

# Hand In History: 150 Years of Grange In America



The National Grange, founded in 1867, is the nation's oldest general farm and rural public interest organization. The history of the National Grange is a history of progress and achievements for farmers and rural communities across this country.

Important historical dates in the 150 year history of the National Grange:

## 1867

The National Grange becomes the first nationwide farm organization and is the first national organization to give full voice and vote to women, 60 years before the adoption of Universal Suffrage in the United States.

## 1870s

The National Grange is the first national farm organization to attempt to organize African American farmers following the Civil War.

Chicago entrepreneur Montgomery Ward begins his mail order business as a contractor to the National Grange selling exclusively to Grange members.



## 1880s to Present

Grange sponsored fairs, attracting more than 1 million visitors each year, provided entertainment, education, a showcase for local agriculture production and community-based economic development opportunities.

The National Grange introduces the "Rochdale" system of cooperative business organization to America. Over time, successful national and regional farm cooperatives were formed from locally organized Grange cooperatives and Grange stores.

*Munn vs Illinois* U.S. Supreme Court decision affirms the constitutionality of Granger Laws to regulate railroads and other monopolies in the public interest.



## 1880s-1910s

The National Grange secures passage of legislation to protect the political and economic rights of farmers and consumers including: the Hatch Act creating "Experiment Stations" at state colleges of agriculture (1887), elevation of the U.S. Department of Agriculture to the President's Cabinet (1889) the Sherman Anti-Trust Act (1890), rural free delivery mail service (1901), the first legislation promoting ethanol as a motor fuel (1906), the Pure Food and Drug Act (1906), direct election of U.S. Senators (1913), federal income tax (1913), Smith-Lever Act for vocational education (1914), the Clayton Anti-Trust Act (1914), and Universal Suffrage (1919).

## 1910s

Grange secures passage of successive pieces of legislation to finance general transportation improvements to benefit farming and rural communities based on dedicated user fees deposited in highway, waterways and airport trust funds.



The National Grange secures passage of federal legislation to assist struggling farmers by strengthening their property rights and their bargaining position including: the Federal Farm Loan Act (1916), the Packers and Stockyards Act (1921), Capper-Volstead Act (1922), the Grain Futures Act (1922), Farm Credit Act (1933), Produce Agency Act (1927), Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act (1930), Agricultural Marketing Agreements Act (1937), Pure Seed Act (1939), and the Livestock Theft Act (1941).

## 1920s

National Grange organizes mutual insurance companies focused on serving farm and rural markets. Grange insurance companies were among the first to offer property and casualty insurance to Japanese-American farmers returning from internment following WWII.

Grange is instrumental in organizing rural electric cooperatives, telephone cooperatives, water service cooperatives, public utility districts, volunteer fire departments and state police programs across the U.S.



## Post WWII to Present

The National Grange steadfastly supported national farm legislation as well as multilateral trade negotiations and food aid programs to open foreign markets to U.S. farmers, advised Congress and supported every periodic reauthorization of national farm legislation, known as the "Farm Bill". The National Grange also gave counsel and support to every U.S. President on international discussions leading to multi-lateral trade agreements and international food aid programs such as the General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade, the World Trade Organization, Food for Peace, the Caribbean Basin Initiative, North American Free Trade Agreement and the Central American Free Trade Agreement.

The National Grange assisted in rebuilding a world ravaged by economic depression and war. The National Grange advised the U.S. delegation at the founding of the United Nations (1945). The National Grange helped found CARE or Cooperatives for American Relief Everywhere (1946). The Grange/Germany Friendship program, a part of the U.S. Marshall Plan, brought more than 1700 German and European farm teenagers to live with Grange farm families to learn about modern agriculture practices and the advantages of democracy (1950-1966). The National Grange participated in agriculture development programs for the U.S. Peace Corps (1963-1970).



Through our grassroots network, the National Grange sponsored community service programs to generate more than 1 million volunteer hours annually for community improvement projects.

These are just some of the accomplishments of the National Grange throughout its proud history. We encourage everyone to learn more about the important role the Grange continues to play in the history of their community, their state, and the nation by visiting [www.nationalgrange.org](http://www.nationalgrange.org).