

Women in the Grange: Greek Goddesses and Efficient Homemakers

When Grange ritual was first formulated women were given three elected ceremonial positions named after Greek Goddesses: Ceres, Flora and Pomona. These “graces” served the purpose of “elevating the social tone of Grange meetings”. In the early days of the Grange these positions were more decorative than functional. The Grange’s founding fathers thought women possessed some kind of innate purity and righteousness and that their mere presence would exert its gentle influence on rough, uncouth and rude Grange men and in this way bring out their better nature.

The sphere of women in the Grange was an extension of the roles of an idealized homemaker, who had the attributes of caretaker, mother, and upholder of moral values in the home. Thus they decorated the hall and beautified the grounds; they baked and cleaned; served on the committee that did outreach to those who were sick or in distress; and frequently were in charge of literary programs.

“Women’s Work” was a standing committee in 1933 according to Quimper Grange records. This nebulously defined committee led some discontented and vocal women to get the National Grange to establish Home Economics Committees instead which had the goal of applying the latest science to help women be more efficient and educated homemakers.