

# PUG Times



## The newsletter of the Pittsfield Union Grange

Volume 8, Number 2

April 2009

### Message from the President

It can pay to be a Pittsfield Granger.

There are many good reasons to be a Granger. It's a fun group of people. We have interesting presentations and fun potlucks at our monthly meetings and a fun picnic in the summer and a Holiday Party in December. Together we support a facility and provide a valuable resource to the dance community and other groups in Ann Arbor. We support local schools in a variety of ways including Words for Thirds, which provides each third grader in a school with their own dictionary, and Math and Science Nights that give students and their parents an interesting and educational evening of math and science games/projects. We all have fun and wear ourselves out on Apple Day pressing cider, making apple butter and apple sauce, providing samples of many different apples to taste, making apple sorbet, and running a bake sale. What a deal for only \$40 per year!

But wait! there is more – you can actually save money by being a member of Pittsfield Grange. Preserving Traditions has become a Grange sponsored program. It meets on the second Sunday of every month and collects \$5 from each participant who is not a Grange member but Grange members pay nothing. \$5 per month for a year is a potential saving of \$60. The Grange Family Dance is another Grange sponsored program. It costs \$12 per family unless you are a Grange member, then it only costs \$10. 8 dances per year gives a potential

savings or \$16 more. Finally, the Third Saturday Cobblestone Contra is \$10 unless you are a Grange member, then it costs \$7 – potential savings of \$36. You could realize a savings of \$112 for a membership cost of \$40 and get to be a member of a great organization in the bargain.

### Upcoming Meetings and Events

#### Wed, April 15 – Grange Meeting

Margaret O'Rourke-Kelly will speak on Dora Stockman, a prominent political and Grange figure in Michigan history. Potluck at 6:30, program at 7:15.

#### Sun, Apr 19 – Family Dance

John Freeman, David Park Williams, and Ed Vincent call dances suitable for (grand)parents and children, to live music by David West and Donna Baird. Followed by Grange-baked cookies. \$12/family (\$10 for Grange members). 2 pm.

#### Sat, April 25 – Work Day

Grangers and friends do some building and outdoor maintenance jobs. 9 am until mid-afternoon. Come for whatever part you can. Lunch provided. Contact Richard for details.

#### Tue, April 28 – Family Math & Science

This is the first FM/S Night at the Ann Arbor Learning Community. Volunteers needed; no experience necessary. 5:00-7:00 pm. Contact Joan for details.

### **Sun, May 10 - Preserving Traditions**

See article below for more info. Free to Grange members.

### **Sun, May 17 - Family Dance**

Last family dance of the season. John Freeman, David Park Williams, and Ed Vincent call dances suitable for (grand)parents and children, to live music by David West and Donna Baird. Followed by Grange-baked cookies. \$12/family (\$10 for Grange members). 2 pm.

### **Wed, May 20 - Grange Meeting**

### **Sun, Jun 14 - Preserving Traditions**

See article below for more info. Free to Grange members.

### **Wed, Jun 24 - Grange Meeting**

This month only, we meet on the fourth Wednesday for our annual memorial service and planning meeting. Potluck at 6:30.

### **Sun, Jul 12 - Preserving Traditions**

See article below for more info. Free to Grange members.

## **Calendars Still Available**

Calendars for the year 2009, featuring a different Grange Hall fro each month are still available for \$10 each. \$5 from each purchase is a donation to the Michigan State Grange.

## **Dues are Due**

Thank you to everyone who has paid their annual Grange dues. If you have not paid yet, please send a check made out to Pittsfield Grange to Joan Hellmann, 208 Murray Ave, Ann Arbor, MI 4810, or bring it to the next meeting. Dues are \$40/person or \$70/family; the membership year runs January through December.

## **Change in Meeting Day Next Year**

At the February meeting, we voted to change the Pittsfield Grange meeting day from the third Wednesday of each month to the second Wednesday. This change inconvenienced no one

and solved a monthly schedule conflict for our Program Chair.

## **New Edition of Apple Cookbook**

A second editon of the Pittsfield Grange Apple Cookbook is underway. It will include an appendix with a few more of our favorite apple recipes. If you have one, please send it to Joan, very soon.

## **Dictionaries at Three Schools**

This year, Pittsfield Grange gave dictionaries to third grade students at Pittsfield and Northside schools and at the Ann Arbor Learning Community. Pittsfield students also get a Spanish/English dictionary, as they all are learning Spanish.



Pittsfield School students with dictionaries.

## **Tales of Tanzania**

The February program was a slide show about Dave and Marty Wilson's recent trip to Tanzania. Their trip had originally been planned for Kenya, but the political upheaval there encouraged a switch. The former German colonies of Tanganyika and Zanzibar combined to form Tanzania in 1964. Swahili was adopted as the common language, but much of higher education is conducted in English. The tourist infrastucture is very good, with delicious food and clean drinking water.

About 80% of the population is involved in agriculture or stockraising. Cattle are everywhere, herded by the Masai people. Overgrazing is a problem, and the government would like to settle the herders in villages. The Masai live in low huts made from sticks and a cow dung mud mixture. They still use their traditional method of fire-making using sticks, using donkey dung as tinder. The cows provide milk and blood as food, but are not slaughtered for meat.

Much of the trip was devoted to animal watching. Poaching is a problem but tourism is an important source of revenue. Dave and Marty saw enough lions that it became a bit of a ho-hum experience. Once a male lion came close enough to mark their land rover. Lions will climb trees and rest in the branches to avoid the tsetse flies.

Herds of elephants consist of females and young. Males live a solitary life. One of the places Dave and Marty visited was the Ngorogoro Crater. Only the bull elephants enter the crater, as the sides are too steep for the young elephants to negotiate. Rhinos also live at Ngorogoro, but there are only 26 there, as the Germans almost exterminated them.

Antelope are the deer equivalent in Africa. One of the differences is that antelope do not shed their horns, while deer do. In some species of antelope only males have horns. There are several different types of antelope: impala, wildebeest, hartebeest, Grant's and Thompson's gazelles, eland, waterbuck, to name a few. The most common are the Thompson's gazelles and wildebeest. Waterbucks are large and not very fast, so they try to hide to avoid predators, preferring wooded areas to open ones. Elands are the largest- too large for a lion to catch - and also easily domesticated and resistant to disease.

Altogether , they must have seen millions of animals of dozens of species, and gave a fascinating talk that made many in the audience ready to take off for travel in Africa.

## Family Dance

Attendance at the monthly family dances has picked up in 2009. The March dance hosted a 10th birthday party as well as nearly a dozen other families. In February, about a dozen high school exchange students came for a taste of American culture.

Ed Vincent has joined John Freeman and David Park Williams as the third caller. David West and Donna Baird provide live music, and the afternoon ends with Grange-baked molasses cookies and a chance to play with family science activities. There will be two more - April 19 and May 17 - before the series takes a break over the summer.



Ed calls a circle dance.



Dancers line up for the start of a contra dance.

## A Cultural History of Muskrat

*Robin Warner reports on the program at the March meeting.*

Yvonne Lockwood, Curator of Folklife at the Natural History Museum at Michigan State, talked to us about the history and traditions surrounding muskrat as a food.

Foodways is a term that anthropologists use to describe all activities around food from planting (or hunting) to cleaning up. Food is central to a culture. Often food preferences are indicators of cultural identity. For this reason food is studied by scholars in many disciplines. Discussions about food can be a way to find common ground across cultures.

Sometimes foodways relate to the heritage of an immigrant population. Pasties in the UP were brought by Cornish immigrants who introduced them to the wider UP. The Coney was brought by Macedonians from their homeland in Northern Greece. Other foodways arise in a region where the ingredients are found. The fish sandwich is a tradition in Bayport in the Thumb Region of Michigan where there is a lot of fishing. The traditions surrounding muskrat exist in the Downriver area southwest of Detroit. This is a wet area where muskrat abound. The tradition dates all the way back to French Canadian fur trappers who referred to the animal as mushrat. This reference is still found in the region.

The traditional way of eating muskrat contains the following elements:

- Harvest between November and January (before mating season to minimize muskiness)
- Skin the muskrat and remove all musk glands (to remove the musky flavor)
- Parboil with onions and spices (some save the broth)
- The French often fry the meat
- The Germans and Poles cook it in a roaster with canned corn and creamed corn.

- The result is meat that still has some muskiness
- Brain and tongue are eaten too.
- Men eat muskrat and their wives eat swiss steak.
- Catholics are allowed to eat muskrat on Fridays and other holy days as if it were fish.

There have been annual muskrat dinners in Monroe since forever. The muskrat is the symbol of Monroe. Some say it is the mascot. In 1987 there was enough publicity (Yvonne might inadvertently have had something to do with this) that the State Government felt obliged to act. Muskrat is wild game and it is illegal to sell wild game in Michigan. The resulting uproar when Lansing decided to enforce the law and close down the annual dinner was so great that public dinners were exempted from the ban.

Other strategies that have been used from time to time are selling muskrat under the table or importing it from Ohio where selling muskrat is legal. I think that the most interesting way muskrat has been obtained is from Canada. Importing muskrat from another country is subject to Federal regulation. The Federal Government accepts Canadian inspection. The Canadian inspection consists of examining the paw of the muskrat to determine that it is indeed a muskrat.

Thank you Yvonne Lockwood for a most interesting evening learning about an unlikely topic.

## Traveling though Australia

*Joan reports on her trip to Australia, which was the subject of the January program.*

Australia is about the size of the lower 48 states, but has less than 10% of the population. The land of the interior is largely inhospitable, so 90% of the people live near the coast, which is where all the main cities are located.

I wanted to experience its vastness by traveling on the ground, so took both of the coast to coast

train journeys – from Sydney to Perth and from Darwin to Adelaide. Going west on the Indian Pacific, we traveled over several hundred miles of completely straight track across the Nullarbor (guess what wasn't there) Plain. Western Australia seems very removed from the rest of the country, as does Darwin.

Australia has inherited the same Anglo folk song and dance as we have in North America, and one finds similar weekend folk festivals. I attended the National Folk Festival in Canberra on Easter weekend – over 20 music and dance venues, great ethnic food, good coffee, and crafts. During my travels, I sought out the Scottish country dance groups. Dancing in Melbourne, I unexpectedly ran into one of Helen's cousins!

Northern Australia is close to the tropics and has The Wet and The Dry (seasons); however, the Aboriginal people divide the year into six seasons. I was there during the beginning of the dry, when the weather was fine, but some places were closed due to high water and crocodiles. Kakadu National Park included vast flooded plains which will be tinder dry by October.

Australia is known for its unusual wildlife, but except for the birds, most of it is nocturnal and thus difficult to see. The flora is also unusual; trees shed their bark instead of their leaves.

Tasmania has a little bit of everything within a small area – temperate rainforest, beautiful coast, rugged (though not high) mountains, dry interior. It also has famous historic prisons for tourists to visit in Port Arthur and McQuarrie Bay. One of my favorite finds was an apple and heritage museum in the Huon Valley near Hobart. Various machines for peeling and coring apples and for sorting them were on display. Along one wall there were shelves with a space every type of apple grown in Tasmania, and one of each type grown that season was on display.

I found Australia an easy place in which to travel. The people are friendly, the language is English, and there are nice youth hostels (open to everyone) almost everywhere. Each of the

major cities has a pleasant waterfront, though with its multi-armed harbor humming with ferries, Sydney's is tops. There are a lot of parks, both in the cities and national parks nearby. Between the nature and the culture, there is plenty for any visitor to enjoy.

## Family Math and Science Night

Family Math and Science Night is an annual event at Pittsfield School, and is expanding to the Ann Arbor Learning Community in 2009. Teachers, Grangers and friends volunteer to explain the activities and play the games. We went to Pittsfield School in early March and are scheduled at AALC for Tuesday, April 28. In addition, some of the most popular activities make appearances our booths at the Chelsea and Saline Fairs and following the family dances.



Students can see minimal surfaces and feel surface tension using soap bubbles.



Using a Venn diagram to sort buttons.

## Preserving Traditions

In the last issue, we reported that Preserving Traditions was a new monthly event on the second Sunday of each month. In March, this activity became a Grange-sponsored series. This group is for people who are interested in "slow food" and local produce, and will feature a different topic each month. The most up-to-date schedule will always be at <http://preservingtraditions.wordpress.com/events/>

As a Grange event, it is now free to all Grange members (\$5 for non-members). Pre-registration is necessary, as there is limited space for cooking. Grange members have an opportunity to register a few days before the general public; watch your email inbox for an announcement each month.



The first meeting, in February, featured pasta. Participants made several varieties, hand-rolled and with a pasta machine, and compared the results. The March meeting was a discussion of different types of wheat and flour, with the opportunity to compare the same recipe made with several different flours.

For more information, visit the website, or call Emily Springfield at 997-8844.

## Food Gatherers Barrel

There is a barrel for donations to Food Gatherers in the basement next to the Grange display. Please bring non-perishable items that are not out of date, and encourage others to do so as well.



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