

Monthly Candle Lighting Ceremonies

The Pennsylvania State Grange is celebrating its 150th Anniversary in 2023 – a truly momentous occasion. In anticipation of this exciting milestone, the State Grange has held a series of candle lighting ceremonies, signifying the spreading of the Grange light from the National Grange to Pennsylvania. A ceremony held in September 2021 was incorporated as part of the Anniversary Kick-Off Celebration and commemorated the birth of the Grange in Pennsylvania, at Eagle Grange #1 in Lycoming County. At the annual State Grange session in October 2021, the light continued to spread among the State Grange officers, highlighting the importance of leadership. Throughout 2022, the light has been given to the Junior and Youth/Young Adults Departments to emphasize the significance of the organization's youngest members. The light has also been shared with the Family Activity and Community Service Departments to highlight two of the Grange's principles – the importance of family and service to the community.

In this – the year leading up to the 150th Anniversary Celebration in October 2023 – the light will spread across all Granges in Pennsylvania. We invite all Granges to join with us in lighting the 150th Candle at each of their meetings and share the accompanying monthly reading with their members. We hope that the candle and readings will help to inspire each local Grange to continue to spread the light of the Grange in their communities.

In these times of division and polarization, our Granges have the potential to be a light in the darkness, setting an example in our communities for how we can join together and work together toward a common purpose. May this light inspire us to continue the work of the Grange and instill in us a renewed enthusiasm to keep the Grange thriving for at least another 150 years.

Instructions

At each meeting, the 150th Candle should be placed on the altar. The candle lighting ceremony should be conducted immediately following the Opening of the Grange, before the Roll Call of Officers. The Lecturer/Program Director (or another appointed reader) should approach the altar, facing the Overseer. The Lecturer/Program Director or other reader should read the corresponding monthly reading (see below) and, at the conclusion of the reading, should light the candle on the altar. The candle should remain lit throughout the meeting and extinguished after the Closing of the Grange.

November 2022 – Unity

The Grange motto begins, “In essentials, *unity*.” As we prepare for the 150th Anniversary of the Pennsylvania State Grange, we celebrate the Grange as a unifying force. Since its founding, the Grange has recognized the importance of banding together toward a common goal. In its early years, the Grange joined together to take on the railroad monopolies and advocate for American farmers. In recent years, the Grange has united to fight for rural broadband to ensure the internet – and the opportunities it brings – is available to *everyone*.

In the current climate of division and polarization, there has never been a greater need for unity. In the installation ode, the Installing Officer reminds us, “Nor does our Order interfere with his religious or political views, but in morality it seeks the highest standard.” Although we may have different opinions and beliefs, in the Grange we are united in working toward a common goal – serving our communities.

As we light the 150th Anniversary Candle, let our Grange be a beacon of unity in our communities. Let us set the example of setting differences aside to work together toward a common purpose. Let us spread this light among ourselves and out into our communities.

December 2022 – Fidelity

As we prepare to enter the season of Winter, we are reminded of the lessons of the 4th Degree – friendship and fidelity. The lesson of fidelity is included in our salutation, “A good patron places Faith in God, nurtures Hope, dispenses Charity, and *is noted for Fidelity*.” Oxford Dictionary defines Fidelity as, “faithfulness to a person, cause, or belief, demonstrated by continuing loyalty and support.”

In the Grange, we honor fidelity toward and support of the Grange, through attendance and participation in its meeting and other activities. The Secretary in the 4th Degree reminds us, “In our fraternity there is work for all and those reap the most abundant harvest of Grange benefits who contribute most liberally of their own time and talent.” As in most things, those who *give* to the Grange *get* the most in return.

We also demonstrate fidelity and loyalty to one another. The emblem of the 4th Degree is the agate (hold up the agate from the implement box) – a stone with variegated colors. The President in the 4th Degree charges us with this: “Let the Agate be to you an emblem of FIDELITY. May your principles of manhood and womanhood be as firmly impressed as the lasting colors in the stone, and may our friendship be as firm as the stone itself.”

As we light the 150th Anniversary Candle, let us remember to always be supportive of one another. Let this light inspire us to continue to be loyal Grangers and friends – both to those in our Order and to those around us.

January 2023 – New Year, Renewed Purpose

January brings with it a new year, filled with new opportunities and new resolutions. The new year is a time to reflect upon the last year and hope, dream, and plan for the new year. Just like in our lives, this is an opportunity to do the same in our Grange.

As we prepare to celebrate 150 years of the Grange in Pennsylvania, let us use this opportunity to not only celebrate the Grange's accomplishments over the last century and a half, but also to think critically of what we can do to ensure the Grange's survival for another 150 years. Let us use this milestone occasion as an opportunity to renew our purpose. Think about these questions: What is the Grange's purpose? What does our Grange do to fulfill that purpose in our communities?

As we light the 150th Anniversary Candle, let us renew our purpose of serving those around us. Whether through service projects, educational opportunities, social experiences, and more, let us spread the Grange light to those around us by providing these opportunities and more to our communities.

February 2023 – Legislation/Advocacy

Since its organization, the Grange has advocated for rural America. In its early days, the Grange saw the passing of the Granger Laws, which regulated the fees that grain elevator companies and railroads could charge farmers to store and transport their crops. The Grange was instrumental in pushing for the organization of the US Department of Agriculture.

The Grange is a grassroots organization, meaning that its legislative policies and priorities arise from the "grassroots" – or local chapters – of the organization. Policies originate in the form of resolutions passed by the local (Subordinate) or county-level (Pomona) Granges. Resolutions then proceed to the State Grange, where they are deliberated and acted upon by the delegates at the annual State Grange session. Resolutions that are adopted by the State Granges and affect national policy then proceed to the National Grange, where they are acted upon by the delegates at the annual National Grange session. Resolutions that are adopted at either the State or National Grange level become the Grange's legislative policy. The Grange's legislative policies and priorities are advocated for in Harrisburg and Washington by the legislative directors of the Pennsylvania State Grange and the National Grange.

Local Granges and their members across the state and nation have nurtured relationships with their local legislators through direct contact and events like legislative banquets and candidate forums. As we light the 150th Anniversary Candle, let its light remind us of our responsibility as Grangers to advocate for the needs of our communities.

March 2023 – Faith

As we enter the season of Spring, we are reminded of the lesson of the 1st Degree – Faith. This lesson is included in our salutation, which is said at every meeting: “A good Patron places *faith in God.*” The Grange, while religious, is non-denominational and does not adhere to a specific faith tradition. The President in the 1st Degree leaves us with this inspirational message: “We are constantly passing blindly along the pathway of life, events occurring that we do not understand, and often encountering difficulties and obstructions in our way; but we should press forward, having Faith that God will ultimately bring us into the broad and pleasant fields of Paradise.”

The emblems of the 1st Degree are the ax, plow, harrow, and spade (show implements from implement case). In the 1st Degree, the President instructs the candidates of not only the literal use of these tools, but also their symbolic lessons. “[The ax] teaches us perseverance in overcoming obstacles; for, as by repeated blows it cleaves its way through the hardest wood, so should we by repeated trials surmount every difficulty...[The plow] should teach us to drive the plowshare of thought diligently through the heavy soil of ignorance, and thus prepare the mind for the growth of knowledge and wisdom...[The Harrow is] emblematic of that course of study and observation necessary to enable you fully to understand your business...[and the spade] becomes the emblem of thoroughness. Whatsoever you attempt to do, strive to do it well”.

As we light the 150th Anniversary Candle, let this light remind us to be faithful and to spread the light of our faithfulness, not only by our words, but by our deeds. May we live the Golden Rule to treat others the way we wish to be treated and may others recognize the Grange light in each of us by the way we treat those around us.

April 2023 – Grange Month – Sharing the Grange Light with Others

April is celebrated across the country as “Grange Month”. It is not only a time to celebrate our own Granges, but should be an opportunity to share the Grange story with others. The Grange is often called our own best-kept secret, but we should not keep our light hidden under a bushel; we should be sharing our Grange story with pride and letting others know the wonderful things we are doing in our communities.

Think about these questions: “How will our Grange share our story this month and beyond?”
“What new ways can we find to share our Grange story to reach those who have not heard it?”
“How can we make our Grange more welcoming and inviting so others can join our Grange story?”

As we light the 150th Anniversary Candle, let us remember to spread the Grange light wherever we go. Let us live out the principles of the Order in our everyday lives so that we can share our Grange light with others.

May 2023 – Perseverance

The lesson of the 5th Degree is Perseverance and is said in the salutation at the county-level (Pomona): “A good Patron places faith in God, nurtures Hope, dispenses Charity, is noted for Fidelity, and will Persevere.” The Oxford Dictionary defines Perseverance as, “persistence in doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success.”

In a world where we have come to expect instant gratification, it has become more and more difficult to wait for the results that we want. As the Grange – like so many other organizations – faces challenges with membership and finances, the lesson of perseverance has never been more important. But, perseverance does not only mean trying the exact same thing and expecting different results. Perseverance requires flexibility of thought and willingness to try new things, despite discomfort or fear.

As we light the 150th Anniversary Candle, let its light remind us to persevere in the Grange and in all that we do. Let its light lead our way in trying new things and finding new ways to reach our fellow members and those in our communities.

June 2023 – Hope

As we begin to enter the season of Summer, we are reminded of the lesson of the 2nd Degree – Hope. The Oxford Dictionary defines Hope as, “a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen.” We are reminded of this lesson in each meeting when completing the salutation, “A good Patron places Faith in God, *nurtures Hope...*”. The President in the 2nd Degree instructs us, “Cultivate with HOPE the seed thus planted, that it may yield an hundredfold.” The Chaplain in the 2nd Degree reminds us, “Do good, hoping for nothing in return, and your reward shall be great.”

The emblems of the 2nd Degree are the hoe and the pruning knife. Like in all Grange Degrees, the implements not only have a literal meaning, but a symbolic one, as well. The President instructs us: “The Hoe, with which we cut up weeds and stir the soil, is emblematic of that cultivation of the mind which destroys error and keeps our thoughts quickened and ready to receive and apply new facts as they appear, thus promoting the growth of knowledge and wisdom...The Pruning Knife, used to remove useless and injurious growths from our trees, plants and vines, should remind you to prune idle thoughts and sinful suggestions, and thus keep your passions within due bounds and prevent your fancy from leading you astray after the vanities and vices of the world.”

As we light the 150th Anniversary Candle, let its light remind us ever to be hopeful. Let its light guide us forward with hope that our endeavors will be fruitful. Let us do good for those around us without expecting anything in return and, in so doing, spread our light to everyone we meet.

July 2023 – Liberty

The Grange motto, as begun in November, continues, “In essentials, unity; *in non-essentials, liberty...*”. Returning to the charge of the Installing Officer, we are reminded, “Nor does our Order interfere with his religious or political views, but in morality it seeks the highest standard.” In the same way that religious or political differences should not interfere with unity toward Grange purposes, the Grange also does not dictate what its members should believe.

Since its organization, the Grange has believed in the equal rights of its members. Youth are able to join with the same full membership rights as adults at the age of 13 ½. Women were granted full and equal rights to men within the Grange from its founding – 53 years before women were granted the right to vote through ratification of the 19th amendment.

As we light the 150th Anniversary Candle, let its light remind us to advocate for liberty and equality in our Granges and in our community. In the spirit of liberty, let this light remind us to be welcoming of all and spread that light of welcome to all we come across.

August 2023 – Education

We are reminded in the manual to “...keep constantly before the minds of the members the important fact that the great object, and the crowning glory of our organization is to “educate and elevate the American farmer and improve the quality of life in rural communities.” Since its organization, education has been a key purpose of the Grange.

Educational opportunities are encouraged and are even built into each regular meeting in the form of the literary program. The Lecturer/Program Director is responsible for the educational work of the Grange and is charged in the installation to, “Especially urge and encourage the young and the diffident to become writers, readers and speakers in Grange meetings, and thus develop and direct to greater usefulness the latent abilities of your fellow members.”

In its early years, the Grange was an important source of education and information for its members. In the mid-1800s, around the time the Grange was organized, public education was not common and certainly not required. It was not until 1918 that all American children were required to attend at least elementary school. The Grange fulfilled its mission of providing educational opportunities to its members, who may not have had the chance to attend formal school. Today, although education is now mandatory, the Grange continues to fulfill its purpose of educating its members and the community about pertinent and timely topics.

As we light the 150th Anniversary Candle, let it remind us to spread the light of education among our members and the community. Let it lead us to find new ways of sharing helpful and relevant information and fulfilling our Grange purpose of “educating and elevating” those around us.

September 2023 – Charity

As we enter the season of Autumn, we are reminded of the lesson of the 3rd Degree. Charity is both the lesson of the 3rd Degree and the culmination of the Grange motto. We repeat the Grange salutation at each meeting – “A good Patron places Faith in God, nurtures Hope, *dispenses Charity* – and it concludes the Grange’s motto: “In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; *in all things, charity.*” Arguably, it is the most important lesson of the Grange and is seen by many as the Grange’s primary purpose.

We are reminded by the Steward in the 3rd Degree, “We must reap for the mind as well as for the body, and from the abundance of our harvest, in good deeds and kind words, dispense CHARITY.” The emblem of the 3rd Degree is the Sickle. “It speaks of peace and prosperity, and is the harbinger of joy. It is used not merely to reap the golden grain for the sheaf, but, in the field of mind and heart and soul, to gather every precious stalk, every opening flower, every desirable fruit.” And, in our abundance, we are encouraged to share with those less fortunate.

As we light the 150th Anniversary Candle, let us remember to always spread our Grange light through our good deeds. As we serve those around us, let us do it with a selfless heart. Let others know we are Grangers in the way that we share our light with those who are experiencing gloom. Let our Grange light find ways to illumine the darkness and serve those in need.

October 2023 – Celebration and Looking to the Next 150 Years

Happy Birthday Pennsylvania State Grange! The Pennsylvania State Grange was organized 150 years ago, on September 18th, 1873. The Grange is America’s oldest fraternal organization and has accomplished many amazing things in the last century and a half. Certainly, this is cause to celebrate!

As we look to the next 150 years, let us not dwell only on the achievements of our past, but imagine new ways to continue to survive and thrive. The Grange’s lessons and purpose that we have celebrated this past year continue to be our guide. But are there new ways of fulfilling those lessons and purposes in ways that are relevant today? Although the Grange has changed since its organization 150 years ago, our purpose has not. We are still called to serve our communities in many different ways.

Although it can be frightening, change is inevitable, necessary, and exciting. The Grange of the future will not look exactly like the Grange today – in the same way that the Grange of today does not look exactly like the Grange of 1873. The founders knew the organization would grow and change to meet the growing and changing needs of the communities it serves.

As we light the 150th Anniversary Candle, let its light lead us forward in charting the next 150 years of the Grange in Pennsylvania. Let it illuminate our way and inspire us to lead the Grange into the future.