Preservation is progress

Chautauqua Historical Society

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- The Newsletter is 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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We have 60 regular/patron members, and send the Newsletter to 94 households.

At its October 22, 2003 meeting, the New Piasa Chautauqua Board of Directors, with President Bill Jackson presiding, approved the following resolution unanimously.

WHEREAS the *Chautauqua Historical Society* has determined to organize formally as an Illinois Non Profit Corporation and to seek tax exempt status under the provisions of Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986; and,

WHEREAS the mission and purpose of the *Chautauqua Historical Society*, to wit, *the preservation and enhancement of the historic traditions and culture of New Piasa Chautauqua, Chautauqua, Illinois, the encouragement of historical research on the Chautauqua community and nearby historic districts, the publication of historical brochures, pamphlets, and other written material on New Piasa Chautauqua, remaining permanent assemblies and chautauquas in other parts of the United States, and the national Chautauqua movement, and the establishment of an educational program, including exhibits, to inform the Chautauqua community and the general public of the historical and educational value of New Piasa Chautauqua*, are deemed meritorious and deserving of the support of the New Piasa Chautauqua Board of Directors;

THEREFORE the New Piasa Chautauqua Board of Directors hereby congratulates the *Chautauqua Historical Society* for its reorganization plans, and welcomes, acknowledges and encourages the *Chautauqua Historical Society* in the pursuit of the activities cited in the Purpose statement of the organization.

The Chautauqua Historical Society was incorporated as an Illinois *Not for Profit Corporation* by the Secretary of State on October 16, 2003. It was issued a Federal Employee Identification Number by the Internal Revenue Service on October 9, 2003. The first official meeting of the Board of Directors was held on October 25, 2003, with Directors Paul Brammeier, Christine Hagin, Judy Hurd, Rose Tomlinson, and Tim Tomlinson in attendance. Director Pat Miller could not be at the meeting. By-laws for the Chautauqua Historical Society were reviewed and approved by the Directors.

The Directors also elected officers for 2003-4. The officers are:

Rose Tomlinson, President
Judy Hurd, Vice President
Tim Tomlinson, Secretary
Christine Hagin, Treasurer
Tim Tomlinson, Archivist

A *Records and Documentation* Book for the Society is available for review and examination in the community library, located in the Kentucky Home.

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http://www.archive.org/details/chautauquahistor21chau

President's Report

After four years of hard work raising money at The Jersey Door Gift Shop (and the Station Stand), augmented by matching funds and other support from the Chautauqua community, we finally had enough money to begin restoration of the historic Kentucky Home building.

Detailed plans for the interior and the exterior of the Kentucky Home were drawn up in the fall and presented to Gerry Staley, Chair of the Buildings and Standards Committee. We were unable to find early photos of the north side of the Kentucky Home, so it was hard to know what that side of the building was like before the sheds were added. Our plans did retain five of the second-story windows, placing them where they were located originally. On the first floor we put in two sets of double doors and two windows. The double doors reflect the type of door used in many Chautauqua cottages during the early 1900's.

The broken cement patio and wall were removed. Under that pad of cement, the remains of a cement kitchen floor was discovered. The cement still had blue linoleum on it. The north part of the building was in worse shape than we thought. A lot of old, rotten material was removed. The area in the kitchen where the LCIA sold its t-shirts had no support at all under it. The floor joists had rotted away and the floorboards were resting on the ground.

All the rot has been removed and new supports added. The north side of the building has been raised about nine inches. The exterior wall was rebuilt with siding milled by Fehlig Bros. for the project., and the new windows and doors are in place. Inside, the new level floor is really welcome. There are new walls in the gift shop, kitchen and bathroom.

We are especially grateful to Dave Hagin for many volunteer hours supervising this job. His volunteer hours were not part of his Chautauqua job. Dave is also donating a toilet, vanity and mirror for the bathroom, as well as his time to install everything.
Thank-you, Dave.

When the Season opens, you will see great improvement, and will realize also we still have a long way to go. Get set to volunteer--we will need lots of cleaning and painting help this spring.

Rose Tomlinson

Kentucky Home activities for the 2004 Season

There are lots of exciting activities planned for the Kentucky Home next summer. The Historical Society will run the Jersey Door. The grand opening will be in early June. We plan to have three special areas in the shop—**Chautauqua Kids**, **Vintage Chautauqua**, and the gift shop of the **Jersey Door**. Profits from the Jersey Door will continue to support the Kentucky Home, as well as the research, book acquisition and program activities of the Historical Society.

The LCIA will continue to sell Chautauqua t-shirts and other related items in the Kentucky Home. In addition, profits from the Indian Giver will benefit the LCIA.

The LCIA also supports the library. Several boxes of books are waiting to be sorted for next summer. The Historical Society has donated a nice selection of books and articles of our Chautauqua history and literature from other Chautauquas around the country.

The LCIA Pink Geranium also will have a new look. Double glass doors will open directly from the kitchen to the terrace. What an improvement after several years of passing things through a window propped up with a stick or walking all the way around through the Indian Giver.

Please remember that the things you donate at the Kentucky Home really do make a difference. We are sure you will agree with this when you see the improvements to the building next summer.

Don't forget that we are always looking for Chautauqua Program Books. Do you have any books from 1885 to the 1930's? If you want to keep your book, we can make a copy of the original. Program books are a great source of historical information.

Name changes:

1885	Piasa Bluffs Assembly
1897	Piasa Chautauqua
1909	New Piasa Chautauqua

Historic Piasa

On the 17th of June, 1673, Marquette and Joliet, with their servants and guides floated out of the mouth of the Wisconsin, upon the placid bosom of the majestic Mississippi river, of which they had heard much from the Indians among whom they had labored for many years. Their object was exploration and discovery.

They were the first white men that ever saw, or navigated the upper Mississippi, from the place where they entered, to the mouth of the Ohio.

The latter part of June or first part of July they passed along that portion of the Mississippi river where Piasa Chautauqua Assembly is now located. In his report of this expedition, to the French government, Marquette gives a description of these bluffs, and the famed pictures of the "Piasa Bird" as follows:

> "As we coasted along the rocks, frightful for their height and vastness, we saw upon one of them two huge monsters painted upon it, that, we were alarmed at first sight, and upon which the most courageous savages dare not for a long time fasten their eyes.
>
> They are as large as a calf, have horns upon the head like a deer, a frightful look, red eyes, a beard like a tiger, a face something like a man's, a body covered with scales, the tail so long that it made the circuit of the body, passing over the head and returning between the legs, terminating in a tail like that of a fish. The colors that composed it were green, red and black. In truth these two monsters are so well painted that we cannot believe a savage was the workman since good painters in France would find it difficult to do as well; and moreover, they are so high upon the rock, that it is difficult to reach them conveniently by painters.
>
> As we were conversing about these monsters, rowing quietly in the beautiful water, clear and tranquil, we heard the noise of a rapid into which we were going to fall. I have never seen anything more frightful: an impediment caused by whole trees and branches and floating islands proceeding from the mouth of the river Peketononi (Missouri) with so much impetuosity, that we could not attempt to pass across without danger; the agitation was such that the water was all muddy and could not be purified."

It will be seen from Marquette's description that these "monsters" partake of the characteristics of man, animal, and fish, but have neither feathers, nor wings as claimed by later tradition.

Editor's Note: The foregoing is reprinted without typographical or grammatical change from ***The Piasa Daily Chautauquan***, published from July 21 (first issue) to Wednesday, August 18, 1897. This was the first year of publishing a daily newspaper at Piasa Chautauqua, and this article appeared every day, apparently a "filler" piece.

No authorship is indicated, and you can see that one section is taken from Marquette's report of his visit to this area. It's clear, from this account, that Marquette and his party saw a representation of two birds, not one. We welcome your comments and other input, dear Readers....

We have a reproduction of *The Piasa Daily Chautauquan* newspaper in our community library for your study and review. This collection was made available through the courtesy of the Marshall Brooks Library, Principia College. It covers the period (Friday) July 21, 1897 to (Wednesday) August 18, 1897, and (Thursday) July 21, 1898 to (Thursday) August 18, 1898. There is a substantial difference in the type of news reported in the second year of publication, with more daily news and less "filler" material. Take time to look at the collection. It's worth it.

Thank you, L.C.I.A. for all that you have done...

It's difficult not to be supportive of the Ladies Civic Improvement Association at New Piasa Chautauqua. In 1923, the following information appeared in ***Chautauqua Echoes***, that period's counterpart of our ***Channels:***

"The L.C.I.A. was organized about 1910, its object being to assist the management, through co-operation, in the civic, philanthropic and social advancement of the New Piasa Chautauqua. The membership was to consist of women interested in Chautauqua. The first record of the work done which is available is 1916. At that time the L.C.I.A. was managing The Springs Hotel. The money made there was used for new furniture, painting, plumbing, screening throughout, including the third floor porch.

The L.C.I.A. also gave bazaars, teas, had quilting parties and card parties. These were for sociability as well as to raise money. With the money made, the following are some of the improvements made:

Besides continual improvement on hotel, a concrete bridge was built near the Jerseyville gate, a new bridge at the spring, the rustic shelter near the tennis court, one thousand dollars paid to the stockholder's board toward the mortgage, a $500 note bought from same board.

A playground was equipped near Jerseyville gate and a supervisor is paid $5 a week during the season.

The imposing structure at the Jerseyville entrance is the last undertaking, and that is not yet completed.

The cafeteria had a new floor and a new roof, and new equipment during the last few years.

The L.C.I.A. has made and spent many thousands of dollars and hopes to continue to do so to help Chautauqua."

Still true in the 21st. Century. **Thanks, LCIA**.

The "Dinky" at Chautauqua in 1933. The conductor is Dewey McDow. The image comes from material provided by CHS member Betsy Drackett. We don't know the source of the image.

It's amazing how far-reaching the Chautauqua influence is..... From the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and the Associated Press, November 27, 2002:

"Astronauts install more latticework outside space station

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. Astronauts used cranes to attach another expensive piece of latticework to the International Space Station Tuesday, and then went out to wire it up."

..We should be pleased that the influence of latticework has now extended into outer space, but we have to wonder if the astronauts had a permit issued by the **Building and Standards Committee**. After all, there are aesthetics and precedents to consider when making fundamental changes or additions to a leasehold, wherever it might be.

What is an Historic District?

New Piasa Chautauqua was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1982. The application for historic district status was prepared by Sam Schmidt, who was president of the NPC Board at the time, and by Dave VanWinkle, also a member of the board. Schmidt journeyed to Springfield to make a presentation to the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.

So, what does "historic district status" mean? New Piasa Chautauqua is in the National Register of Historic Places, a program administered by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior. We are one of eight such designations in Jersey County, four of them located along the river: the Grafton business district, New Piasa Chautauqua, the village of Elsah, and Principia College.

The National Preservation Act of 1966 authorized the Secretary of the Interior to maintain a National Register of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering and culture. A district is a geographically definable areas possessing a significant concentration of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united by past events or aesthetically by plan or physical development.

The National Register is a guide to be used by Federal, State, and local governments, private groups and citizens to identify the Nation's cultural resources and to indicate what properties should be considered for protection from destruction or impairment. Listing in the National Register makes property owners eligible for Federal grants-in-aid for historic preservation. However, listing of private property on the National Register does not prohibit under Federal law or regulation any actions taken by the property owner with respect to the property.

There is also a state program for historic places, administered by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. None of the historic districts in Jersey County are listed on the State Register for Historic Places. To be listed on the State Register, property owners must agree to submit plans for any changes to the property or properties to the Agency for approval. This limits seriously the actions which can be taken by property owners Another designation available to historic places is "landmark" status, either under Federal or county jurisdictions. Principia College has Federal landmark status for the Bernard Maybeck buildings on the campus. To our knowledge, Jersey County does not have a landmark ordinance in place, so no site in the county (including the historic County Courthouse) has landmark status.

Historic district status, therefore, is basically honorific, a designation that gives a site a title without requiring the sites/place to conform to a host of state and federal regulations, except on a voluntary basis. National Register status provides no authority to Federal, state, or local governments to protect historic properties against demolition or alteration. Most historic districts, however, are mindful of the implications of the designation, and understand the significance of the designation as it relates to American history. The village of Elsah, our neighboring historic district, has established a Zoning Board that reviews all prospective changes in the community. New Piasa Chautauqua has established a ***Building and Standards Committee*** that oversees proposed building changes in our community, for public buildings and leaseholder cottages at Chautauqua.

The Building and Standards Committee operates under the ***Architectural and Historic Preservation Design Policy of New Piasa Chautauqua..*** It's ***Purpose*** statement relates directly to an understanding of the National Register status our community enjoys: "It is the purpose of these Rules to establish procedures for the orderly review of construction, alteration and renovation of cottages, out buildings and significant site accouterments within New Piasa Chautauqua to provide a measure of protection from incompatible works that impact the historic fabric of our community...." and the objectives....."(1) To maintain and enhance the distinctive character of our historic community both architecturally and socially. (2) To insure that construction activities will maintain the vitality of both individual creativity and our community's unique historic heritage....." speak clearly to a recognition of the unique place we occupy in local, state, and national history.

This statement clearly recognizes the unique place we occupy in local, state, and national history. What we have, as an historic district, is ours and ours alone to protect and preserve.

A Short Article about a Giant of a Man.
Imagine a single figure standing alone on our Chautauqua Auditorium stage in 1903, commanding the attention of over 1,000 people who have come here by train, horse and carriage, and walking---some from as far away as Springfield.
This 5-foot 10-inch ruggedly handsome orator would mesmerize audiences while in "one hand holding a palm leaf fan, which was never still, and the other resting alternately on a block of ice in a basin on a table and then on the top of his head upon which the heat beat down mercilessly...water would stream down his face but he remained oblivious to heat and fatigue."

C.J. Homer in his biography of William Jennings Bryan continues, "Once or twice, on a quiet summer evening, I have stood a block or two away and even then I could hear what he said. His tones would never swell to a shout or break into a roar and along with the melody of his voice and the grace of his gestures, the flash of his eyes would seem to reach even those who sat far away."

Probably no other name is more closely associated with Chautauqua during the days of the Summer Circuits than William Jennings Bryan. From the mid 1890s through 1924, the year preceding his death, "The Great Commoner," the "Old Dependable" as he was known, spoke thousands of times on the Chautauqua Circuit in the open air, under tents, and in auditoriums; by lakes, rivers, and mountains, he was heard and revered by thousands and thousands of Chautauqua patrons.

In 1924 Bryan estimated that since 1894 he had averaged about two hundred lectures a year, for a total of some five thousand lectures, and that he had traveled the equivalent of once around the world each year. He is said to have visited New Piasa Chautauqua at least five times during those three decades. (Ongoing research to verify precisely the number and times of those visits is being conducted by our Chautauqua Historical Society.)

He was a three-time unsuccessful candidate for President, Secretary of State under Woodrow Wilson, campaigner for free silver, prohibition, women's suffrage, government ownership of railroads, and the League of Nations. Bryan made himself notorious at the end of his life as a foe of the teaching of evolution, facing Clarence Darrow in the famous "Monkey Trial," in Tennessee. He was a native of Illinois, born in Salem, Marion County, and graduated with honors from Illinois College in Jacksonville in 1881. He acquired his Law Degree from a Chicago Law School in 1885. In 1887 he and his wife, Mary, who also held a law degree and was from Perry, Illinois, moved to Lincoln, Nebraska. Here they remained, practiced law and raised three children. Mary was Bryan's most avid supporter, advocate and critic, advising him on the content of his lectures and the style and demeanor of his presentations. She traveled extensively with him until arthritis limited her movements and freedom. William Jennings Bryan's letters to his wife during his travels without her document his deep and lasting love for her, his devotion to his family, and the mutual respect they had for each other.

There is much to be learned about this man who had such an influence on America and the Chautauqua Movement between 1885 and 1924. This article is an introduction to this most significant historical figure. Please let us know if, through future issues of the Chautauqua Historical Society Newsletter, you would like to learn more about this man, as well as other regular participants who traveled the historical Chautauqua Circuit.

Paul Brammeier, Director, Chautauqua Historical Society.

PRESEVATION IS PROGRESS

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