

Leonard Rhone (1838 – 1917)

Leonard Rhone was a native of Centre County, PA, born July 21, 1838, on the Rhone Homestead in Potter Township near Centre Hall. He studied at Kishacoquilla Academy for a year (1857-1858), and, after teaching for a year, he became a farmer by choice.

In 1864 he married Mary Margaret Sankey, a neighbor girl, and later purchased the other heirs' interest in the family farm.

He and his wife, Mary Margaret, were Charter members of Progress Grange #96. He served as Overseer, and she as Ceres. He was appointed as a Deputy by State Master Mauger and in a short time organized Centre County Pomona Grange and served four terms as its Master. He was the prime mover in the establishment and development of the Grange Encampment and Centre County Fair. This annual event began as a one day picnic in 1874 in Leech's Woods along the Brush Valley Road between Centre Hall and Linden Hall, at which a parade of Grange members wearing their regalia of small brown nankeen aprons and shoulder sashes was featured.

He was elected Trustee of the Pennsylvania State College in 1880 and appointed on important commissions by various Governors.

In 1878 he was elected Pennsylvania State Grange Overseer and then became Master in 1880, serving for 18 years.

He was elected to the Pennsylvania State Legislature during his term as Master of the State Grange, serving two two-year terms (1885-86 and 1887-88). An earlier campaign in 1880 as a candidate for the Greenback Party was not successful. While serving in the Legislature, he was a champion for agriculture and good government, and secured increased appropriations for public schools in an effort to equalize taxation.

Leonard served on the National Grange Legislative Committee, where he and National Lecturer Mortimer Whitehead appeared before Congress in favor of rural free mail delivery. Elected to the National Grange Executive Committee in 1888 and serving there for a decade, Leonard was chairperson of the committee from 1889-1896. Concurrently, from 1889-1895, he was also the High Priest of Demeter.

Although he had many demands on his time for State and National Granges, he had a successful farm and took part in local cooperatives. He died September 25, 1917 in Centre Hall and is interred in the local Reformed & Lutheran Cemetery.

