



*American Values.
Hometown Roots.*

Maine State Grange Website Handbook

2016- 2017

This handbook has been prepared to aid users in taking full advantage of the Maine State Grange website.

Walter
Boomsma,
Communications
Director

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INTRODUCTION

One might certainly wonder what the founders would think if they could somehow come back and look at the world today. While they did succeed in creating an organization with permanence, it is doubtful they could have imagined the technology we now take for granted. Remembering the campaign to get mail delivered to rural areas, they likely did not envision a day when we'd have email at our fingertips.

As an organization that values ritual and predictability, our relationship with technology is guarded—perhaps more guarded than that of society in general. That's not a bad thing, but we must also adapt to the times for if not we will surely be left behind.

Rather than debate the relative merits of the technological abilities we now have, let us adapt them to our good use to the extent we are comfortable. Perhaps more importantly, let us understand that if we are to have relevance to future generations, we must speak their language using media they have adopted.

The Maine State Website is far from being on the leading edge—somewhat by design. When the site was totally rebuilt in 2011 we agreed to use a structure that would

- Encourage prompt posting and maintenance of resources,
- Control the posting process with some degree of moderation and quality control,
- Allow users to find basic information such as applications, manuals, etc. readily and,
- Allow users to subscribe to and receive email versions of posts.

In addition, software development has allowed us to add yet another component in the form of an event calendar.

This structure has served us well and will continue. The challenge we have faced is, simply, participation. At this stage of development we do not need more “bells and whistles,” we need increased use of the structure in place. The increased use must come from all levels of the organization. State officers and directors must increase the content and frequency of communication to the membership and members must increase the amount of news and information submitted for sharing. This basic handbook has been designed to assist those who are willing to explore the electronic aspect of our fraternal organization. It is by no means a detailed user's manual nor does it purport to cover every possible scenario. Suggestions and questions are always welcomed!

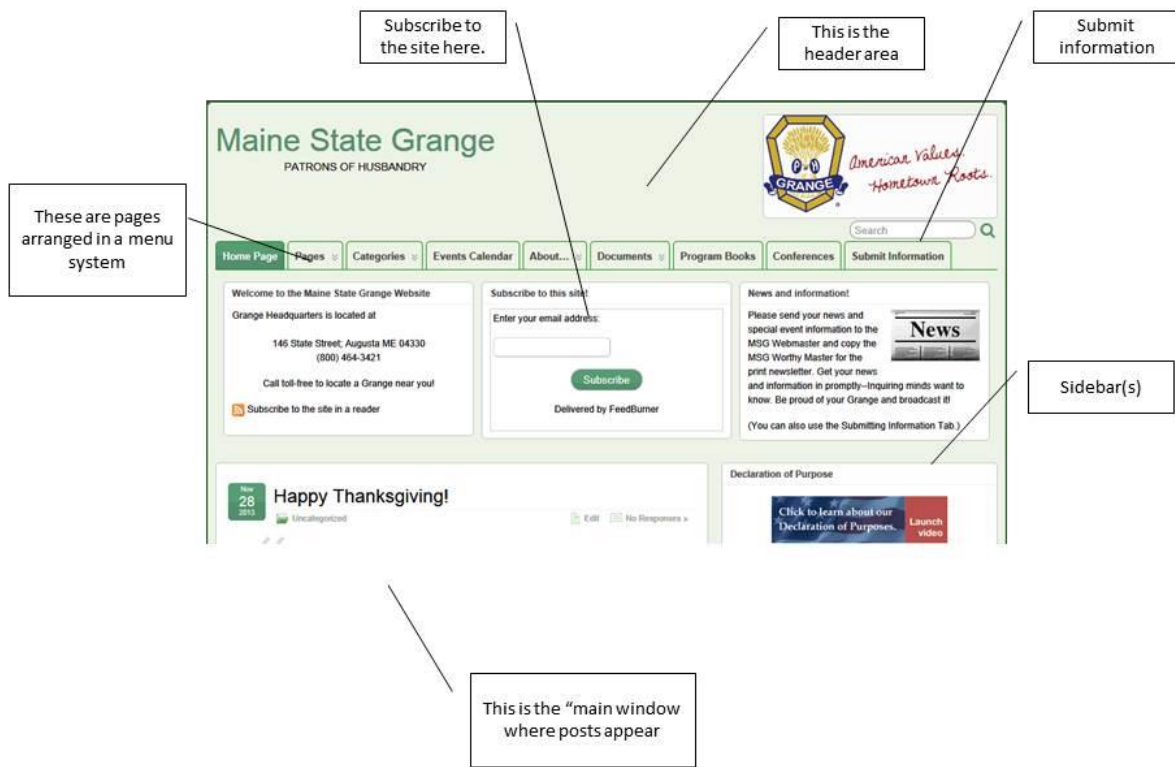
Fraternally,

Walter



VISITING THE SITE

BASIC LAYOUT



PAGES, POSTS, EVENTS

When visiting the site, it may be helpful to understand the distinction between a page, a post, and an event. The site is based on WordPress blogging software and these are terms common to blogging.

A page tends to be static and relatively timeless. Pages are used to build menu systems and make frequently sought information readily available. The tabs across the top the site's home page reflect many of the pages that are available. Clicking on one of those tabs opens the page in the main window.

A post is truly the heart of any blog. These appear in the main window in the order posted (which will usually be the order received.) An exception to this is a "sticky" post which stays at the top until it is "unstuck." Sticky posts are most often used when we have a need to keep information at the top of the site for some period of time. One example of this is "sticking" the list of installation teams available in the fall.

Events are handled differently than either posts or pages using a “plugin” add on to WordPress software. This plugin allows us to maintain a fairly basic calendar as part of the site—there aren’t a lot of options with it, but like all of our software, it’s free! It is because this is an entirely different system that events are not sent to subscribers. It is necessary to visit the site and look at the calendar.

Note that when you click on the link, a calendar for the current month opens showing a short description of the events submitted. Clicking on any of those links will open the complete information for the event. Doing this will show the importance of including all details, because site visitors can even get a map to your Grange Hall if you’ve included the street address!



SEARCHING FOR INFORMATION

There are at least three ways to find things on the site. (Four if you count wandering around aimlessly.) One is located at the top of the site in the header area. Here you can simply enter a term and click the magnifying glass. If, for example, you enter the name of a Grange, you’ll get all posts and events where that Grange is mentioned.

A second type of search is a category search. When the site was created, we also created categories of information. Most of these categories relate but are not limited to committees. When a post is made one or more categories may be assigned. A complete list of categories is found in the sidebar called “Things you can find here.” If you click one (say, agriculture) the main window will show every post labelled with that category. A category search from the sidebar will not yield events—only posts.

A third type of search is a “tag” search. There is a list of tags further down in the side bar—you’ll immediately notice some of these tags are in larger type. Tags are similar to categories in that they are assigned at the time the post is made. There are many more tags than categories making this a much less structured way of labelling. Those in larger type have been used the most often. If you click on a tag you will get a list of all posts bearing that tag. Note that events are not tagged, so this would not be an effective way of searching for an event.



Another way to use tags is when reading a post. At the bottom of the post there will be a list of tags applied to that post. Clicking on any tag will reveal a list of posts labelled with that same tag.

In case you haven’t noticed, pages haven’t been mentioned and that is where you will find most documents. Categories and tags do not apply to pages. Finding documents and program books requires some wandering, but it doesn’t have to be aimless. At the top of the site, there are two tabs: one called “Documents” and the other “Program Books.” The documents tab lists miscellaneous items and links to specific pages where many documents can be found. The program book tab links

to a page where we've listed departments and committees in alphabetical order with any books or documents below the department/committee.

A relatively new addition is a "Conference" tab. Our intent with this tab is to list any Grange Conferences in date order with a link to any documents such as registration forms, programs, brochures, etc. Committees hosting conferences are encouraged to submit detailed information for posting here.

We continue to search for ways to make as much information as practical available and easy to find. Please understand we can only post what we know and what we have.

SUBSCRIBING TO THE SITE

Subscribing to the site has been touted as one of our greatest features because it means you don't have to remember to check the site to see if new information has been posted. If you've subscribed to the site, you get a daily email summary that includes all posts.

Subscribing is also one of the easiest tasks for users. Just below the tabs there is a box in the center where the user enters his or her email address and clicks "subscribe." There is a second step that many people unfortunately miss! After you subscribe, you'll receive an email asking you to confirm that you, in fact, want to subscribe. That email includes a link you must click. If you do not do this step, you will not be subscribed.

This step makes sense if you think about it! Without it, a "friend" could subscribe you to a lot of sites and newsletters and plug your inbox with email you don't want.

One other important point about email subscriptions is that the user must maintain the subscription. If you change your email address, you must subscribe using that new address. Please do not send an email to the webmaster asking that your address be changed. Remember, the system is designed to ensure that others can't subscribe you and that includes the webmaster!

Also, should a user ever wish to "unsubscribe," there is a link at the bottom of every email sent from the site allowing that option.

SUBMITTING INFORMATION

Information is the lifeblood of our site. While the webmaster will occasionally come across some news or general information and post it, by and large we are dependent on officers, directors and members to provide us with relevant information and news. Please review the website policy included in this handbook and understand that there are a few things we do not post. For example, we do not post personal causes or events unless a Grange is formally involved as a sponsor. Submitting information about a community blood drive might seem appropriate, but it will not be posted either as an event or news unless the drive is being held at the Grange Hall or members are participating as a group. This policy exists for two reasons. The primary one is to avoid cluttering the site with "non-Grange" information. We do not want to lose the site's focus—the second reason. We could quickly have a huge volume of posting and maintenance if we just started accepting anything anyone wanted to submit.

That said, no one should feel discouraged from submitting! We have historically accepted almost everything we receive. Occasionally, the webmaster will ask the submitter to reword an item or perhaps give it a different slant. An important consideration is that the site is like an open meeting potentially attended by the entire world. We want to keep our best face forward!

The Grange Communication Handbook available from National Grange is a highly recommended resource for publicity, promotion, and public relations efforts. It includes suggestions, communication basics, a quick guide to AP style, etc. Did you know, for example, you should always capitalize the word “Grange?”

There are two ways to submit information and either is acceptable. You can submit using the site’s tab at the top. It may not be apparent, but this method allows you to fill out a form which is then emailed to the webmaster. The second method bypasses the need to visit the site and allows the submitter to just send an email to webmaster@mainestategrango.org.

SUBMITTING FROM THE SITE

The advantage of submitting from the site is that one can simply fill out a form while having guidelines and suggestions right there. It’s a simple matter of clicking the “Submitting Information” tab, filling out a simple form and clicking “submit.” A disadvantage of using this technique is that it does not allow for submitting photos. Photos must then be submitted separately by email.

SUBMITTING BY EMAIL

The good news is submitting by email is quick and easy, but that may also be the bad news. Please take the time to:

- Think about the submission—if it is a newsy item, write it in an upbeat and positive manner, don’t just recite facts.
- Be accurate and complete—spell names correctly, include the name of the Grange and the name and title of the person reporting.
- Use a spell-checker and pay attention to grammar.

When submitting photos, please make certain they are of reasonable quality, in good focus, etc. One thing that helps immensely is when the submitter takes the time to resize photos to a reasonable size. However, this is a double edge sword, because reducing the size (in bytes) can also reduce the quality. The most basic guideline is “if it doesn’t look good on your screen, it probably won’t look good on the site.”

In most cases we will post a maximum of 2-3 photos with a news story, so be selective!

Whenever possible, please submit documents (program books, forms, etc.) as PDF files. This avoids compatibility issues and is basically an industry standard—we will only post PDF files to the site.

Photos and PDF files should be attached to the email. Information can also be submitted by “snail mail” but understand this creates a time lag and with documents and photos means they must be scanned before posting. Snail mail submissions to Walter Boomsma, Webmaster at 17 River Road,

Abbot ME 04406. Email to webmaster@mainestategrange.org and use a subject that makes it clear you are submitting to the site.

SUBMITTING EVENTS

Submitting events follows the same general guidelines—you can submit from the site or by sending an email. The important difference with submitting events is to include ALL the details. Submitting an event requires the submitter to pretend he or she is talking to someone who knows nothing. Do not assume people know where your Grange Hall is located. Ideally, you should include both a street address and some simple directions. If you include a street address your event will actually include a Google map! You should also include a “for more information” contact with a phone number and email address and the URL of your Grange’s website if it has one.

In the past we have followed up on missing information, but as the number of posts and events increases this is not always practical and items must occasionally be posted “as is.” Please do not send flyers and photos with events. The information must come in the form of an email, either by submitting through the site or a direct email.

SOCIAL MEDIA

What about Facebook? Here is a column posted by the webmaster:

WWW – Webmaster Walter Writes...

I will willingly acknowledge that I am not a huge fan of Facebook... I'm also willing to acknowledge that a number of Granges have created pages and a number of members are “on” Facebook. One of my major issues with Facebook is the lack of privacy that results... I recently discovered, for example, that at least two of my “friends” are involved with an online dating service. (I thought one of them was married!)

Anyway, before we talk about Facebook Pages you may be creating for your Grange, let me just remind you that your behavior on Facebook may well reflect on your Grange. You are a Grange Ambassador! Please think before you post!

In February 2011 National Grange recognized the growth of social media and the National Grange Executive Committee adopted a website and social media “code of conduct.” The code is part of the Maine State Grange Web Policy, but let me share a few points from it with a few editorial comments.

All websites, Facebook groups or pages, and all other internet based social media platforms representing the Grange must be under the jurisdiction of a Subordinate/Community, Pomona, or State Grange.

In short, an individual should not just decide to start a Facebook page on behalf of his or her Grange. There are many good reasons for this, but let’s focus on the fact that the page is representing the Grange—not an individual. As such, members should be engaged and involved in order to assure the page is monitored and posts and comments are appropriate. This also helps if the original member loses interest because there will be others ensuring the page/group is kept up-to-date.

No partisan or sectarian comments, opinions, statements, or endorsements may be posted on the website or page.

For reasons sociologists are still exploring, many people feel very free to make bold, sometimes outlandish statements on social media. If your Grange has a Facebook page or group, members should be monitoring themselves and the page to make certain inappropriate comments are not being posted. If the page is identified as a "Grange page," one person's opinion should not be represented as Grange thinking.

Note that these guidelines apply to websites as well. Regardless of the venue, we need to keep our Grange Face smiling and positive. That's not to say there is no room for "healthy debate"—in fact (lecturers note!) I've had one or two folks suggest we might consider more debates as part of our programming.

One additional thought: The National Grange Style Book includes the statement, "For external purposes, you may refer to the Subordinate Grange as a Community Grange or pluralized as local Granges." We truly do have our own language in the Grange... but we might well consider the impact our language has on others. Step outside tradition and habit and ask yourself if most people would be more inclined to be involved in a "Subordinate Grange" or a "Community Grange."

I thought so! Want to take it one step further? I actually had someone (not a Granger) recently explain that she thought "Grange Meeting" meant members only, but that a "Grange Program" was for everyone. So just maybe instead of Subordinate Grange Meetings we ought to be promoting Community Grange Programs!

SUBORDINATE AND POMONA GRANGE SITES

Subordinate and Pomona Grange websites (using a simplified version of the same software as the Maine State Grange site) are available through National Grange. These sites are quite user friendly and are recommended for those Granges who recognize the need for a web presence. As time allows, the MSG webmaster will assist individuals who are willing to work on those sites. Support is also available from National Grange.

WEBSITE POLICY

WEBSITE DISCLAIMER

The information contained in this website is believed to be reliable and while every effort is made to assure information is accurate the Maine State Grange and affiliates disclaim any implied warranty or representation regarding its accuracy, completeness or appropriateness for any particular purpose. This includes but is not limited to information provided by any third party which is accessed through this site via a hyperlink.

Those persons who access this site assume full responsibility for the use of said information and understand and agree that the owner of this site is not responsible for any claim, loss or damage arising from the use of any information contained in the site.

Any reference to products, companies or services does not constitute or imply recommendation or endorsement by the Maine State Grange.

We hope that makes all the lawyers happy! Now enjoy the site and make use of the information!

PRIVACY STATEMENT

The Maine State Grange is committed to privacy. Every attempt is made to protect and maintain your privacy.

INFORMATION AUTOMATICALLY COLLECTED

Your IP address and server information are automatically recorded as part of our website statistics. This information will not be used to contact you in anyway. Because of the site's design as a blog the use of cookies will be minimal.

USE OF CONTACT FORM

Use of the site's contact form may require users to supply some information (name, email address). This information is only used to reply to requests for information or acknowledge information submitted. Information supplied using a contact form will not be kept, shared, or sold.

SUBSCRIPTION FEATURE

Use of the subscription feature is an "opt in" service provided by a third party. If you have any difficulty with the service or "opting out" please contact the Maine State Grange webmaster for assistance.

EXTERNAL LINKS AND THIRD PARTIES

This site contains links to other sites and utilizes third party services. The Maine State Grange is not responsible for the content and privacy practices of these third parties. Please be aware that these sites may collect information about you and may have privacy policies which differ substantially from this.

If you have questions about this privacy statement, the practices of this site or your experiences with it, you may contact the Master of the Maine State Grange or the Webmaster either by emailing from the site or at above address/phone number.

POSTING POLICY

The Maine State Grange website serves two primary purposes. First, it will serve as a communication mechanism that will facilitate sharing information among members. Second, as a

“public face” that allows non-members an introduction to the Grange and the ability to find information regarding programs. These two purposes are complementary but require a balance in terms of the types of information posted. The two primary guidelines we will use in posting are:

Does the information submitted have general interest statewide?

Does the information portray the Grange in a positive light and reflect basic Grange values?

We will not, therefore, post Fraternal Concerns regarding sickness and death. Exceptions may be made when concern involves a current or past state officer or other person well-known throughout the state. This policy also avoids potential privacy issues. We will also not post events that are not directly Grange related or sponsored. If, for example, a marathon is being held in the area to benefit a charity, it would not qualify for posting unless it is sponsored by the local Grange or the Grange membership is participating as a group.

We will attempt to keep information regarding State Grange activities and policies current, but it must be noted that directors and officers are responsible for providing current information.

We reserve the right to refuse to post information submitted.

We will use extreme caution when posting photos that include children and expect the submitter to be absolutely certain that parental/guardian permission is secured before submitting photos for posting. Please bear in mind that many Grange Meetings and events do not qualify as “public events” and attendees would likely have a reasonable right to an expectation of privacy.

We will also follow the “Grange Website and Electronic Social Media Code of Conduct” adopted February 25, 2011 by the National Grange Executive Committee.

NATIONAL GRANGE WEBSITE AND ELECTRONIC SOCIAL MEDIA CODE OF CONDUCT

All websites, Facebook groups or pages, and all other internet based social media platforms representing the Grange must be under the jurisdiction of a Subordinate/Community, Pomona, or State Grange.

Each website must be clearly identified as being a Grange website and must have contact information on or within one easily identifiable click from the home or index page.

Each Facebook or other social media platform must be clearly identified as being a Grange sponsored page or group and have a Grange contact person easily identified on the page.

No partisan or sectarian comments, opinions, statements, or endorsements may be posted on the website or the page.

No negative or inflammatory (designed to insult or belittle) comments, opinions, or statements toward any Grange or level of the Grange or toward any member of any Grange may be posted on the website or page.

No inflammatory (designed to insult or belittle) statements, comments, or opinions toward any the public, including public officials, may be posted on the website or page.

All policies of the Grange posted on the website or page must be clearly labeled as to which Grange or level of the Grange has adopted the policies.

All content, including advertisements, must be within the guidelines of the Digest, By-Laws of the State Grange with jurisdiction, and By-Laws of the Grange operating the website or page.

Adopted February 25, 2011 by the National Grange Executive Committee.

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