in 1867. It was a time when most Americans were farmers. People who joined the Grange hoped that if they worked together they could pass laws that would help farmers. They met every other week to discuss new ideas about farming and to enjoy being with their neighbors.



*The upstairs of the Edwards Grange was the place for meetings and dances. Downstairs may have had a small store. Ed Hadlock remembers that the Hammond Grange sold big wheels of cheese, canned goods and boxes of cereal at their store. [SLCHA 1000-2537]*

In 1874 the Grange came to St. Lawrence County. Norwood and Massena started the first local groups, called Subordinate Granges. By 1937 there were 35 Subordinate Granges in the county with a total of 6,200 members. While their parents met, children had their own meetings in another room. They were called the Juvenile Grange.

Each Grange elected officers to run the meeting. The children had officers, too. They weren't called President and Vice-president but



*In this painting, the artist imagines what a Grange meeting might have looked like in 1867. The Grange had many officers. See if you can find some of these people in the painting: Master, Overseer, Lecturer, Steward, Assistant Steward, Lady Assistant Steward, Chaplain, Treasurer, Secretary, Gate Keeper, Color Bearer, Pianist, Ceres (in Roman mythology the goddess of agriculture), Flora (the goddess of Flowers), Pomona (the goddess of fruit). [SLCHA - cover of Grange Magazine, November 1967]*



CRARY MILLS GRANGE HALL NO. 54

*Here's a photo from a Crary Mills Grange meeting in 1908. How is it the same as the painting of the Grange meeting? How is it different? [Crary Mills Grange Yearbook, 1909; courtesy of Roger and Ann Huntley]*

had titles like Master and Overseer. Some of the offices were reserved for women and girls. It was a new idea to have men and women and children together in an organization. No one was left out when the family hitched their horse up to a buggy and drove to the Grange Hall.

Grange members had to learn secret rituals with passwords and secret hand symbols. This may seem funny to us today but one hundred years ago many groups, called fraternal organizations, had secret rules. New members had to learn the rules before they could become officers.

With so many farmers united, the Grange had political strength. Grangers helped pass a law for rural free delivery

of the mail and lobbied for more money to be spent on country roads. They joined together to provide fire insurance for farmers. In their meetings they learned new ways to farm and they helped out neighbors who were sick by sending food, flowers and cards.

## *Juvenile Grange*

What did children do at their meetings? They elected officers and had time during the meeting to play games. Each Juvenile Grange in St. Lawrence County decided what they would do for projects. In 1937 Dekalb Junction Juvenile Grange No. 378 organized an orchestra, made toys and aprons to sell at a bazaar, and pieced a quilt. They raised money at summer Ice



*1937 Officers of Silas Wright Juvenile Grange No. 66. Can you find the officers who are Ceres, Flora and Pomona? [SLCHA – 1938 St. Lawrence County Grange Directory]*

Cream Socials and also sold hot dogs and buns. They had a cake and cookie contest for girls and a birdhouse building contest for boys.

Mary Young was in the Juvenile Grange in Macomb in the 1950's. She liked going to Grange meetings to see her friends, to play games and sing songs and have something sweet to eat before going home. Sometimes her Juvenile Grange practiced skits and plays to put on for the adults in their meeting. They always had a booth at the County Fair. The Grange meetings in Macomb started at 8pm. "And we hoped to be out by 10pm," Mary said. Sometimes her father wasn't finished with the milking so he didn't always go but her mother was the secretary so she went to all the meetings, every other week.



*Richville Grange display at the St. Lawrence County Fair. What do you see at this Grange booth? Why are these objects on display? [SLCHA 1000-2745]*

## *Dinners, Socials & Feeds*

The 1938 Official Directory and History of St. Lawrence County Granges had this to say about food: “Grange dinners are famous and frequent. All hands like to turn out for them. To eat together, talk together, and laugh together is to know one another.”

Mary Young remembers that the Maccomb Grange had a Harvest Dinner in October with turkey and all the fixings. In the spring they’d have a Sugar Social with maple syrup heated up and thickened and then poured on snow. It would cool into delicious, sticky taffy. When your mouth got too much sweetness, she said, it was time to eat a dill pickle. Then after that, you could eat more sugar on snow!

In June the Grange would put on an Ice Cream Social with home-made ice cream and fresh-picked strawberries. These events were fund-raisers to earn money to pay for the Grange Hall expenses. Everyone worked hard cooking the food and setting up the Grange Hall but they also had fun eating and sharing. Many Granges put on “Neighbor Night”. They would invite the members from a nearby Grange to come and visit, listen to music and skits and, of course, share refreshments.

Roger Huntley went to Grange meetings with his family in the 1930’s. The Huntley’s lived on a farm about two miles away from the Crary Mills Grange. The Juvenile Grange met downstairs while the adults had their meeting upstairs. Roger remembers that his Grange had “lots of



CRARY MILLS GRANGE DINING HALL

*Crary Mills Grange dinner, 1908. This photo was taken in the downstairs room at the Crary Mills Grange. Do you see any paper plates and plastic silverware? [Crary Mills Grange Yearbook, 1909; courtesy of Roger and Ann Huntley]*

different feeds”. They had Oyster dinners and Sugar Socials and Chicken dinners. Sometimes they prepared a 10 cent lunch for the school kids. The schoolhouse was right across the street.



*Prof. W.F. Sudds Orchestra, Canton. Does this look like an orchestra to you? The meaning of the word has changed. Several granges in St. Lawrence County had their own “orchestras” that played at meetings and dances. Remember, this was before radio or television or record players or CD players. [SLCHA]*

Upstairs the Crary Mills Grange has a smooth hardwood floor—perfect for dancing. Every other Saturday night people from all over would gather for a square dance. The band had three musicians and they had to play loudly as they didn’t have an amplifier. On other nights people gathered to play cards at a Pedro Party. The card players sat in long rows of tables.

When the Crary Mills Grange Hall was built in 1905 it seemed big enough. But soon there were more and more people joining. In 1927 the building was cut in half. The front half was put on rollers and moved closer to the road. Carpenters built a new middle section to make the hall longer for meetings and dances.

Ed Hadlock became a member of the Hammond Juvenile Grange in 1935 when he was five years old. He remembers that all the kids wanted to be officers. Each officer had a special job during the meeting.

An adult, called the Matron, supervised the children. Children in the Hammond Juvenile Grange often prepared speeches or poems to share during the Grange meeting program. The experience of public speaking helped Ed feel more confident. As an adult he used the skills he learned at the Grange in his new job in Washington, DC. Almost 75 years later, Ed is still a member of the Hammond Grange. He wishes more people in St. Lawrence County today could experience the learning and fun he has had as a Granger.

In 1938 the Grange had over a million members in the United States. It hoped to accomplish these four goals:

1. A more prosperous agriculture
2. A more practical education.
3. A better community life.
4. Higher ideals of manhood, womanhood and citizenship.

## *What happened to all the Granges in St. Lawrence County?*

Today most of the Grange Halls are cold and empty. Only Macomb and Kendrew Corners still use their halls. The Juvenile Grange is completely gone.



*Kendrew Grange Hall. This photo doesn't have a date. We can see that one man drives a horse and buggy but behind him there is a truck. The road is dirt. (Now it is paved). How could we use these details to figure out when this photo was taken? [SLCHA 1000-484]*

Farming has changed since the first Granges began over one hundred years ago. Not as many families have farms and the farms that are left are much bigger. Grangers used to meet to discuss topics such as “What kind of horse is best suited for the farmer?” or “The Best Way of Planting and Caring for Potatoes.” Most farmers now drive huge tractors and plant long fields of corn.

Roger Huntley thinks that when television became available in the 1950's people didn't want to leave their homes at night. They weren't as interested in discussions and games and group dinners.

Roads are much better than they used to be and cars are faster. Families will now travel farther to go to church or a concert or a restaurant. They do not stay in a small community the way they used to.

Many of the Subordinate Granges in St. Lawrence County had to sell their Grange Halls. They didn't have enough members left to raise the money to pay for heat and maintenance of the buildings. Other Grange Halls are gradually falling apart, with leaky roofs and broken windows.



*Crary Mills Grange Hall today. This photo was taken at a birthday party on February 29, 2008. Guests had a potluck dinner downstairs in the Crary Mills Community Center then came upstairs to dance. [Courtesy of Betsy Kepes]*

In some communities it is now the Volunteer Fire Department or a church that puts on Chicken and Biscuit dinners, Pig Roasts and Ice Cream Socials. People still like to gather together to share food and companionship.

re-opening. Now the building is called the Crary Mills Tri-town Community Center. People today still gather together there to talk and eat and to dance on the beautiful hardwood floor.



*A dance band at the Crary Mills Grange Hall in 2008. Notice the advertisements on the early 1900s stage curtain behind the musicians. [Courtesy of Betsy Kepes]*

In Crary Mills the Grange Hall was abandoned for fifteen years. The paint peeled off its walls and trees crowded against its windows. But some of the people in Crary Mills remembered how much they had enjoyed going to dances and dinners at the Crary Mills Grange. They decided to raise money to fix up the building and in 1985 they had a grand

<p><b>THE ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY CHRONICLER</b> <i>Spring 2009 - Volume 24, Number 2 - Copyright 2009, SLCHA</i> ISSN 1077 - 4637</p> <p>The St. Lawrence County Chronicler is a collaborative project of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association and the St. Lawrence - Lewis Board of Cooperative Educational Services.</p> <p><i>Writing/Research: Betsy Kepes</i> <span style="float: right;"><i>Design: Susie Wood</i></span></p>
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