

Oliver H. Kelley:

Oliver H. Kelley is considered by most to be the father of the Grange. The initial vision of the Grange was his. He also traveled extensively and spent much time researching, planning, and preparing in laying most of the early groundwork for the founding of the Grange.

He was born and grew up in Boston. In 1847, at the age of 21, he moved to Chicago, doing different jobs. He kept moving west and, two years later, ended up in Itaska, MN, where he took up a claim and began farming. Because of a partial crop failure in 1864, he went to Washington, DC, where he was able to get a job as a clerk in the Department of Agriculture. The next spring he returned to his Minnesota farm for that growing season. He went back to DC late that October when he received an urgent request via the Department of Agriculture from President Andrew Johnson, requesting him to survey the agricultural conditions in the South in order to hasten the rehabilitation of the economy and to aid in its reconstruction.

It was largely because of those interactions with the southerners and his relationships with the other Founders that he felt strongly that a proposed organization which would be known as the Grange would prosper in this country. After several meetings with the other Founders, his dream became a reality, December 4, 1867.

He was the first Secretary of the National Grange and also the first Priest Annalist of the Assembly of Demeter.