

PUG Times



The newsletter of the Pittsfield Union Grange

Volume 9, Number 1

January 2010

Message from the President

Several years ago Pittsfield Grange was one of the few Granges in Michigan chosen to participate in a national program called the Action Grange Program. As part of the program we were asked to experiment with new and different programs led by an Action Grange Committee within our Grange.

The Action Grange Committee determined that most of our current success depended on renting our hall to groups that put on various dance activities. This worked quite well. The dance groups that used the Grange provided the funds for our programs. They also provided a steady stream of people using the hall to have a good time. These people were a source of community support as well as a source of new members for the Grange organization. The dancing members of the Grange continue to keep the hall in very good condition for dancing.

What worried the committee was the fact that we were so dependent on one activity. As successful as dancing is in Ann Arbor there could come a time when it fell out of favor. Two areas of programming have come out of those discussions. One is support of local food and the other is programs and partnerships with local schools. It is the school programs that I want to talk about today.

The National Grange has a program called Words for Thirds. We currently use this program to provide dictionaries to all third graders in
(continued on page 2)

Upcoming Meetings and Events

Sun, Jan 10 - Preserving Traditions
Learning to make tamales has been postponed. No Preserving Traditions event in January.

Wed, January 13 - Grange meeting
Mary Wessel Walker speaks on her business, Community Farm Kitchen, which has a loose affiliation with the Community Farm of Ann Arbor. Potluck at 6:30, program at 7:15, followed by business meeting.

Sun, January 17 - 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

Thurs, January 28 - Family Math and Science Night at AALC
Grangers, friends, and members of the Ann Arbor Learning Community collaborate to present interesting and fun activities for children and parents. Contact Joan to volunteer.

Sun, Feb 7 - Preserving Traditions
PT moves to the first Sunday this month, to avoid conflict with Valentine's Day. Celebrate its first anniversary with a yoga class at 10:30, a potluck at noon, and a show and tell and trading session of kitchen implements starting a 2:00. Free to Grange members.

(continued on page 2)

(President's Message, cont from page 1)
three area schools. All three school deliveries will happen in the next couple of months. This means that three of four of us will be busy having a good time this spring. Giving dictionaries to third graders who open them and start exploring the inside is indeed a good time.

Another program that we provide to two schools is called Family Math and Science Night. This program was developed by members of our Grange and provides several interesting math and science activities for parents and students to share. This program needs a larger group of workers. We provide several Grangers, solicit help from friends of the Grange and ask the school to provide parents and teachers to help. These two Family Math and Science Nights will also happen in the next two or three months. Most of the people from Words for Thirds also help with Family Math and Science Night.

Pittsfield Grange is a member of the Partners in Excellence Program of the Ann Arbor School District. We support several more activities at Pittsfield School with everything from musicians to people to run the popcorn machine. We usually meet with the Principal in the fall to plan joint activities for the year.

The Grange sponsors a series of Family Dances at the Grange on Sunday afternoons once a month during the school year. These dances are for parents and children or grandparents and children to do together.

As a result of all these activities we have increased our recognition in the community. We have been able to increase participation in our monthly Family Dance and also the annual Apple Day celebration that we hold every fall because we can promote them at school functions and leave literature at schools.

If you are interested in joining us at these programs you can contact any of the officers listed at the end of this newsletter. Better yet, come to a Grange Meeting. They are on the schedule beside this article. As interest grows, we can extend these programs to other schools in the area.

(Upcoming Events, cont from page 1)

Wed, February 10 – Grange meeting

A Pomona meeting will precede the PUG meeting; planning for the 2010 State Grange Convention is on the agenda. The PUG program will be Ruth Ehman will be speaking on her farming operation. Pomona at 6:00, potluck at 6:30, program at 7:15, business meeting following.

Sun, February 21 – 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

Wed, March 10 – Grange meeting

Amadeus Scott will be speaking on Heritage in the Landscape. Potluck at 6:30, program at 7:15, business meeting following.

Sun, March 14 – Preserving Traditions

Learn to make ketchup, mustard, and salad dressing. Bring small jars if you want to take samples home. RSVP at <http://condiments.sign-up-sheet.com/>. Free to Grange members. 2 pm

Sun, March 21 – 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

Thurs, March 25 – Family Math and Science Night at Pittsfield School

Grangers, friends, and members of the Pittsfield School Community collaborate to present interesting and fun activities for children and parents. Contact Joan to volunteer.

Food Gatherers Barrel

Please remember the Food Gatherers barrel in the basement near the Grange display. Non-perishable items are much appreciated and will be delivered to Food Gatherers in a timely manner. Some people in our community could use the help.

Plant Diseases and History

Dave Wilson reports on the program at the October meeting.

PUG member Linda Hanson spoke on “Effects of Plant Pathogens on Human History and Culture—Some High and Low Lights” at our October 14 meeting. Linda is a research plant pathologist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Agricultural Research Service, stationed in East Lansing. After a brief introduction to plant pathology, she focused on a number of events in which plant diseases had major impacts (usually disastrous) on human beings.

Grains are the primary food source throughout most of the world, and diseases of grains have been a threat to grains and to humans throughout recorded history. “Mildews and blights” are mentioned in the Bible, and early agricultural writings describe mildews and rusts. Famines are frequently the result of an outbreak of such plant pathogens. As an aside, I remember all too well the impact an outbreak of wheat rust in Colorado had on our family’s income for a couple of years back in the 1930’s.



Wheat rust on plant

A more insidious plant pathogen that affects grains is the fungus causing ergot, which attacks wild grasses and grains such as, sorghum, millet, barley, and, particularly, rye. Wheat and oats are less affected. Ergot poisoning was described in China back in 1100 BC, in the Middle East in 600 BC, and in Europe

throughout the Middle Ages, particularly starting in the Rhine area in 857 AD. Since the fungus has little impact on crop yield, is highly toxic, and is not readily identified in food products, it was not generally recognized as the cause of the poisoning until the 1850’s. Gangrenous ergotism causes reddening and blistering of the skin and burning sensations (St. Anthony’s Fire), muscle pain, weakness, and loss of fingers and limbs. Mortality, as high as 40%, is due to cardiac arrest. Convulsive ergotism, which is less common, can result in writhing and tremors, slurred speech, hallucinations and delusions, confusion, panic, and sometimes insanity. Nasty.

The impact of ergot poisoning on military history is substantial. It trashed at least one of Julius Caesar’s campaigns in Gaul; it weakened the Franks (who ate lots of ergot-vulnerable rye) and made them vulnerable to Viking conquests; and in 1722 it wiped out Peter the Great’s military campaign to acquire Constantinople as a warm-water port for Russia. In this last, ergot killed the horses first, then some 20,000 of his soldiers.

Ergot also may be closely associated with accusations of witchcraft, including America’s own Salem Witch Trials as well as many outbreaks of alleged witchcraft in ergot-prone sections of Europe. The symptoms of convulsive ergotism are extremely similar to the symptoms of those supposed to have been bewitched or to some factors associated with being a witch. And, lastly, ergotism is probably responsible for the very slow recovery of Europe’s population after the “Black Death” (plague), since ergotism can substantially reduce human reproduction. Ironically, drugs derived from ergot are often used in childbirth, particularly to control bleeding.

The Spanish brought the potato from Peru to Europe in the 1500s, and it found a happy new home. Widely accepted by the 1700s, it was THE food for the poor of Europe, and its spread resulted in a substantial population increase. However, in 1845-1850 a series of cold wet summers provided ideal conditions for potato late blight, which spread throughout much of

northern Europe and absolutely devastated Ireland, which lost some 1 - 1.5 million people through starvation and an additional 1.5 - 2 million through emigration. The proof by Anton de Bary in 1861 that *Phytophthora infestans* was the agent responsible for the blight disproved the biological theory of the spontaneous generation of life and provided evidence for the germ theory of disease that predated the work of Pasteur on this problem.

For many years there was only a single strain of the potato blight pathogen, which was controlled by fungicides and by selecting resistant varieties of potatoes. However, other strains were introduced in the 1970s-80s and later, so we now have a progressively increasing multiplicity of strains of this pathogen. This makes control much more difficult. Some strains now affect tomatoes, for example.

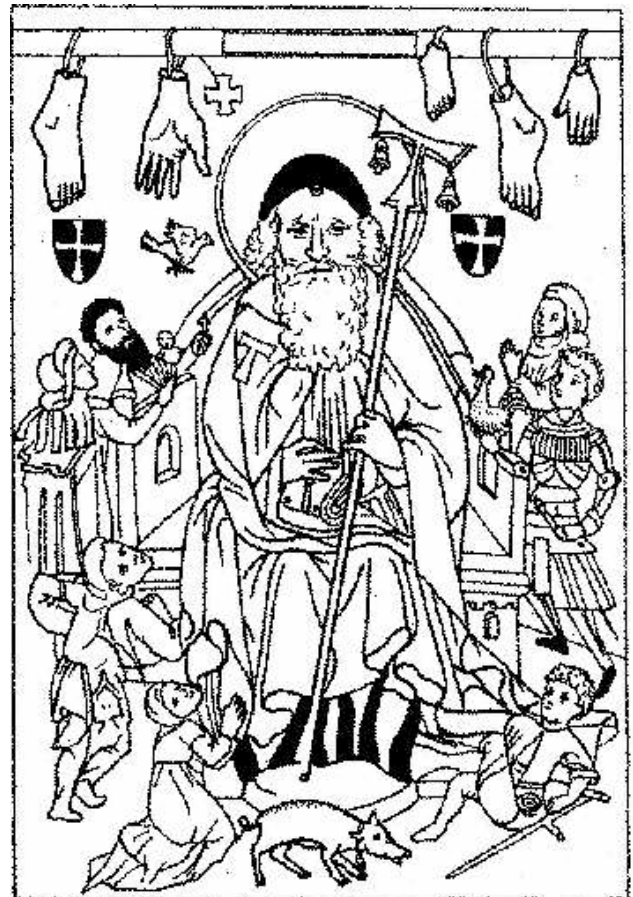
Linda next discussed the devastating impact of coffee rust (*Hemileia vastarix*) on coffee production, first in Ceylon starting in 1868, and, within ten years throughout much of the rest of southern Asia. The disease was first seen in the Americas in 1903 (in Puerto Rico), and in the 1970's it hit Brazil, resulting in skyrocketing coffee prices as supplies vanished.

We are all familiar with the border controls that our USDA and similar organizations in other countries use to block the import of potentially infected plant material. One amusing aspect of Linda's talk was her description of the very effective "Beagle Brigades"—beagles trained to sniff out fruit and vegetable materials at border control points. Without stringent controls and quarantines the rapid spread of plant diseases by travelers appears inevitable, and new problems continue to pop up as new diseases come into the country.

One case in which a plant disease turned out to have quite desirable results involved the tulip craze in the Netherlands back in the 1600s. Tulips were very popular, and therefore very valuable, particularly if they had fancy petals in variegated colors. Bulb prices for such tulips shot sky high, then plummeted when it

was found that these tulips did not breed true. These beautiful flowers were later found to be the result of the tulip breaking virus, the effects of which were later duplicated by plant breeding.

Linda then threw the floor open to questions, which came fast and furious—a sure indication of the audience's interest and enthusiasm. Thanks ever so much, Linda, for an absolutely spellbinding talk.



Dues for 2010

This is the second reminder that 2010 dues are officially due on or before the January meeting. Checks made out to Pittfield Union Grange can be mailed c/o Hellmann, 208 Murray Ave, Ann Arbor 48103 or brought to the meeting. The rate is still \$40/person or \$70/family. Life is much easier for the membership secretary/treasurer (who hates to be a nag) if dues are paid promptly.

Hardin County Granges

Another report on one of Joan's occasional jaunts to photograph Grange Halls.

A beautiful Indian summer day seemed a perfect opportunity to take a road trip to photograph the Grange halls in my birth county (Hardin, in Ohio). Patty Carncross, former Community Service Director of the Michigan Grange, was also born in Kenton, the county seat, and grew up there, so she provided me with directions to Greenwood and Goshen Granges. Patty grew up in Goshen Grange, and she told me that the one family I could name in Kenton from my family stories were also members there.



While I was walking around Goshen Grange, a couple drove up to collect the coffee-pot that was too hot to take home after the previous evening's Grange meeting.



They told me that Goshen was part of the action Grange program and is now a "community" Grange. They have about 75 members, mainly from several large families, and they meet twice a month. Members take turns providing literary programs, and they no longer have a lecturer. Dues are set at whatever the state of Ohio is currently charging. One of their projects is to do the collecting for local charities. It's not quite like United Way, as they solicit with a list of charities and the donors make out checks directly. They also give \$300 scholarships to reward local high school volunteerism, and any Grange member may apply for \$200/year toward college books. Chicken suppers provide some of their funds, but as it gets harder to find volunteers, providing dinners has become less frequent. Goshen had one of two Junior Granges in Hardin

County, but recently the Pomona has taken over the Junior program.

I asked about Painter Creek Grange, and got directions to find it east of town, which took me past the former home of the family friends. I



had directions from the web to the hall shared by McDonald and Lawrence Valley Granges, and was told there was one more in the northwest corner of the county, near Ada. After a walk around the courthouse square, I set out to find those.



The directions to McDonald were not quite right, but the address and a map made it possible to find. Then on to Ada. I had forgotten the name of that Grange, so I went into several businesses downtown and asked, "I hear there's a Grange hall near Ada. Do you know where it is?" Soon I had two replies which agreed with each other; Liberty Grange is about two miles north of town on the main highway.



As I travel around looking for Grange halls, I find that I can often recognize them by style, but even active Granges sometimes have halls that don't make much of a statement. Every now and then I can look in the windows, but often the drapes are drawn; the halls seem empty and the doors look closed. A small sign gives the name, and maybe when it was founded. Granges that seem friendlier – and there have been enough of them – have an entryway, landscaping or trees, a large sign, and maybe even some playground equipment.

The Granges from the top: Greenwood, Goshen, Painter Creek, McDonald/Lawrence Valley, Liberty

State and National Grange Report

Joan shares her impressions of the two conventions. These opinions are solely her own and do not represent the views of Pittsfield Union Grange or its other members.

Much of the time at State Session is spent going through all the resolutions proposed by Community and Pomons Granges. Each is assigned to a committee, which either brings it to the floor or fails to endorse it. Resolutions cover a wide range of topics, from Grange regulations to licensure of CNA's. They often are proposed because one or two Grange members have had an experience which leads them to desire a change in some law or regulation; unfortunately, some offer only simplistic solutions to complex problems.

Pittsfield Grange's resolution regarding use of the Grange name was significantly watered down before it passed. It reads, "... Michigan State Grange supports the National Grange in its efforts to protect the Grange name, and urges the National Grange to keep State Granges informed of their work and progress in this area." Though PUG specifically noted that we thought local Granges should be kept better informed about the process of dealing with infractions in their own localities, we were met with descriptions of the top-down Grange Way and the reasons why it would not be feasible to keep us in the information loop.

Our other resolution, regarding membership reporting, died in committee, for good reason. It turns out the various Community Granges in Michigan have different membership years and different ways of dealing with people who join in the middle of a year. These differences make it impossible to go to annual reporting, as we had proposed.

The Calhoun County Pomona Grange did a great job of performing the Fifth Degree; they will be a hard act for us to follow.

The National Grange Convention in Grand Rapids followed a month later. This year, for the first time, applicants for the Seventh Degree were

admitted to all sessions as if they already had the degree; the actual ceremony was only after the rest of the convention was officially over. Thus we could attend the Assembly of Demeter, whose sole functions appear to be holding elections for its offices and conserving Grange ritual.

One highlight was the Evening of Excellence, a program of talent and speech winners from various states. The audience was treated to musical numbers, a ventriloquist, a clogging troop, and a stand-up comic. We were glad that there was no judging, because all the performances were topnotch.

Saturday was reserved for the Sixth and Seventh Degrees and the final banquet. Sixth Degree was an amalgamation of the practices of the states in the midwest region, so had aspects that were quite different than what is done in Michigan State Grange Session. Seventh Degree was done by the officers of the Assembly of Demeter, and was both astounding and disturbing. Despite the general rule that Grangers are not to try to influence the religious or political views of other members, I found the Seventh Degree did just that; it explicitly told me what the correct religious views are, as well as being mildly sexist. It is possible that I am remembering somewhat incorrectly, but the secrecy means that I have no way of going back and checking my perceptions against the actual text.

At the banquet, we met the Minnesota delegation, which included two people on the staff of the Oliver Kelley Farm, now a Minnesota State Park. The food and company were good, but the dance music following was so loud that it was painful to stay in the room – and as the Grange is an organization interested in deaf awareness, this was a final instance of inconsistency.

November Grange Program

Dave Wilson reports on his own presentation at the November meeting.

For our November meeting Dave Wilson gave a talk on his and Marty's recent trip to Spain.

The first portion of the trip was a tour in northern Spain with a group from Vanderbilt University, where Dave taught for many years; the trip leader was an old friend of Dave's. This was followed by a postscript jaunt to Málaga, on Spain's Costa del Sol, where Dave and Marty had spent a sabbatical year at the University of Málaga in 1993-4. We speak enough Spanish to be dangerous, so getting around in Spain is pretty easy for us.

Our first stop was in the very lively Catalan city of Barcelona, a large port city in the northeast corner of Spain on its Costa Brava. Antoni Gaudi's whimsical and creative architecture mark the city unmistakably; his spectacular and original Church of the Sacred Family with its 18 bottle-shaped towers is the city's trademark. Wealthy Barcelonians with a sense of humor and originality had him design homes for them that must be seen to be believed. (Chimneys that look like Darth Vader, for example, and everywhere the catenary curves that are his signature) A posh housing development he was involved with fell on its face, but he and the city then converted the site into a very intriguing and eye-catching park. Other things not to be missed in the city include a lovely waterfront and Las Ramblas, a most interesting and picturesque street mall where one can buy flowers, birds and foods, observe street artists at work, and avoid getting one's pocket picked.

Barcelona is also well known for its artists, particularly Miro and Picasso. Miro's brightly colored tiles are much in evidence in the city, and fine museums showcase the art of the two men. Both lived through the harsh times of the Spanish Civil War and the Franco era, and this is reflected in their work, some of which is pretty grim.

Spain is a group of countries struggling to become (or not become) a nation, and this is quite apparent in Catalonia; Catalonians regard themselves as Catalan first, and Spanish a very distant second. We very much enjoyed la Fiesta de la Mercé, a Catalan festival in Barcelona that featured parades, fireworks, spectacular

acrobatics (human towers), and regional dancing (in which Marty participated).

Our next stop was Zaragoza, in the north central part of the country. A spectacular basilica, a beautifully restored Roman theater, a gorgeous square, and a lot of lovely Mudejar buildings make this city one not to be missed. (Mudejar refers to Moors living under Christian rule.) The basilica was bombed during the Civil War, but the bomb miraculously failed to explode; a replica (I hope!) of the bomb is displayed within the church.

We briefly visited Pamplona, made famous by Ernest Hemingway for its tradition of the running of the bulls. Bulls making the one-way trip from the holding pens through the city's narrow streets to the bull ring are accompanied by large numbers of idiotic young men who think that running the risk of being gored or trampled by a ton of upset, angry bull is great sport. Apparently feeling the hot breath of the bulls on one's legs gives one a real high. Thanks—I'll pass.

We stayed for several days in beautiful San Sebastian, located in the mountains on a lovely bay on the north coast (Costa Verde) of Spain. Northwestern Spain gets quite a bit of rain, so the mountains are heavily forested and everything is green (verde). We enjoyed walking along the promenade bordering the beach, visiting the little gothic cathedral and watching a kids' pickup soccer game at its entrance, visiting the aquarium with its fish and exhibits of fishing equipment and techniques, and eating scrumptious food. While in San Sebastian we made a side trip to the large industrial city of Bilbao, which recently acquired a spectacular tourist attraction, the new Guggenheim Art Museum. Clad in glass and titanium sheath and shaped somewhat like a futuristic ship, the Guggenheim is unique. And the art exhibits inside push the definition of art absolutely to the limit... Years ago Dave was involved in planning remedial work on a hazardous waste site in Bilbao.

We then left the group and headed on our own down to Málaga, on the Costa del Sol (Sol=Sun,

Spain's south coast). Ties between the University of Málaga and Vanderbilt University (where Dave taught for many years) go back a long way; quite a number of young (and not-so-young) chemical engineers came to Vanderbilt to work in environmental engineering with Dave and his engineering colleague Ed Thackston. In 1993-4 Dave took a sabbatical year at the U of Málaga, and we have many friends there.

In Andalucía (including Málaga) the Moorish influence is to be seen everywhere; the Moors were in this part of Spain for some 700 years. Many of the historical sights are Moorish, including two of our favorites: the Alcazaba (a lovely palace and fortress) and the Gibralfaro (a grim, ready-for-business fortress) in Málaga. On this trip José Miguel Maroto and his wife Victoria took us to visit one that we hadn't seen before, El Sohail fortress at Fuengirola just west of Málaga, the rusty cannons of which still stare out over the Mediterranean on the lookout for long-gone Barbary pirates. One of the high points of our visit was the day César Gómez-Lahoz took us high up into the mountains to El Torcal to hike among its bizarre limestone formations. The geology here looks like something invented by Dr. Seuss, complete with huge stone mushrooms and a limestone elephant. Another high point was the day we spent cruising through the twisting passageways and beautiful gardens of the Alcazaba.

Much of the time we spent just cruising the city—visiting friends at the Department of Chemical Engineering at the university and eating too much delicious food with them, admiring Málaga's one-towered cathedral (Money for the second tower was spent to support the American Revolution instead, and the cathedral was never completed.), walking the narrow twisting streets of the older part of the city, viewing the city's Roman ruins, enjoying the beautiful gardens along the Paseo del Parque, and eating ice creams of all sorts of delicious flavors.

All too soon it was time for César to take us to the airport and for us to catch our flight home. This last turned out not to be a trivial matter,

thanks to some disorganization on the part of recently merged Northwest and Delta Airlines, but Marty eventually got them sorted out and we got home in good order.

Grange Store

Pittsfield Grange is selling several new items. Preserving Tradition "Yes. We Can." aprons, T shirts, and packs of canning labels are available through Downtown Home and Garden, with all profit being returned to our Grange. Other Preserving Traditions items – tote bags, mugs, magnets – are available through the web at www.cafepress.com/preservetrad. The second edition of the PUG Apple Cookbook, now coil-bound, and the 2010 Michigan Grange Calendar are for sale at Grange events. Michigan quarter medallions, small and large, are also available, as are both the state and national cookbooks

Price List for Items for Sale at Grange:

2010 Calendar	\$10
"YES. WE CAN." Apron	\$25
"YES. WE CAN." Canning Labels (12)	\$ 3
PUG Apple Cookbook	\$ 5
Michigan Quarter Large Medallion	\$10
Michigan Quarter Small Medallion	\$ 1
Sharing Our Best	\$15
What's Cooking at the Grange	\$15

Grange contacts:

<p>Robin Warner, President 734-426-0241, robin@ic.net Helen Welford, Hall Rental 734-426-0241 welford@umich.edu Joan Hellmann, Treasurer/Membership 734-769-1052, hellmann@umich.edu Linore Latham, Community Service/Secretary 734-769-6152, linore@umich.edu Richard Raymond, Hall Maintenance 734-662-9290, rreymond@umich.edu David Wilson, Program Chair 734-699-7623, djw1ls0n@sbcglobal.net</p>
