

MAPLE CORNER COMMUNITY CENTER

Bicentennial Open House

Saturday, August 8, 1981

Exhibits relate to the history of the Community Club and its building, and to the activities taking place here over the years. Also to the village of Maple Corner, its houses, stores and inhabitants.

BRIEF HISTORY

Phase I Maple Valley Grange No. 470

The Grange is an organization of farmers coming together to promote agriculture and do away with middlemen and agents between producer and consumer. It originated in the Western United States in 1867 and members were called Patrons of Husbandry. It was a secret order, modeled after the Masons, to which the whole family could belong.

The Maple Valley Grange was started in October, 1915. It was never a large organization and about 25 members in attendance was tops. From 1915 until the Hall was finished in 1923, meetings were held in the schoolhouse vestry, quite a large room with a stage at the rear.

On Tuesday, Sept. 28, 1920, the Grange voted to inquire about buying the store near Dean Holt's blacksmith shop in Gospel Hollow. It stood on land now owned by Dr. and Mrs. Herriott. At the time the building belonged to a Mrs. Hawley.

On Jan. 11, 1921, it was voted to buy the building and make an offer of \$150. On Jan. 25 it was voted to close the deal at \$175 and Hector A. Wheelock was instructed to tear it down completely.

The construction (or re-construction) of the building on its present site next the schoolhouse was started next summer (1921). On July 25, 1922, it was decided to add twelve feet to the building for a stage and kitchen. Five hundred dollars was borrowed and later another two hundred to finish the work. The Hall was dedicated on August 28, 1923. The builders were Hector Wheelock, Ed Lamphere and Bert Britton.

The Grange in Maple Corner was more of a social organization than the first societies in the 1800's. They had a program at each meeting - some educational and some for entertainment. Card Parties were put on and dances held; many plays were produced. As people's lives were directed more towards Montpelier and farming declined, the Grange faded and eventually gave up, to become the Community Club, so that all residents of the area could enjoy the use of the Hall.

Stanley Fitch

Phase II Maple Corner Community Club

In 1949, when the Grange clearly could not exist much longer, a group of active Grange members, especially Mattie and Clyde Fitch, and Alice Graham, became the core of a movement to organize a new group to preserve and maintain the Hall and to provide entertainment for a wider range of people. Mrs. Theresa Brungardt, then State Director of Recreation, met with an interested group to explain setting up a community center. The Washington Electric Coop and the Upper Winooski Development Council were supportive and encouraging in the early days.

Meetings went on during the winter, and by the spring of 1950 an active program of woodchopping bees, picnics, dances, suppers, parties and the like was under way. Two principles guided the Club from the first: membership was automatically open without fee to all those living within the Maple Corner-Kents' Corner area, loosely defined as about a two-mile radius from Maple Corner, and programs were designed to meet the needs of all ages. People have also been welcomed who felt themselves part of the community though perhaps living elsewhere, as are seasonal residents.

Funds for maintaining the building in good repair have come from periodic events such as covered-dish and chicken-pie suppers, entertainments, rental fees and the sale of map cards and an excellent quality of dishcloths. Other expenses are for utilities, taxes, insurance and minor repairs.

About 1962 a program of major repairs and redecoration was undertaken under the leadership of Col. Joseph Bayne and his wife Marcy. The dance floor was sanded and refinished, interior shutters installed downstairs, kitchen remodeled, new lighting fixtures, a bathroom and water system installed, and painting inside and out. Dishes, tables and folding chairs were purchased and the old chairs repaired. The front porch was added at this time.

The Hall has faithfully served as the gathering place for all ages, providing facilities for dances, lectures, plays, movies, meetings of local organizations, showers, receptions, art shows and classes. It is open for such purposes to any responsible member or group in the community. For social purposes a modest fee is charged to cover maintenance.

Phase III The Present

Currently the Community Center is once more being redecorated and put in good order. It is much in demand for wedding receptions. A successful series of hootenannies has been held this summer, preceded by well-attended pot-luck suppers. The play to be given today revives a strong tradition of dramatic performances. The Community Center building and the Community Club stand ready to meet new social needs as they arise. Use them and support them!