Preservation is progress

Chautauqua Historical Society

Volume 2, Issue 3 October, 2004

- The Newsletter is published three times a year: winter, spring, and fall.
- The Newsletter is a membership benefit at the Piasa Bluffs Assembly (PBA), Patron, and Regular levels.
- **PBA and Patron** membership include 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 3 PBA , 46 Patron, and 16 Regular members, and send the Newsletter to 125 households.

Chicago Daily Tribune

DEWEY DEFEATS TRUMAN

G.O.P. Sweep Indicated in State; Boyle Leads in City

Historic Local Chautauqua will be site of new Air Force Academy

Air Force Secretary Harold Talbot is expected to announce today that New Piasa Chautauqua and adjacent lands are the unanimous choice for the newest United States service academy. After a lengthy and sometimes contentious.....

Elsah River Packet

Thursday, June 24, 1954

We print all the news that fits....

Full story begins on page 3..

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The President's message

A principal objective of the Society is to collect and preserve historical documents relating to our community. Our earliest Program book is from the sixteenth Annual Session of the Piasa Chautauqua Assembly, 1899. That year the season was from July 20 to August 17. The book is devoted to information about lodging, places to eat, tents, transportation, and tickets. The program leaned heavily on education, the teachers, the musical entertainment, and religious activities. Lunches at the restaurants were a nickel, the hotel charged a quarter per night for a cot, and a day ticket was a quarter.

We have only a few books from the early years, but do have book for every year after 1951. Do you have an early Program Book? If you don't want to donate your book to the Society, we'd like to be able to make a copy and return your original. And, our history is not only about the early years. We have plans for Scrap Books on more recent activities, including the Air Force controversy, Reorganization in the 1980s, and annual Children's Day programs. We need copies of interesting photographs to plan out these books. This is a great opportunity to keep our history alive for future generations.

Rose Tomlinson

The Chautauqua Network

The 2004 National Chautauqua Network conference was held July 29-31 2004 in Petoskey, MI, hosted by the Bay View Association of the United Methodist Church. Over 20 participants represented nine contemporary Chautauquas: New York, Ocean Park (ME), Lakeside (OH), Bay View (MI), Epworth Heights (MI), New Piasa (IL), Monteagle (TN), Waxahachie (TX), and a new proposed Chautauqua in Badin, NC.

The conference featured group discussions on topics such as programming, the restoration and care of historic buildings, finances and local taxes, and relationships with surrounding communities. The meetings were held in "campus" buildings such as the Chapel, once a community store and an art center, in two different auditoriums, and in an elegant Victorian building that had been the national summer home of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Tours of the campus and its buildings, many Bay View historic cottages, and visits to regional attractions were part of the very intensive three-day program. Meals in the two historic hotels provided additional opportunities to talk with other Chautauquans. There was some interest in developing an information base about the remaining sites, a project in which our Society may have a leadership role.

Patron and PBA members of the CHS are enrolled automatically in the Chautauqua Network and receive at least two newsletters each year from New York. If you are a Patron member, you will also receive an invitation to the Network Conference. It will be held next year at New York. It's a great deal. The fee has been $75 for the last two years. This includes enrollment, several meals, and the opportunity to be a guest in a local cottage—without additional charges. The meetings are held the last weekend of July, so check your calendar. You could visit Mother Chautauqua next year, at very little expense on your part. Rose and Tim have had a great time at the conferences the last two years, and recommend the experience highly.

PRESEVATION IS PROGRESS

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The mission and purpose of the *Chautauqua Historical Society* is *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 to inform the Chautauqua community and the general public of the historical and educational value of New Piasa Chautauqua.*

The West Point of the Air...

Although the Chicago Daily Tribune's headline has become one of the enduring images of the American political scene, Dewey did not defeat Truman in 1948. And, as far as we know, there never was a local newspaper known as the Elsah River Packet. However, in the summer of 1954, there did exist a possibility that our Chautauqua community might disappear, taken over to become part of the site for a new United States Air Force Academy.

The use of air power in wartime had grown considerably from the personal aerial dogfights of pilots, such as the "Red Baron" in World War I, to the massive aerial bombardments of Europe's cities in World War II. In that war, the main services had their individual "air forces," including the Army, Navy, and Marines. The Army had developed a training school for officers as early as 1925, but it did not compare to the programs at West Point or Annapolis. When the Air Force became an independent department of the military in 1947, it was clear that it would need a college career training program and facility to provide what West Point and Annapolis did for the Army and Navy respectively— a continuous supply of junior officers. Dwight Eisenhower, at the time President of Columbia College, served on the board that recommended the creation of a separate institution. Stuart Symington, later a senator from Missouri, was the first Secretary of the Air Force.

Where should such an academy be located? This proved to a thorny and politically difficult question. A Site Selection Commission was formed in 1948. It reviewed over 350 sites in 22 states. The commissioners visited the Elsah area briefly in November 1950. No decision was made, and the matter was "tabled," possibly because of the Korean War.

The issue came up again when Dwight Eisenhower became president in 1953. On April 1, 1954 he signed the Air Force Academy Act, and a Selection Commission was appointed quickly. Famed aviator Charles Lindbergh was a member of the Commission that built on its earlier counterpart's experience. It expanded the review to almost 600 sites in 45 states. A major specification was that a site contain between 15,000 and 20,000 acres. Plans called for academic and training facilities, including long runways for flight training.

The Commissioners visited 34 sites, including New Piasa Chautauqua, Elsah, and the Principia campus. In its official report of June 3, 1954, the Commission recommended three sites: an area on the shores of Lake Geneva (Wisconsin), an area south of Colorado Springs (Colorado), and an area west of

Alton (between Elsah and Grafton, northwest to include the plateaus between Elsah and Cemetery Roads, and more).

The Lake Geneva Civic Association filed a request for a temporary injunction to restrain Secretary of the Air Force Harold C. Talbott until opponents had an opportunity to present their case. This strong opposition in the Lake Geneva area led Talbott to announce the Wisconsin option had been removed because the government did not want to locate the new academy within a potentially hostile environment. So, by mid-June the three sites had narrowed to two.

There were many supporters of the Mississippi River site in the St. Louis metropolitan region . Local unions pledged a "no strike" position on construction work for the new academy. Senators Stuart Symington (D-Mo), Thomas Hennings (D-Mo), Paul Douglas (D-Il), and Everett Dirksen (R-Il) lobbied in the Congressional arena, as did Representatives Tom Curtis (R-Mo), Leonore Sullivan (D-Mo), and Melvin Price (D-Il). The Grafton Chamber of Commerce, the Jerseyville Lions, and the Greater Alton Association of Commerce joined the St. Louis Chamber of Commerce

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MEETING

COURT HOUSE
JERSEYVILLE, ILLINOIS

SATURDAY, JUNE 12, 1954
9:00 P. M. (D. S. T.)

There will be a protest meeting of all those opposed to the proposed location of the U. S. Air Academy in the Elsah-Chautauqua-McClusky-Otterville area at the Court House in Jerseyville, Ill., Saturday, June 12, 1954 at 9:00 P. M. (DST).

The purpose of this meeting is to organize an effective protest and authorize proper steps to be taken before proper authorities. their sentiments.

All will be given an opportunity to voice

All Taxpayers in Jersey County should be interested.

JOHN F. GIBBONS
Attorney for Certain Clients

JOSEPH E. KNIGHT
on behalf of Knight Bros., Neighbors and Friends

Gibbons was a Jerseyville attorney who represented local farmers. He argued that families had held land for generations, and also that locating the Academy in the St. Louis area would make the area a "prime target" in the event of an H-bomb attack.

in promoting what the national news media called the Alton site.

There was also opposition. A Post-Dispatch article describes a long-time Chautauqua resident in the following way:
"Harold Brainerd and his wife Bertha are one of two or three families who live in Chautauqua year around. Brainerd has run the community's only store since 1918 ('It's a nice business') and lives in his cottage, Oak Heights, above. "If this thing comes, I guess I'll find myself another home some place," he says, "Where it would be I don't know. We have so many friends here that there's no place else we could go and feel so much like home. The cottages are handed down from one generation to another and it's like a homecoming every summer." Last week some veteran Chautauquans wondered whether they'd be able to spend another full summer in their tranquil hollow under the giant oaks and elms."

Other local opposition included a special anti-Air Force Academy prayer session held at a Sunday service at the United Methodist Church in Elsah. "Reverend Nelson Bundage called upon the congregation to pray…for courage and strength to be given to those persons who would be affected by the academy." There were about 30 persons in attendance at the regular Sunday morning service.

A 10-member team of Air Force engineers was scheduled to visit the Chautauqua site on Saturday, June 12, 1954, as a follow-up to earlier visits by Selection commissioners. An open protest meeting was scheduled for the same day at the Jerseyville County Courthouse. On Wednesday, June 9, a quarter-page advertisement (shown below) was purchased in the Alton Telegraph by a number of

A PUBLIC PROTEST

It has been made to appear in press and radio that there is no opposition to the location of the U. S. Air Academy in the Elsah-Chautauqua area in Jersey County.

As a matter of fact, the people who are most vitally interested in the area there are those who are to be put out of their homes, whose farms are to be taken out of production, whose institutions, religious and secular, are to be destroyed, almost without exception, are deeply opposed, not to an Air Academy as such, but to its location in a settled community where it will be destructive of so many social, spiritual and traditional American values.

It is so easy to give away the property of someone else, when it costs nothing and there is the scent of future profits in the offing. It is time that the fiction of no opposition here should be dissolved, and Secretary Talbot and the public should know the facts.

Property Owners of the Proposed Air Academy Site

Chautauquans, led by Joseph Rain, Sr. and Kenneth Schulenburg. Rain and Schulenburg told Telegraph reporters that an additional 30 Chautauquans subscribed to their view and that a meeting of stock-

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holders was scheduled for June 12 in the community.

The Telegraph article went on to state, "Schulenburg explained no formal statement of any opposition had been forthcoming until now…because property owners had not taken very seriously the chance that the Air Force would select the site."

The article also described an opposition, a Protest against Protest. "….another Chautauquan who preferred not to be identified publicly called the Telegraph this morning, said he understood a protest was about to be publicized, and that he wanted to protest against the protest. He said he believed most Chautauqua property owners merely wanted a fair price for their cottages when it came time to settle for them; that the Air Force Academy was too big a thing to oppose on the principles described (in the advertisement)."

Principia College was also in the mix. In the beginning of the selection process, the College did not seem to oppose the prospect of having the Academy as a neighbor. A spokesman is quoted (Post-Dispatch) as saying "We'd just as soon not have the sound barrier crashed over our chapel when we are having an assembly, but certainly national welfare trumps every ace we might have." And, in a letter to the site commission, Frederic E. Morgan, chairman of the Board of Trustees, said "We are fully prepared to welcome the academy to this beautiful area and be its good neighbor if the commission should decide that Elsah is its proper place." (Post-Dispatch)

As the time neared for a final decision, Principia's position changed significantly. Contemporary news articles speculate that College officials became concerned that their properties also would be acquired as part of the site package, even though the properties were not listed in any official documents. Dr. Morgan sent out a letter to alumni (June 15) that warned of a "major crisis," one that could not be dealt with at the local level, and urged the alumni to write and/or wire President Eisenhower and Secretary Talbott: "Even though no portion of the Principia property might be taken, the close proximity of such an enormous establishment, with consequent air traffic over the campus, would destroy the effectiveness of the Elsah campus for college work."

The Spring 2004 issue of the Principia Alumni magazine, *Principia Purpose,* has the college's "behind the scenes" story of the events of fifty years ago. Through a series of unusual circumstances, including the direct involvement of a member of the Colorado Springs Site Committee that was promoting the Colorado site, school administrators were convinced that the campus, whether identified directly in the plans or not, were a central component of the Mississippi River site. The article describes a visit of Secretary Talbott to the Principia campus, apparently sometime in June. The letter and telegram campaign of opposition was in full progress. After a meeting with school officials, the visitors toured the campus. Talbott admired the Chapel, and its location high above the bluffs along the river, and he is quoted as saying "This is beautiful. We can leave it. But the rest will have to go."

An aggressive local opposition was mobilized and lead largely, according the *Purpose* article, by college officials. The most conspicuous element of the campaign involved contacting Eisenhower and Talbott. An estimated 2200 telegrams were received by Talbott's office in the week prior to his decision (June 17-24), most of them from Principia alumni. Rep. Melvin Price told the Telegraph that the Secretary informed him that 1700 telegrams were received in a two-day period, all opposed to the Chautauqua-Elsah-Principia site. One message made this point: "Why don't you put it in Colorado where they want it?"

So it was that, on June 24, 1954, the Air Force announced that America's counterpart of West Point and Annapolis would be built in Colorado Springs, Colorado. In informing the country of the selection, Talbott said he felt "very humble in my duty to select a site…..(and)…the academy is destined to play an essential part in the future of our country."

When pressed to defend his choice, Talbott presented a number of different arguments. While he said (as late as June 22) that "..you could say that any of the three sites would be a magnificent location for the academy…." Following the decision he wrote Rep. Price that the "topography of the land along the Mississippi River" was the chief objection to the Chautauqua site. Talbott rejected any claim that the objections of local groups, including Jerseyville farmers, Chautauquans. and supporters of Principia College had anything to do with his decision. He did, however, write a letter to the executive director of the Greater Alton Association of Commerce in which he cited Principia's objections as a problem he wanted to avoid. He is quoted in the Purpose article as saying, "How in the world do we call off these damned Christian Scientists?"

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A few editorials and articles in area newspapers speculated that President Eisenhower played a part in the decision, although Talbott said the President did not indicate a preference. Mamie Eisenhower's home town was Denver, and the President and First Lady enjoyed vacationing in Colorado. Ike is known to have said "he had a pretty good place in mind for the academy," but there is no evidence he made known that place to Secretary Talbott.

The recent article in the Principia magazine suggests a somewhat less detached position on the part of the Eisenhowers. It describes a long-term friendship between Mamie and Charlotte Pritchard, the wife of a good friend of Ike's when both men were cadets at West Point. Mrs. Pritchard was a Christian Scientist, had graduated from Principia. She also had served on the staff of Principia College. In 1954 she was serving in a government appointed position in Washington. The article describes a call for help to Mrs. Pritchard, who agreed to speak directly to her old friends in the White House. Shortly thereafter, Secretary Talbott announced the selection of Colorado Springs as the site for the academy. In support of this story, there is a description of a conversation between Ike and a congressman from Kentucky, in which Ike told the congressman that his wife had never asked him for any special favors, with one exception.

For a short time there was talk of appealing the decision. But folks in the area generally took it in a spirit of acceptance and understanding. A *Telegraph* editorial said, "We think...the Colorado Springs site will be a good one, with comparatively unlimited expansion possibilities. This could be highly important in view of the nebulous plans for the academy, and, for that matter, the whole United States defense program."

When national radio outlets announced Talbott's selection of Colorado Springs on the afternoon of June 24, 1954, the word spread quickly through the Chautauqua populace. The community bell was rung vigorously. Pool patrons were informed by megaphone. Many Chautauquans visited the Chapel, thankful for "deliverance."

The day before the decision, June 23, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Behymer celebrated their 63rd wedding anniversary. They had been Chautauquans for 55 years, staying in a tent in 1899. They built the "Hiawatha" cottage, now owned by the Staleys. Frank retired in 1953, after 64 years as a Post-Dispatch reporter, and Mrs. Behymer ran the postcard shop and newsstand at Chautauqua.

On July 11, 1954, the *Telegraph* published a letter from Frank: "...It turned out that Secretary Talbott, though not unappreciative of Jersey county's loveliness, was not looking for borrowed scenery and was moved by the protests of the farmers, the Principians and the Chautauquans and was not deterred by considerations for Alton's disappointment and bitterness.

So the farmers can go on tilling their acres, Principia can go ahead with its expanding educational programs, Chautauqua can pursue in peace its cultural course, and Elsah can slumber again unvexed in its quaint tranquility, all free of fear of being sold down the river for the greater gain and glory of business."

Editor's Note:

The information in this article comes from several internet sites and from articles in local newspapers, collected and assembled in a Scrapbook by (name) and given to the Chautauqua Historical Society by Helen Margaret Thatcher. The article, "Campus eviction averted," in the Spring 2004 *Principia Purpose* was also helpful.

Even today, newspaper articles (and the national television media) are not always reliable sources of information, so readers, especially those who have direct knowledge of the events in Chautauqua in 1954, are encouraged to contact me with any concerns and/or objections to the contents of the article.

For my point, even though my principal source has been the newspapers of the day, I don't believe I have included any "fact" that has not been cited by at least two different newspaper articles.

I do look forward to hearing from many of you.

Tim Tomlinson
TRT1933@aol.com

The Christian Flag

If you can recall your last visit to the Auditorium, you probably remember seeing the Christian flag, placed to the left side of the stage, enclosed in a glass case, hung in a vertical manner. Another Christian flag is placed in the Chapel, to the left of the lectern/pulpit. They are white flags, with a blue canton (the rectangle in the upper left part of the white field), and a red cross centered in the blue field. Most vexillologists agree that the white represents purity and peace, the blue stands for faithfulness, truth, and sincerity, and the red represents sacrifice.

The colors of the flag match those of the American flag, and this probably is not coincidental. A Sunday School superintendent, Charles C. Overton, "created" the flag in 1897. He had scheduled a speaker who didn't show up and had to give the talk himself, using the American flag draped over a piano as his point of departure. As part of his talk, he suggested Christians have their own flag. He may have designed the flag and used it in his own church. Certainly by 1907 he was responsible for making it more widely available. Many Protestant groups have specific flags of their own, as do Roman Catholic dioceses.

The Christian flag is non-denominational. It has a "pledge" and an "anthem." It was adopted officially by the Presbyterian Church of the U.S.A. in 1942, and is the unofficial flag of other denominations. It has created some controversy. Some groups see any flag as a "graven image," and others argue about bringing "God" and "Caesar" into the same space. Placement of the flag in relation to the American flag also has been a topic of disputed—is there a "higher law" that supersedes the requirement that the American flag always be placed in the position of honor? Our Chautauqua seems to think not, placing the U. S. flag to the right of the Christian flag in both the Auditorium and Chapel.

A Lighthouse Wedding

Sarah MacArthur was born in 1879 in Woodburn, Illinois. Her parents were Sarah Badley MacArthur and John MacArthur, early supporters of the Chautauqua experiment in Jersey County. Our leasehold records show they held lot 122 as early as 1913. This is now part of the Schlansker leasehold. Later the MacArthur's lived at Lousar Lodge, now the Trabue cottage Lousar came from their daughters' names, Sarah and Louise..

Sarah and Louise bicycled across England the summer following their mother's death, and later that year they lived on the left bank in Paris and attended classes at the Sorbonne. Sarah married the Reverend William Henry Dickman in 1916 at the age of thirty-seven. She was Dickman's second wife and decided against a traditional wedding because of her age and the fact that Dickman was a widower.

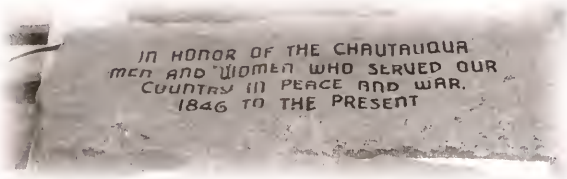
Miss MacArthur invited her friends to a "social bonfire" by the Chautauqua lighthouse and along the riverbank. Rev. Dickman often referred to Sarah as "Gypsy" because of her love of nature and adventurous spirit and, at her request, gave her a gypsy engagement ring, one made from a horseshoe nail. She designed the ring, a central diamond between two nail heads, accompanied by two smaller diamonds and four sapphires, her birthstone.

Guests were asked to come dressed to perform a skit of a gypsy wedding. Sarah wore a homespun dress with berries in her hair and played the role of the gypsy bride. The guests had a grand time, enjoying their participation in the "game." What a surprise they must have had when the minister produced a license to show that the wedding was genuine.

Sarah died in October 1945, and is buried in Oakwood Cemetery in Alton. Her daughter Beatrice, the first cousin of Billy Clarkson, attended the Sundial Rededication this summer. Sarah's grandson, David McJonathan-Swarm, spoke briefly to Chautauquans who participated in the ceremony, another memorable moment in our community history.

Setting the Final Piece

On September 5, following the final Sunday service of New Piasa Chautauqua's 119th season, many members of the community gathered together in the Auditorium grove for the installation of a commemorative bench that honors all Chautauqua men and women who have served our country in peace and war. This ceremony was the last official act of the Clarkson Memorial Sundial project, supported by contributions from people from within and outside the community.



The bench is fashioned from Vermont granite, supported by two granite pedestals. New England craftsmen carved the inscription into the seat surface. The bench is located just above the refurbished flagpole, in line with the restored sundial and the central steps that lead up to the historic Auditorium. We hope all Chautauquans will take time to visit the commemorative area and admire the new bench. It is truly a handsome natural addition to an important community site, and will be with us for many years to come. And, once again, thanks to the Clarkson volunteer committee headed by Dave Hagin, and the 49 contributors to the project.

Piasa Bluff Assembly (PBA) events, 119th Season

The Chautauqua Historical Society was privileged this season to work closely with the Program committee in sponsoring a number of programs that resembled the type of programming one would have attended at Chautauqua in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The events were scheduled over a brief period, similar to the patterns of early Chautauqua programming.

A **Roundtable** discussion of novelist Brian Hall's *I Should Be Extremely Happy In Your Company* was well attended on July 21 at the Pink Geranium. It featured a taped lecture given by Hall at the New York Chautauqua. His book was a 2003 selection of the national Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle.

Historian Robert Moore of the National Park Service delivered the Second Annual **Chautauqua Platform Lecture** on July 25. Moore spoke of the science of the Lewis and Clark expedition. and described how the attitudes of the explorers changed as they faced the challenges of the wilderness every day for almost three years.

The third event was a viewing of **The Women of Chautauqua**, a film produced at New York in 2003, featuring the role of women in the Chautauqua movement, ranging from education to politics, economics, and social reform. The movement provided a "platform" for Susan B. Anthony, Jane Addams, Helen Keller, Eleanor Roosevelt, and the Women's Christian Temperance Union. The film contained many antique photographs of the formative years of the New York Chautauqua.

Our final **PBA** event had a local flavor in two ways. It was a **book signing** by Robert Jackson, Jr. for his recently published children's book, *Meet Me in St. Louis,* a pictorial history of the 1904 World's Fair. The setting was early evening at the Pink Geranium; the group was small but enthusiastic.

We are planning similar events for the 120th Season, and already have obtained a film of the history of the Bay View Association, a very old Michigan Chautauqua." Of course, the Third Annual Chautauqua Platform Lecture will be offered.