

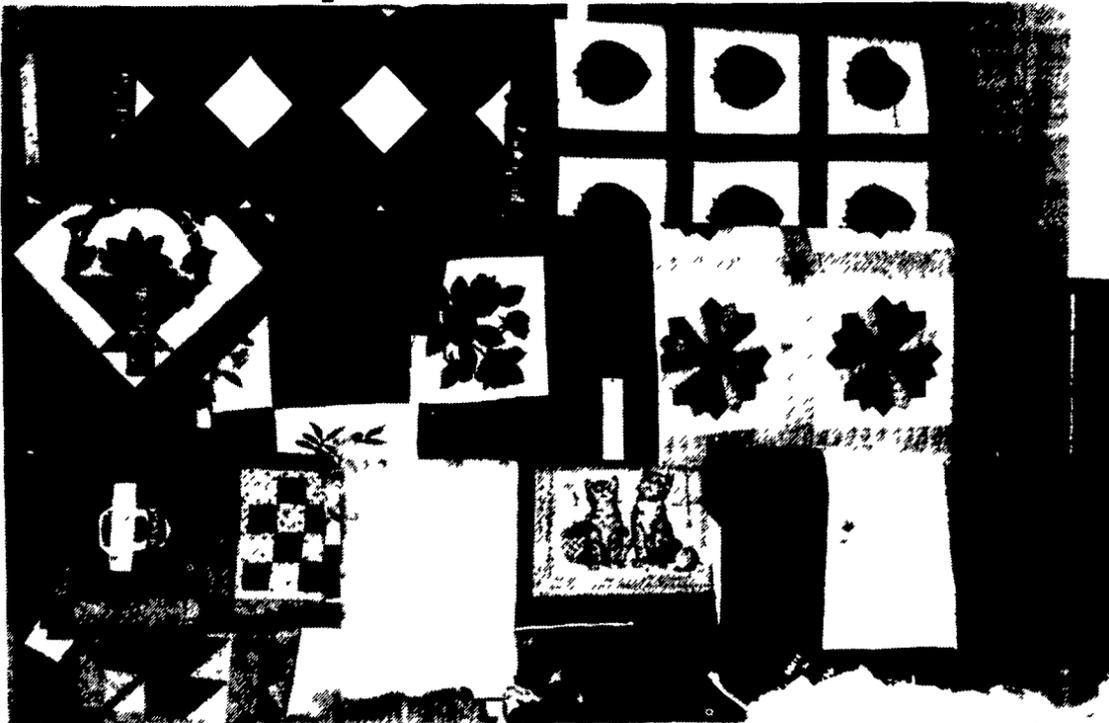
Grange Fosters Teddy Bear Picnic

GAIL STROCK
Mifflin Co. Correspondent
ALTOONA (Blair Co.) —
When more than 1,000 Grange
members converged at the Jaffa

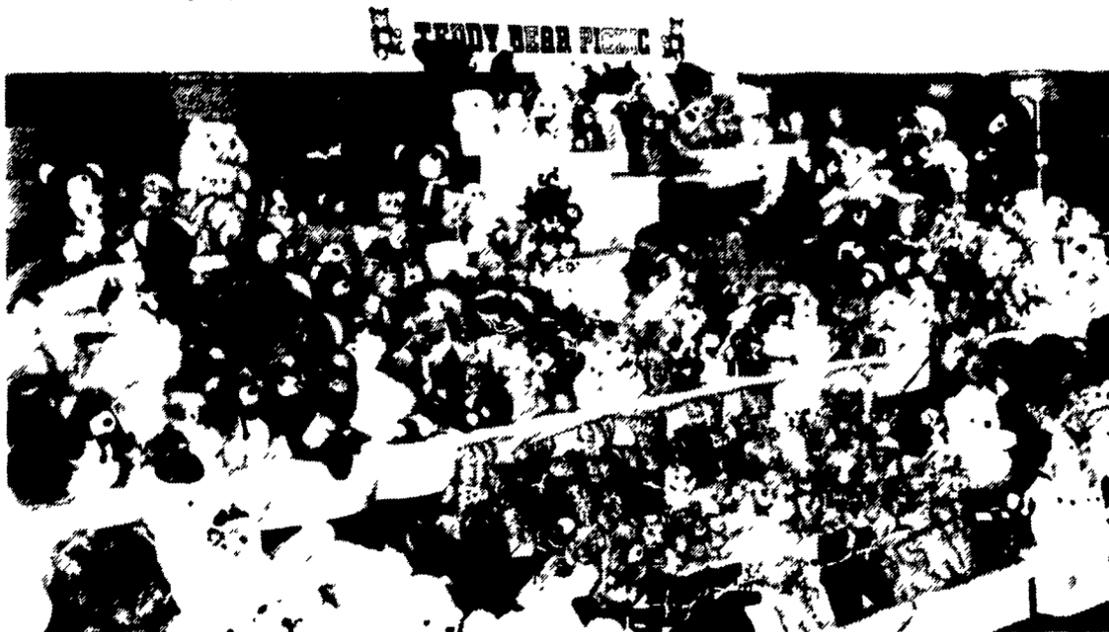
Mosque in Altoona last week for
their 119th annual state conven-
tion, they brought some extra
things along with them. Teddy
Bears! 619 of them! And stuffed



Grangers at the 199th Pennsylvania State Grange Convention in Altoona display the results of their talents.

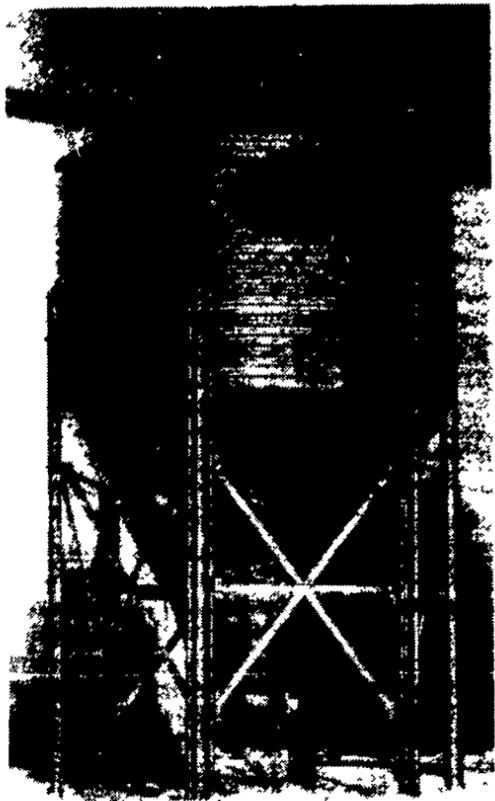


Contests bring out friendly competition during the convention. Grangers make crafts and projects, including quilts, for display.



More than 619 Teddy Bears attended the "Teddy Bear Picnic" at the Grange Convention. Grangers make the bears for "at-risk" babies - ones with AIDS or who are chemically dependent. Other stuffed toys - 5,000 in all - will go to children of trauma.

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toys! 5,000 of them!

The impressive "Teddy Bear Picnic" display represents one of the many facets of the organization called Grange.

The Pennsylvania State Grange, a fraternal grass roots organization, meets annually at its convention to discuss and approve resolutions, honor outstanding members, conduct business, hear keynote speakers, enjoy the fel-

lowship of other Grangers, and to participate in some statewide community service projects, including the gathering of Teddy Bears for "at risk" babies.

State Grange lecturer (program director) Hedy Chaffee, hoping to gather up to 500 bears, can now distribute the 619 bears across the state through an organization known as ABC Quilts. Formed in 1988 in New Hampshire, ABC Quilts donates quilts to hospitals to wrap up "at-risk" babies - those with AIDS or who are chemically addicted. Since January 1991, the ABC Quilts western branch has collected and distributed 250 quilts.

Grangers also reach out to help other children through a stuffed toy contest. This year's 5,000 toys, after judging, will be distributed to Ronald McDonald houses, Police Departments, Ambulance services, and other organizations who help traumatized children.

The community service and social aspects of Grange remain strong, attesting to the fact that Grange began, in 1867, for those very reasons.

"Back when Grange was formed after the Civil War, there weren't televisions and radios, in the rural communities, Grange was a way for people to get together and have entertainment also," said Steve Robinson, public relations director for the Pennsylvania state Grange.

But the purpose of Grange goes even further. This rural-farm fraternity, the second largest farm

organization in America, concerns itself with the well-being of all people by supporting legislative activity to improve the quality of rural life.

At this year's convention, delegates at Wednesday's session discussed, along with many others, resolutions opposing school strikes, supporting binding arbitration, and supporting voter approval of school board tax increases that are higher than the current rate of inflation.

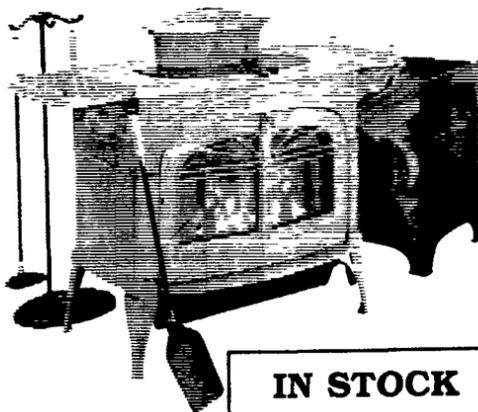
Resolutions of national interest become part of those discussed and voted upon at the 125th national "Celebrate Grange" Convention to be held in Burlington, Vt. this month.

With more than 40,000 members in Pennsylvania, Grangers look to the future hoping to increase awareness of their organization. Grange was the first organization to include women on an equal basis with men, with equal voting privileges, long before women obtained voting rights. Grange also believes in the power of that voting privilege and works legislatively for a better future.

Faced with a decreasing farming population, Grangers emphasize the need to attract members from all walks of life, including rural and suburban. The benefits of Grange membership are available to all.

As Robinson said, "A lot of people hear 'agriculture' and 'rural' and think that Grange isn't for them because they are in a suburban community. But membership is really open to everyone."

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