

Pittsfield Union Grange Hall, #882

Location: 3337 Ann Arbor-Saline Rd, Ann Arbor MI 48103

pittsfieldgrange.org

The Grange Motto:

In Essentials, Unity -

In Non-Essentials, Liberty -

In All Things, Charity



Pittsfield Union Grange 882: An Exploration of a People and Their Landscape

by Shannan Gibb-Randall

9 April 1996

Contents

Introduction

Historical Southeastern Michigan

Antecedents to the Grange

The National Grange Movement

The Pittsfield Grange, no. 882

Membership

Meetings

Work, Funerals and Celebration

Ritual

Relationships to the Surrounding Area

Decline of the Pittsfield Grange

Appendix: A Poem by Creative Grange Member Lydia Lavender

References

Acknowledgments

Introduction

When this paper was written, I was a first year student in the masters program for Landscape Architecture in the School of Natural Resources at the University of Michigan. The project was conceived in a History of Landscape Architecture class, where the professors encouraged students to explore a local site that had not already been thoroughly researched. As an Ann Arbor native, I used to drive by the Pittsfield Grange and wonder what kind of organization the Grange was. This research project provided the opportunity for me not only to discover the rich history of the Grange, but to document the dramatic land use changes in the area as well.

This paper would not have been possible without the generous and kind people of the Pittsfield Union Grange who made the research of this project both interesting and entertaining. Special thanks to Herman Koehn, Louise Koehn, Betty Katz, Bud Katz, Ulian Gutekunst, Elaine McCalla, Susan English, Dave Sebolt, and University of Michigan professor Larry Berlin.

As someone who grew up in Ann Arbor, I remember driving out on Ann Arbor-Saline road and seeing miles of corn and wheat with old fence rows of oaks dividing the shades of gold. Old houses dotted the landscape. Ann Arbor-Saline road is now 5 lanes, and instead of being lined with crops and spidery old trees, it is flanked by acres of parking lots and shopping areas named after the trees that once used to grow there. Just the other side of the Meijer's complex sits a white unassuming building surrounded by

Historical Southeastern Michigan

Farming is the 'seedbed' of the Grange, and geology is the bedrock for farming. Therefore I would like to begin my analysis with a general survey of Washtenaw County in geologic time as well as conditions that were present just previous to active farming and white settlement. The land that now comprises Pittsfield Township was on the edge of an ancient lakebed that had a base of thick humic clay (Puffer, 1976). The rest of the township mostly was glacial till plain (podzolic soils over a gravelly base). The area was a mosaic of oak forest and oak savanna which are prairie openings amid mostly white, burr and black oak. The openings were maintained by fire regimes, both starting from lightning strikes and deliberately lit by the Potawatami Indians (relatively recent arrivals from the east after being squeezed out by the Iroquois) for game and food cultivation management. The conditions of soils and oak savanna made it an attractive place for white settlers to farm.

Michigan became a territory in 1805, but for the first thirteen years there was little interest in the area due to the marshy quality in lower Southeastern Michigan, which made it seem like an interminable wetland. In another decade the Potawatami had no control over the land other than the usual hunting and fishing rights. In anticipation of the completion of the Erie Canal (which was finished in 1825) a few pioneers made the trek in and found much dryer land traveling both north and west of Detroit (outside of the old lake bed). Surveyors started to lay the standard grid system and to record land features dictated by the Land Ordinance of 1785. Tiffin, the head surveyor, ran into some difficulties around 1815, which further delayed accelerated white settlement. By the luck of where the survey line ran, Tiffin and his team went through what were actually scattered, but seemed like ongoing bogs that were extremely difficult to survey. He and his team became very discouraged and cut their survey short due to what they thought were an entire landscape of untravelable and uninhabitable conditions for future settlement. They gave Michigan bad press, but this did not last for long and by the 1820s, a wave of white settlers were building on and altering the landscape for farming. (Puffer, 1976)

Arriving settlers generally were impressed with the oak openings amid the mosaic of dense trees and wetlands. Traveling through these openings around trees with a team of horses was relatively easy. Many associated oaks with fertile ground for farming (though some thought the lack of trees meant infertility) and the lack of trees made plowing more immediate. It is easy to see why these areas became the first natural settling spots. However, the openings were not as "open" as they thought. Because this system is fire dependent, underneath the soil was a thick one foot mat of oak "grubs", or root crowns, that had been burned back but with the root system still stubbornly intact. Standing trees and these root crowns quickly made trees into the enemy of farmers. Great joy was expressed when trees were taken down as people thought they cut off light and encouraged "bad air". Despite advice to the contrary, these farmers cut down everything around them (though most left small woodlots for fuel). The market was saturated with oak timber which yielded very low prices. White oak was the only type that would even sell. (Puffer, 1976) With this drastic alteration of the landscape, farming quickly became the dominant human land use in Pittsfield Township -- for years to come.

The grid system of surveying put property lines on the landscape in six mile grids which are today's townships. Due to the layout of this system, people tended to have their home next to the roads, which were laid out in square mile grids and/or in the middle of their farm land. This land settlement pattern encouraged maximum distance between neighbors which led to isolation of farming families. Without easy access to their neighbors, many social and intellectual opportunities were lost. Throughout the

nineteenth century, different responses rose to this challenge, which was typical all over rural America. Adult education opportunities were introduced to provide mental stimulation, entertainment and community gathering for those in the rural landscape. These movements were the seeds of the Grange.

Antecedents to the Grange

One such response to the rural condition was the Lyceum movement, which began in the 1820s, developing public education nodes where people could come. However, most of these were in areas of greater population density. Fifty years later the Lyceum took to the road and became a lecture circuit for "experts" that brought debates of the day to rural America (Stubblefield, 1994).

In the 1830s a popular Agricultural Press began and state grants became available to promote farming innovation. Agricultural Societies gained in popularity and were a way to disseminate new scientific farming techniques -- trying to prevail over the working farmers suspicion of "book learning". According to the sales-like writing of the Plat Book of 1874, there was an agricultural society in Washtenaw County, which was very successful. It should be noted that its documentation was sparse and therefore difficult to measure how successful or active it was in comparison to the Grange.

The National Grange Movement

The Grange movement was another answer to the challenge of lack of opportunity for rural education and thin social organization. It began right after the end of the Civil War in 1867. It actually was one of several adult education movements after the War and had contemporaries like the Knights of Labor and the Farmers' Alliance. (Stubblefield, 1994) The National Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry, as it is officially known, was conceived by Oliver Hudson Kelley and several of his colleagues at the U S. Department of Agriculture. The term "Grange" comes from England and means an old estate where a variety of agricultural activities were carried on. (Gardner, 1949) The mission of the Grange was meant to: 1) advance agriculture through education; 2) make farmers more aware of new farming methods and legislation that was affecting them; 3) improve the living and working conditions of farming families; 4) organize cooperative economic power; and 5) overcome their isolation. (Stubblefield, 1994)

The Grange had a rocky beginning, taking on and promising too much at once. They had their greatest gain during the depression of 1873, when farmers turned to politics to cure their political problems. By 1874, almost nine thousand Granges with a membership of 643,125 had been organized in twenty-four states (Woods, 1991). It declined thereafter, but picked up again in the late 1880s (Buck, 1913).

Founder Oliver Hudson Kelley was a member of the Masonic Order and developed the Grange as a fraternal organization that borrowed heavily from symbolism and ritual from the Masons. Grange members refer to each other as "brother" and "sister", and there is a clubby feel with "pleasing rituals and the subtle charm of secrecy", as National Master Dudley W. Abrams declared in 1874. (Gardner, 1949)

One of the Grange's contribution as a movement was creating social and educational opportunities at the local, state and national level. They had some outside lecturers, but relied heavily on their own membership to interchange views, prepare papers, debates, and talks about issues of interest. It was less about getting knowledge from the "experts" than gathering information and forming opinions themselves, from the ground up through group involvement.

The Grange movement won several political battles for farmers. They strongly influenced the break up of the power of railroads that set exorbitant prices for shipping crops and goods. This made it possible for farmers to actually make a living, instead of giving their earnings to the railroads to ship their produce. They conceived of and pushed for rural mail delivery, improved rural highways and greatly influenced the establishment and quality of rural schools. These are a few among many political accomplishments that the Grange was instrumental in bringing to the national, state and local debate.

Perhaps most unique as an organization of its time, the Grange was a forward-looking leader in the way that it handled membership and the participation of women. When the Grange was first in the minds of its creators, the men who were discussing it did not even consider membership of women to their organization. Caroline Hall, the niece of founder Oliver Hudson Kelley, told her uncle, "Your organization will never be permanent if you leave the women out!" (Gardner, 1949) The Grange went on to include women as full voting members, able to hold any of the sixteen offices in each local Grange hierarchy. Women became Grange masters, chaplains, secretaries, lecturers, gate keepers, etc. In fact, in order to begin a Grange, four of the necessary ten members had to be women. For many years women enjoyed many more rights and responsibilities within the Grange than in general American society.

Further, it was crucial to have the involvement of women if the Grange was to become a farming family institution -- not only acknowledging the work women contributed to farming, but providing social opportunities for the whole family. There was a Junior Grange developed at the national level, but it was scattered in its popularity among local Granges. The Grange was made up of farming families, but also became a larger family in itself, and was reinforced by the fraternal language of using "brother" and "sister" as prefixes to one's name.

The Pittsfield Grange, no. 882

With Ann Arbor several miles to its north and Saline in its extreme southwest corner, Pittsfield Township was ripe for a Grange. Before the time of cars, the township had no natural gathering spot. Farms were spread evenly over the land, maximizing distance between farming families. The Grange was an answer to the farmer's need for education, information, collective buying power, and social opportunities for the isolated farmers and their families.

The information gathered in this section was based primarily on interviews with people that have been members of the Pittsfield Grange for over fifty years. There are records of meeting minutes, but most are tucked away in corners of basements and were beyond the scope of this project. I did not attempt to gather them together in the time given. I do have some records of scattered periods of time (1905-1912, 1950-1956, 1977-1989), but certainly not comprehensive coverage. I have had to rely mainly on the memories of long-time members, and as the reader can imagine, there were a few inconsistencies.

Membership

Pittsfield Grange no.882 began in 1901 with around fifteen members. Other Granges had started in Washtenaw County and it was difficult to find any information on how they were or were not related to the aforementioned Washtenaw County Agricultural Society. Members were farmers, though this changed later over time. Membership eventually was open to anyone who was sympathetic, or not opposed to farming. As Herman Koehn put it, "It was open to anyone who liked to eat!" He meant, of course, that if you ate, you were not opposed to farming since that is where our food came from. Membership was open to men and women (over 16 years of age), though children were always taken in tow to meetings and, according to those interviewed, usually played by themselves when the parents met. Consistent with the National Grange guidelines, women were full voting members and held offices. Minutes were recorded by the secretary. Scanning old meeting notes, it seems women and men had about equal time speaking in the meetings and organizing events. The elected chaplain would offer prayers to open the meeting and for other events. For women, this was a unique opportunity not otherwise open to them in the larger community. In many ways, the Grange was a place women could achieve influence and respect. Betty Katz, a woman who was raised in the Grange by both grandparents and parents, reported that her mother was known as "the mouth of the Grange" and was a very active member. She was also known as a rather lackadaisical housekeeper. The Grange was an opportunity for her to show her real strengths instead of only being measured on usual standards of domestic neatness.



New members were voted upon by current membership. Usually couples or parents with older children were voted in together instead of individually. There was a clause, however, that said that if there were reservations about one of the new members, individual voting sessions could be held. In the memory of Lilian Gutekunst there was an instance when an older woman, her son and his wife tried to enter the Grange. The older woman apparently had a shady reputation (how shady was not elaborated). Some members objected to this woman, but would allow the son and his wife. They decided to have a separate vote, the first of its kind in the Pittsfield Grange, which enraged and embarrassed the son. He said that if his mother was not good enough for the Grange, neither was he and stormed out. The politics of this situation demonstrate that the Grange was not purely an open farming family organization, but one that had moral and social criteria as well. A certain amount of homogeneity was important to its membership.



Meetings

For the first thirty years, the Pittsfield Grange regularly met twice a month in people's homes, with intermittent outside social gathering. The meetings usually consisted of Grange business (run by various officers in the Grange but with the participation of all) followed by a "program".

In the business portion it is clear from ledgers that cooperative buying was common for products like coal, especially in the early years. The Grange had contracts with town businesses, like Hertler Brothers

of Ann Arbor, and members got a discount. There are also many references in meeting minutes about checking prices on seed, as well as for corn and wheat and other information that would aid the collective Grange community. Without the Grange, the farmer would have to gather all this information himself to take advantage of the agricultural market. Working together, farmers could be much more knowledgeable and savvy in their dealings with buyers. The Grange was a way for farming families, spread out thinly over the landscape, to come together and pursue advantages of collectivism.

There also was a political component to the Grange. Grange members were kept up to date on legislative measures and voted for laws and candidates that were sympathetic to their cause as farmers or as community members.

The Grange is officially non-partisan and this was reinforced by several people I interviewed. However, Louise Gutekunst said that when she joined in the 1920s, there was mainly a Republican agenda. People were kept up to date much more on Republican issues. According to Michigan historian Clever Bald, this was common to Michigan Granges where there was relative prosperity. Western Granges were much more radical due to the adverse economic conditions to which they were subjected. However, there was a offshoot organization formed in Michigan in 1887 called the Patrons of Industry that appealed to farmers who were dissatisfied with the Conservatism of Michigan Granges. They became allied with the radical Populist Movement, but soon declined. By 1896 they were gone.

Intellectual activity also was a component of the program. "Papers" were presented at various times, though not consistency. "Reasons for Changing the Constitution" by Brother Sperry was on the program for the evening of 13 February 1907. Reports on local schools were a common theme throughout Grange meetings. Debates between members also were held: "Women's Suffrage" was the subject between three women and three men on 7 November 1907. Meeting minutes show readings were given, but fail to mention topics. The papers, debates and readings surely provided intellectual stimulation for Grange members.

The Grange encouraged involvement; its members were intent on developing their own ideas and ability to communicate with each other effectively. These were educational opportunities for Grange members to engage politics and learning at the local level, but also extend beyond to the larger system, to feel connected and stimulated to the wider world around them despite their physical isolation from each other in the landscape.

The organization structure included education, collective buying, intellectual stimulation and political involvement, but social opportunities and entertainment were crucial elements in any Grange gathering. Even from the meeting minutes of 1905, it is clear that social activity was a major component of the Grange meeting "program". On 13 February 1906, "Michigan, my Michigan" was performed by the children, and Sister Lavender sang a solo. Folk music was popular with the group, and generally they adapted older songs into "Grange melodies". As testimony to the involvement and home-spun entertainment of its members, I have included a humorous poem on agriculture written by the same Sister Lavender (see Appendix).

Work, Funerals and Celebration

Outside of meetings, work sometimes brought Grange members together. In times of need, they often would help each other with work, though this happened between neighbors as well--Grange and non-

Grange alike. In the early thirties the Grange was popular and big enough to construct a building. Land was purchased in the northwest corner of Pittsfield township from the Heller family and construction began. A contractor was hired, but many of the Grange members did work on the project. Farmers of course must have many skills in order to survive, and it was a skilled group of Grange members that put in many hours in the building's construction. Lilian Gutekunst's husband did all the electrical work.

The new Grange building was built with a large kitchen and gathering place for eating in the basement, with an open wood floor and stage upstairs (figure 2). No indoor bathrooms were added until the fifties. The Grange had many members (figure 3) and was secure enough in its identity that it was time to create its own place in the landscape. The work to construct and maintain it over time no doubt brought people together and added to the Grange's sense of purpose and importance. As with most human groups, the establishment of a physical place in the landscape was a deeply significant event for the Pittsfield Grange.

The Grange community gathered in times of sadness as well. Each spring that required it, a memorial service was held for any Grange member who died in the last year. The chaplain would run the service. This was a way for the community to come together to honor the deceased and support the grieving family. Though no one mentioned this in interviews, the timing of these services corresponds to an old rural tradition of burying and honoring the dead who had died over the winter when the ground was frozen. Services were held when the 'serviceberry' (*Amelanchier* sp.) was blooming and ground properly thawed. (Perkins, 1984)

However, celebration within the Grange was much more common than funeral services. There were frequent parties, picnics in the summer out at a lake, mother-daughter and father-son dinners, anniversaries and the annual Christmas party. A skit always was prepared; this tradition continues today at the Grange Hall. Betty Katz fondly remembers children involved in the decorating party with a fresh tree and then the potluck with lots of oranges, popcorn balls and hard candy for the kids. Everyone associated with the Grange would come (including Santa Claus). Even in the years of waning popularity, members or children of members who never came throughout the year still came to the Christmas party.

Ritual

Ritual was a strong part of the internal Grange gatherings, though only vestiges remain now. It was included in many elements of Grange life--opening and closing the meeting, voting, celebrations. It also was the primary expression of the relationship between the landscape and the Grange members who farmed it. As mentioned earlier, one of the founding members of the National Grange movement was a Mason, and the Grange themes and rituals he created reflect this. It was a fraternal organization and had a secret password that was changed annually by the national level Grange group Assembly of Demeter (named after the goddess of the harvest). There were times that members had to "prove" that they knew the current password and whisper it to the Grange master. However, as Betty Katz tells it, the Pittsfield Grange was forgiving; the master usually would give you a hint if your memory failed! Rituals were a regular part of meetings, but also featured at various times of the year.

"Degree Teams" were groups of Grangers that would practice various dance-like movements in costume and would compete with other Granges in the local, state and national level. The Pittsfield Grange was active in these events and competed on a national scale. Rituals described to me seem to have strong

agricultural and earth fecundity themes. Herman Koehn, current Grange master, was impressed when he first saw rituals as a new member in the 1940s. He believes they are based in Catholic ritual, are nature-based, honor the creator of the universe, honor the seasons and life.

Three women were elected to hold offices of the "three graces", Syries (grain), Flora (flowers), and Pomona (fruit). They sat in a certain configuration for the Grange meeting, were symbols in ancient recognition of these graces, and had a strong part in many rituals. Grange ritual and rhetoric borrows heavily from Greek mythology, though according to Herman Koehn, the Grange does not overtly acknowledge the Greeks. From my perspective it seems that Greek mythology was incorporated into Grange ritual and language because Greek religion and beliefs had many stories, gods and goddesses, and myths based in the landscape and the seasons. It seems natural that farmers would relate with this world view. It should be noted, however, that the tone of Grange was very Biblical as well. The meetings always were opened with a prayer from the Bible, and the book itself sat squarely in the middle of every meeting.

This kind of ritual surely brought meaning to the act of farming. Ritual born out of action, or abstracted from everyday life into a respected and important event elevates the mundane habits of one's livelihood into something special and revered (Holland, 1994). When a woman carries sheaths of wheat, or a man carries a sickle in front of a community of like-minded people, it infuses the ordinary with meaning-- honoring the past growers of human sustenance, acknowledging the importance of their current daily work, and setting respect in motion for its continuation. It would bring security and self respect with their relationship to the larger human world and greater meaning to their relationship with the land as cultivators of the earth's bounty.

Relationships to the Surrounding Area

The Grange not only was involved with its own members, but sought relationships to the surrounding community as well through community service. In the meeting notes of 1905, there was an active "Charity Committee", though it was not entirely clear what they were involved in. Later they were involved with myriad groups, from the 4-H, to the University of Michigan hospital, to educating people on hearing loss and the deaf. The Grange would offer free hearing tests, especially for farmers who worked with loud equipment.

Money was an issue for the Grange since they had a building to maintain. Membership fees went straight to the state Grange leadership, so the Pittsfield chapter got creative with income earning that took advantage of the talents of its members--good organization skills, cooking and knowing how to plan for a good time.

One of the consistently fond memories of those I interviewed was the dinners that were prepared by Grange members for groups up to two-hundred people who wanted to rent the hall and have a meal provided. Some repeat groups were the Michigan Dairy Association, Libby Glass and football tourists from Ohio that came up for the game against Michigan. Grange women would start the day before making homemade pies of fruit in season. The next morning they would gather around 6:00 A.M. to begin peeling potatoes, put the chicken or roast beef in the ovens, and start the rolls, chop the vegetables for salads, and shuck the corn All the women I interviewed took part in these events and all spoke nostalgically in glowing tones about the work and the fun they had preparing these meals. As a small child, Betty Katz remembers being asked to brush the sugar water on the rolls, the sense of

importance she derived feeling she was responsible for such an important part of the delectable dinner. Men served the meal. The food evidently was excellent and the Grange was contracted to do this for many years up through the late sixties.

Dances at the Pittsfield Grange were a well-known event throughout Washtenaw County and were another way for them to raise money.

Grange chaperones would be present to hire musicians, run the event and provide snacks and make sure no alcohol was around. Square dances were the main attraction, though once the jitterbug and other popular dances started to stir the dance scene, the Grange adapted by updating their music with the times. Grange members attended, and many local people who were not affiliated with the Grange as well. Many people in fact got involved in the Grange through the dances. Lilian Gutekunst and her husband first joined the Grange because they got a cheaper price into the popular dances. Her husband was an electrician and they had one cow, but they did not consider themselves farmers. But they were very interested in the social opportunities the Pittsfield Grange provided and became long time members, her husband eventually becoming master for a time. "Many future husbands and wives met at those dances", remembers Louise Koehn. Even for people who were not members, the Grange was a way for people who lived apart to come together in social ways.



Euchre tournaments were another Grange tradition that raised money and brought people together. In January, a ten week euchre tournament was held to help enliven the dark winter months. "So many people would come we had to set up tables on the stage", remembers Betty Katz.

Decline of the Pittsfield Grange

The descriptions I have written so far lead the reader to believe the Pittsfield Grange is a vibrant, educational, social place and group of people that meets the needs of a thinly populated landscape worked by farmers. And this was true for sixty to seventy years. Today, however, the Pittsfield Grange is comprised mostly of elderly members attending meetings out of duty and a sense of nostalgia. Realizing the building would go soon if they did not get new blood into their organization, the Grange has appealed to members from the Contra Dance community (who use the building regularly) to join, and some have become quite active.

What has changed? Why has the Grange not grown or at least stayed steady when it had so many positive impacts on Grange members themselves and its surrounding community? When I posed this question to the people I interviewed, I got a variety of responses. Elaine McCalla noticed that it was hard to get children to be involved in the Grange when schools started offering after school sports and events. "There are so many activities to be involved in now: PTA, sports, classes. The Grange used to be the main center of activity, and now there are so many other options."

As early as 1908, topics were discussed at Grange meetings about how to get young people involved. That discussion still continues. Betty Katz said, "We should have seen it coming in the late 1960s, membership was not growing and we didn't take a hard look at our Grange to see if it was fitting the times."

Women who did not work outside of the home had more time and flexibility to give to the Grange. Even with an enthusiastic membership, it would be very difficult to repeat many of those fondly-remembered dinners due to the fact that men and women are tied to a full work day away from their home.

I believe another factor greatly influenced Grange membership--television. With the spread of television in the 1950s education for rural people was revolutionized. People no longer had to leave their homes for stimulation, but could stay in and be 'informed'. The quality of their stimulation was undoubtedly different though. The Grange asked its members to write, create, debate, interact-- to be involved with others within a larger context of rural quietude. Television asks that you open your ears and eyes, but not respond (let alone socialize). According to Harvard researcher Robert Putnam, surveys of average Americans over the last 30 years show that participation in voluntary organizations is down 25-50%, and the finger he points is at television. On average people spend 40% of their free time watching television, which discourages "social trust and group membership," Putnam writes. Readers (of newspapers) belong to 76% more civic groups than T.V. watchers. Surely Pittsfield Township residents do not know or participate with each other in the same way they did when the Grange was at its height without the drone of the T.V. in the background.

Cars undoubtedly had a profound impact on the way people interacted in Pittsfield Township as well. One could easily move elsewhere for entertainment and stimulation, and this increased the options for activities outside of the home. The Grange was one of those options, but one could easily choose from a broad array in Ann Arbor and Saline as well.

The increased use of the car led to enormous land use change in Pittsfield Township. Families with multiple cars could move to the "country", work in a different city, socialize in town and drop their kids at soccer practice without ever interacting deeply with the land as a farmer would. In other words, Pittsfield Township could become a suburb of surrounding towns.

In the Plat book of 1874, there were ninety-nine men listed as Pittsfield Township residents. Ninety-four were farmers; there was a clergyman, a blacksmith, a druggist, a machine agent, and a physician (figure 4). According to the Plat book of 1895 (nearer to the Pittsfield Grange's inception) there were forty-five men recorded as residents, and all of them were listed as farmers. These are not census records, so should not be trusted completely, but certainly this reflects the agrarian character of Pittsfield Township at the turn of the century.

Close to one hundred years later, not surprisingly, the township has grown. According to the 1990 census, the total population of Pittsfield Township was 17,668. Growth in itself is interesting, but an account of occupational change is more so. Of the 10,194 residents who worked in 1990, eighty-one were involved in farming. That means .13% of Pittsfield Township residents farmed as compared to 100% in 1895. According to the Washtenaw County Planning Commission, almost the entire township has been zoned for single family housing use. Agriculture is clearly on the way out in this area and Pittsfield Township is rapidly becoming a suburb to surrounding areas. If the Grange is a farming organization, it is no surprise that it has declined in this township given the shift of land use from agricultural to residential.

It is a general consensus among employees at the Washtenaw County Planning Commission and at the planning department at the City of Ann Arbor that Pittsfield Township is the most pro-growth township in Washtenaw County. It is planning for 50,000 residents in the next 25 years. Though farming is quickly

being lost all over the county (according to the Ann Arbor News, Washtenaw County has 16% less farm land and 21.5% fewer farms in the last 10 years alone), and Pittsfield Township land owners seems to have sold agricultural land to developers at a faster rate than other surrounding townships.

The Grange rose up in a time that was very different than now; the pattern of the landscape has vastly changed since 1901. Families used to be spread out thinly over Pittsfield Township and had greater need for community institutions that could bring them education, political leverage and opportunities for social interaction with their neighbors. The Grange was very successful, in its hey day up through the 1960s, and met many needs of Pittsfield Township farming families, including bringing meaning to their toil as cultivators of the land.

Pittsfield Township no longer has the sense of communal identity as a group of people with a common purpose in vocation and similar beliefs. The population has exploded, people work in a large variety of vocational fields that don't necessarily have common interests, there are many more options for education, intellectual stimulation, and entertainment. The township no longer is coherent. Many people live physically much closer together now, in neighborhood developments with people close by. It is difficult to ascertain how much people actually socialize with neighbors, but some of the developments have added community centers in their residential plans, according to Bud Katz.

The Grange played its part well for the needs of Pittsfield Township residents, but in its current state does not seem appropriate for its home anymore. Grange members are very concerned about this now, and currently are trying to redefine the Pittsfield Grange to see if it can meet some of the present needs of this area. Farming is a disappearing reality in the township--as Bud Katz put it, "How do you think my one acre-lot neighbors would like it if I spread pig manure over my eighty acres?" If the Pittsfield Grange is to survive, it must explore other alternatives for new membership, and yet at the same time hold on to the general principles of the Grange as an agricultural organization. Ideas that have been explored would be to build a greenhouse for township residents to get an early start on their gardens, develop a commitment to historic preservation, get involved in the movement to slow rural development and encourage farm preservation, continue to provide a meeting space for area residents including the contra dance community and continue community service projects.

The building, too, is breaking down. Its electrical system is as old as the building itself, there is mold in the basement, the septic field is shaky at best, and the kitchen needs repair. All of this requires large amounts of money that the Grange does not have. The Pittsfield Grange needs new and energetic membership if it is going to surmount the next few formidable hurdles. It has a history of responding to the needs of people as they work and live with the land, the question is whether they will be able to figure out the current relationship and respond as well to a new set of twenty-first century land needs.

Appendix: A Poem by Creative Grange Member Lydia Lavender

AN ORIGINAL POEM ON AGRICULTURE

BY LYDIA LAVENDER

I WAS ASKED TO WRITE A POEM ON AGRICULTURE
WHICH HAS BEEN A HARD THING TO DO.
AND I THINK YOU WILL ALL AGREE WITH ME
BEFORE I FINALLY GET THROUGH.

SO THESE FEW LINES I HAVE WRITTEN
WON'T SOUND LIKE EDGAR GUEST
BUT I'M SURE YOU WILL REALIZE
THAT I'VE TRIED MY BEST.

WHAT'S THE MOST POPULAR OCCUPATION IN THE WORLD?
"AGRICULTURE", YOU WILL SAY.
MOST ALL THE PEOPLE ROUND
ARE ENGAGED IN IT TODAY.

AGRICULTURE IS ALSO THE MOST TALKED OF
SUBJECT OF THE DAY.
IT COMES IN ON THE RADIO, TELEVISION
FOUR "H" CLUBS, FAIRS AND IN EVERY WAY.

ANY FARMER WHO WISHES TO GROW
CROP OF THE BEST
MUST USE KNOWLEDGE TO CONTROL
THE BUGS, WORMS AND OTHER PESTS.

SO I SUPPOSE YOU ALL
HAVE BEEN GATHERING IN
YOUR WHEAT, OATS, CORN AND RYE
AND STORING IT IN YOUR BIN.

WHEAT IS MADE INTO FLOUR AND BREAD.
SO BEAUTIFUL AND WHITE,
AND, AS THE BIBLE TELLS US,
BREAD IS THE STAFF OF LIFE.

OATS ARE MADE INTO CEREALS
THAT LITTLE CHILDREN LOVE
SO WE SHOULD RAISE OUR HEARTS AND HANDS
AND THANK THE DEAR FATHER ABOVE.

CORN IS GROUND INTO CORNMEAL.
IT SURE MAKES GOOD JOHNNY CAKE.
I'LL BET ANDY CAMPBELL CAN EAT IT
UNTIL HIS TUMMY ACHES.

THERE ARE CARROTS, CELERY, CABBAGE
AND TOMATOES
BUT LET'S NOT FORGET
OUR GOOD OLD POTATOES.

THERE'S THE LUSCIOUS APPLE,
SO PLEASING TO THE EYE.

SPIES, BALDWINS AND GREENINGS
THAT MAKE SUCH WONDERFUL PIE.

References

Bald, Chever. Michigan in Four Centuries. New York: Harper and Bros., 1954.

Buck, S. I. The Granger Movement: A Study of Agricultural Organization and Its Political, Economic, and Social Manifestations, 1870-1880. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1913.

Gardner, Charles M. The Grange--Friend of the Farmer, 1867-1947. Washington D.C.: The National Grange, 1949.

History of Washtenaw County Michigan. Chicago: Chapman and Co. 1881.

Holland, Karen M. "Restoration Rituals, Transforming Workday Tasks Into Inspirational Rites".1994. Restoration and Management Notes, 12:2 Winter

Perkins, Benjamin. Trees. London: Savarti Books Ltd.

Plat Book 1874 and 1895 (combined). Combination Atlas Map of Washtenaw County Michigan. Chicago: Everts and Stewart. 1874 and 1895.

Puffer, Raymond LaBounty. The Michigan Agricultural Frontier Southeast Region 1820-1860. Thesis. Albuquerque New Mexico: University of New Mexico, 1976.

Putnam, Robert. "The American Prospect as published by the Ann Arbor News," December 21, 1995.

"Sprawl". Ann Arbor: Ann Arbor News, February 18, 1990.

Census of Pittsfield Township. Ann Arbor: Washtenaw County Planning Commission, 1993.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to the Grange members whom I interviewed:

Betty Katz

Bud Katz

Herman Koehn

Louise Koehn

Lilian Gutekunst

Elaine McCalla