

THE FOUNDING OF THE NATIONAL GRANGE



“I FEED YOU ALL”

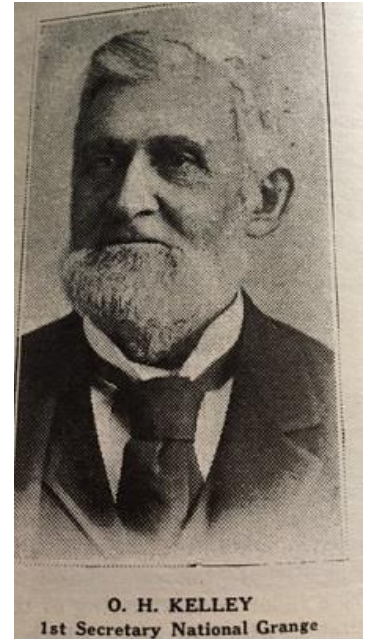
HISTORIC VALENTOWN MUSEUM GRANGE BOOKLET
BOOKLET No. 1 of 6 – The Founding of the National Grange

*Source: 100 Year History of the New York State Grange 1873-1973, as compiled by Historian L. Ray Alexander, Maplewood Grange (maplewoodgrange.org), California Granger (castategrange.org).
Research compiled by Lynne D. Perry.*

NATIONAL GRANGE OVERVIEW

The great farm fraternity known as the Grange had its beginnings through the efforts of the Federal Government in an attempt to bring order and healing to the grievous wounds of warfare and chaos in the South immediately following the Civil War.

In 1866, Oliver Hudson Kelley, an employee of the Agricultural Department, was sent by Commissioner of Agriculture Isaac Newton on a mission into the Southern States that the Civil War had ravaged to report on the conditions of their agriculture and needs. Mr. Kelley was a Free Mason, and it was during this trip that he conceived of the organization of the National Grange which adopted several of the statutes and practices of the Order of Free Masons such as devotion to, support of and compassion for community.



On his return from the South, Kelley stopped in Boston to visit his niece, Miss Caroline A. Hall. She suggested he plan to include as members in this order the women of the farms on an equal basis with the men. Miss Hall was later accorded the honor of a rank as equal to the founders of the order.

The first formal meeting of the National Grange was held November 15th, 1867, at which time the preliminary forms of the organization were considered.

On December 4th, 1867 (now regarded as the birthday of the order) the National Grange was formally organized, with William Saunders as master and Oliver H. Kelley as secretary.

A trial Grange was established to work out the newly formed ritual and degree work. This pioneer grange was reborn into Potomac Grange No. 1 of Washington.

At a meeting of the National Grange on March 28, 1868, Mr. Kelley was authorized to undertake the work of organizing the Granges. Just previously Kelley had resigned from his position in the Post Office Department and now gave himself to the work of establishing Granges nationwide.

The first subordinate Grange organized by Mr. Kelley was Fredonia Grange #1 in Chautauqua County, NY, on April 16, 1868. The 1st year State Granges were organized numbered 10, the 2nd year 36 were added, the 3rd year 134 were added and at the end of th3 4th year the total number of Granges had

reached 1,005. By 1874 new Granges were averaging about 2,000 a month. At the end of the 8th year, Mr. Kelley announced that 24,290 charters had been granted to Granges.

The marvelous growth of the new order during those first years was largely due to the fact that the farm people believed that they were unjustly suffering from excessive freight charges on the produce on the part of the railroad companies and also that the prices they were compelled to pay for the supplies they purchased were also excessive.

In this new organization the farmers saw an opportunity to obtain relief from the injustices under which they were suffering and so came into the order by the thousands. The proposition of cooperating in the purchase of supplies also made a strong appeal and cooperative trade was advanced as a leading inducement to join the Grange.

With the exception of one, the seven founding fathers of the order of Patrons of Husbandry were all men in employment of the Federal Government in Washington DC. These men came from a wide array of diverse backgrounds and were:

William Saunders, chosen as First Master of the National Grange, was the superintendent of the governments experimental gardens and grounds in Washington, DC.

William M. Ireland, chosen as First Treasurer of the National Grange, was chief clerk for the finance department of the United States Post Office.

Dr. John Trimble, chosen as one of the secretaries of the National Grange, was an Episcopalian clergyman who was a clerk in the Treasury Department.

John R. Thompson, a veteran of the Civil War, was also a clerk in the Treasury Department.

Aaron B. Gorsh, a retired Universalist minister chosen as First Chaplain of the National Grange, was a clerk in the Agricultural Department.

Francis Marion McDowell, a prominent fruit grower in Steuben County, New York was inducted into the National Grange after meeting William Saunders, who was attending a fruit fair near Mr. McDowell's home.

Oliver Hudson Kelley, who initially conceived of the organization, and was the other Secretary of the National Grange was a clerk at the Department of Agriculture and then later at the United States Post Office.

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Grange Ritualism Development, Meaning

The founders prepared a fraternal ritual based upon the most exalted views of God and nature. The symbols come from nature and the art of farming.

IN ESSENTIALS, **UNITY** IN NONESSENTIALS, **LIBERTY** IN ALL THINGS, **CHARITY**

“While the Grange does not live for or by Ritual alone, the Ritualistic structure is the lifeblood of the Order. It is the ingredient that brings members together in harmonious relationship to work for the good of all people everywhere.

The teachings of the ritual enable the Order to be political without being partisan, religious without being denominational, and though it binds its members with a strong fraternal tie, it assures a complete individuality.” -C. Jerome Davis, Field Assistant to the National Master

The Preamble to the Constitution of the National Grange states:

... Unity of action cannot be acquired without discipline, and discipline cannot be enforced without significant organization; hence, we have a ceremony of initiation which binds us in mutual fraternity as with a band of iron; but, although its influence is so powerful, its application is as gentle as that of the silken thread that binds a wreath of flowers.

In a letter written by Founder Oliver H. Kelley in August 1867, Kelley said:

"I suggest the project of organizing an Order to embrace in its membership those persons interested in cultivating the soil. I should make it a secret order, with several degrees, and signs and passwords. The lectures in each degree should be practical, appertaining to agricultural work, and at the same time convey a moral lesson. While the Order would aim to advance agriculture to a higher rank, by encouraging education, it would at the same time naturally embrace the benefits to its members guaranteed by Masonry. Every tool used by farmers and gardeners could be emblems of the Order in some degree, and each convey a practical and moral illustration."

In a later letter, Kelley said:

"Country and town societies and clubs are interesting for a while, but soon lose their interest, and I see nothing that will be lasting, unless it combines with it the advantages which an Order similar to our Masonic Fraternity will provide. Among the objects in view may be mentioned a cordial and social fraternity of the farmers all over the country. Encourage them to read and think, to plant fruits and flowers, beautify their homes; elevate them; make them progressive. [...]Every tool the farmer works with, and all his surroundings, the beauties of nature, can convey a moral illustrated lesson, and in the labors of the farm also,-the preparation of the soil (the mind) for the seed (ideas)-planting-the harvest, etc."

Grange Ritualism

- First Degree: - Faith - Spring - Laborer - Maid
- Second Degree: - Hope - Summer - Cultivator - Shepherdess
- Third Degree: - Charity - Autumn - Harvester - Cleaner
- Fourth Degree : - Fidelity - Winter - Husbandman - Matron
- Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh are degrees of Pomona, Flora, and Ceres or Demeter and are conferred by Pomona Granges which are County or District Granges, by State Granges for the degree of Flora, and by the National for the degree of Ceres.

GRANGE ACHIEVEMENTS

Some of the blessings brought to the farmers of America through the Grange were well stated in the annual address of National Master Aaron Jones at the 1904 annual session at Portland, Oregon. Master Jones said:

“The Grange has removed the isolation of the farm home, inoculated and promoted education, fostered and secured better schools for our children, raised the standard of intelligence amount the farming population, developed the latent talent of its members and making them logical thinkers and writers and fluent speakers, and giving them a better understanding of the relation of agriculture to the varied and complex social, industrial and commercial interest of our country and the world.”

Some of the leading achievements of the order in its long career have been:

The recognition of agriculture as shown by the addition of a member in the President’s cabinet representing the great industry; the adoption of rural mail delivery and the postal savings bank system, and the parcel post delivery system; obtaining legislation to supervise and control the nations railway systems; the enactment of legislation for the regulation of the manufacture and sale of oleo/ margarine; the establishment of agricultural colleges, experimental stations, farmer’s institutes and the teaching of agriculture in the public schools; preventing the passage of much legislation that would have been harmful to agriculture; developing and training leadership among the farm people, and laying the foundation for the successful farm cooperatives which in the past few decades have been established.

Historic Valentown Museum

The Historic Valentown Museum, owned and operated by the **Victor Historical Society**, promotes, preserves and teaches the history of the **Historic Valentown** site, including the 1879 structure known as Valentown Hall, its collection of related artifacts and the history of the surrounding community.

Using the **Historic Valentown** site, we teach by using exhibits, giving tours and through promoting community. Our goal is to teach the public the concepts and applications of American commerce and the community story, past, present and potential future. Our mission is to create interest and instill appreciation for hometown business and community using our historic collection of documents, our knowledge of the people and generations that came before us, the American made artifacts housed within Valentown Hall, and other settings on the site.

Historic Valentown Museum

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Historic Valentown is owned and operated by the
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