

THE GRANGE IN COLUMBIA COUNTY IN 1903

INTRODUCTION: *Included in The Morning Press first anniversary edition on March 2, 1903, was an article about the Patrons of Husbandry or the Grange, an important national farm organization that was well represented in Columbia County. Charles H. Dildine the author of the piece entitled "The Origin of the Grange and Its Growth in Columbia County" was a farmer in Greenwood Township and a Grange official who was the State Deputy for the North Columbia County.*

He commented briefly on the role of Oliver H. Kelly who founded the Patrons of Husbandry in 1867. It is important to note that in the early years its major growth occurred in the Midwestern states and became an important voice in addressing the grievances of the agricultural community. It had success in a number of areas: government regulation of railroad freight rates, establishment of farmer owned cooperatives, exposing monopolistic practices of grain elevator companies, and calling for rural free mail delivery. It was not until late the late 1800s and early 1900s that the Grange achieved a significant following among farmers in the east. In addition to its political agenda, the Grange also sought to provide social and educational programs for farm families. Dildine's account is important in identifying the number of Granges in Columbia County in 1903, a total of sixteen. His article follows:



"The Patrons of Husbandry or better known to many as the Grange originated in the mind of O. H. Kelly, a young farmer, reared in the New England states, who subsequently moved to Minnesota, taking up farming. Shortly after the Civil War he was commissioned by the Commissioner of Agriculture to travel through the farming districts and secure statistical reports. In the discharge of his duties, he saw the dilapidated condition of everything appertaining to the farming industry and the unfriendly feeling among the farmers of the North, South, East and West. He determined there should be some organization to elevate, educate and bring about a friendly feeling among the farmers. During his leisure hours, he studied in his own mind the organization of the Patrons of Husbandry or the Grange that has become such a marvelous success and which has an organization that is National, State, County, and Subordinate.

COUNTY ORGANIZATION

"The first Grange to be organized in Columbia County was Light Street. Grange No. 31 by H. H. Brown, the secretary of the Grange Fire Insurance Company with property insured to the amount of \$4,524,149.00. This Grange owns its own hall. The second to be started in Columbia Count was at Bendertown with O. J. Hess as the present master. The next was Valley Grange No. 542, P. of H. at Millville. Dr. Everett is the present master, having been elected for the second term. The literary work and the study of practical questions are made an essential part of their program, and they meet regularly twice a month.

"Centre Grange No. 58 is located near one of Lafayette Creasy's farms, and they own a very fine hall. The first floor is used for one of the public schools, and the second is well furnished and used for the hall. Benton Grange No. 88, the next to be started, has increased its membership in the County. Hon. Russel Karns is the master. Sugar Loaf Grange No. 105 is located two miles north east of Coles Creek Station at a point where five public roads meet. This Grange deserves not a little credit in helping to make the Grassmere picnic the success it always is.

"Rohrsburg Grange No. 108 is next to Benton in point of membership. A fact of more than ordinary interest in connection with this Grange is that many young people are numbered among its members; they always take an active interest in the literary program. This Grange is usually awarded the prize banner at the Pomona meetings¹ for the largest representation.

"Orange Grange No. 128, located at Orangeville, is another flourishing Grange. Jackson Union No. 210 located near the North Mountain own their hall, the first floor being used for the public school, and the second for the Grange Hall. Locust No. 248 located at Newlin also owns

a very fine hall. Other flourishing Granges that complete the county organization are Briar Creek Grange No. 146, Catawissa Grange No. 216, Bloomsburg No. 322, Hemlock No. 525, Numidia No. 857, and Waller No. 1059.”

The foregoing facts presented by Mr. Dildine show in a manner most forcible the county organization of the Grange; shows its marvelous development while, its existence and growth show the manifold benefits which it reaps for its members. In the words of Mr. Dildine: “The Grange in Columbia County is here to stay, and the majority of the organizations are in a healthy and thrifty condition. Within the last year, I have helped confer degrees on 105 candidates.”

¹ A Pomona Grange meeting is a combined meeting of several Granges from a specific area. “At the Pomona level, community concerns are dealt with on a county-wide basis.”

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