

PUG Times



The newsletter of the Pittsfield Union Grange

Volume 8, Number 3

July 2009

Friends at the Chelsea Fair

Robin Warner's Message from the President

Last year the Chelsea Fair introduced a new exhibit that turned out to be very popular. It was called "Nature's Creation of Life" and featured the live birth of various farm animals supervised by local area veterinarians. It was housed in a tent by the main gate that was passable but far from ideal. This year the exhibit will be expanded and moved to the red barn. The reduction in exhibit space prompted a decision to restrict nonprofit exhibitors at the fair to those based in Chelsea.

When our representative called to ask why we hadn't received our registration materials and was given the explanation above, she expressed her disappointment and the fair manager expressed regret. A few days later the fair manager called back to say that the fair wouldn't be the same without us and that they would work to find a place for us. The end result is that we will be at the Chelsea Fair.

What have we done to warrant being allowed to exhibit when space is so limited? I don't know for sure but here are several things that we have done. We put up a nice looking and interesting booth (we won a prize for it last year) and we man it for most of the time that the fair is open. We become part of the community of exhibitors around us and help when needed. Each of the last several years we have donated a collection of Grange Cookbooks to be used as door prizes at Ladies Day. Several of

our members have bought lambs and pigs at the livestock auction in the name of the Grange. Some of our members have entered the various cooking and homemaker contests. In short, we have been involved in the whole fair.

This is one tangible example of the good that comes from being relevant in our community. Our support of the dance community and our programs to help schools in the area and our free apple day celebration and our help with Rural Education Days are other activities that keep us involved in the wider community. If you want to support Pittsfield Grange and help to secure its future, helping to man the Chelsea Fair booth is one way to do it.



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Upcoming Meetings and Events

Sun, Aug 9 – Preserving Traditions

Topic for this month is lactofermented pickles. 2:00-4:30. Free for Grange members; \$5 for others.

Tue-Sat, Aug 25-29 - Chelsea Fair

The Grange has a booth in the Merchants' Building. Contact Helen to help and Joan if you are interested in purchasing a share of an animal at the auction.

Tue-Sat, Sep 8-12 -- Saline Fair

The Grange has a booth in the Merchants' Building. Contact Joan if you can help or if you are interested in purchasing a share of an animal at the auction.

Wed, Sep 9 - Grange Meeting + Pomona

Pomona at 6:00. Program TBA. Potluck at 6:30, program at 7:15, followed by business meeting.

Sun, Sep 13 – Preserving Traditions

Topic for this month is canning tomatoes. 2:00-4:30. Free for Grange members; \$5 for others.

Sat, Sep 26 – Apple Day

We bring out the cider presses for use by the public. Also a bake sale, apple tasting, applesauce and apple butter, apple cider ice, crafts and more fun with apples. 10 am – 4 pm.

Sun, Oct 11 – Preserving Traditions

Topic for this month is old-fashioned sauerkraut. 2:00-4:30. Free for Grange members; \$5 for others.

Wed, Oct 14 - Grange Meeting

Grange member and plant pathologist Linda Hanson will speak on Impacts of Plant Diseases on Human History. Potluck at 6:30, program at 7:15, followed by business meeting.

Thu-Sat, Oct 15-17 - State Grange

The State Grange Convention is in Marshall, with an opportunity to attain the sixth degree before the national convention in November.

Sun, Oct 18 - 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.

Sometime in Fall – Work Day

Look for announcements of date. We gather to do semi-annual maintenance jobs around the building and grounds.

Sun, Nov 8 – Preserving Traditions

Topic for this month is pierogies 2:00-4:30. Free for Grange members; \$5 for others.

Wed, Nov 11 - Grange Meeting

Program TBA. Potluck at 6:30, program at 7:15, followed by business meeting.

Tue-Sat, Nov 17-21 - National Grange

The National Grange Convention is in Grand Rapids this year, so there is a nearby opportunity to attain the seventh degree.

Sun, Nov 18 - 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.

Fri, Dec 11 - Grange Holiday Party

Sun, Dec 20 - 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.

Meeting Day Change in Fall

Starting with the September meeting, Pittsfield Grange will meet on the **second** Wednesday of each month, with the usual exceptions for the holiday party in December, and the months of July and August.

Rural Education Days

The end of April brings Rural Education Days, sponsored by the Washtenaw County Extension to educate third graders about the origins of our food and other agricultural products.

Students learn about water quality and soil conservation, and see farm equipment and baby animals. Afterwards they sample various foods representing Michigan products, from ice cream, to dried cherries, to soy nuts. Pittsfield Grange pops thousands of bag of popcorn and showcases field crops such as grains and soybeans.

Each year, we are helped by high school students from 4-H and FFA.



Everyone turned the crank on the grain mill.



Richard and 4-H volunteer make some popcorn.

Family Math & Science at AALC

This year, we added Family Math and Science Night at Ann Arbor Learning Community to our schedule. Grangers and friends, along with parents and teachers, volunteered to show off various entertaining and interesting science and math activities.



Kids and kids-at-heart enjoyed playing with the balancing toy.



Seeing the minimal surface using soap bubbles.

Summer Picnic

PUG's annual picnic was held the last weekend of June at the home of Emily Springfield and Scott Martin. The weather was beautiful and many of us enjoyed a tour of Emily's large garden. As evidenced by Emily's photos, we also enjoyed a delicious and varied potluck and good conversation.

The digital camera seems to have been inspired by Georges Seurat's pointilism!



Dora Stockman, American Change Agent

Marty Wilson reports on the April program, and adds more information about Dora Stockman, an important woman in Michigan Grange history.

On Wednesday, April 15 Margaret O'Rourke Kelly gave a very interesting talk about Dora Hall Stockman, a Michigan woman of many talents, whose life was very much entwined with the Grange.

The National Grange was founded in 1867 to help farmers after the Civil War. In its early days the Grange really filled a need; from 1873 to 1875 membership grew from 200,000 to over 858,000.

Dora Hall was born in 1872 on a Manistee County farm (in the northwest corner of Michigan's "mitten"). Her parents joined the Grange in 1874; and Dora grew up in the Grange - a farmers' organization that welcomed families and considered teens and women to have full membership, equal to that of the men - a very unusual concept in that day.

Dora passed the teacher examination at age 14 and started teaching at age 16. She married Francis Stockman at age 17, thereby losing her teaching job. But she was very busy as a wife and mother, a student, and working with the Grange. She attended Bezonia College and later earned a master's degree in education from Hillsdale College. And she wrote, selling long stories, farm rhymes, plays. Most of her writing was thematic, praising farm life, damning cigarettes, etc. In 1913 she was appointed by Michigan's Governor Ferris to attend the international Congress of Farm Women.

In 1914 she was elected State Grange Lecturer; she held that post for 16 years. During that time she traveled all over the state and became very well known in Grange circles. In addition to serving as Editor of the Grange newsletter (the Michigan Patron), Dora was instrumental

in establishing the 4-Leaf Clover Club, a junior Grange that became the 4H Clubs of today.

“A year after women’s suffrage passed in Michigan, Dora was elected in 1919 to the Board of Agriculture, now the Board of Trustees of Michigan State University. With this election she became the first woman elected to a statewide office in Michigan, and the first woman in the US to serve on the board of a Land Grant College.”* She served two terms (1920-32). The fact that she was well-known in Grange circles would have really helped in her runs for public office.

In 1932 her husband died. And in 1934 she was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Law Degree by Michigan State, honoring her contributions to education, agriculture, and the Board of Michigan State; she was the first woman in the US to receive an honorary doctorate.

In 1937 she ran for the Grange Master position in Michigan. She was disappointed in this loss. But the next year she ran for and was elected to the Michigan State House of Representatives. She was reelected three more times, and finally retired in 1946 because of advanced diabetes. While a Representative “she introduced legislation that resulted in the Michigan Medical Insurance Program, the first of its kind in the nation. This was implemented as Blue Cross/Blue Shield.”*

Dora Hall Stockman died in 1948. We are grateful to Margaret O’Rourke Kelly for introducing us to such an outstanding woman.

P.S. Margaret O’Rourke Kelly is an interesting person in her own right. She first found out about Dora Stockman when she was running for the Michigan House of Representative (from the same district that Dora served decades earlier). Margaret was so enamored of Dora that she wrote her Ph.D. thesis on “Dora Stockman, American Change Agent” – and later wrote the book, “Phenomenal Woman: The Dora Stockman Story” that was published last year. She is Professor of Communication and Adult Studies at Spring Arbor University. She is a delightful

speaker. She and her husband live in Canton; we look forward to seeing them both again.

*From the Michigan Women’s Historical Center and Hall of Fame write up on Dora Hall Stockman.

Sojourn on St Kilda

Dave Wilson reports on the May program, with additional information from the web.

At our May 20 meeting Joan Hellmann, filling in most ably for a last-minute cancellation, gave an illustrated talk on her 1994 trip to St. Kilda. The largest of the islands composing the St. Kilda Archipelago, Hirta, is a remote, jagged volcanic bit of granite and gabbro, only 2.6 square miles in area, 40 miles west from the nearest land, the Outer Hebrides of Scotland. Three other smaller islands and a number of sea stacks complete the archipelago. St. Kilda is famous for its awesome sea cliffs, great colonies of sea birds (gannets, puffins, fulmars, skuas, and petrels), and archeological remains. Traces of settlement indicate that St. Kilda was inhabited for at least 2000 years, although its population probably was never greater than 180, and was no more than 100 after 1851. The earliest written records of life on St. Kilda are from the Late Middle Ages. The medieval houses that formed the village of Am Baile on Hirta were replaced in the middle of the 1800’s, but illnesses resulting from increased contact with outsiders through tourism, excessive religious zeal, and World War I all contributed to the island’s eventual abandonment. It was evacuated by its last 36 inhabitants in 1930. At present, parties of volunteers work for the National Trust for Scotland during summers to restore buildings left by the St. Kildans, there is some biological research, and there is a small military post and boat landing at Village Bay. Joan informed us that a small pub, the Puff Inn, provides liquid refreshments of a very fortifying sort at very modest prices.

The inhabitants raised a few hardy crops (such as barley and potatoes) on those scraps of land where this was possible, and they had sheep and

a few cattle. The bulk of their food came from the enormous numbers of sea birds found on the island. Heavy seas and savage weather made fishing a good way to get oneself killed, although the islanders did travel between the islands by boat. Visits from outsiders all too often brought diseases such as cholera and smallpox. Life for St. Kildans was austere, isolated, and well-supplied with privation, although probably less grim than life for the factory slaves in England's manufacturing towns.

Joan's spectacular pictures and lively commentary gave us an excellent picture of this remote, tiny, savage, beautiful scrap of land. There are no trees whatsoever, because of the heavy winds and violent storms, but the grassy slopes and meadows are filled with lovely little alpine-type flowers. Hikes ranged in difficulty from gentle ambles to serious mountaineering that was not for the faint of heart. Narrow paths traversed steep slopes, with sea cliffs and crashing surf hundreds of feet below—not a good place for the unsure of foot. As a birder, I particularly enjoyed her gorgeous shots of St. Kilda's fulmars, gannets, and other feathered residents. Also of interest were the feral Soay sheep, which molt in a most unbecoming and untidy way and so don't require shearing.

Joan's group of volunteers was there to put a roof on one of the houses built back in the 1800s. The stone walls of these houses were built to last, even after the roofs were long gone. The houses are being restored for use as dorms for volunteers, for research projects, for a museum, and for storage. Joan's pictures showed a good bit of detail about the roof construction; for instance, the roofs are tied on, presumably to withstand autumnal and winter gales. Other remains of occupation of the island includes cleits—corbelled stone buildings with turf roofs—and stone-walled sheep folds.

Thanks ever so much, Joan, for jumping in to fill the gap with a most interesting and entertaining account.



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.

June Planning Meeting

The June meeting was devoted to discussing PUG plans for the future. Programs at meetings, possible acquisition of a sound system, regulations for the use of the hall, and our various programs were discussed, but no significant action was taken.

Write for the PUG Times

The PUG Times is always looking for articles written by Grange members about topics of interest. Have you started a new business? Learned something new about agriculture, gardening, or the local area? Share it with the rest of us!

Buy an Animal at a Fair Auction

You may be able to share with other people. Contact Joan if you are interested in lamb, beef, or pork.

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