

LEONARD RHONE

3rd MASTER OF THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE GRANGE (1880-1898)



The Person:

- Leonard Rhone was a native of Centre County, born July 21, 1838, on the Rhone Homestead in Potter Township near Centre Hall. He studied at Kishacoquilla Academy for a year (1857-1858), and after teaching for a year, became a farmer by choice.
- In 1864 he married Mary Margaret Sankey, a neighbor girl. He later purchased the other heirs' interests to the farm.
- He and Mary Margaret were Charter members of Progress Grange #96. He served as Overseer and she as Ceres. He was appointed as a Deputy by State Master Mauger and in a short time organized Centre County Pomona and served four terms as Master.
- He was the prime mover in the establishment and development of the Grange Encampment and Centre County Fair. This annual event began as a one day picnic in 1874 in Leech's Woods along the Brush Valley Road between Centre Hall and Linden Hall, at which a parade of Grange members wearing their regalia of small brown nankeen aprons and shoulder sashes was featured.
- In 1878 he was elected State Grange Overseer and then became Master in 1880, serving for 18 years.
- Elected as Trustee of PA State College in 1880 and appointed on important commissions by various Governors.
- He was elected to the Pennsylvania State Legislature during his term as Master of the State Grange, serving two two-year terms (1885-86 and 1887-88) as a Democrat. An earlier campaign in 1880 as a candidate for the Greenback Party was not successful. While serving in the Legislature, he was a champion for agriculture and good government, and secured increased appropriations for public schools in an effort to equalize taxation.
- Leonard served on the National Grange Legislative Committee, where he and National Lecturer Mortimer Whitehead were the first to appear before Congress in favor of rural free mail delivery.
- Elected to the National Grange Executive Committee in 1888 and serving there for a decade, he was chairperson of the committee from 1889-1896. Concurrently, from 1889-1895, Leonard Rhone was also High Priest of Demeter.
- Although he had many demands on his time for State and National Granges, he had a successful farm and took part in local cooperatives.
- He died September 25, 1917 in Centre Hall and is interred in the local Reformed & Lutheran Cemetery.

Of Note:

- At the time he became Master there were approximately 400 active Subordinate Granges with a membership of approximately 11,000.
- In 1887 the first class of 160 candidates received the Sixth Degree.
- In 1890, 92 Subordinate Granges were organized and 24 reorganized with 6,000 new members initiated. As of September 30, 1890 there were 507 Subordinate Granges and four Pomona Granges.

- 1891 – Appointed a Committee on Women’s Work with Mrs. Anna M. Holstein as Chairman.
- 1891 – 57 Subordinate Granges organized and 16 reorganized, five new Pomona Granges organized. There was a membership gain of 6,508 members.
- 1892 – A total of 572 Subordinate Granges with 518 paid up dues to September 30, and three new Pomona Granges organized.
- National Grange Secretary Reverend Dr. John Trimble attended the 1892 State Session held in Harrisburg.
- PA was the first state to organize County Councils and the first to change the Councils to Pomona Granges. The right to confer the Fifth Degree by Pomona Granges originated in PA and was approved by National Grange.
- Several hundred Granges throughout the state built halls and equipped them with libraries, maps, and charts.
- Cooperative work established with farm machinery, fertilizer, general supplies and mutual fire insurance companies.

Legislative:

- PA State Grange passed a resolution asking that the Commissioner of Agriculture be raised to cabinet rank. The Department of Agriculture was raised to cabinet rank with the first Secretary of Agriculture Norman J. Coleman, a Grange member at its head.
- The State Grange also began its crusade for legislation to protect the dairy industry against dishonest competition of oleomargarine.
- State Grange supported National Grange’s demand for regulation of the railroads.
- The State Grange called for a more fair and equitable system of taxation.
- Advocated for a more uniform plan for the purchase of textbooks used in public schools.
- In 1884 the State Grange Agriculture Committee recommended a program for reforestation.
- Urged the establishment of Technical Agricultural Schools for additional training in the pursuit of agricultural careers. Not until 1917 was the Smith-Hughes Act providing for vocational education passed by Congress.
- President Grover Cleveland approved the act to regulate commerce on February 4, 1887. It provided for the Interstate Commerce Commission. Under this legislation it made it illegal to charge more for a shorter haul of goods than a longer haul over the same line and in the same direction.
- In 1887 the State Grange actively supported a bill in the Legislature appropriating \$500,000 annually for the support of public schools in addition to the customary appropriation of \$1,000,000 a year.
- The state appropriations for public schools were increased in 1891 from \$2,000,000 to \$5,000,000 easing the tax burden on real estate.
- State Grange advocated for state and national legislation to assure pure food and drugs.
- In 1895 the State Legislature established the State Department of Agriculture which was supported by Granges throughout the state.
- Act to establish a State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners and registered veterinary practices.
- Act to establish a State Livestock Board to provide for the control and suppression of dangerous and contagious or infectious diseases of domesticated animals.
- Act to promote cleanliness and healthfulness in public schools.
- Act to provide for appointment of Game Commissioners

- Act legalizing dehorning of cattle
- Act to provide against adulteration of food and providing for enforcement.
- Act to expand duties of State Food Commissioner authorizing him to enforce all laws against adulterations and impurities, and also to require proper labeling of products in PA.
- Grange instrumental in securing return to County Treasury's three-fourths of personal property tax and turning over to local governments the entire retail liquor license fees.