

Patrons of Protest: An Environmental and Social History of the Grange Movement in
Post-Civil War Ohio

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Young Scholar Proposal
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Description of the Project

On February 17, 1874, hundreds of Ohio farmers stood shoulder to shoulder, crowding Xenia's town hall, to participate in the proceedings of the Ohio State Grange. "The most interesting feature of the proceedings," reported the *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, "was a proposition to ask railroad companies for half fare." This suggestion of compromise with monopolistic railroads failed, however, amidst the thunderous applause of this assembled "army of agriculturalists" (*Cincinnati Daily Gazette* Feb 18, 1874, p.4; Feb 19, p.5). What compelled multitudes of farmers to engage in agrarian protest? An investigation of the Grange movement in Ohio from environmental and social perspectives will shed new light on a decade of farmer agitation.

The Order of the Patrons of Husbandry, or the Grange, contested the broad transportation and economic transformations immediately impacting farmer livelihoods in the aftermath of the Civil War. This farmer organization, founded in 1867 by Oliver Kelley, operated at national, state, and local levels, and bound farmers together under the banner of agrarian discontent. As railroads crisscrossed the Midwest during the 1860s and 1870s, farmers increasingly produced for distant consumers, specialized their operations, and faced high transportation and implement costs (Buck 1913). Not only did the Grange agitate for political reform and elimination of new merchant "middlemen," but these farmers also constructed a social organization and disseminated agricultural education (Kelley 1875). Much of the existing literature on the Grange centers on how these Patrons of Husbandry politically contested the ascendant railroad capitalism that, from their perspectives, undermined the American republic (Woods 1991, Buck 1913, Miller 1971). Beyond this traditional political focus, however, how did the Grange movement impact the practices of agriculture and the landscape of Ohio? What was the nature of its social organization and its conception of the role of farmers in American society? By focusing on Ohio, a Grange stronghold, I intend to examine the local and particular manifestations of agrarian discontent, offering a unique contribution to current Grange scholarship.

My summer research has two aims. First, research generated this summer will provide the necessary foundation for my year-long senior Honors thesis on the Grange movement in Ohio, and represents the culminating intersection of both my History and Environmental Studies majors. I will produce the historiographic portion of my senior research, as well as an extensive annotated bibliography of relevant primary resources. Secondly, I will utilize the summer to investigate this movement from two novel angles, producing substantial written analyses for the summer and a focus for my senior year. Heretofore unaddressed in the literature, how specifically did the agricultural landscape change for the Ohio farmer during the 1860s and 1870s, and what were the environmental impacts of these altered practices? How did broad transformations in transportation and farming unfold in Ohio, and how did the Grange respond to and/or facilitate these changes? An environmental history of the Grange has not yet been produced: a particular focus on Ohio and an abundance of primary resources permit this wholly original project. Beyond this environmental focus, I will also discern the demographics of the Ohio Grange. Did the Grange address the needs of all Ohio farmers, or did it represent the social and economic interests of a particular class and gender?

This project will utilize the wealth of primary resources from both the Ohio Historical Society and online historical databases such as Archive of Americana and American Periodicals Series. In particular, the Ohio Historical Society, located in Columbus, possesses a significant collection of Grange-centered documents. Not only does it offer Grange newspapers from cities like Findley, Perrysburg, and Springfield, but also family papers and twenty-two feet worth of Ohio State Grange records (1876-1968). I plan to travel to the Ohio Historical Society for the first several weeks to conduct archival research. Online historical newspapers such as the *Cincinnati Daily Gazette* and the *Ohio Farmer*, as well as Censuses of Agriculture, provide insight into the Grange and the specific nature of Ohio agriculture in the 1870s. Thorough collection and analysis of these primary resources during the summer will provide me with an extensive annotated bibliography, permitting the creation of an original history of the Ohio Grange undertaken my senior year.

Work Plan

Week One:

- Meet with Dr. Snay to solidify schedule for the rest of the summer and to discuss how to proceed with archival research at the Ohio Historical Society.
- Thurs/Fri (primary sources): travel to the Ohio Historical Society on to focus on Ohio State Grange's Journal of Proceedings and records from 1876-1880s.
- Historiography: read basic histories of the Grange (e.g., Buck 1913, Shannon 1945, Wood 1991); gather other sources.

Week Two:

- Historiography: read background histories of era (e.g., Donald 1978, Nevins 1927, Oberholzer 1917, and Richardson 2001)
- Meet with Dr. Snay to discuss primary sources, Grange historiography debates
- Thurs/Fri (primary sources): travel to Ohio Historical Society on Thursday and Friday to read and take notes on individual Grange newspapers (e.g., Perrysburg, Springfield); continue examination of Grange records from 1876-1880s.
- Begin outline for literature review (historiography section).

Week Three:

- Meet with Dr. Snay to discuss literature review outline and collected primary documents
- Historiography: read agrarian protest literature (e.g., Hahn 1983, McMath 1992, Fink 1983).
- Begin writing literature review (historiography section)
- Thurs/Fri (primary sources): travel to Ohio Historical Society to read and take notes on bylaws of specific Granges (e.g., Jefferson Grange, Waterford); read Grange propaganda histories (e.g., Martin 1874, Kelley 1875, Periam 1874).

Week Four:

- Turn in a draft of literature review to Dr. Snay by the end of the week
- Thurs/Fri (primary sources): travel to the Ohio Historical Society to read, catalogue, and take notes on Hess Family papers, Ohio State Grange records.
- Meet with Dr. Snay to discuss primary source progress; begin to contextualize resources in current literature debates and/or offer new interpretations.

Week Five:

- Meet with Dr. Snay to discuss literature review; begin editing.

- Collect primary documents from the following online databases: ProQuest's American Periodical Series Online, American's Historical Newspapers, Historical Statistics of the United States.
- Thurs/Fri (primary sources): Travel to Ohio Historical Society and complete examination of Ohio State Grange records.

Week Six:

- Begin specific investigation on agricultural transitions in Ohio and Grange response
- Primary sources: US Census of Agriculture 1860, 1870 (available in Denison library); *The Ohio Farmer*; focus on soil surveys, crop yields, and environmental conditions (e.g., climate, rainfall, crop disease).
- Read secondary sources on late nineteenth century agriculture
- Draft outline/approach to Grange responses to agricultural transitions
- Meet with Dr. Snay to discuss edited literature review, agricultural transitions

Week Seven:

- Complete final draft of literature review
- Complete draft of agricultural transition section
- Meet with Dr. Snay to discuss draft and transitions

Week Eight:

- Begin specific investigation of social organization of the Grange, focusing on female participation, income/farm size disparities between members, composition of leadership at state and local levels; use primary sources previously collected from Ohio Historical Society.
- Begin draft of social organization perspective; turn into Dr. Snay by end of the week
- Meet with Dr. Snay to discuss information gleaned from primary resources

Week Nine:

- Organize all primary documents
- Meet with Dr. Snay to discuss social organization of Grange and draft.
- Finish draft of social organization perspective

Week Ten:

- Finalize annotated bibliography of all compiled primary resource documents.
- Meet with Dr. Snay to discuss directions for senior research—which perspective or particular aspect of the Grange to focus on for honors thesis.
- Begin brainstorming design of poster presentation for fall.

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