

Maine State Grange Master's Address

144th Annual State Convention

State Master Rick Grotton

To our Sister Amanda Brozana Rios, Communications Director of the National Grange, Officers, Delegates and Brothers and Sisters of the Maine State Grange,

It gives me great pleasure to present to you my second annual Master's Address. I wish to thank the delegates for their confidence in me to lead this wonderful organization called the Grange. Much thanks for the support and help received from my Brothers and Sisters. Your willingness to help when called upon; the hard work you do, is very much appreciated.

Many thanks to Sister Sharon Morton and Brother Jim Owens again for their work and keeping me informed and in line. Sister Sharon has been instrumental in assisting in and assuring that events being held at State Headquarters went smoothly and without incident. She has attended a number of the agricultural fairs this year as well as cooking and preparing for these events. Brother Jim, as the Administrative Assistant, has been busy doing the administrative duties and planning certain events such as State Grange Session and the banquet.

Of course, I need to thank Greg Rafferty for all of his support. He made sure, as always, I was on the ball often testing me and keeping me on my toes. I certainly am very grateful!

Our State officer meetings this year were very much fulfilling. It was enjoyable to see the enthusiasm, participation and willingness to lay issues on the table. Each discussion was rewarding and necessary for our growth. Each contributed with ideas, suggestions and problem solving. I am blessed to have such a talented and motivated group of leaders to work with and sincerely thank them for their support and hard work.

Many thanks go to Margaret Morse, our State Lecturer who made Maine proud at Northeast Lecturers Conference in Castleton, VT this past August. She has been attending these conferences for years and her experience showed tremendously. Good work Margaret.

Two State Directors meetings were held in the past year. They shared ideas, offered new incentives and worked together. We have some new leaders this year who became Directors and their work is outstanding. Sister Karen Gagne took over as Director of the Agricultural Committee. She stepped right in and with the help of her Committee and her agricultural background, had another successful year. She put in much work and time with enthusiasm and energy. We have a new Youth Director, Terry Lacombe who has been busy formulating plans for 2018 when we host the Northeast Youth Conference. She and Jared Grenier attended the 2017 Youth Conference and fulfilled Maine's part during the conference. Thank you to both!!!

The Community Service and Family Health and Hearing Committee has again had a busy and productive year. Thank you to sister Christine Corliss for her hard work. Their goal of receiving funds from National Grange has been achieved for another year. Thank you to all the Granges that turned in their Community Service Report. The CWA Committee again has had a productive year. Thank you to sister Karen Flagg for her work and those who contributed items to the Big E again this year. Thanks to all members who entered the contests. The Big E is

always looking for crafts and other donations to sell during their annual fair so keep up the good work. Sister Christine Hebert has been working with the Juniors, trying new ways to rebuild our Junior program. Seven Juniors attended camp this year at Scribner's Mills in Harrison this year. It was much fun as the attendees learned to churn butter, cook delicious muffins, make tapered candles and observe barrel making and other woodworking procedures. It was a pleasure to see their crafts displayed and judged at the annual Family Campout. To Brother Jim Annis who has kept us up to date with Legislative policies. Our annual Legislative Day was not well attended since the Legislature was in session on that day, however, those who did attend were served a great meal by devoted Grange members. Thanks to those dedicated members and State Officers who offered their time to help.

Many thanks to Brother Walter Boomsma our Communications Director who has been instrumental in keeping us informed and for all the other duties he does to keep communication flowing. I thank him for his hard work and dedication. It is great to know that non-members are asking questions about membership, locations and contacts of Granges, membership history of their loved ones, and various other questions about our Order. The website has proved to be a tremendous help with communications throughout the Granges and to general public. To find out more about State Grange operates and to keep up with event dates, I urge all with computers to GOTO mainstategrange.org and visit our webpage. Hit "Submit" and you will be receiving information from the material that goes into the bulletin to what is going on in throughout the State.

Our new committees were active during this second year. Our new Fundraising Committee director, Steven Haycock has worked hard from the start and continues to plan new fundraising ideas. He organized a very successful Variety Show in April that offered a wide variety of entertainment, silent auctions and much fun. Thank you to the planners, volunteers and participants. Our annual Yard Sale was well attended with many enthusiastic brothers and sisters organizing and selling. It is always a pleasure to help with these events as spending time with and working with my Grange family for a common cause; the benefit of our Order. We always have a good time. It is rewarding for all.

Brother Stanley Howe offered to take valuable records and Grange memorabilia to his museum in Bethel. These records, old charters and pictures are a reminder of the hard work of our dedicated ancestors who helped make this Order flourish. We should be proud of our history.

Thank you to the Deputies who again continued to shine. Sister Melissa Baldwin from York Pomona and Thomas Cooper from Hancock Pomona are our two newest deputies who took over with pride and great ideas. One of our goals from the previous year was to enforce a chain of command in order to establish some structure and to allow the deputies to do their jobs. Including inspections and instructions, they were instructed to listen to members, report on their inspections to what is going on in their districts and to keep communication lines open. This was tested many times during the year and I thank the Deputies for handling issues and to provide solutions for the Good of the Order. I had the pleasure of working with them. Many thanks to our Chief Deputy, Maynard Chapman who has been there when I needed him and working with his staff. I appreciate the work all of you do.

New leaders are needed to be our successors on all levels. Anyone who has an interest in a State Committee or being trained to be a leader or to learn mentoring practices please let it be known. Working together accomplishes more and makes us stronger. Since this was mentioned in last session's address, we were able to

fill the State Soloist and back up musician duties. Thank you to Carolyn Van Horn and Linda Cobb of Manchester Grange for contacting me in order to fill those positions.

To all members of the Grange who through their hard work, devotion and loyalty, have helped our beloved Order to reach 150 glorious years. Think of the number of lives we have touched, the smiles we have generated, the betterment to the communities we have served, the accomplishments over the years we have accomplished and continue to do. I will not single out and praise any particular Granges for their outstanding work since there has been a number of Granges who have performed such outstanding work and to leave someone unmentioned would not be fair. But I will mention a couple of big events that occurred this year. There have been many active events throughout the state and most have been published on the website and through the media. One event, just recently, was posted on Facebook by the recipient of an award. The feelings expressed by this gentleman can be experienced when reading his column. Celebrations have been held to honor our 150 years of existence, the most recent was a state-wide event complete with entertainment and a ceremony to recognize 50-year members. If I have missed anyone, my sincere apologies for all of you have been instrumental in the work assigned to you.

A number of Degree Days have been held, the last two in the last three weeks. A big thanks to all who have organized these events, volunteered to do parts and to cook meals. Obligation ceremonies have been done, I did three within the last month. New members are coming in, many reviving tired Granges and giving them new life. One Grange, Escutarsis #231, had closed a year ago but due to timing circumstances, this Grange received a new life last Friday at their reorganizational meeting where 19 new members were obligated. Many thanks to Richard Harriman, who was in the right place at the right time cleaning out the Grange Hall this past Spring when approached by a curious towns person. Thank you to Ammadamast Grange for their support and warm welcome to their new neighbors. They are true Grangers! Thank you also to Deputy Phil Parsons for his help and support and to Brother Rolfe Staples and his team for doing the Obligation Ceremony and installing the new officers.

It has been a busy year; many of the ideas set up from the previous year were tested and accepted. One big accomplishment was the chain of command which helped set up a structure for our Order and to improve communication throughout the Granges. It has been another year of accomplishments. As your leader, first year goals were set and many were carried out in this second year. Thank all of you for accepting the changes.

Although tremendous effort and hard work has prevailed we still have our realities to face. Many thanks and recognitions have been given, however, let's look at the big picture. Membership has been declining still. Only a handful of the Granges have held degree days and it is the usually the same ones. Where are the others? We need to be at full strength with every Pomona area participating. This is the Grange way and to be slack adds to the declining membership. There is much work to do everywhere to keep Granges operating. We need to work together.

Three big areas of concern are declining membership, declining number of doers, and declining leadership interest. The first, membership is always a concern and should be a priority during good times and bad. Most organizations are having similar problems gaining members. Changes in society attribute to this trend. But, we are a diverse Order where there are opportunities for all ages and with effective planning and educating the public, we can gain members. Then, what do we do with them after they join? Let them be heard, accept them warmly, work with them, educate them on traditions and rituals, and let them in on planning events. A major

concern is that while we are getting new members, educating them about our Order has been lacking. This leads to decisions being made by our successors based on what they have been taught about traditions and rituals (if anything) which may take Grange down a different path; one unlike we know today.

There are many tools available to help with the education and how to get members. Membership training is available, materials available to guide you and people to talk to. What are the needs of your community? How can the Grange be of help to the community? Will the schools allow the Grange to provide information to the students? Does the community know you exist? These questions need to be answered. The more the public knows you and your works, membership will be much easier.

Membership should be a topic at every Grange meeting and all, not just a few, should be coming up with ideas or plans to maintain and increase membership. This appears to be a dubious task, however, we can make it fun and rewarding for us, as members, the community and for new members. How do we do this? Use our minds, our talents and the lessons of the Grange; Faith, Hope, Charity, Fidelity and Perseverance. By being active, known in your community, and with a smile, membership tasks become rewarding and less of a task. People will want to join or to help. In this day, people are tired of a divided country with negative news and more problems. They want something fresh and rewarding, something with purpose, something positive and want to be part of it. That is where the Grange stands. With very little effort, most Granges can make this happen as we always have. This is one of those times where we can say, "We have always done it that way." Do you as members know how to do this? Have you explained this to new members? Have you opened up to your communities? The time is NOW. Great opportunities await us if we only reach out and accept and implement them. But this takes effort of ALL members, not just your leadership. We are responsible for helping our own Granges by instructing and being instructed, honoring and being honored, blessing and being blessed, approved by your own conscience and the judgment of the wise and good who know you and your works (all 5th degree members should recognize this phrase in the Overseer's degree charge). If we only paid attention and listened to the degree charges and the descriptions of the installation charges for each office. No matter how many times we hear these words, we should reflect on them and put them to use. Everyone should be familiar with the duties of their offices, either by listening to the charges, asking questions, visiting other Granges or doing research. Be proud of what you do for your community, for others and for your Granges. There are great personal rewards included also. For those who have not become 5th degree members yet, please continue your Grange journey as there are still lessons to be learned. State Grange is here for you. We offer training for new leaders, acquiring membership, resolution writing, team building and how to get along. We offer contests on all levels in most departments, CWA, Community Service, Membership, Youth, Junior and Lecturer. The State Officers attend Pomonas, sharing information and listening to your ideas and concerns. Your deputies are not only there to instruct and inspect but are our eyes and ears. We need to hear from you. We cannot run your Subordinate Granges, it is up to you and your members to work together in your areas to help your communities, their people and to provide a place for them to enjoy. There were mixed results as a closing of the four Pomonas last year. In Lincoln and Androscoggin Pomonas there have been little or no change in attendance from the new Subordinates in their districts while in others, there have been some good attendance from the "new" granges in their areas. Pomona is very important to the structure of our Grange and more are encouraged to take their 5th degree. These are offered all year long by many Pomonas.

Second, those who are the "doers" are getting smaller in number. We need all members to step up and offer their service. I hear "This Grange used to be so active but we hardly see anything going on there anymore" or

"What happened to the Grange suppers that used to be done here twice a month?" or similar questions. The answer is that they are not "doing" anymore or that the ones who kept the Grange going are gone and the rest of the membership is lost or the doers are just tired out and no one wants to take over. Doers, train others including new members of what makes your Grange operate by teaching them what you know.

Third, leadership roles are not being filled as most do not want to lead. We can all help each other out on this one. Each person is unique and has their own areas of interest and knowledge of that interest. Be a leader by sharing your ideas and take charge on that subject. Form committees in your Granges. A Chair will be a leader with their duty to supply information from State Grange concerning that committee such as events, contests and other areas of interest. Step outside the box, take the step, learn more about the Grange, yourself and others, and do your Grange proud. All are for the GOTO. Don't be afraid to ask about leadership roles and what to do about becoming a leader. Leadership training is available with team building exercises. I have been to a number of these in state and out of state. Each course has been refreshing and informational. Most of all it helps our Order!

There will be no Northeast Leader's Conference this year as it was decided that the current structure of the conference needs to be revamped and improved to achieve its purpose. A new committee was formed, with our own Sister Sherry Harriman as Chair. She has attended these sessions regularly and knows where changes need to occur.

This second year we put plans from paper into action. Last year I gave you observations I noticed in the first year. Here are some of the results. First, there have been many questions about procedures and what each office entails. Granges have been encouraged repeatedly by Deputies and State Officers to educate newer members who do not fully understand the Grange and what it is about. Mentors, including myself have been working with Granges to show them the floor work if necessary, stress Grange procedures and to create a pleasant working atmosphere. This is working in the Grange I mentor. Second, those Granges which are active serving the community, fundraising, involved with other organizations and that work together are the most successful and are growing. I have seen a turnaround in some Granges who have become more active which includes my affiliate Grange. With a little planning and organization, things are getting done and new members are joining. Third, it seems that the purpose of the Grange is missing the mark which means that there is no uniformity, we have drifted apart, some Granges are doing their own thing and act more like a social club than a Grange. This year more Granges are working together, however, the lack of uniformity still rears its ugly head. Fourth, the trend toward being self sufficient in growing our own food, the growing numbers of young farmers, and the interest in agricultural area are drawing the interest of the public. Awareness is forthcoming and involvement by the Granges to tap into this resource needs to increase more than it has been doing. Fifth, we need to train new leaders, delegate assignments rather than to have one or two people dominating and to involve all members, other organizations and non-members in our endeavors. This area has show much improvement this year especially in training new leaders. There is still a long road ahead but together we can drive on the paved road instead of one filled with obstacles.

The plan to add more members to some State Committees around the State has been a slow one. The Youth Committee has expanded as well and the CWA is looking for new committee members. Training for all new leaders will be available. I will work with some of the Committees with recruiting and directed interested members to their attention. The plan of having the State Lecturer send Lecturers materials, training and

developing productive program ideas has been successful due to our State Lecturer who immediately took on this task.

A cleanup of closing inactive Subordinate Granges and selling empty Grange Halls that were abandoned by closed Granges over a period of time has been a great task but effective in the second year. There are still a few on the market and a couple needing to be listed but many have been sold by either the State Grange or a Grange into which a closed Grange has merged.

One thing I have mentioned in my visits to various Granges is the importance of having committees and having these committees report on their activities. Each year Directors submit their new workbooks or reference guides that give event dates, instructions for contests, new ideas for Granges and ways to be productive. All delegates receive these at State Grange to pass along to respective committees. If you do not have one of these and would like to have one, ask your Master, State Director or Committee Member or GOTO mainstategrange.org where these are listed. Active committees are the nervous system of our Granges. Without them, we are lax and uneventful, with them we are busy, productive and efficient. In which category does your Grange belong?

As mentioned last year, Granges are encouraged to focus on their Lecturer's programs. They are an important part of a success of a Grange. I have still visited many Granges where the Lecturer had no program or had a reading. This is unacceptable! More attentiveness to agricultural programs such as having programs on being self sufficient in growing food, how to can, to plant, to take care of the soil. More ritualistic programs need to be implemented so that new and seasoned members alike understand how and why the Grange was formed. Bring in speakers, hold community workshops on such topics and hold Community Service nights; honoring those who make the community a better place or volunteers who have impacted a number of people in their communities. Keep your doors open to community events, advertise your accomplishments, wear your Grange clothing in public, include Grange in conversations with non- members and make everyone feel welcome. Smile, have fun, work together. Non-members sense your energies and if it is a good feeling they will come back.

I invite all delegates and members here to participate in a Town Hall discussion to clear up questions you have, to offer words of wisdom, new ideas, and to have a "family" discussion on how we can all improve our Order. Please listen carefully. In order for this Town Hall to be successful, full participation is needed. Taking notes is encouraged and a National Digest available in case we need to refer to by-laws. We must all be on the same page during these discussions so show respect to those who ask questions to those who answer the questions. I believe this meeting is necessary for all of us. Attention and cooperation is to be encouraged. Last year we had time restraints so we were unable to hold the discussions.

To update you on the progress of selling Headquarters, Kennebec Savings Bank only wanted to offer us \$420,000 which was refused. They were given first option based on the right of way conditions and contracts we have with them, especially concerning the parking spaces at the rear of the building. A commercial realtor was notified and the building is currently on the market. More information will be forthcoming. Sharon Morton, Sherry Harriman and I have been taking inventory of all the Grange "stuff" located at Headquarters. Much of this "stuff" which included staves, ballot boxes, gavels, implement cases and cloths was given to other Granges as offered in an earlier Master column or sold at the annual garage sale. Many old Charters were offered on loan to historical societies. The garage is looking more open; however, we still have much more to clean out.

In conclusion, we all have issues to face in our Granges, however, we are all in this together. We must face and tackle these obstacles with confidence. It will make us stronger. As we go through this session please become acquainted with others, talk Grange, make new friends or reignite old ones, and most of all let's create more uniformity. We have survived 150 years which is a remarkable milestone. Hopefully it will survive another 150 years. It's up to all of us to decide where our future path leads. Let us all choose to grow by applying and honoring our lessons of Faith, Hope, Charity, Fidelity and Perseverance. We can and we will!

Respectfully Submitted,

Rick Grotton