

Chautauqua Historical Society

Volume I, Issue I

September, 2003

- The Newsletter will be published three times a year: February, June, and September.
- The Newsletter is a membership benefit at the Regular and Patron levels.
- **Patron** membership includes a membership in the Chautauqua Network.
- CHS members are encouraged to submit articles to the editor for inclusion in the Newsletter.

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Are we part of a larger American historical movement.....?

Of course we are.

Our community was founded in 1885 by two Methodist groups that represented St. Louis and southern Illinois. We know that the founders were aware they were establishing a "western Chautauqua," connected to the New York experiment.

The goals and objectives of our community from 1885 to 1909, the year of re-organization, were consistent with the national movement: religion, culture and education, and family recreation. And, when we became **New Piasa Chautauqua** in 1909, the commitment to the

original values was loud and clear, as can be seen by looking at the program for the years following 1909.

There are ten contemporary chautauquas to which we are connected by history, program, and our interest in preserving links to the past. Active assemblies can be found on Wellesley Island in the St. Lawrence Seaway, in the Appalachian mountains near Nashville, TN, on the Atlantic Ocean in New Jersey and near Portland, ME, in Colorado, Pennsylvania,



Restore the memory.....

on Lake Erie in Ohio and on Lake Michigan And, the spirit of our founders is still alive along the Mississippi; we are still an important part of a continuing national movement.

Tim Tomlinson

A challenge...tell a Chautauqua neighbor about the CHS, and enroll a new member...at the Patron level.

CHS is committed ...to preserve the social, moral, and religious culture of our community, and the historical traditions that support that culture.....That's the

part of our mission statement that the **Newsletter** will hope to realize.

We now have 54 members, 5 at the regular level, and 49 at the

Patron level. You can be a CHS ambassador by talking with your Chautauqua neighbors and asking them to join you in our common work.



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<http://www.archive.org/details/chautauquahistor11chau>

From the Co-Chairs.....

We are really excited about the Shareholders' approval at this year's annual meeting of a line item appropriation of \$17,000 to work on the restoration of the north side of the Kentucky Home.

The community contribution will be matched by an equal amount with monies raised by volunteer efforts over the past few years. These efforts include the Station Stand under the leadership of Ruth Nickols, and later Bill Jackson, and the Jersey Door. No organization funds (LCIA, Men's Club, Historical Society membership fees/auction proceeds) are included in the matching funds.

Work will start this fall, and will be completed before the opening of the 2004 season. The detailed stabilization/maintenance plans will be reviewed by the Building and Standards Committee. The present kitchen area, Jersey Door, and parts of the Indian Giver have been cleaned out in anticipation of the upcoming work.

Remember, each season we make Chautauqua history. This fall we will start to catalog recent photographs, issues of Channels, programs, and so on. If you have materials you believe would be valuable to the collection, let us know. It's everybody's history.

Judy Hurd

Rose Tomlinson

1897 and 1898 daily newspapers come to light in Principia College archives

In the early years of our Chautauqua, the summer experience was divided into two segments. There was a "season," which operated sometimes from mid-May into September, and then there was the "assembly" or the program, which was generally a four- to six- week flurry of activities related to the Chautauqua mission of education and religion. The Assemblies were held in July and August.

During the Assembly period, in the late 1890s, a daily newspaper was published, called *The Piasa Chautauquan*. Principia College has copies of this newspaper for 1897 and 1898 in its archival environmentally controlled vault. They were published during the "assembly" part of those seasons and are not complete. The 1897 documents are particularly fragile, but we hope the materials will provide new insight into what our community was doing during this two-year period, and how the community presented itself to the outside world. We expect to feature *The Piasa Chautauquan* in our February, 2004 issue.

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Our first reorganization was in 1909, as reported in Ralph Osborn's Centennial history, with information taken from articles published in the Alton Evening Telegraph. In January 1909, Secretary of State James A. Rose authorized the opening of books of subscription to the capital stock of (a new company) New Piasa Chautauqua. On April 6, 1909, Rose certified New Piasa Chautauqua "a legally organized corporation under the laws of this state." To pay off the indebtedness incurred in the previous seasons, 150 shares of stock at \$100 per share were sold to investors. Eight persons bought or pledged 55 shares, over one-third of the new corporate stock. H.A. Tunehorst, who owned what is now the Thatcher cottage and who built Kentucky Home in 1910, bought 1.5 shares. Dr. F. W. Grundmann, Gordon and Bill Grundmann's grandfather, who built the Villa Mexico in 1905, purchased two shares of the new issue. William Sauvage, one-time Mayor of Alton, Chautauqua pool and steamboat concessionaire, and builder of the Tomlinson cottage in 1907, purchased 2.5 shares. Existing leasehold commitments of the Piasa Bluffs Assembly/Piasa Chautauqua were honored in the reorganization scheme.

Name changes:	1885	Piasa Bluffs Assembly
	1897	Piasa Chautauqua
	1909	New Piasa Chautauqua

Chautauqua Network News

The Chautauqua Network is an informal association of present-day chautauquas, assemblies, camp meetings, and individuals that are interested in providing opportunities for institutional contacts and personal contacts, and for the dissemination of information about current activities and future plans of chautauquas across the country. The Network is administered by the Chautauqua Institution, Chautauqua, NY. It sponsors an annual "national" conference, and publishes an intermittent Newsletter.

If you are a member of the (New Piasa) Chautauqua Historical Society at the patron level, you have been enrolled in the Chautauqua Network. Information is also available by going to the Chautauqua Institution's web site, ciweb.org, go to "more links," and click on the network box.

The annual network conference is open to all members, and is held at the New York Chautauqua on odd-numbered years, and at other Chautauqua sites on even-numbered years. The 2004 conference will be held at Bay View, Michigan. Meetings are generally scheduled for the last week in July.

The *Minutes* for the 1998 meeting offer an idea of the motivations and principles of the Network:

- Chautauquas have survived and prospered by meeting people's needs. We all must continue responding to ethnic diversity and spirituality needs to remain vital in coming years.
- Network members should examine "exporting" programs to reach beyond their grounds and to keep the spirit alive. CLSC is a good example of programs beyond the physical boundaries of (the NY) Chautauqua.

Tim and Rose Tomlinson attended the Network Conference held this year at the Chautauqua Institution, July 24-28. The following is reprinted in part from the *Daily Chautauquan*, by Guest Writer Suzon O. Kister. Sue is the editor of the Network Newsletter, and a summer resident of the "chautauqua" at

Thousand Island Park, NY, located on Wellesley Island on the St. Lawrence Seaway.

"The Chautauqua Network, an organization of individuals and groups that promotes the history and fosters the values of the Chautauqua movement, will convene its annual meeting here July 24-28.

Thirty registrants are expected to attend. They represent not only the Chautauqua Institution, but also similar resort communities around the country that began as Methodist campgrounds in the 19th century.

Among new Network members will be Tim Tomlinson of the New Piasa Chautauqua on the Mississippi River in Illinois. A 30-year leaseholder at New Piasa, Tomlinson recently retired as associate director of the arboretum at the University of Pennsylvania. Researching the connections between the Mississippi River chautauqua and its counterparts has become his retirement project.

.....Many of the registrants will be staying in the homes of Chautauquans for the weekend.

....Chautauqua Institution's Archivist Jon Schmitz, will make a presentation to the Networkers on Saturday morning.

Schmitz is concerned that the more than 100 chautauquas round the country, whether extant or just a memory, may lose their individual histories if something is not done to preserve the historical record.

He will address issues of record-keeping decisions, preservation methods, and archival practices.

Later in the day, Schmitz will lead a discussion for members to assess what preservation initiatives have been undertaken already at various assemblies, and how to coordinate these archival efforts in the future.

Current officers of the Chautauqua Network are Frank Gwaltney, president, Ocean Park, ME; George McCormick, vice president, Lakeside, OH; and Betty Nelson, secretary-treasurer, Chautauqua, NY."

(Excerpted from the *Daily Chautauquan*, July 17, 2004.)

From the University of Missouri Press....

James R. Schultz's book, *The Romance of small-town Chautauquas*, was published by the University of Missouri Press, Columbia, MO, in 1902.

Schulz is currently a San Francisco resident. He grew up in Meadville, PA, and attended Allegheny College and Harvard Business School. An earlier book, *The Long Way Home, A Pacific Odyssey of World War II*, was published in 1996.

He was invited by the Chautauqua Women's Club to speak about his book, as part of the 2004 season Program of the Women's Club. The book describes the *traveling chautauquas*, and their dramatic impact on the cultural and intellectual landscape of the early 20th century.

Schultz says the traveling chautauqua movement began in 1904, at the Chautauqua Institution and was inspired by the educational opportunities offered by the then 30-year old permanent assembly. The new chautauquas were tent communities that sprang up all over the country, stayed in a community for a week to ten days, and then traveled on to a new site and new audience. He says they "...drew on the same energy the Chautauqua Institution relied on," and states that it was the traveling chautauquas to which Teddy Roosevelt referred when he spoke of the "most American thing in America."

"The mornings were devoted to children and lighter material like magicians and ventriloquists. The afternoon and evening featured lectures by the most prominent speakers in the country, including President Warren G. Harding, Congresswoman Jeannette Rankin," Schultz explained to the Women's Club audience.

Schultz's father was a professor of history at Allegheny College, and for a time during summer periods, the general superintendent for the New York and New England traveling chautauquas. He says his father intended to write a book on the tent cultural movement. Schultz spent five years researching and writing his book.

The Romance of small-town Chautauquas is described as follows by the Midwest Library Service: For almost 30 years, tent shows known as "chautauquas" brought popular education and

entertainment to small towns of America from coast to coast. With more than 100 photographs and other illustrations from the era, the book presents an overview of the tent Chautauqua movement, from its inception to its demise in 1932. The photographs reflect the styles and customs of a bygone era, as well as anecdotes about many people of prominence who toured as speakers or entertainers, including individuals such as President Warren G. Harding, Congresswoman Jeannette Rankin, ventriloquist Edgar Bergen, journalist and historian Ida Tarbell, poet Carl Sandburg, and many others."

A significant collection of archival materials related to the traveling chautauquas is located in the University of Iowa library system, particularly at the University of Iowa in Iowa City, and Iowa State University, in Ames, Iowa. A readable scholarly account of the movement can be found in *Circuit Chautauqua*, by John Tapia, published in 1997. The traveling chautauquas had booking agents to organize and administer the complex scheduling of speakers and performers, and the Tapia book concentrates on the so-called Redpath Circuit. The Redpath Chautauqua Collection is held in Iowa City, Iowa. Tapia's book closes with a comment by an interviewee: "Circuit Chautauqua was wonderful. Oh, it was simply wonderful. I wish I could go again."

We're making good progress in our application for incorporation to the Illinois Secretary of State. Kathy Brammeier, who has considerable experience in helping prepare such applications, has been a great help. We also have drafted a set of By-Laws to govern the Chautauqua Historical Society, and hope to have these reviewed by "friends" of the Society, including Attorney Matt Kelly and Judge Ken Trabue. And, we will at the appropriate time apply for tax exempt status with the IRS, sales tax exemption with the Illinois Department of Revenue, and will register as a charitable and educational organization with the Illinois Attorney General's office.

The Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle, Benjamin St. James Fry Chapter

The Chautauqua Historical Society will sponsor a chapter of the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle.

The CLSC was founded in 1878 at Chautauqua, New York, and was America's first Great Books Club. An early adult education effort, it was designed to reach out to people who could not afford a college education. The program required four years of reading from a prescribed list of books on history, culture, science, and literature. The format envisioned small group discussions, a form of roundtable approach. In 1882 there were 1800 graduates in the "first" class. Each year thereafter, continuing to present day, the Chautauqua Institution has a Recognition Day where CLSC members "graduate."

The Circles were enormously popular. Some estimates, for example, describe over 10,000 "tent" Chautauquas in the early 1900s, but speak of more

"Circles" than the tent Chautauquas in the country.

Our research indicates that a CLSC chapter was active in St. Louis in 1883, in the Clifton Heights neighborhood where Benjamin St. James Fry had a ministry. Fry was the head of the St. Louis group of Methodists that founded our Chautauqua community and the first president of the Piasa Bluffs Assembly. He was an early shareholder and cottage owner, and lived in the cottage now held by the Holowatuks.

In the early years the Piasa Bluffs Assembly established the CLSC as part of the program, enrolled students, built a Hall of Philosophy (1905), and annually had a Recognition Day to honor students and graduates of the program.

The CLSC at the Chautauqua Institution celebrated its 125th anniversary in 2003, and is still a strong and

vibrant force in the modern Chautauqua movement. The Fry Chapter of the CLSC at New Piasa Chautauqua will be linked to the CLSC program at the Chautauqua Institution.

Join Us Now....

Membership in the Fry Chapter is open to CHS members at all levels. To be a founding member of the Fry Chapter of the CLSC, send your check for \$10 to the Chautauqua Historical Society, with the completed membership application insert in the Newsletter. We will forward your application to New York, and send you a copy of the "rules," including instructions on how to get a book list that dates back to 1878!

Of course, any member can contact the New York CLSC directly about CLSC membership, or may choose not to be "recognized" officially by the Chautauqua Institution.

Definitions

Preservation is progress.....

chautauqua.. an institution of the late 19th and early 20th centuries providing popular education combined with entertainment in the form of lectures, concerts, and plays often presented outdoors or in a tent...

lyceum...an association providing public lectures, concerts, and entertainments, originating in New England in the early 19th century ...

PRESERVATION IS PROGRESS

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...to preserve the social, moral,
and religious culture of our
community, and the historical
traditions that support that
culture.....

An important Chautauqua Historical Society project is to explore ways to print a second edition of Ralph Osborn's book, *A Centennial, The History of New Piasa Chautauqua, 1885-1985*.

We have had conversations with Bill Osborn, and Bill has said we can discuss publication options with printers and develop a funding plan and marketing plan. When these plans are in place, we will ask Bill and his family to release the second edition rights to the Historical Society.

Those of us who own a copy of Ralph's book turn to it from time to time to seek historical information about our community, or to remind ourselves of how all of us are stewards of an important tradition. It's a help.

Food for thought....or reading to be considered...

Many of the present-day assemblies (or chautauquas) have a book or books that describe their history, tradition, and connection to the Chautauqua movement. Here is an partial list:

New Piasa Chautauqua, Chautauqua, IL

Ralph Osborn, *A Centennial, The History of New Piasa Chautauqua, 1885-1985* (Ralph Osborn, 1989)

William M. Fabian, *Chautauqua, Illinois: A Brief History*, (Historic Elsau Foundation, 1975)

A History of Chautauqua, in *The Prairie Schooner*, (The Jersey County Historical Society, Fall, 1997)

The Chautauqua Institution, Chautauqua, NY

Alfreda Irwin, *Three Taps of the Gavel*. (Chautauqua Institution, Chautauqua, NY, 1970, 1977, 1987)

Pauline Fancher, *Chautauqua: Its Architecture and its People*, (Banyan Book, Inc., Miami, FL, 1978)

Jeffrey Simpson, *Chautauqua, An American Utopia*

The Pennsylvania Chautauqua, Mt. Gretna, PA

Jack Bittner, *Mt. Gretna, A Coleman Legacy*. (Lebanon County Historical Society, Lebanon, PA, 1990)

The Colorado Chautauqua Association, Boulder, CO

Mary Galey, *The Grand Assembly*. (Winlock Publishing Co., Sun City, CA, 1981, 1998)

Sylvia Pettem, *Chautauqua Centennial: Boulder, Colorado*. (The Book Lode, in cooperation with the Colorado Chautauqua Association, Boulder, CO, 1998)

Thousand Island Park, Thousand Island, NY

Helen P. Jacox, Eugene Kleinhans, Jr., with Paul Malo, *Thousand Island Park: One Hundred Years and Then Some*. (Valhalla Printing Co., Thousand Island Park, NY, 1975)

Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association, Ocean Grove, New Jersey

Wayne T. Bell, *Images of America: Ocean Grove*. (Arcadia Publishing, Charleston, SC, 2000)

Frederic A. Smith, Jr., *Memories of Ocean Grove*. (Ocean Grove Historical Society, Ocean Grove, NJ, 2002)

(In later issues of the Newsletter we will add titles as we learn of them. All titles are or will be available at the Chautauqua library in the Kentucky Home.)



