

MASTER'S ANNUAL ADDRESS

Worthy National Representative Cindy Greer, Officers, Delegates and Members of the Maine State Grange,

It is an honor to present the 2023 Maine State Grange Annual Address at the start of our 150th anniversary year as a State Grange. We can only imagine what effort it took for that first group of people to meet together, just the challenge of getting there, what dedication. We are here today because we have a similar dedication to the principles of our organization and the heartfelt desire to continue to be helpful and keep it going. We as an organization, have accomplished great things in the 150 years of our existence and the opportunity is ours to continue that tradition for a very long time to come.

Jim Owens and I represented Maine last November as the delegates at the National Grange in Sparks, Nevada participating in all work and activities. I was assigned to the Agriculture committee and Jim assigned to Grange Law. We did our advance work by zoom before the convention on the Present Policy, Policy Statements, and reviewed Resolutions.

Richard and I will be the delegates at the 2023 National Grange Convention which will be hosted by the Northeast Region held in Niagara Falls, New York November 12th – 19th. The 7th Degree will be conferred on Saturday November 18. This region hosts every five years. Richard has been assigned to the Labor, Judiciary, & Transportation Committee and I have been assigned to Citizenship & Taxation. Again this year, we will do updates from home by zoom to Present Policy, Policy Statements and review Resolutions this saves considerable time before the session opens. The 7 regional states have a good handle on the plans for that event. Volunteers will be needed for the convention, for different activities, please help out if you can. We still have 2023 National Convention T-shirts here for sale.

I work at the office in Augusta and continue to do a lot of Grange work from home and camp. I have communicated directly with the Subordinate & Pomona Masters/Presidents answering questions, calls & emails, creating, printing & sending assorted information, if one person asks a question I share the answer and info with all. I have sent letters to the Granges, State Officers, Deputies and Directors and others on a variety of subjects, and written a monthly article for the bulletin.

Richard and I attended 11 informational and instructional meetings, all over the state, answering questions and providing copies of materials to everyone present. Sharon also participated in most meeting, presenting information to the Secretaries. I have continued to update the paperwork describing ritual floor work and 'how-to' information in more detail and making it easier to understand. I hosted Instructions for Deputies, Officers and Directors during the year, gaining a lot of input and ideas from those attending. I traveled to closure or consolidation meetings when required or was invited, presented certificates, signed paperwork for deeds and contracts for the sales of buildings, etc. There are 6 halls available for sale.

In addition to the updating the instructional guidelines, roster, state session & budget and other items I work on, I have worked on getting a new database completed. I typed in all the information for our 82 Granges, 2,359 names, addresses and other information into a more user friendly format that can be accessed without internet. The basic information has been compiled, and copies sent to the Grange Secretaries for corrections, additions and deletions. Yes, I can hear the grumbles but it needed to be done, if I am spending this much time putting it back together from older versions provided by the State Secretary, your assistance is greatly appreciated. Each of you, as an individual member can help by checking your information, is your name spelled correctly, is your address up to date, if not, then please correct whatever may be required. I am most interested in the date you joined the Grange, and the Granges you have belonged to, many of the dates or previous membership in a different Grange (because of closure or consolidation) are not listed. Some are listed as Golden Sheaf members (50 years of **continuous** membership) but do not list the date of joining or where. Most Granges exempt all Golden Sheaf (50 year) members from paying dues to their respective Granges and the Maine State Grange does not charge dues on any Golden Sheaf members but the Maine State Grange must still pay dues to National on them. Golden Sheaf membership attained before Jan 1, 2001, the Maine State Grange does not pay dues to National Grange on those members. Golden Sheaf membership attained after Jan 1, 2001, the Maine State Grange must pay dues to National Grange on those members.

Once again during this past year our ranks have been broken with the loss of many special members and good friends. Former State Master, Philip Arthur Herbert passed to the great Grange above in December. We have lost several prominent Deputies, and many other valuable members. Their passing was a difficult time at the Subordinate, Pomona and State levels and these strong notable Grange personalities will certainly be missed by many.

Meetings and Membership

Most of our Granges are doing well, some of these Granges are large and some are the smaller ones doing great things in their communities but we still have other Granges that are struggling. We have a few Granges that are considering consolidation or closure, they have been struggling for some time, invite them to be part of your Grange. Membership, attendance at meetings, participation and finances continue to be the biggest concerns and are vital to our organization. A strong sense of achievement and service to our communities must be developed. Community activities and involvement are important but so is the Grange Ritual. The Grange Ritual (the set pattern that we do things at each meeting) may seem outdated to some or unnecessary, but it is part of this Fraternal Organization and to be considered a **Grange, to use the term "Grange"** certain requirements must be carried out and the ritual **MUST** be followed. Opening the Bible, the Prayer, the Grange Salutation, and Salute to the Flag must be done at every meeting no matter what level you are working in. Some things have been modernized and simplified but the basics are still there. Let's make the effort to be part of it whether in person or by use of technology.

Many more Granges conferred the Obligation Ceremony and several successful degree days were held throughout the state at different times during the year. We had 19 Granges with Net Gains in Membership, that's almost a quarter of our Granges. However, we did not have a net gain overall this year. Maybe next time. Thank you to all who took the time to invite someone to join and to the members who organized and took part in the obligation ceremonies and degree work. I have encouraged Granges to handle degrees and installations on their own and many have reported finding this very satisfactory and easier than they thought. Now let's put the seasoned members AND new members to work with something meaningful for them to do and keep their interest involved. We enjoy going to Grange, but we need to continually work to make our meetings and activities productive and interesting. New ideas came out of necessity, we need to continue with our renewed excitement, new ideas and the positive energy can be contagious. Many public events were held, where we had a manned booth and some unmanned, an ag trade show, fairs, and other events where we publicized Grange.

Membership Director, Rick Grotton writes an excellent column for the Bulletin every month with helpful tips and suggestions, please check it out.

Internal fighting is a problem and hurtful to our Order, we are a collective group working together for the betterment of all, no one or two members should control everything that happens in the Grange. Many problems could have been prevented had our members followed the rules and procedures that we have in place, plus using some tact, common courtesy and respect for each other. Every member in every Grange has a say and a vote on what goes on, whether they agree or disagree with your opinion, each is entitled to that vote. Respectful discussions must take place **in the meeting** where each can express their views and listen to others views. Decisions are to be made in the meeting, open in full form, with all participating not by a few in the kitchen or grocery store. Reach out to those members who haven't been to Grange for a while, what can we do to get them to return? Is it a matter of a ride, a different day of the week or consider a day meeting?

Headquarters

The Maine State Grange headquarters building in Augusta has had a tough year as you can see from the budget. The pipes froze upstairs, burst and caused damage in that bathroom and ran down into the dining room, causing lots of damage there too. It has been stripped down but not reconstructed yet. Next, the furnace in the garage end of the building finally gave up the fight, and stopped working. A new furnace had to be special ordered and built to replace the old one. In order to put in a new furnace, the chimney on that end needed to have a liner installed. While we were at it, we also had to have all the chimney tops fixed because of the crumbling bricks coming off of them. Now we have a leak in the septic pipe from the upstairs bathroom that runs through the dining room ceiling, luckily it is visible, and now needs replacement.

Sharon and Henry Morton spend a lot of time at our building, doing a whole variety of BIG jobs and extras, like letting in the plumber, electrician, furnace man, and the list goes on and on for the good of the Grange and not because they have to, or are asked to, but because they care about the Grange. Most recently they have been chasing away the vagrants and

cleaning up after them, who have taken a liking to our porches and extra eaves to get out of the rain. The police have come several times and removed people. I don't think these jobs are the Office Secretary's obligation, more a maintenance issue but she is in the office and does them. For all **the extra** things they do for the Grange and the building, thank you doesn't cover my appreciation for their efforts. THANK YOU BOTH VERY MUCH!

Committees and Departments

Our State Officers, Deputies, Committees and Departments have continued to work promoting programs and events. Many thanks to each of you that are involved. I do have to comment, getting these Officers and Directors to provide a year end report has been challenging like pulling teeth, to say the least. It needs to be sent to **me** as Master/President in a reasonable time, there is a deadline so we can get them printed for session. Yes, it should go to the webmaster but I need it sent to me.

Many of our current members will continue in their positions and some will change.

If anyone is interested in being a deputy, committee chair or part of one of these committees let us know.

Agriculture

The Agriculture Committee under the direction of Willie Grenier, promotes agriculture with their participation in several statewide events and has met often during the year. The committee gave scholarships again this year to students going to college with agricultural pursuits. They need your help to get the word out to the schools that this program is available and certainly rely on your donations to make these scholarships possible.

Agriculture in Maine continues to have many challenges. It makes more sense than ever to purchase locally, if we do not support agriculture in the State of Maine, it will continue to disappear.

Fairs

Many Granges participated at the Agricultural Fairs with wonderful exhibits or displays. Congratulations. The building Superintendents, appreciate your efforts and need your displays to get people to come in and look around, keep up the good work. Congratulations to Marilyn Stinson for all the fair exhibits she took the time setting up on behalf of the Junior Committee.

The New England Grange Building at the Big E did very well. Thank you Mike, Judy, and Jimmy, for working in the Big-E store for the first weekend. Thankyou Mike for taking the quilt and sales items down. Thank you to all who sent items for the sales tables, they will gladly accept all that you can provide for next year.

Committee of Women's Activities

The Committee of Women's Activities under the direction of Margaret Henderson has been busy with many projects. Their donations toward Home for Little Wanderers and House in the Woods program through your kind contributions is certainly beneficial to many.

Thank you to all who sent items for the State sales tables at the yard sale and here.

Community Service

Director Christine Corliss received 10 notebooks this year and have done such outstanding work in their communities. I know that many more Granges are also doing superb community service in their towns and areas but our Granges need to publicize our helpful deeds better. Promote your good works, no project is too small to brag about. Sister Christine has tendered her resignation as Director, Thank you for serving for 9 years.

Educational Aid and Howes Nurses' Scholarship

This committee continues to award scholarships to deserving recipients but are still in need of your assistance to get the word out that these scholarships are available. Scholarships are now available to non-members. Your continued donations are needed to keep these scholarship programs viable.

Fundraising

Norma Meserve chairman and the fundraising committee have been dedicated in their fundraising efforts and are still work for the good of the Grange. We appreciate what has been done. The meal starters, dessert, gift card and yard sale were fundraising successes.

Junior Grange

Thank-you Junior Director Betty Young who has worked hard to increase the number of active Junior members through the various programs and activities. Distance is still disrupting plans but adjustments were made and zoom utilized a few times. This department needs your support to continue growing.

Legislative

Director Linda Weston, continues to follow legislative issues. I would encourage our Granges and membership to be active in legislative issues in your local community. As in days gone by, the Grange can make a difference, be part of the solution and be an important part of our community, state and nation.

Publicity and Web Site

Our Web Master and Publicity Director Walter Boomsma, works diligently updating and upgrading the website for all of us. I appreciate his input. The State and National Grange websites are very helpful tools for our benefit. Walter will be glad to assist you with publicity, and be delighted to put information, upcoming events and pictures on the web site.

In addition to the web postings, the Grange Bulletin is printed monthly including articles by Officers, Directors and guest writers, which getting them to write a monthly even occasional article, is a battle. These articles keep our membership informed and is sent to the Secretary of each Grange around the 15th of each month.

In Conclusion

I would like to thank everyone who helped to make this job easier and keeping our organization moving and to each of you who do so much to make our Granges grow and prosper. It is hard work, no doubt about it, but the rewards are worth it. I certainly appreciate the efforts of our Officers, Members, Deputies, Directors and Committees who work diligently on behalf of the Grange and wish us all success in the coming year. Thank you to Jim Owens, past Master, for your advice, guidance, counsel and friendship. In addition, Sharon, I can't thank you enough for all your help and assistance you have given me, doing a lot of things which are not part of the State Secretary's job, but needed to be done, doing a lot of behind the scenes work. I appreciate you more than I can say. A special, thank-you Richard for your support and strength through the good happenings and some very difficult Grange situations & decisions.

I love the Grange and the people in it, and I am so glad the Grange is a part of my life.

I am looking forward to a successful year in our State Grange and hope all our Granges prosper. I would encourage each of you to do something special to celebrate our monumental anniversary.

Respectfully Submitted,
Sherry A. Harriman, Master Maine State Grange