**Fairview Grange #342 Annual Report**

The Fairview Grange had a busy year in 2022. In spite of all of us still figuring out how to resume normal activities as the China Virus entered year two the Grange was pretty active. Member Milford Witham was recognized by the State and National Granges for being a 50-year member. We were once again able to get 40+ flags up on poles throughout the Village and nearby roads. The Smithfield Volunteer Fire Dept has assisted us each year and deserve recognition for lending a hand. Thanks! We were once again able to provide personal care items and cold weather clothing to the Veterans at the VA in Togus through donations from our members. We donated to the Christmas Tree Fund and Food Cupboard at the Smithfield Town Office.

So what is a Grange or what does it do you ask? Well it has evolved over the years to become a local resource defined by the needs of the Community. It was originally founded after the Civil War in the 1800’s to restore the Nations farms and get the US growing food and sharing agricultural successes. Many thousands of men had died in the war and many thousands of acres of farmland had been destroyed. The idea was to have a non-political, non-denominational, non-North-South, and non-sexist organization meet to help each other stay alive and bring the Nation together. Women were recognized as equals to men and were encouraged to hold any and every office. Pretty forward thinking at the time. If you see white lines painted on the edge of your road that was a Grange initiative. They encouraged growing food not tobacco. Rural mail delivery is another initiative put forth by the Grange. Fast forward a couple hundred years to today and the National Grange encourages us to do “what fits”. In our case we are supportive of ecological needs by supporting the lake associations with examples of best management practices on our grounds and a place for them to store items and to hold their meetings. We as a Grange located in a lakeside community are also glad to offer each year a Maine State Boater Safety Course. One of only a few held in the State.

What else? Well, we thought there was a need for a “Community Center” of sorts for locals (and beyond) to hold Celebrations of Life, Birthday parties, Christmas parties, Fundraisers, Class Reunions and pretty much any other gathering of 96 people or fewer that has a nice kitchen facility, handicap access, waterfront access and docks, bathrooms, and tables and chairs for of up to just under 100. We rented over 30 different times in 2022 (in roughly 9 months) which goes toward our expenses and building upkeep. All members pay dues and volunteer their time and energy. No paid staff.

How do you join? Well, that’s been tough as we keep the membership applications inside a locked building! One of our initiatives for 2023 is to make finding and joining us a lot easier. We’re redoing our membership applications and will have them available at the Town Office and area businesses starting in the Spring. If you’d like to join, ask any member and if you’d like to donate to our funds (Flag Fund for example) we’re at Fairview Grange P.O. Box 22, c/o Sharon Wood, Smithfield, Maine 04978. Thanks for supporting us.

Respectfully submitted,

Rick Watson, Master, Fairview Grange #342.

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