

# SCHLEY GRANGE LISTED IN NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

by : Katie Greene

On Sunday, September 12, Schley Grange held a special event to celebrate being listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The occasion brought together the community, and it was great seeing people socializing and laughing. Even behind masks, you could see the smiles on the faces of those who attended and how much they love their community and its local Grange.

Schley Grange President David Latta started the program by welcoming everyone. He introduced Earl McKee, Orange County Commissioner – District 2, who welcomed elected officials attending the ceremony. After speaking about Schley and the fondness he has for his home community, County Commissioner McKee introduced NC House Representative Graig Meyer. Rep. Meyer congratulated Schley Grange on such a special recognition stating that it is the community and the people who win the honor, not the building. He recalled one of his most memorable events at the Grange Hall when it was packed with around 200 people, all gathered to discuss rural broadband, an event people in Schley are still talking about. Rep. Meyer stated, “The community is tuned in with what is happening around here!” He also suggested that Schley Grange should be a mandatory stop for all elected officials because they would never have to worry about getting a bad meal at the Grange. Anyone who has attended one of these meals would agree.



Speaking on the history of the organization and how Schley Grange acquired their building was former State Grange President, Robert Caldwell. Schley Grange entered the National Grange Community Service Contest which was sponsored by Sears Roebuck & Company. They competed against 37 other Granges across the country. There were four main projects that Schley Grange conducted for the contest. They established rural telephone service in the community, led soil conservation efforts, started a new youth program, and performed property work on Mars Hill Baptist Church. Schley Grange won first place and received a new building worth nearly \$50,000. In 1949, NC Governor W. Kerr Scott and Fowler McConnell, President of Sears Roebuck & Co., dedicated the building completely debt free. Schley Grange has been holding meetings and serving the community from this historical building since then.

After sharing the building’s history, Caldwell commended former Schley Grange President Katherine Cheek calling her one of the most influential Grange members Schley has ever had. He stated, “A spark plug without a battery is not much good. Katherine is the battery for Schley Grange.” After being thanked for all she has done, Cheek spoke of her own experience in the Grange stating that she did not grow up in the Grange, but she married into the Grange and has seen it grow over the years. She spoke about perseverance stating, “Do not give up until you get what you want.” That is exactly what Schley Grange has done over the years, and the story of how this Grange was put on the National Register of Historic Places is another example.

In 2013, Peter Kramer with the National Register contacted Katherine Cheek, wanting to ensure that Schley Grange received this honor. At that time, he was diagnosed with cancer and soon after lost his battle. Before passing away, he handed the baton to Peter Sanback, who Cheek described as being persistent. Sanbeck took over the project and would not give up. He even joined the Grange to learn more about the importance of the organization. His efforts obviously paid off. Sanback gave a brief history of Schley Grange, observing that its first organizational meeting was held on September 19, 1931. “The telephone project was so important in the 1930s, that it has looped back around to rural broadband today,” expressed Sanback.



After thanking Peter Sanback and Katherine Cheek for all of their hard work completing this historical project, David Latta stated, “The community is what makes the building.” Before ending the program, Latta, with members Bonnie Hauser and Pam Pittman, presented Cheek with a special plaque honoring her for 37 years of service as Schley Grange President, a well-deserved award.

As the outdoor ceremony ended, members and guests were invited to move inside the building to watch a special presentation on the history of the Schley Grange Hall and the Schley community. Tasty refreshments were also served on the front lawn as people reflected, mingled, and enjoyed a time of fellowship. There were many stories shared on that Sunday afternoon; stories that I will remember for years to come. Congratulations to Schley Grange on this honor.

