

# Westford Grange No. 208 rooted in past

## Farmers' group was social, educational

By June W. Kennedy

**T**he Grange carries connotations as American as apple pie, which is fitting for this 121-year old farmers' association.

The nationwide group was founded in 1867 for the furtherance of agricultural interests. It wasn't until 28 years later, on Feb. 28, 1895, that 41 persons gathered at the home of Leonard W. Wheeler on Main Street (the brick-end house directly opposite Roudenbush Community Center) for the purpose of forming a local Grange.

Wheeler already was a member of the Littleton Grange, but later became a member of the Westford chapter. The second meeting was held on March 7, 1895, with State Deputy F.H. Stevens of Stow, Mass., in attendance to organize the Westford Grange. First Master was J. Willard Fletcher; 13 officers were elected by the 41 charter members.

From these members, several still have descendants living in town: J. Willard Fletcher, Mr. & Mrs. Quincy Day, Mr. & Mrs. Frank C. Hildreth and Miss Annie Wilson, who later became Mrs. George Kimball.

Members attended regular monthly meetings of Pomona Grange (the county or district organization), traveling 10 to 15 miles in a two-horse barge or sleigh, depending on the season. They would arrive in time for a mid-day dinner, participate in cleaning up, enjoy a business meeting, followed by an informative, educational program. That part is similar to today's Grange.

In 1896 the First Farmers' Institute was held in Westford. While the sisters of the Grange prepared the dinner, the brothers met trains at the Westford station to bring the guests to the Town Hall. These Institutes proved to be an excellent source of income to

## GRANGE ENTERTAINMENT COURSE

### SEASON 1908-9

Oct. 29. Stereopticon Lecture. Storm Heroes of our Coast.  
Nov. 23. Lecture. Across the Continent.  
Dec. 10. A Dramatic Entertainment.  
Jan. 14. Lecture. Glass Eggs under Wooden Hens.  
Jan. 25. Concert. Vocal and Instrumental.  
Stereopticon Lecture. To be announced.

ARTHUR K. PEGK  
GEO. S. LADD  
MISS CAROLYN S. FOYE  
JAMES E. NORGROSS

### Course Tickets: Adults \$1.00. Children 50c.

ENTERTAINMENTS BEGIN AT 8 O'CLOCK

GRANGE MEMBERSHIP AFFORDED entertainment and enlightenment for those who joined the association primarily to further agricultural interests. This poster provides a partial listing of the Westford group's diversions for the 1908-09 season.

(Courtesy of June Kennedy)

the Grange for several years.

As late as 1928, they were still serving meals to the visiting farmers' organizations. In return for use of the hall, the Westford Grange many times replenished the dishes and other kitchen utensils as the need arose.

Westford Grange arranged exhibits for Middlesex North Agricultural Fairs for several years. In September of 1901, members received a 2nd prize of \$20; in 1904, a 1st

prize of \$25 was brought home. A 3rd prize of \$15 was won in 1905.

#### Set up postal service

Through the efforts of two Grange members, Frank C. Wright and Edson G. Boynton, the first R.F.D. mail route was established in Westford in 1904. These two had been present at a Pomona Grange meeting in 1903 when George W. Trull of

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## Grange past

### GRANGE

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Tewksbury read a paper concerning R.F.D. mail routes.

From the enthusiasm this created, the two members sent to Washington, D.C., for necessary papers. The mileage was measured on a tandem bicycle, with the assistance of then Westford Postmaster, Sherman H. Fletcher.

The route started in October 1904. Brother Frank C. Wright was carrier. A second route was established the next year and another Westford Grange Brother, Samuel H. Balch, was carrier. He continued to carry mail as late as 1914.

In 1904 the first set of Regalia for the Officers was made by the Sisters of the Grange. It was that year also that programs for the year's meetings were first printed.

In January 1905 Westford Grange assisted in organizing Chelmsford Grange, with a Westford Past Master, Fred L. Fletcher, becoming its first Master.

March 1906 found Westford Grange with its own Ladies' Degree Team with Mrs. M. Aurilla Wright, one of Westford's Past Masters, as instructor. There have been Ladies' degree teams in Westford most of the years since. At one time the group would go to other Granges in the district to confer the third degree.

In 1910, by invitation of the Westford Selectmen, papers containing the list of Charter Members, First Officers of Grange, a history of the first ten years of Westford Grange, and a copy of the current Grange program were prepared and deposited with other town papers under the cornerstone of the Soldiers monument in the Center of Westford.

It was in 1913 that the Grange presented a drinking fountain to the Town of Westford. It cost the members \$367. Placed on the west side of the Common, it was functional as long as the Water Company was privately-owned. Today it is ornamental.

Through the years, Westford Grange sponsored many projects consisting of canning demonstrations, 4-H club exhibits and a Community Agricultural Fair which elicited a little friendly competition amongst the agrarian citizenry.

Grange events could be the highlight of a farmer's week, as seen in this excerpt from the July 10, 1909 Westford Wardman News:



THE CIVIL WAR monument to Westford volunteers was erected in 1910, with important Grange papers encapsulated beneath its cornerstone. The familiar soldier stands watch over the common at Boston Road and Hildreth Street. (File photo)

"At the grange meeting last week, Thursday evening, the lecturer's hour was entertainingly and instructively occupied. Music by the grange orchestra so lively and good that it had to be played all over again several times, such was the hand clapping for it, that it couldn't be put off with a bow. Mrs. H.B. Read read a paper of much interest and news to many of what the women of the North did for the women of the South during the Civil War.

"Charles L. Hildreth read and explained Farm Law in its bearing on the farmer, with particular reference to the milk standard, forest laws, the setting of

fires and the protection of wild game. Mrs. F.C. Wright read and quoted interesting facts relating to the early history of the town.

"The discussion of the question, 'From which do we derive the most benefits: education or observation?' was postponed until the first meeting in August on account of the crowded benefits of the evening. The grange voted to invite Tyngsboro and Concord Granges to visit Westford Grange the evening of Sept. 16."

June Kennedy is a Westford resident and author of "Westford Recollections", a series of historical vignettes and photos.