



MG-493: THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE GRANGE RECORDS 1870–2005

The Pennsylvania State Archives is now the official repository for the records of the Pennsylvania State Grange. Working in partnership with the Grange, the Archives is providing a safe, secure, climate-controlled environment for the preservation of this important organization relating to agriculture—now a vanishing way of life. As one of the most rural states in the nation, Pennsylvania counts agriculture as a major industry and source of income. Changes to our culture and landscapes over time have eroded this rural heritage and threaten to erase documentary evidence of this important part of our history. This collection includes records of the State Grange headquarters and records of nearly sixty local chapters, some still in existence and some now defunct. Staff at the Archives is in the process of inventorying the records and making them available for research purposes.

The records have been designated Manuscript Group 493 and comprise forty-two cubic feet. Portions have been microfilmed, including the Pennsylvania State Grange Minutes and Proceedings, 1877–2004. Records of the various State Grange affiliates include records of dues collected, treasurer accounts, roll books, minute books and histories, as well as photographs of Grange activities held around the state. A detailed description and inventory of the collection can be accessed at the PHMC Web site at www.phmc.state.pa.us, click on "Pennsylvania State Archives," then on "Record Holdings." Under the heading of Manuscript Group, click on MG-493.

The Pennsylvania State Grange is a family-oriented fraternal organization dedicated to the betterment of rural Pennsylvania through community service, education, legislation and fellowship. The state offices are currently in Lemoyne, Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania's first Grange, Eagle Grange #001, was officially organized March 4, 1871. Two and a half years later, the Pennsylvania State Grange was organized on September 18, 1873. By this time there were already twenty-five granges existing in the state. The National Grange (the Order of Patrons of Husbandry) had been established in 1867 with the objectives of promoting cooperative purchasing, lowering of railroad rates and rural free delivery. The Granges were also advocates in the movement to give equal status to women. A Grange hall was built at Montgomery in Lycoming County in 1887. Membership peaked at 96,000 in 1922, but as the number of farms in Pennsylvania declined in the following decades, so did Grange membership and influence. With close to 400 granges comprising 25,000 members across the state, the Pennsylvania State Grange today remains dedicated to improving the quality of life for farm families and their communities. This grassroots organization continues to be "the voice for rural Pennsylvania."



At left, History of the Early Grange Movement in Lawrence County (1874); below, vintage photograph taken at a Grange picnic.