

Biography

Steve Coye

The National Grange (the formal name is The National Grange of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry) was formally organized on December 4, 1867 in Washington, DC in the Office of William Saunders, head of the Propagating Gardens (since renamed to the Botanical Gardens) of that City. The men assembled at that meeting, all of which superior intellects and could be considered far ahead of their times, put together an organization designed to 1) educate the American farmer (which constituted over 90% of the population at the time), 2) provide social opportunities for the mostly isolated rural folks, and 3) help to heal the divisions caused by the Civil War. It is a hierarchical organization, with memberships residing at the community level. At the outset membership was restricted to those actively involved in agriculture, however within 25 years that restriction was phased out.

The very first local Grange organized subsequent to the organizational meeting was in Fredonia, New York, in April of 1868. Since that time, 1606 Granges have been organized just here in New York State, with organizations in other States nearing or surpassing this number.

While the Grange did not originally intend to be a political force, it didn't take long for that to become the case, and down through the years has been the impetus behind several "big ticket" items that have changed the face of America.

The Grange is a fraternity, modeled in the lodge format, with its teachings and philosophy rooted in agriculture. The reason for that is at least twofold, as it was a popular format at the time, and fraternalism will win out over sectarianism, which was a huge issue following the Civil War.