



Otter Creek Grange Hall

HISTORY OF OTTER CREEK GRANGE

By WILLARD SQUIRES

The Grange was organized on a National level in 1867, while the country was in turmoil following the Civil War. It is America's oldest farm organization, and the only rural fraternity in the world.

The first subordinate grange in Vermont was organized August 12, 1871, being Green Mt., at St. Johnsbury. On July 4, 1872 the Vermont State Grange came into being. This was the first state in New England and the 7th in the United States to have such a grange. By 1901 there were 286 subordinates in Vermont.

Some of the Clarendon people thought it would be nice to have one in our town, so wrote to C. J. Bell, State Master, for information. Mr. Bell responded by sending R. J. Galusha, the State Lecturer, here to talk with the people and 31 signed to become Charter Members.

On February 13th, seventeen of these thirty one people met at the Town Hall with Brother Galusha, and the Grange was organized with Seneca Smith as Master.

Brother Galusha installed the officers and instructed them in their duties. Brother Lensey Burr suggested the name, Otter Creek, which was adopted and the number 287. Also the 1st and 3rd Thursday evenings were selected for meeting nights.

State Master Bell visited us in March, and gave us help and instruction. We received our Charter in April. We bought a piano and officer's chairs and tables. The officers bought their own badges, and soon regalia was purchased.

In 1903, a Ladies' Degree Team was formed which continued to work the 3rd and 4th degrees until about 1940.

In 1905, Otter Creek was among the granges which formed Killington Pomona #14. We continued to meet in the Town Hall, but were thinking of a home of our own. In 1921, we were informed that we must find another place; so a committee got busy and in October of that year arranged to buy a building, a former creamery. It was remodeled and we moved to it in the spring of 1922.

In 1923, the barn on the property was purchased, and later sold, making room for parking cars.

From October 1921 to November 1923 we earned \$2446.00, used to pay for remodeling and buying chairs for the hall and a new range for the kitchen.

There was never any mortgage on the building, as the money was obtained by a note, signed by 10 members, and with the fine co-operation of all the grange members, paid by having dances, suppers, and entertainments.

In 1926, we observed our 25th anniversary with State Master Willis Cady with us.

On February 19, 1931, we celebrated our 30th birthday with Brother and Sister Burr as guests of honor. They were the only charter members present.

November 2, 1933 we finished paying our borrowed money, but we have kept on working for repairs and improvements, such as a furnace, new floors, larger kitchen, papering and painting hall, and painting outside of building.

In looking over the old record books, it seems as though almost everyone in town had sometime been a member, the number being 135 at one time. Many of these have died, some have moved away, and others just dropped out.

There have been 22 masters. Several have been elected for another term after a period of time, namely Horace Dryden, Charles Daly, George Squier, Leon Moulton, George Holden, and our present master, Willard Squier.

This grange has furnished 2 deputies for the State Grange. They were Lensey Burr and George Squier, both giving exemplary service, especially George in his delivery of the installation charges, entirely committed to memory.

In 1951, we celebrated our 50th anniversary, with all of the granges in the Pomona district invited, and 48 of our own members present.

Worthy State Master, Harold Arthur was with us and presented 25 year certificates to 12 members, including Almo and Minnie Franzoni, Rena Morse,

Charles Daly, Willard and George Squier, Doris Thompson Stocks, and Viola Heath.

During the 75 years of our existence, we have tried to follow the Grange lessons by having faith in the present, Hope for the future, Charity for all, and as an example of Fidelity the arduous duties of Secretary were performed continuously, except for 2 years, 1910-11, by the first Secretary, Gertrude Burr, until her death in 1942, a period of 40 years. Since her death, there have been only 4 secretaries. The same Chaplain has held the office for more than 30 years, Rachel Weeks.

It is said that "The Past is Prologue." So we shall continue to carry on in the future.

We now have running water in the hall as arrangements were made with the School Board for Right of Way across grange property in exchange to connect with the school water system.

Where the old barn was, now stands the Volunteer Fire Department House. The property was given to the Fire Department, also the right to connect on to the water from the school.

At present there are 15 members with 25 year certificates; 5 with 50 year certificates, Amherst Weeks has been a member for 72 years and Rachel Weeks 69 years.

The grange hall was painted on the outside last summer for the Bicentennial Year.