



*American Values.
Hometown Roots.*

MAINE STATE GRANGE

ABSTRACT

A resource book for those who are interested in communicating the Grange message effectively.

Walter Boomsma

Communications Director

COMMUNICATIONS HANDBOOK

2025-2026

Communications Handbook

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2 INTRODUCTION

The position of Communications Director was created in 2014 with at least several goals in mind:

- To create a more integrated system of communicating and a greater consistency of content and style,
- To develop an economy of effort with a focus on improving internal communication throughout our organization,
- To decrease the amount of time required for information to be distributed throughout the organization,
- To increase the amount of information available to members and the public, and
- To raise professionalism and delivery of information both within and outside the organization.



These broad goals are a welcome challenge to me personally—and I would challenge every Granger to adopt them. Communication is a powerful tool that can contribute to the growth of our Granges at all levels.

This updated handbook focuses on some of the more fundamental aspects of communications with the media and is based in part on a program I developed several years ago called “Media Relationships for the Non-professional.” I also rely heavily on and strongly recommend the *Grange Communication Handbook* published by National Grange in 2012. (Available for download from the National Grange website.) While these resources emphasize the public relations aspect of communication, one of the challenges we face is improving communications among our members—particularly as new technologies become available.

I still hear, “Not everyone has or uses a computer.” This is a statement that can’t be disagreed with certainly, although driving a car includes using a computer. Smartphones also qualify. The numbers and my personal experience indicate that a vast majority of Mainers are using the Internet at some level, and no one can disagree with the statement that society is embracing electronic communication.

As an organization seeking members, we cannot ignore this trend. It is not, however, my intention as communications director to “leave out” those who have not and will not adopt this technology. To the extent practical and possible, we will continue using “multi-media” communication approaches.

Media use continues to change rapidly. During an onsite event covered by a major television news team we discussed some of the realities, including the “instant” nature of news. While the team was located over fifty miles away from the broadcast studio, small, portable equipment made it possible to broadcast live. It wasn’t too long ago that a huge truck with a satellite tower would have been required.

As we move forward, we should continue to explore ideas for improving communication and engaging both members and prospective members. Whether you are building a website for your Grange or writing a press release or media advisory, please do not hesitate to ask if you’d like help or to brainstorm ideas.

In addition to this handbook, the Communications Department has a **Maine State Grange Website Handbook**—a non-technical guide to the MSG website explaining some of the essential functions and uses.

It is available on the website, or you may request a printed copy from State Headquarters.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Walter Boomsma', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Walter Boomsma

Email address: Webmaster@MaineStateGrange.org

Home address: 17 River Road, Abbot ME 04406

Cell Phone: 207 343-1842

3 ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025

Brothers and Sisters,

It is my distinct honor to report some activities and accomplishments from this year's efforts. This is the eleventh full year I have served in the capacity of Communications Director—a position created in January 2014 that combined and expanded the historical roles of the publicity director and webmaster. The Communications Director assembles the printed Bulletin, maintains the website, facilitates communication between and to State Leaders and members, advises on communication matters, and provides information and resources to Subordinate and Pomona Granges.

During the past year, I published twelve monthly Bulletins and wrote at least two columns each month. I am grateful to the directors and officers who regularly submit articles and support the improvement of our internal communication. I also seek resources and information applicable to Granges and Grangers.

The website is now in its fifteenth full year of operation in its current form. The objectives for the redesign in November 2010 were simple. Some of the more critical included:

- To encourage prompt posting and maintenance of information and resources,
- To control that posting process with some level of moderation and quality control,
- To allow users to find basic information and resources (such as applications, manuals, etc.) readily and,
- To allow users to subscribe to the site and receive email versions of posts.

We continue to achieve those objectives. Site views have declined slightly. This Grange year the site has been viewed at least 17,800 times—an average of 1500 times per month. However, these visits do not include subscribers who are receiving the posts without necessarily visiting the site.

Considering the decline in Granges and Grange membership, the site is doing well. Some of that success can be attributed to the site design and content. The site is resource-rich and appeals to both members and non-members. The top pages visited are the information pages, such as the Directory of Granges, Program Books, and Information page, as well as the events calendar.

Of course, numbers do not tell the entire story. Members and non-members continue to use the site as a vehicle for asking questions. These questions do not always appear on the site (unless they are of a general nature) but are handled by forwarding them to the appropriate party or parties.

Several significant accomplishments this year include:

- Development of a resource section on the website specific to the Words for Thirds Dictionary Program. Thanks go to Mary French, Director of the Dictionary Project, for her assistance and support.
- Added additional "Resources for Grangers," including weekly Fraud Watch Alerts from AARP and a Suicide Prevention Month series from SAMHSA.
- Opened a dialog with the Maine FFA to explore mutual interests and possible collaborations.
- Completed interviews with media representatives and researchers.
- Continued efforts to improve website security and "hacking" of the site, including upgrading our SSL certificate.

- Continued a purge of the website’s oldest posts and images. This makes the site much more manageable and saves server space.
- Continued to work with an editorial calendar to ensure regular, consistent posting.
- Continued posting of “special events” being sponsored or hosted by Granges. These events are also added to the MSG Calendar Page.
- Continued to facilitate an outbound email service that allows information to be sent directly to officers, directors, and deputies on short notice. This service also makes website subscriptions possible.

My goal is to keep costs associated with the website as low as possible by using “free” software versions and applying creativity to how things get done. Technology costs continue to rise as software companies look to change from purchased software to subscription software. Website security is a growing issue requiring additional support and expertise. One example of increased costs is our Sitelocks® protection, which increased nearly 25%.

Invoiced costs for the website almost totally reflect the expenses Abbot Village Press and I incur. I also apply the director’s stipend to expenses. To provide a comprehensive view, I include the stipend as part of the website and communication department's costs to the Maine State Grange and its membership. The past five years are shown in the table below.

Fiscal Year	Invoiced	Stipend	Total	% Change
2019-2020	\$912	\$400	\$1312	
2020-2021	\$987	\$400	\$1387	+5.7%
2020-2022	\$1275	\$200	\$1475	+6.3%
2022-2023	\$1400	\$200	\$1600	+8.5%
2024-2025	\$1425	\$200	\$1625	+1.6%
2025-2026	\$1585	\$200	\$1785	+9.8%

I would encourage members to visit other state Grange websites and compare the appearance and content. Our site should be a source of pride! If we use a conservative estimate of 21,000 site visits per year, each visit costs us less than one cent. Currently, it costs 78 cents to mail a one-ounce first-class letter—and that’s just for the postage. The MSG Website is a “good deal,” and offers significant value.

Looking ahead to 2025-2026, some objectives include:

- Continuing to keep communication positive, helpful, and engaging.
- Complete a resource page for Little Free Libraries
- Promote the posting of Subordinate Grange Events and news to the site.
- Continue searching for resources, including additional guest columnists and regular topical information that can be reposted with attribution.
- Update the online directory of Granges

Our greatest accomplishment is also our most significant need for the coming year. We must continue increasing participation and information, working to build a positive communication program. The Maine State Grange website is an integral part of our organization and is a “go-to” place for members

and friends who wish to learn more about our Order. We impact Maine Communities and beyond while preserving our heritage.

Over 20% of our site views are from Facebook. (Most visits are coming from search engines such as Google. Only a handful come from National Grange and other sites.) While social media does play a role in Grange Communication, that role should be seen as supportive. The data suggests that even Facebook users are turning to the website for information that is timely, complete, accurate, and easily found.

I believe the primary role of any state position or function is to support Subordinate and Pomona Granges and their members. But communication is not a "one-person job." Individuals, Community/Subordinate, and Pomona Granges can best support our communications efforts by providing positive news and information.

I will continue encouraging open communication throughout our Order and with the public. We must generate interest and excitement among our communities, prospective members, and ourselves.

Please let me know if there is anything I can do to help you and your Grange.

Thank you for your continued confidence and support.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "J. B. [unclear]", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

4 Fundamental Media Concepts

4.1 DEFINITIONS

Media is a broad category of forms of communication: radio, TV, print (newspapers, magazines, newsletters), and the Internet.

“**The press**” has historically referred to representatives of the media engaged in print, although many people use the terms “press” and “media” interchangeably.

For our purposes, we might apply a third term—**news outlets**. A significant trend to acknowledge is that more and more news outlets are using a multimedia approach. Newspapers are creating websites. Many newspapers have weekly supplements resembling magazines. And in significant markets some are developing collaborative relationships with local television stations.

But no matter how they deliver the news, the press isn't in the public relations business. The press is in the business of making money. We might think he was a bit jaded, but some years ago a newspaper editor told me, “The only reason we print news is to get subscribers, and the only reason we get subscribers is so we can sell advertising.” That doesn't mean the news is unimportant, but it does create perspective.

4.2 MEDIA RELATIONS

I am often surprised to discover many people have an outdated image of newspaper reporting that includes a large bevy of reporters waiting for something to happen so they can write about it. When I was young and lived in a rural area, every town had at least a part-time reporter, sniffing out local news and often writing what resembled a gossip column. Today, reporters are few and far between—and there's significant competition for their attention. Even the “major” newspapers are working with less and less staff. Unless it is a truly big story, we have to get the news to them.

One way to increase the likelihood of getting your story published is to “make it easy” for the reporter to use it. This includes writing effectively, proofreading and spell-checking, and delivering your story in a timely fashion with some sensitivity to deadlines and publication schedules. If, for example, your local paper is delivered on Wednesday, submit your article by the previous Friday. Tuesday is too late... and unless the story has some longevity, you've missed the opportunity.

Effective media relations require that you

- Know who you are
- Know who “they” are
- Know what's important to them

4.3 MAKING NEWS

News has value, but how much? You’ve probably heard that it’s not news when a dog bites a man. But if a man bites a dog, that’s news! In this case, the value is the novelty—it’s unusual for a man to bite a dog. Some of the elements that create value and encourage editors to include your news are:

- **Impact:** This is often found in sheer numbers. The more people affected, the greater the impact. A snowstorm dropping two feet of snow has more impact than a few inches.
- **Proximity:** “close to home” events have greater value. This is particularly true for smaller community publications.
- **Timeliness:** In the old days, newspapers would publish an “extra” edition with a late-breaking story of high impact. In today’s world, news becomes stale very quickly.
- **Prominence:** The public cares about celebrities more than average citizens.
- **Novelty:** Unusual events, first and last or once in a lifetime happenings have greater news value than the commonplace.
- **Conflict:** In the ultimate sense, “if it bleeds, it leads.” There’s a saying among freelancers: Controversy sells!
- **Usefulness:** Information that can be used by readers can have great value, particularly in the home, business, travel, etc. sections.
- **Human Interest:** An interview with a fascinating person can have value, even if it’s not earth-shattering and doesn’t meet the other criteria.

For most people, it’s usually easier to make news than it is to write press releases.

Walter Boomsma

4.4 WRITING THE STORY

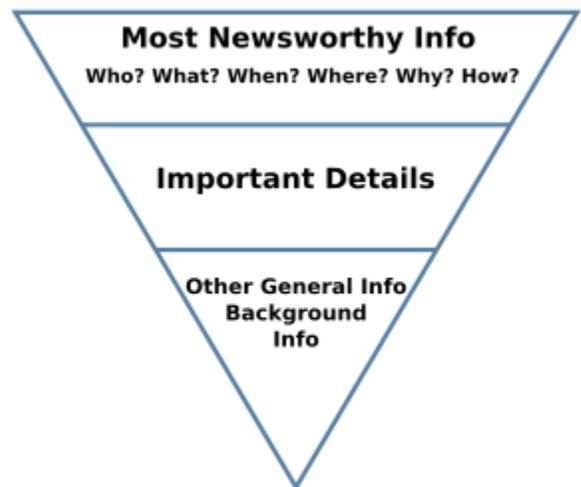
The inverted pyramid is used as a metaphor to show how the most substantial information always comes first in a story. This approach allows the reader to stop reading at just about any point in the story and still understand it. The approach also gives rise to the phrase “cut from the bottom.” Editors who need to save space will most often start from the end of the article and work backward.

The lead must capture the interest of the reader quickly. It tells the reader what the article is about in a short, exciting, and informative way. You hook the reader by including the most important or most exciting

*I keep six honest serving-men
(They taught me all I knew);
Their names are What and Why and When
And How and Where and Who.*

information in the first sentence and try to cover the five w’s in the first paragraph or two.

The term “nutgraph” is a contraction of the two words “nutshell paragraph.” The nutgraph answers the questions “What is the point?” and “Why am I reading this?” The nutgraph typically appears three or four paragraphs into the article to keep the reader’s interest.



Quotations can add vitality to a story. The writer outlines the main points while the quotes allow others to “talk” to the reader. A direct quote will always appear inside quotation marks and must be the source’s exact words. (Walter said, “I’m happy to be here.”) Indirect quotes do not require quotation marks but must accurately convey the meaning of the speaker. (Walter said he was happy to be present.)

5 TOOLS OF THE TRADE

The **Media Advisory** (page 12) is a combination of an announcement and an invitation. “Here’s what’s going to happen and why your reporter(s) should attend.” Send it to all your media contacts, even those without reporters or staff. Sometimes they’ll reply and tell you what they’d like you to send them after the event.

The **Press Release** (page 13) is a reporter/editor friendly document, provided to the media when there is no expectation a reporter will attend the event. Many papers will run the story exactly as written.

A **Press or Media Kit** (page 14) is also a reporter-friendly document, provided to media representatives who attend your event. Use this to give reporters background or statistical information as well as resources.

One quick way to generate print publicity is to submit a **“photo with cutline.”** The term cutline is jargon for the caption, but it suggests more than a caption. A caption suggests identifying the photo; a cutline tries to tell the story in a sentence or two.

A caption for the photo to the right would merely list names. A cutline might read, “A Happy Betty VanDyke is flanked by her daughters Lois (left) and Ginny at her 90th birthday celebration held recently at... with over fifty well-wishers attending...”



Photo by Walter Boomsma

And while we are on the subject of photos, many times including a good photo will make the difference in whether or not your press release is printed. Here are a couple of important suggestions!

- **Get close!** Fill the frame with the subject and watch the background.
- **No Feet!** This is one of the funnier rules I heard from an editor who refused to run photos if he could see feet—and it’s especially true when taking those obligatory group shots.
- **High Res!** While websites and social media welcome lower resolution and smaller file sizes, print media wants the highest resolution practical.

Does it go without saying that photos should meet some very basic criteria such as being in focus, no camera shake, and the camera held straight? You don’t need a fancy camera, but you do need to take your time, compose the shot carefully, and take a few shots—somebody will have their eyes closed if you only take one.

A word about kids in photographs... the general rule is photographs of kids at public events are accepted for publication without parental release or permission. Remember, however, that events like Grange meetings may not be considered public events. Dictionary presentations at school are not public events and any children’s photos must be checked against the school’s “do not photograph” list. Ask the teacher or a staff member for assistance.

Personally, I take and recommend a very conservative approach when it comes to using photos of kids. If, for example, I know a child is on the school's "do not photograph" list, I will not use a photo of them even if taken at a public event. Bear in mind there are creative ways to provide a photograph with a news story that doesn't put children at risk.

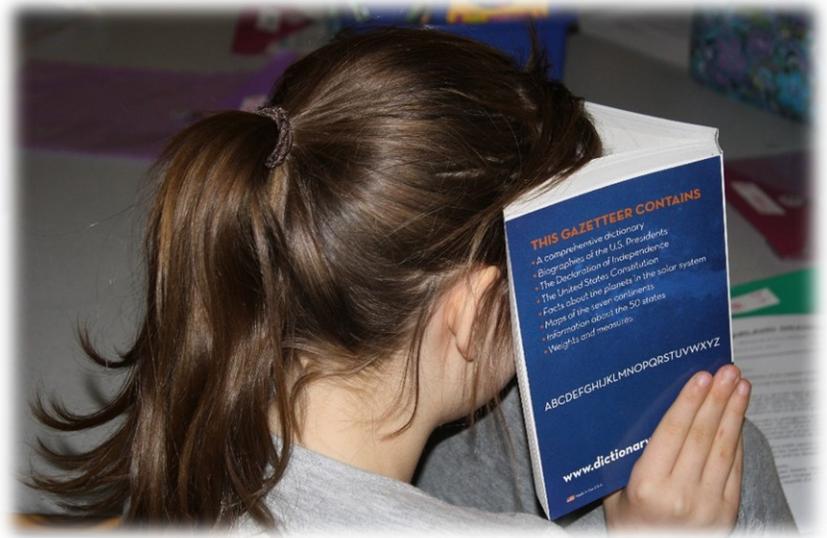


Photo by Walter Boomsma... captioned in part "...third grader gets into her dictionary--literally!"

5.1 MEDIA ADVISORY (SAMPLE)

MEDIA ADVISORY

VALLEY GRANGE TO ANNOUNCE NEWSPAPERS IN EDUCATION WINNERS

Who: Valley Grange will announce third and fourth-grade winners of their third annual Newspapers in Education contest at Piscataquis Community Elementary School. Assembly will include 100 students and their teachers.

What: The Grange is proud to support art and local business by sponsoring a contest in which third and fourth graders develop newspaper advertisements for the Grange. The winning advertisements will appear in the March 30th edition of the Piscataquis Observer and be used by the Grange in print materials and on their website.

What is the story? Can you describe it in a sentence or two?

When: Tuesday, March 8th at 8:45 AM

Where: Piscataquis Community Elementary School
25 Campus Drive
Guilford ME 04443

It might make sense to give directions... I got a call from a lost news crew on this one because the address wouldn't come up on their GPS.

Please note that media representatives must register at the school office!

Photo Opportunity: Watching the tension and surprised looks when the winners are announced and presented with their awards! The kids are always so proud of their classmates!

Contact: Walter Boomsma, 343-1842 for the Grange or Julie Orton (Principal), 876-4301 for PCES.

Resource for Info: <http://Valleygrange.com>

This may be the most important part of your media advisory, particularly where television is concerned.

5.2 PRESS RELEASE (SAMPLE)

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Note that you can send releases in advance of when you want them published.

For additional information:

Walter Boomsma, Director of Publicity/Program Director

Valley Grange

Cell Phone 207 343-1842

Email walter@boomsmaonline.com

Make it easy to contact the right person... in this example I included a contact from Penquis.

Valley Grange Collaborates with Penquis

Organizations work together to host fundraising supper

Include the town where the event is based... this helps determine where items are ultimately printed

Guilford/Dover Foxcroft—Valley Grange and Penquis are teaming up to raise funds for the Penquis Smart Starts for Students Project Fund in a way that’s smart for both organizations, according to Sheree Brown, Project Coordinator. “Valley Grange has been a supporter for several years, but this way we found an even smarter way to help our kids by informally partnering to offer folks in the area another way to help. In what may be our final fundraiser for this year, we’ll be offering an Italian Buffet with a build your own salad bar in exchange for a donation to the project.”

Walter Boomsma, program director for Valley Grange notes... *(Note in this example, the supper isn’t the news; the collaboration is... if it was all about the supper it could be considered advertising.)*

Brown agrees, “Kids’ needs are often simple but simple doesn’t mean unimportant...” *(This offers a human interest aspect and further develops the news)*

The buffet will be served... *(pertinent details)*

###

Use ### or -30- to indicate the end of your copy.

5.3 PRESS KIT AND INFORMATION

Press kits do not necessarily follow any particular format. The objective of a press kit (sometimes called a media kit) is to provide print information that will help the reporter write the story. The first page might include a list of participants, winners, etc. with correct name spellings and possible contact information. You might also attach documents.

When, for example, the story is about a Grange dictionary presentation to third graders, I might attach:

- General information about the Grange—specific information about the local Grange.
- A list of key contacts and participants.
- Background information on dictionary project (The Grange is participating in a program that is international in nature.)
- A sheet describing the role of the Grange in Rural Free Delivery. (This is a point within the presentation, and we use letters that require the use of a dictionary.)
- A copy of the letter sent home to parents.
- A list of upcoming events.

Because school children are involved, I would also include a summary of school policy regarding photos in this press kit—most reporters are aware of the policy and will appreciate any help you can offer, but not all—and I have had reporters ignore it.

5.4 MAINE DAILY NEWSPAPERS

Note that newspapers differ widely in how they will accept press releases and news tips—most will not accept telephone calls and most prefer online submission—either through a website portal or by email. Information was believed to be accurate at the time of publication but due to frequent changes in ownership and procedure cannot be guaranteed.

Bangor Daily News
491 Main Street
PO Box 1329
Bangor ME 04401
207 990-8000

<http://bangordailynews.com>

Biddeford Journal Tribune
457 Alfred Street
Biddeford ME 04005
207 282-1535

<http://journaltribune.com>

Brunswick Times Record
PO Box 10
Brunswick ME 04011

<http://timesrecord.com>

Foster's Daily Democrat
150 Venture Drive
Dover NH 03820
603 742-4455

<http://fosters.com>

Kennebec Journal
36 Anthony Street
Augusta ME 04330
207 623-3811

<http://centralmaine.com>

Lewiston Sun Journal
PO Box 4400
Lewiston ME 04243
207 784-5411

<http://www.sunjournal.com>

Portland Press Herald/Sunday Telegram
One City Center, Fifth Floor
Portland ME 04101

<http://pressherald.com>

Portsmouth Herald
111 New Hampshire Avenue
Portsmouth NH 03801
800 439-0303

<https://www.seacoastonline.com/portsmouthherald>

Waterville Morning Sentinel
31 Front Street
Waterville ME 04901

207 873-3341

<http://centralmaine.com>

5.6 MAINE WEEKLY NEWSPAPERS

Note that newspapers differ widely in how they will accept press releases and news tips—most will not accept telephone calls and most prefer online submission—either through a website portal or by email. Information was believed to be accurate at the time of publication but due to frequent changes in ownership and procedure cannot be guaranteed.

Advertiser Democrat

newsteam@advertiserdemocrat.com

1 Pikes Hill
Norway ME 04268
(207) 743-7011

Aroostook Republican

editor@nepublish.com

PO Box 608
Caribou ME 04736
(207) 496-3251

Bethel Citizen

news@bethelcitizen.com

PO Box 109
Bethel ME 04217
(207) 824-2444

Biddeford Saco Courier

editor@thecourier.com

PO Box 1894
Biddeford ME 04005

Boothbay Register

kburnham@boothbayregister.com

PO Box 357
Boothbay Harbor ME 04538
(207) 633-4620

Bridgton News

bnews@roadrunner.com

PO Box 244
Bridgton ME 04009
207-647-2851

Bucksport Enterprise

PO Box 829
Bucksport ME 04416
207-469-6722

Calais Advertiser

letters@thecalaisadvertiser.com

23 Church Street
Calais ME 04614
207-454-3561

Camden Herald

editor@villagesoup.com

113 Washington Street
Camden ME 04843
207-236-8511

Castine Patriot

news@pbp.me

PO Box 646
Blue Hill ME 04614
207-326-9300

Coastal Journal

rharmon@coastaljournal.com

97 Commercial Street
Bath ME 04530
207-443-6241

Current Publishing

info@keepmecurrent.com

840 Main Street
Westbrook ME 04098
207-854-2577

Daily Bulldog

editor@dailybulldog.com

127 Smiling Goat Lane
Farmington ME 04938
207-778-6905

Downeast Coastal Press

downeastcoastal@earthlink.net

2413 Cutler Road
Cutler ME 04626
207-259-7751

Ellsworth American
news@ellsworthamerican.com
PO Box 509
Ellsworth ME 04605

Fiddlehead Focus
andrewb@fiddleheadfocus.com

267 West Main Street
Fort Kent ME 04743

Falmouth Forecaster
editor@theforecaster.net
5 Fundy Road
Falmouth ME 04105
(207) 781-3661

Franklin Journal
editor@thefranklinjournal.com
187 Wilton Road
Farmington ME 04938
(207) 778-2075

Free Press
copyedit@freepressonline.com
8 North Main Street
Rockland ME 04841
(207) 596-0055

Gorham Times
gorhamtimes@gmail.com
PO Box 401
Gorham ME 04038
(207) 839-8390

Houlton Pioneer Times
pioneertimes@nepublish.com
23 Court Street
Houlton ME 04730
(207) 532-2281

Island Ad-Vantages
news@pbp.me
PO Box 36
Stonington ME 04681
(207) 367-6397

Kennebunk Post
news@kennebunkpost.com
PO Box 1894
Biddeford ME 04005
(207) 282-4337

Lincoln News
news@lincnews.com
PO Box 357
Lincoln ME 04457
(207) 794-6532

Lincoln County News
lcnc@lincoln.midcoast.com
PO Box 36
Damariscotta ME 04543
(207) 563-3171

Livermore Falls Advertiser
news@lfadvertiser.com
59 Main Street
Livermore Falls ME 04254
(207) 897-4321

Machias Valley News Observer
editor@machiasnews.com
PO Box 357
Machias ME 04654
(207) 255-6561

Mount Desert Islander
new@mdislander.com
310 Main Street
Bar Harbor ME 04609
(207) 288-0556

Original Irregular
theirregular@tds.net
PO Box 616
Kingfield ME 04947
(207) 265-2773

Penobscot Times
gfish@thepenobscottimes.com
282 Main Street
Old Town ME 04468
(207) 827-4451

Piscataquis Observer
observer@nepublish.com
12 E Main Street Suite A
Dover Foxcroft ME 04426
(207) 564-8355

Quoddy Tides
qtides@midmaine.com
PO Box 213
Eastport ME 04631
(207) 853-4806

Rangeley Highlander
info@therangeleyhighlander.com
2579 Main Street
Rangeley ME 04970
(207) 864-3756

Republican Journal
editor@villagesoup.com
161 High Street
Belfast ME 04915
(207) 338-3333

Rumford Falls Times
editor@runfordfallstimes.com
60 Congress Street
Rumford ME 04276
(207) 364-5986

St John Valley Times
tessie.dubois@sjvalley-times.com
PO Box 419
Madawaska ME 04756
(207) 728-3386

Sanford News
letters@fosters.com
835 Main Street
Sanford ME 04073
(207) 324-5986

Scarborough Leader
editor@inthecourier.com
PO Box 1894
Biddeford ME 04005
(207) 282-4337

South Portland Sentry
editor@inthesentry.com
PO Box 1894
Biddeford ME 04005
(207) 282-4337

Star Herald
starherald@nepublish.com
40 North Street
Presque Isle ME 04769
(207) 738-5431

The Town Line
townline@fairpoint.net
PO Box 89
South China ME 04358
(207) 445-2234

Twin City Times
editor@twincitytimes.com
33 Dunn Street
Auburn ME 04210
(207) 795-5017

The Weekly Packet
news@pbp.me
PO Box 646
Blue Hill ME 04614
(207) 374-2341

Wiscasset Newspaper
newsdesk@wiscassetnewspaper.com
PO Box 429
Wiscasset ME 04578
(207) 882-6355

York County Coast Star
yccs@seacoastonline.com
PO Box 979
Kennebunk ME 04043
(207) 985-5901

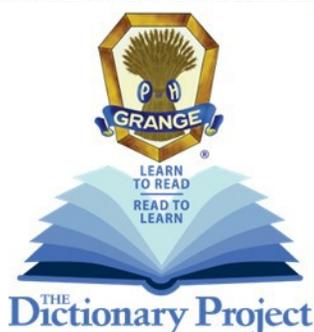
York Weekly
yorkweekly@seacoastonline.com
PO Box 7
York ME 03909
(207) 985-2961

6 COMMUNICATING WITH KIDS

One thing we can probably say with some confidence—in the Grange we probably aren't having enough conversation with kids! They are our future members, and we should be talking with them! As I've worked with kids through Valley Grange's programs like Words for Thirds, Bookworming and Newspapers in Education I've learned that most kids are hungry for adult interest. I've also discovered that we often have communication gaps simply because we do speak and think differently. If "men are from Mars" and "women are from Venus," there may be a "children are from..." version.

Simplifying this just means we need to be aware that kids are constantly learning and developing their communications skills and vocabulary. You may need to adjust depending on the age of the child(ren) who are listening to you.

WORDS FOR THIRDS



An area where many Granges have an opportunity to talk with kids is the Words for Thirds dictionary program. At Valley Grange, we've been doing this for over a decade and I've had the distinct honor to be the presenter. As a result, we've developed an approach and program that I'll outline briefly and point out that it certainly can be tailored to your situation. I have the basics in a PowerPoint Presentation and would be happy to share that with anyone interested.

We have two different programs: one we do when the kids visit the Grange Hall and another when we visit the school. Since field trips to the Grange Hall will not be the norm for most, this outline is based on a visit to a classroom.

You will need the four staves from your Grange and, of course, the dictionaries! You may also want to use a marker and whiteboard or flip chart—these will usually be available in the classroom.

The teacher will likely introduce you after giving the kids a short "lecture" on "good listening skills" and audience behaviors.

I tend to write my name on the board because it's a fun one for the kids to learn. The important thing about starting is to get the kids engaged as quickly as you can because they will tune you out if you don't. I do this by saying "Good Morning, Third Graders" and getting them to respond, "Good Morning, Mr. Boomsma."

Expect to be interrupted and that the kids will want to go off on tangents and tell you stories that may have nothing to do with your presentation. Don't fear this—the teacher will likely help you manage it.

Using simple terms and avoiding "Grange Speak" you can explain what the Grange is and why you are there—so they can learn a little bit about the Grange. I emphasize the importance of agriculture and farming. That leads naturally to the farmers' tools we have brought. How you do this depends on your comfort level with the kids. I tend to dialog with them and demonstrate how each one would have been used. The emphasis is that farming is about taking care of things: the land, the animals, the crops. Each

of these tools are helpful. “While the ones we brought today aren’t real, we have them at our meetings to remind us of farming and how we should act.”

Our approach at Valley Grange includes an RFD mailbox with some letters in it, but a simpler version would perhaps involve explaining that farmers, like Grangers, are good stewards, a word that most third graders won’t recognize or be able to define. This leads to a discussion of what we do when we don’t know what a word means. “Look it up!” Write the word “STEWARD” (letter it, do not use cursive as third graders are just starting to learn cursive) on the board or flipchart so the kids can look it up.

Expect bedlam when you pass out dictionaries. When most of the students have found the word (if you have Grangers with you, they should wander around the room helping the kids by showing guidewords, etc.) Eventually, you can pick one child to read the definition. He or she may need help with some of the words in the definition and you’ll want to be prepared to explain the definition.

The dictionary Valley Grange uses defines stewardship as the “wise management of resources.” This requires explaining what management and a resource is... a good third-grade definition/explanation might be “resources are things we can use... like tools... the tools (staffs) we looked at today are resources... and your dictionary is going to be a tool you can use for a long time. Management is about using those tools.” You can also talk about how a good steward takes good care of tools and they should take good care of their dictionaries.

You can “wrap up” by letting the kids ask questions about the Grange or their dictionaries. Some of the questions I hear about the Grange are, “How many of you are there? Do you have animals? Can I join? Do you live at the Grange? What do you do there?” Sometimes the kids will brag that they’ve been to the hall for a dinner. Relax and enjoy the conversation. If you get stumped, just admit it. The kids will accept “I don’t know.” You might add, however, “I’m going to look that up later!”

One caution: You’ll want to avoid asking the kids any questions that might elicit personal information or create an embarrassing situation. It’s easy to do this without intending. I remember once we had sixth graders attend to talk about how they still have and use their dictionaries. I asked one of them, “Do you have any brothers or sisters?” (My follow-up question was going to be whether they got to use his dictionary.) I knew immediately I’d made an error. The sixth-grader put his hand on his chin and said, “I’m going to have to think about how to answer that.” He recovered gracefully explaining a somewhat complicated blended family situation, but I should have avoided the topic.

Don’t overstay your welcome. I usually close by reminding the kids to raise their hands and ask, “Who can tell me one thing you learned today?” If you call on somebody who doesn’t have an answer, let it go... give him or her a few seconds, then just call on somebody else. Be patient and smile a lot.



End by thanking the kids for being such a good audience and for letting you come to visit with them. The teacher will take over and likely instruct the kids to thank you. You'll leave a little tired but with the assurance that you've done a very good thing.

Because I love the Dictionary Project and working with kids, I'm always willing to assist any Grange who wants to get a program started. There's a lot to like about this program. In addition to helping the kids, teachers, and schools, we are also helping ourselves. Valley Grange has found community support for fundraisers has increased dramatically because we hear people say, "Oh you are the ones who give kids dictionaries. What a great program!" Many of our Grange members look forward to "Dictionary Day" every year—for some, it's one program they won't miss!

There are so many ways to make this fun and meaningful. When the kids visit the Grange Hall, we usually arrange for Civil War Re-enactors to come and talk with the kids. We often teach a game called "the dictionary race." For several years now we've had a few older kids (fifth/sixth grade) come and talk about how much they have used their dictionaries.

Somewhere between just dropping off a box of dictionaries at the school and having the kids make a field trip to the Grange Hall, there is a program that will work for you and your schools and teachers. The one minimum requirement is that you get started! Please let me know if you're interested and would like some help.

For information about the program and purchasing dictionaries:

The Dictionary Project
P. O. Box 1845
Charleston, SC 29402
(843) 388-8375
<http://dictionaryproject.org>

Note: The Communications Department has created an extensive section of Words for Thirds Resources on the website. We can even provide you with a logo customized to your Grange.



7 COMMUNICATION TIPS AND SAMPLES

The following section includes tips and samples of communication techniques and ideas used by some of our Granges. As such, they are “field tested!”



7.1 PROMOTING EVENTS WITH A MEDIA CALENDAR

By Grace Lommel, Wayside Grange

I read with interest your/Grangers’ need for communications tips. I’d like to share what I do to publicize the Wayside Grange and Theatre.

Grangers helping Grangers... its’ the Grange way!

The most important step for promotion, I believe, is to set up a media calendar ASAP and enter all deadlines. I have two calendars: one handwritten on a wall calendar for visual planning and the other entered into my mail server’s calendar. Google calendar would work, too, if you have many people involved.

On the electronic calendar, I also set up reminders, usually three days prior to each deadline to give me a heads up. These notices pop up when I open my email. Google does this for Gmail accounts, I believe.

Wayside’s media calendar is set up roughly as follows for every event:

- Four to five weeks prior to an event, posters of the next concert/supper are hung up at the current event. We want these people most of all to know what’s coming next! Forty posters are hung at grocery and convenience stores, restaurants. I design the posters on Word, send the file to the printer, it’s converted to a PDF and then I convert it to a JPEG. Kelly Printing in Newport does this for \$12.50, the extent of our monthly advertising budget.
- Three weeks prior, print news releases are emailed with a good quality photo (at least 150kb but best is 1+mg). The photo is named appropriately (“DSN6987092” is not good. “Castlebay promo photo” is good.) The caption for the photo (L-R Tom Thumb, Dick Cheney, Harry Truman) is clearly identified in the release. Depending on the music genre, I’ll also email the Maine Country Music Association, DEFFA, etc. The band is also copied. We don’t do attachments; the release is right in the email body.
- Two to three weeks in advance, online releases are entered. These are rehashes of the same print release and same photo. I do this for the major papers (Bangor Daily News and Morning Sentinel (which also includes the Kennebec Journal and Portland Press Herald)). Radio and TV stations are also included. Tedious, yes, but very effective.
- We don’t have a web page (yet), but we do use Facebook. The newest event photo JPEG becomes our profile picture. FB event pages are created as soon as our schedule is confirmed, and the band/contact is named as a co-host. The print news release is copied into the event body and the band promo pic used. I try to post as often as I think of it, in both the event and home page. Ten days, five days, three days and one day before an event, a MailChimp email is sent to our list, which includes Grangers. It might seem obsessive, but reminders help

tremendously in this busy world. And MailChimp social cards post automatically on our FB page, too.

- The day of the event- pack camera, tripod, a smile and boundless good humor because it's going to be a GREAT event!
- The day after an event, we post on FB, thanking the audience, band and Grangers. Recently, bands have taken a picture of our audience from the stage. People like to see themselves and it gives a good idea of the size and set up of the theatre. Also posted are photos of the band playing, candid of Grangers working during the show, our desserts, whatever looks good.

Because our events are one month apart, there is some overlapping. For example, one week prior to event one we are sending the poster for event two to the printer. You can see why a media calendar is a necessity! This Wayside season contains four events, two weeks apart! Will I be busy? You bet. But it's under control 'cause it's all calendared! And it's all FREE! Except for the posters.

My goal is to make everything easy for everyone else to copy/share/pass on the info. And it's working!

Hope this has been helpful!

7.2 PHOTOS AND CUT LINES

By Walter Boomsma, Valley Grange #144

However unfortunately, many people admit they "hate to write" and, as a result, our Grange Stories go untold. A potential solution to that is to submit photos with cutlines to your media sources. Here's an example of a photo that was submitted to the local paper with a short cutline. (Think of the cutline as an expanded caption. The "cut" is the photo, the line is the caption which explains the photo in very brief terms.)

Note how the cutline tells the story in a very compact way. The sentence starting "Walter Boomsma, Program Director..." could be deleted without harming the story. I included it to make the article and story "bigger." The reporter/editor opted to run it as submitted so it appeared as about one third the width of the page.



Contributed Photo

VALLEY GRANGE CONTRIBUTION—As part of their Community Care Program, Maine Highlands Federal Credit Union recently presented a donation to Valley Grange. Employees contributed based on their "dress down" Fridays with the proceeds being distributed to local community organizations. Walter Boomsma, Program Director for Valley Grange noted, "Through no fault of our own, we recently lost part of the funding of our [Words for Thirds Dictionary Program](#), so this is perfect timing and will help us to continue to give a dictionary to every third grader in four area districts. Thank you!" From left is Sonya Smith of the credit union, Boomsma and Valley Grange Master Jim Annis.

7.3 TALKING WALLS

By Heather Retberg, Halcyon Grange #345

Our 'Talking Walls Project' is inspired by the creative homeschooling Master mama at the Union Harvest Grange in Montville, Bridget McKeen. She had written some beautiful Grange principles down on large recipe cards using Sharpies™ and posted four or five around their dining hall. I brought the idea back to Halcyon to see what members thought of using our walls to help us communicate to guests and event attendees, just what the Grange is really all about and what is it, anyway? Grangers were enthusiastic about the idea. So, I gave everyone some homework to take home the manual, sent them links to the Grange Constitution and Declaration of Purposes and asked them to each send me a few of their favorite guiding principles. What a response! This was also a great way to get seasoned and newer members alike familiarize themselves with Grange principles and the Grange manual. Members chose principles ranging from good animal care to small business attitude to care of soil to true patriotism. It was great to have all those principles pulled and highlighted. Member Elise Schellhase has great graphics skills and will be putting them all into posters for the hall as we get into fall months and all is not so intensely busy. Anyways, I think this would be fun for other Granges and help others demystify their local Granges, too. People are curious and often ask: Just what is the Grange about anyways? We think this is a great way to answer them while they eat or enjoy music or educational programming

7.4 FAIR COMMUNICATIONS

By Walter Boomsma, Piscataquis Pomona



For several years, we've set up an information booth at the Piscataquis Valley Fair that introduces fair-goers to the Grange in general and promotes each of the Granges in the area. Fortunately, we can create an "open" display where people can actually "enter" and spend some time reviewing the information. Several chairs are available for folks to "rest their feet." The stand holding the panels is "homemade" and could be made to fit almost any space. The four panels include a brief listing of every Community Grange with brief meeting

and contact information. One panel includes the entire Declaration of Purposes.

We also publish a one-page "Piscataquis Pomona Directory of Granges" for visitors to take. Postcard size coupons featuring upcoming events at various Granges are available on the table and we try to leave room for posters and flyers of upcoming events.

We've considered attempting to staff the booth with members, at least during the high traffic times. We do encourage members who are at the fair to stop by and make use of one of the chairs. This has resulted in some very interesting conversations and opportunities.

7.5 KEEPING MEMBERS INFORMED

By Larry Bailey, Master of Ocean View Grange #463

This is an example of a basic but effective way to keep members and friends informed. Larry sent this out as an email. The "by date" method helps keep things organized and allows for done and doing! It's very easy to lose track of how active your Grange is... an occasional reminder is great!

I thought it was time to send out an update of our activities so far this year and what is coming up.

May 12 – St George Road Clean-up – We participated in our annual St George Road Clean-up Day. We adopted the same stretch of road and had a nice turnout to help. It always leaves you with a good feeling to look at the difference you made.

May 19 – Veterans Grave Flags – Placing American Flags on veterans' graves is another service that we provide which is both enjoyable and humbling. We were joined by members of the Port Clyde Sailing Club...many of whom are also Grange members.

May 26 – Flea Market – The Flea Market held at the Grange was very successful. The public seems to anxiously anticipate and appreciate the Flea Market and enjoy the luncheons. The group that puts this on includes Grange members and others and provides a nice donation to the Grange.

June 2 – Bean Supper. – What would life in Maine be without a great, traditional Maine Bean Supper? It was very successful and, as a thank you to our military veterans, they dined free. The public never fails to say how much they enjoy the food, the camaraderie and the chance to break bread (brown bread and biscuits) with friends and neighbors. Many ask as they are leaving, "When is the next one? I don't want to miss it!"

June and July are busy with several rentals for weddings, parties, receptions, and memorials. Our Grange Hall is seen as a wonderful venue for family and commercial gatherings.

Farmers Market is open every Tuesday at 9 am and has been enthusiastically received.

July 9 – Grange Inspection – Sister Sherrill Snowdeal attended our meeting and conducted her annual inspection. She praised our ritual performances saying that we are among the best she has seen, and we are one of the few Granges which Presents the Flag. Our meeting was further enhanced by having to vote on six (6) new members.

June 15 – Words for Thirds – We presented 22 dictionaries to the third-grade class at St George Elementary School. This is our second year and, just like last year, we found the students were excited to get the books. The interest in our Grange and what we do was clear from their questions. This is a worthwhile project which we will continue in the future.

July 10 – Library Literary Series – As a community service, we donate the use of our Grange to the local library, Jackson Memorial Library, where a series of authors present and read from their books. The meetings are usually Standing-Room-Only. They have programs on July 17 and 24.

July 28 – Flea Market – This is the 2nd one for the year. Hours are from 9 am to 2 pm.

Aug 7 – Irish Music – Last year we hosted an evening of traditional Irish music performed by Gabriel Donovan. Almost everyone who attended said they want more. We have asked him back again and he and his wife will be here on Aug 7th. There is a donation at the door. Look for hours etc. on our Facebook page.

Sept 6 – Flea Market – Third one for the year.

Oct 6 – Flea Market

Nov 10 – Bean Supper – All the favorites will be served and veterans are welcomed to a dinner on us. 5 pm to 8 pm.

We want to give recognition to our members who cut trees and brush adjoining the Grange for safety and moisture purposes. Thank you, Brothers Ben Norton, and Joss Coggeshall. Also, it should be noted that Sister Sharon Harmon and a FOG (Friend of the Grange) Brenda Armstrong have given much time and effort to our beautiful flower gardens at the Grange.

8 MAINE STATE GRANGE BULLETIN POLICY

The Maine State Grange Bulletin serves as an internal communication mechanism that will facilitate sharing information between state leaders and members. In determining what to publish two guiding questions will be applied:

1. Does the information or article submitted have general interest statewide?
2. Does the information or article reflect Grange values?

Publishing priority will be given to articles submitted by state officers and directors, but the *Maine State Grange Bulletin* encourages articles from the membership. The writer's name and contact information for verification must be included. Submission does not guarantee publication. The *Maine State Grange Bulletin* reserves the right to make any changes necessary to accepted articles. Anonymous, pseudonyms, and articles dealing with personalities will not be printed. The editor reserves the right to edit articles for style, grammar, spelling, and length. The overriding standard for editing will be good old common sense fairness.

The State Master and Executive Committee will serve as an editorial policy review board when necessary.

All articles and information must be submitted by the fifteenth of the month. Our goal is then to have the issue assembled, printed, and mailed by the end of that month. (Articles will be posted to the website as received unless otherwise requested.)

The process for submitting to the bulletin is the same as submitting to the website. There are three options:

1. Use the [SUBMIT] tab at the top of the website. This effectively emails your submission to the webmaster/editor.
2. Send an email using the webmaster@mainestategrange.org email address. Your information/article can be the email itself (preferred) or an attached Microsoft Word document.
3. "Snail mail" your information/article to the editor's home address: 17 River Road, Abbot ME 04406. **Do not use this address for any other State Grange business.** Doing so will delay a reply!

All letters or articles submitted for publication must have content relating to the Grange and be limited to 250-300 words. When submitting future events, please allow adequate lead time and include all the details such as date, time, Grange (and location), and a contact for more information.

Adopted by the Maine State Grange Executive Committee, February 2, 2014

9 NATIONAL GRANGE WEBSITE AND 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.

In February 2011 National Grange recognized the growth of social media and the National Grange Executive Committee adopted the above 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 ensure 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.

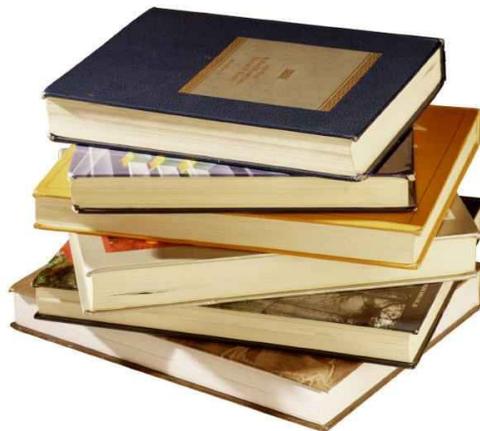
Note that these guidelines apply to websites as well. Regardless of the venue, we need to keep our Grange Face smiling and positive. That’s not to say there is no room for “healthy debate”—in fact (lecturers note!) I’ve had one or two people suggest we might consider more debates as part of our programming.

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) 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!

10 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND RECOMMENDED READING

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11 INTERNET RESOURCES

<http://wboomsma.com> is an informal site with some resources and links for writers.

<http://www.bethkanter.org/> claims to be geared towards non-profits, but just about anyone can benefit from her ideas and comments regarding social media.

<http://newspapers.com/> lists newspapers around the world.

<http://www.mondotimes.com/> is an extensive list of media sources worldwide.

Additional resources can be found on the Maine State Grange Website on the Program Books and Information Page.

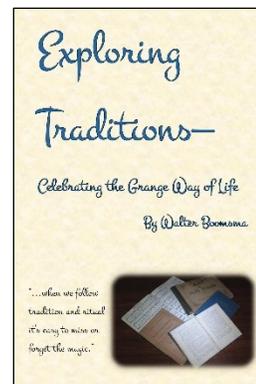
This Communications Handbook was written by Walter Boomsma and formatted by:



17 River Road
Abbot ME 04406

Abbot Village Press publishes "Exploring Traditions—Celebrating the Grange Way of Life," a book by Walter Boomsma available from Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and the author's online store.

Coming soon! A Words for Thirds Program Handbook by Walter Boomsma!



<http://wboomsma.com>

12 YOUR NOTES AND IDEAS
