

10/2/24

**An Historic Journey — Starling Hall — Fayette is at risk of losing a piece of its Cultural Identity.**

Starling Hall - Fayette's Historic Grange - recently joined the list of Maine's most endangered historic places due to a Ballot Initiative on Nov 5th requesting that the town sell Starling Hall. There is no other Historic site in Fayette that has played a greater role in shaping the cultural Identity of Fayette than Starling Hall. Let's keep Starling Hall and allow the - Friends of Starling Hall - to continue their commendable efforts to preserve an intrinsic part of Fayette's Cultural Heritage and Identity.

What a humanitarian act it would be to preserve a part of Fayette's cultural heritage for future generations; To protect an Historic site that connects current and future generations to their past; To allow Starling Hall to carry forward the stories of the lives of those who built Fayette.

Starling Hall is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. A designation that reminds us of a National History that binds us. A reminder that we are descendants of those who fought for our freedoms and pushed back a frontier. Isn't this designation evidence that shows the enormous role Starling Hall had in shaping Fayette's Cultural Identity? Today's generation and future generations will benefit from the path, Starling Hall can provide, to a deeper understanding of Fayette's History and to the common threads that bind a small community together. Attending an event at Starling Hall, today, speaks to the value of the hall as a hub for community events; a significant reason why a Grange hall was built in the 19th century; to serve the community. Let's allow Starling Hall to continue to serve Fayette.

Starling Hall - dedicated in 1879 - reflects the cooperative spirit of a rural farming community that pooled their resources and efforts to promote an independent agrarian way of life. In addition to the Grange's mission to promote agricultural support, it hosted educational programs, dances,

musicals, fairs and community meals. The mission is as relevant today as it was then. Starling Hall has hosted over 90 community events in 2024.

Entering Starling Hall is to step into living history. You share in the collective memory of a Heritage site that played a significant role in shaping the culture and the identity of Fayette. It transports you to a way of life after the Civil War when the Grange was the hub of social activity for a rural farming community.

Fayette's ancestral roots hold a tapestry of origin stories woven throughout the landscape. The same stories of rural communities settled east and west of the Ohio river after the Revolutionary war. Stories of tenacity and resilience in the remains of stone walls and foundations artfully crafted by first settlers. Stories in the names carved onto the gravestones of early settlers and first veterans. Stories of hope embedded in the floors and walls of Fayette's historic churches and Starling Hall.

**Imagine the following scene. It is October 12, 1880. The farmers gather for the monthly assembly at Starling Hall.**

It is a crisp, sunny Tuesday afternoon in Fayette. The summer has yielded to Octobers cooler evenings and a cast of vibrant reds, oranges and yellows limns Starling Hall in a mid-autumn halo. Summer crops are harvested and preserved. Haylofts are brimming with hay. Root cellars are stocked with barrels of potatoes, squash and turnips. Cider is pressed and vinegar is fermenting. The slaughterhouse and smithy on South Road are steeped in butchering and the repair of farm tools.

Among the many members who arrive to the Grange are the descendants of the Revolutionary War Veterans who first settled Fayette. Joseph Hutchinson and his son Sullivan dismount from their horse-drawn wagon. John Hubbard arrives on horseback from South Road. Adoniram Sturtevant walks from Baldwin Hill and chats with Gilbert Underwood and his son Joseph about the young Herefords they have trained to the

yoke. Oliver Billings and his son George arrive by horse drawn carriage with apples and pears from their orchard. Boardman Crane the grandson of Abijah Crane canters up on horseback.

Carriages and buggy's are parked under the grange and horses are tethered to hitching posts. The chatter in the crisp air is punctuated by bursts of laughter and the excited cries of children playing as members catch up on community news. The air is ashen with the eddy's of October dust stirred up by horse hooves and wagon wheels striking the dirt and the earthy scent of dry soil, falling leaves and charred wood lingers in the air. Tinges of woodsmoke drift from the Grange chimney and fade into the autumn canopy. An American flag flutters from the hip roof entrance as a reminder of those who came before.

Members enter the building to the steady flames of oil lamps casting a timeless amber-glow onto the bead board walls and ceiling. The aroma of the autumn-harvest permeates the air with a potluck of fresh breads, corn chowder, beef and venison stews; baked beans, mashed parsnips; pumpkin and apple pies. Women remove their bonnets and plump their chignons as they chatter with each other and sit to dine while men with stained and calloused hands top off their mugs of mulled cider and discuss the bulk cost of corn seed.

This scene, from one small town in the Northeast corner of America, is a snapshot of a broader cultural heritage shared by every rural farming community in the late 19th century. Starling Hall is a physical link in a chain of historic buildings across America that each holds the origins of their community.

*The majority vote, to whether or not require the town to sell Starling Hall, will ultimately reflect the value the community places on the origins of Fayette and the value they place on the preservation of a tangible symbol of its history for future generations.*

Will the citizens of Fayette value the preservation of a tangible link to their past?

Will they preserve an Historic site that connects current and future generations to their cultural and social heritage?

Will they preserve a symbol that fosters a sense of belonging, community and continuity?

Should the citizens of Fayette preserve and protect their Heritage sites?

Is Starling Hall worth saving? Yes it is. Vote NO to the proposed sale of Starling Hall on Nov. 5th.

As Robert Heinlein said - A generation which ignores history has no past - and no future.