

Eugene A. Eckert (1879-1955)

Eugene Eckert was a successful native southwestern Illinois farmer and businessman who devoted nearly his entire adult life to the Grange and its principles. Born in Belleville Illinois, he spent his entire married life on Drum Hill Farm, a grain and livestock farm and apple orchard inherited from his grandfather who immigrated from Germany. After several terms as Master of the St. Clair County Pomona Grange, he served as Master of the Illinois State Grange from 1919 to 1945 and then as a member of the Executive Committee from 1946 to 1953. He served for 24 years as a member of the Executive Committee of the National Grange from 1922 to 1946, serving as 15 years as Secretary and seven years as Chairman.



Mr. Eckert was a successful farmer in St. Clair County and a member of Woodland Grange. Mr. Eckert's ability as a businessman was demonstrated on many occasions in Grange affairs, particularly in the matter of investments. His counsel and participation in the purchase of the Grange headquarters in Washington, DC in 1943 was of great value. He often represented the National Grange at large agricultural conferences and never failed to vigorously defend the farmers' interests and adequately express their viewpoint.

He was also president of the First National Bank of Freeburg, Illinois (1945-55) and a board member of the National Livestock Producers Association. In 1948 he received an award from the Illinois Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers as the individual who contributed most to the furtherance of agriculture in Illinois. He was founding vice president and served for 26 years on the National Grange Mutual Liability Insurance Company and was also vice-president of the National Grange Fire Insurance Company. He sat for six years on the state Soil Conservation Board.

During his term as state Master, Granges in Illinois flourished. On the national level, in 1935 he handled the details and was instrumental in acquiring for the National Grange the Oliver Hudson Kelley homestead, a farm of 192 acres with house, tenant house, and other outbuildings in Elk River, Minnesota. When he arrived in Elk River to negotiate for the farm, he learned that the farm was about to be sold under a decree for foreclosure of a mortgage. He had no time to consult with anyone so he bought the farm with his own funds, for which he was later reimbursed by the National Grange.

Eugene Eckert was well known in Grange work and agriculture in the state and nation. He often represented the National Grange at agricultural conferences and was a vigorous defender of the interests of farmers and the Grange for many years.

