

CHARLES E. WISMER, JR.

18th MASTER OF THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE GRANGE (1979-1988)



The Person:

- Married the former Jane Troutman in 1955 and had four children – Matthew, Betsy, Mindy and Julie.
- Montgomery County Dairy Farmer elected as Master at the 1979 State Convention held in Williamsport.
- Active in Keystone Grange #2 and many civic activities in Trappe Borough, including three years as Mayor.
- State Granger of the Year in 1972 and had chaired the State Grange Agriculture and Legislative Committees.
- Upon election as Master he was determined to improve the image of the Grange and help Grange members take pride in their membership. He adopted as the motto of his term “Grangers Helping Grangers.”
- 1984 - Master Wismer was elected to the National Grange Executive Committee.
- State Master Wismer was elected to a fourth term by a “write-in” vote, as his name could not appear on the written ballot according to the By-Laws.
- Did not complete the fourth term and resigned in July 1988.

Of Note:

- 1980 – 44,425 members in 567 Subordinate Granges
- Fourteen regional meetings were conducted by officers and department leaders to promote programs.
- The long-standing practice of paying delegate mileage to the state session was eliminated.
- The Pomona Grange Award for Public Service was begun.
- A “Buy a Brick” campaign was begun to provide funds for Headquarters repairs.
- A Youth Ritual Demonstration Team contest was developed to encourage Granges with smaller numbers of youth members to participate.
- Fifty-seven teams participated in the Bowling Tournament and 12 in the Softball Tournament sponsored by the Youth Department.
- Ken and Sharon Schlegel, Berks County, were named National Grange Young Couple of the Year.
- Ann Davis, Chester County, won the Grand National Award in Needlework for a wall hanging.
- 1981 – 42,787 members in 560 Subordinate Granges
- The “Grange Truck” began its travels across PA delivering bulk food commodities ordered by members and friends.
- One thousand interested parties attended Oil and Gas Leasing Informational Seminars.
- The Grange Insurance Agency was formed, later became the Grange Service Corporation.
- The first Grange Week Banquet and Conference was held in Hershey.
- Leadership School drew 300 members with 25% being first time attendees.
- The first Youth sponsored Volleyball Tournament drew 20 teams, and 19 teams participated in the Horseshoes Tournament.
- Mary R. Buffington, Chester County, was named Director of Women’s Activities by the Master of the National Grange, Ed Andersen. William A. Steel retired as National Grange Youth Director.

- The National Grange re-established contacts with the Oliver Hudson Kelley Farm in Minnesota, donating a quilt and sufficient funds to purchase a pair of calves to be trained as oxen.
- The Women's Activities Department also placed a quilt in the National Grange Headquarters building in Washington, DC.
- 1982 – 42,663 members in 556 Subordinate Granges
- Elizabethtown #2076, Lancaster County, became the first Subordinate Grange organized in 14 years.
- The Keystone Grange Exchange, operated from 1912 – 1952 was disbanded, and funds were used to provide additional services, including the formation of the PA State Grange Credit Union.
- Grange members pledged \$43,000 toward a new Ag Arena at Penn State University.
- Grange member mailing lists were computerized.
- A new metal roof was placed on the Grange Headquarters and new windows installed.
- The Women's Activities Department instituted the first raffle to raise funds for their departmental activities.
- In National Grange competitions, Pennsylvania Juniors took 15 first place honors, and Clay Snyder of Venango County won Best of Show in the Junior Photography Contest. State Junior Director, Sandra Westover, won first place for her state report.
- 1983 - There were 511 delegates at the 111th annual convention in Clearfield, and voted to eliminate the elected office of State Grange Finance Committee as their main duty was that of paying delegate mileage which had been discontinued.
- Regional Days were held in March to promote departmental training and activity.
- The Pennsylvania Grange Exchange (The Grange Truck) reported sales of \$1.7 million dollars.
- Brenda Shambaugh was hired as the Legislative Director for the State Grange.
- Prince and Princess titles were changed to Male and Female Youth Ambassador.
- There were 1,568 Pennsylvania entries in the National Grange Sewing Contest.
- There were 41,851 members in 553 Subordinate Granges at the end of June, but a net gain was reported by the end of September.
- Perry Valley Grange, Perry County, won first place in the National Grange Community Service Contest.
- 1984 – 41,966 members in 552 Granges
- Seminars in Estate Planning, Timber Management, Membership Motivation and Leadership Development were held across the state.
- A toll-free phone number was installed in the State Grange Headquarters.
- A new cookbook was published and 25,000 copies were sold in less than one year.
- A “Blue Ribbon Committee” was appointed and reviewed a doctoral thesis on the Grange by Dr. Arba Henry, and recommended three areas of activity with goals for each:
 - Leadership development and training;
 - Additional programs and member services;
 - Membership qualification and organizational structure changes.
- Six new Subordinate Granges were organized, and two were re-organized.
- Perry Valley Grange repeated as the National Grange Community Service Contest Winner.
- Virgenville Junior Grange, Berks County, was named the Junior Grange of the Nation.
- 1985 - 42,075 members in 550 Granges
- The PA State Grange was recognized as the largest organizational contributor at the dedication of the new Ag Arena at Penn State University.
- The Grange Credit Union introduced a VISA Card program.
- The PA Grange Service Corporation added health insurance with Geisinger to their list of member services.
- New siding was added to the Grange Headquarters in Harrisburg.

- The State Grange Deaf Activities Department donated \$1,000 to the Omega Project to assist in making the Bible available in Sign Language.
- Six new Subordinate Granges were organized during the year.
- Janet Rudy, Allegheny County, was named National Grange Female Youth Ambassador.
- MeeCee Baker, Juniata County, won first place in her division of the first Public Speaking Contest held by the Youth Department at the National Grange convention.
- 1986 - 42,088 members in the state according to the June 30 report
- The Grange Insurance Agency reported a 10% increase in business.
- The PA Grange Credit Union reported a 24% growth in assets and the PA Grange Exchange reported a 10% growth in sales.
- The Quarterback Club was formed to assist in raising funds to send Pennsylvania talent and youth representatives to the National Grange convention for competition.
- Junior Grange Camp had 222 registered participants.
- Mary McMillin, Lawrence County, placed first in her division in Public Speaking at the National Grange convention.
- 1987 – 42,091 members in Subordinate Granges; 1,800 Junior Grange members
- The Grange Service Corporation formally incorporated, elected their own Board of Directors, and adopted By-Laws. Seventy-five percent of any profits were to be returned to the PA State Grange annually.
- Five new Subordinate Granges were organized.
- National Grange published a new cookbook, and PA sold more copies than any other State Grange.
- The Women’s Activities Committee received and donated 4,000 handmade stuffed toys.
- There were 516 delegates at the 115th annual session in Butler.
- A year-long celebration to mark the 100th Anniversary of the founding of the Junior (formerly Juvenile) Grange was kicked off.
- Mary Buffington became the first woman and the first non-delegate elected to the office of Lecturer of the National Grange
- Jeff and Cindy Wetzel, Berks County, were named the National Grange Young Couple of the Year
- Jeff Wetzel was recognized as having the best report of any Junior Director with 20 or more Junior Granges in the state.

Legislation:

- 1980 - A legislative tour to Washington, DC was initiated for interested members.
- The Milk Security Fund was authorized, and Johnsongrass was declared a noxious weed by the Legislature.
- 1982 - The Grange appealed to President Ronald Reagan to limit casein imports.
- Funding was secured for research into stray voltage affecting some dairy operations.
- Multiflora Rose was declared a noxious weed.
- 1984 - The Grange opposed efforts to sell the State Liquor Stores.
- The Grange opposed any new forms of legalized gambling in Pennsylvania.
- The State Grange worked to get funding for research into Johne’s Disease in cattle.