Preservation is Progress
...may we be worthy stewards...

Chautauqua Historical Society

Volume 3, Issue 2 **May 2005**

- 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** levels include a membership in the Chautauqua Network
- CHS members are encouraged to submit articles to the editor for inclusion in the Newsletter.

Inside this issue:

The President's Message 2

Project ARC underway 3

The Hamilton Primary School, Karen Foss, contributor 4

Piasa Daily Chautauquan on sale this season 6

CLSC news 7

Piasa Bluffs Assembly schedule 7

Principia campus tour 8

2005 Flag exchange dates 8

We have 5 PBA, 52 Patron, and 19 Regular members, and send the Newsletter to 124 households.

Photo by Tim Tomlinson, used with permission.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
CARLI: Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois

http://www.archive.org/details/chautauquahistor32chau

The President's message

The 2005 season will add another chapter to the history of New Piasa Chautauqua. In preparing for our 120th year as a community, the Historical Society has a lot to report.

For this issue, Tim selected a picture taken in Los Angeles when we visited Paul and Kathy Brammeier last January. The sign reads "Chautauqua Blvd." The community has disappeared, as have so many Chautauquas across the country. Paul is looking for information about this California community and promises an article for one of our upcoming issues.

Speaking of writers, we are indebted to Karen Foss for helping us with an important piece of local history—the Otterville School. Thanks also to Bob Edmunds for providing a photo for the Newsletter. We are always on the lookout for articles that feature Chautauqua memories, and there is an open invitation to submit a piece for review and publication. Why not give it a try?

We want to welcome Rick Ross as a new CHS Board member and as our new Treasurer. Chris Hagin did a terrific job as Treasurer for the Society in our formative years, and her contributions to the Jersey Door have been and are important to its success.

Thanks, Chris. The Kentucky Home features two separate shops this summer—the Jersey Door and the Indian Giver run by the LCIA. The profits of the Jersey Door fund our preservation and conservation programs. We appreciate Chautauquans who donate "treasures" that are resold—to other Chautauquans and their guests.

Next year, 2005-06, will be our third "official" year as an Illinois non-profit corporation. So, it's membership renewal time again. A renewal brochure is part of this issue's package. In our second year we lost a few members and gained a few. This coming year we'd like to have a spectacular renewal rate. We want also to increase the number of PBA members. The brochure explains why this is important.

We have signed an intellectual property agreement with Principia College that permits us to reprint a limited number of copies of a "book" of newspapers, the *Daily Piasa Chautauquan*, published originally in 1897 and 1898. It will be on sale at the Jersey Door. It's fun to read these reports of activities in the late 19th century. I especially liked one ad for a local undertaker in Jerseyville. He would sell you a casket or a sewing machine!

Our contacts at Principia College helped arrange for a special tour of the Bernard Maybeck buildings on campus, and the library and archives staff at the College have been very helpful to us in preparing for the preservation and conservation of our own historical documents and artifacts.

All in all, it should be a busy and rewarding season.

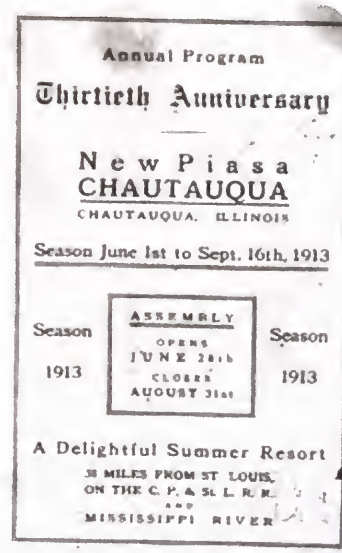
Rose Tomlinson

PRESERVATION IS PROGRESS
....may we be worthy stewards...

Address inquires and other communications to
Tim Tomlinson
Editor, CHS Newsletter
Post Office Box 87, Elsah, Illinois 62028
Phone: 618-374-1518; email: Trt1933@aol.com
Copy/Proof Reader: Gary Cooper
Printed by Abbey Graphic & Design, Alton, Illinois

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.*

Preservation, Restoration, Conservation
are some of the watchwords of any historical minded organization. The Chautauqua Historical Society is pleased to announce the **Archival Restoration and Conservation (ARC)** project, to begin this season, the community's 120th consecutive season. CHS has committed up to $1,000 to fund the project's activities.


Annual Program
Thirtieth Anniversary
New Piasa
CHAUTAUQUA
CHAUTAUQUA, ILLINOIS
Season June 1st to Sept. 16th, 1913
Season 1913
ASSEMBLY OPENS JUNE 28th CLOSES AUGUST 31st
Season 1913
A Delightful Summer Resort
38 MILES FROM ST LOUIS, ON THE C. P. & St. L. R. R. AND MISSISSIPPI RIVER

early program book

CHS document collection

ARC is understandably a long-term effort. It has, however, specific short-term objectives. For this season, we expect (1) to copy weekly *Channels* published in the 1980s and 1990s and saved by Barb Westre, and (2) to conserve documents, photographs, and memorabilia held by CHS. The *Channels* will be encased in page protectors and then placed in document preservation boxes. From our collection, individual documents will be separated from other documents by acid free interleaving sheets. Simple repairs (tears and so on) will be made when possible. Materials will be grouped and placed in separate "closed" folders. In addition to these minimal conservation and restoration procedures, and if opportunity and funding permit, the *Channels* may be scanned into electronic documents. Photocopying will provide a "hard copy" backup for each of these important files; scanning will conserve the documents in a different way and can be useful for research activities.
For all the work, we need volunteers. An ARC volunteer work schedule will be published in the forthcoming program book, and we will use the 2005 Channels as a means to communicate needs and achievements.

An additional and important goal for the 2005 Season should be noted. We are negotiating with the Jersey County Historical Society and former Chautauquan Steve Voss for permission to review and treat systematically the Chautauqua materials given by Mr. Voss to the JCHS. Our goal will be to catalog the materials and provide for them the same protective environment we plan for our corporate records and other community-held documents and materials. When we have permission from JCHS for this project, we will look for volunteers.

CHS postcard collection

A word about our official corporate records, i.e., Minutes, stock book, lease files. These records, from a conservation and preservation perspective, are in sad condition. CHS submitted a written proposal to the NPC Board, asking the Board to match the $1,000 we have committed to preservation, with the understanding that Board materials would be afforded absolute priority in this season's ARC volunteer work. We have been told, not in writing, that our proposal did not have the support of several Board members, and that no action was taken on our proposal. We are at a loss to understand why volunteer time, energy, and expertise are ignored when a very real need exists.

The Hamilton Primary School, 1835

A small but significant part of American history in the 1800's played out in the small Illinois town of Otterville, about six miles from Chautauqua. A progressive white doctor who believed in the potential of an orphaned black child established the first free and racially integrated school.

Otterville sits among Illinois woods and farm fields. Every day the hundred residents of the town, and its few visitors, pass the old stone Hamilton School. Many people today are only vaguely aware of the school's extraordinary past as the nation's first integrated school. Most remarkably, the school was established during the same years the question of slavery ripped apart the young nation.

Visitors to Otterville are sure to guess the old yellow stone school is historic, but not until they read the inscription on the monument out front do they begin to grasp the unique story. The monument reads in part: "Erected by George Washington - born a slave - in memory of Silas Hamilton - his former master. "

It all started in the 1820s when Dr Hamilton inquired about a sobbing child - about two years old - alongside the road. Jeannie Marshall of the Otter Creek Historical Society tells the story, "His mother had been sold into slavery. And we're told the man who had him, had him tied to a horse by a rope. Dr Hamilton inquired if he could buy him and he bought him for 100 dollars."

It was a high price to pay for a slave child far too young to work, but Dr Hamilton and his wife had no plans to enslave the baby. They eventually took young George Washington into their home and raised him as they had their own son.

When Silas Hamilton died in 1834, he left four thousand dollars to establish the Otterville School. His will read, " Believing in the very great importance of primary education and desiring that my friends and family have such..."
Silas Hamilton."

Hamilton's will went on to spell out exactly which children would qualify for the school to ensure young George Washington would be included. As a result Washington shared the same benches and books; coatrooms and classrooms as the neighboring white children for many years.

Washington learned his lessons well and lived up to the hopes of Hamilton. It appears he became the first black landowner in Illinois. Old documents at the Jersey County Courthouse and the Greene County Courthouse record his purchases and sale of property, along with the wills of both Hamilton and Washington.

When Washington died his will set aside money to have the monument built to honor Dr. Silas Hamilton, the man who gave him freedom and freedom from ignorance.

In addition, Washington shared the gift of education with other blacks, as spelled out in his will; "... the rest of my estate to be used for the education of colored persons or Americans of African descent... George Washington." It's a gift that is still giving. Even today deserving students can get interest free loans from the George Washington Education Fund, administered by the Jerseyville Bank.

The fund has proven more durable than the yellow stone school. It was the centerpiece of the community until it was closed in 1971. Members of the Otter Creek Historical Society have struggled against the elements and indifference to preserve the old school building. They've raised money for new windows, tuck-pointing and a new roof. The third weekend of September the Society holds a festival to celebrate their piece of history and raise funds to preserve the old school building.

continued on page 5

continued from page 4

For a hundred and thirty-seven years Hamilton Elementary provided eight grades of education and set a quiet example of racial justice, as remembered by Gladys Drainer, "When I was a kid and went to school here they taught you the history of the school." Five generations of her family - and hundreds of other local children - learned the lessons of Hamilton primary.

Today the two most remarkable men of Otterville rest together in one crypt, just a few yards from the school, their courage, generosity and mutual respect in life now recorded for history.

Karen Foss

Editor's note: We appreciate Karen's efforts for this contribution to the Newsletter. It is taken from a TV broadcast of hers, done earlier this year. When we discussed the possibility of presenting the information to our audience, Karen asked me "how long should it be?" My response was, "about 800 words." She thought a moment, and then said, "I'll have to give it some thought. I think in minutes and seconds, not words." Obviously, she was able to work it out.

Silas Hamilton was born in Vermont and trained as a medical doctor. He was strongly opposed to slavery. In the 1820s he conducted an experiment in Mississippi wherein he attempted to run a plantation on humane principles. Having failed in this effort, he moved north to Cincinnati in 1829 and freed all his slaves. He moved to Jersey County in 1830, bringing the young George with him. Hamilton was the only physician in Jersey County. There was a great deal of sickness in the region in 1834. Hamilton, in ministering to others, contracted the sickness, and died on October 28, 1834. After his death in, Washington lived with the Gilbert Douglas family. He became a successful farmer, never married, and had no living relatives. When he died in 1864 he established a trust fund for the education of "colored persons, or Americans of African descent.

Silas Hamilton, George Washington, and Gilbert Douglas are buried in a crypt at the corner of Main and Hamilton, in Otterville. It is possible that this is the only instance in the United States where a master and slave are buried side by side. The original building (see photo on page 3) was replaced in 1873. The school was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1998.

The following excerpt from the ***Congressional Register*** for October 2, 1998 is of note:

"The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. **Shimkus**) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be from Illinois and the 20th district. Today I want to mention three reasons why.

The first integrated school in the Nation is about to be added to the National Register of Historic Places. The addition of Hamilton School in Otterville, Illinois, was recently announced by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. Behind the history of the school is a heartwarming story of unselfish brotherly love between a young black slave and his master.

Silas Hamilton, a white doctor, founded the Hamilton School. Not having any children of his own, he freed a six-year-old black slave, George Washington, and raised him as his own child. Two years later, in 1836, when he was old enough, Washington began attending classes at the formerly all-white school in Otterville and grew up to be a successful farmer in Jersey County. When Washington died, he left a fund to have a monument erected in Hamilton's memory on the lawn of the school.

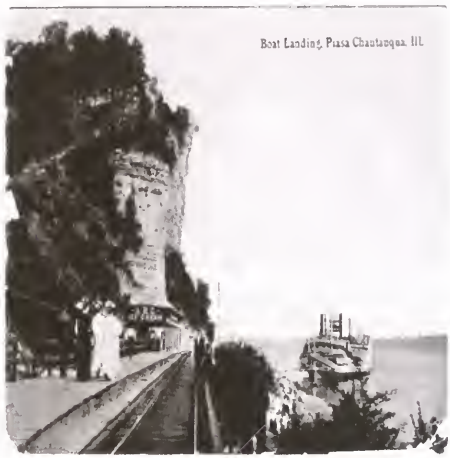
Today, Washington and Hamilton are buried together; not as master and slave, but as friend and friend. The large stone crypt is visible from the window of the Hamilton School, and serves as a symbol of the friendship between a white and a black man, and the beginnings of American racial harmony."

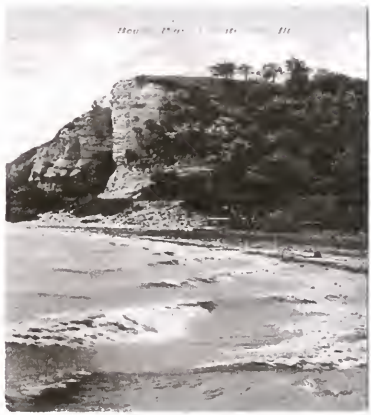
Photo by Tim Tomlinson, used with permission

The Piasa Daily Chautauquan
was first published as a daily newspaper on July 21, 1987. We don't have information as to how long it was published. We didn't know about its existence until a year or so ago when library and archives staff at Principia College "found" an envelope in the Treasure Vault, sent to the College by the Missouri Historical Society. There was no transmittal letter with the material, as we understand it. The material consisted of very fragile sheets of newspaper, the *Piasa Daily Chautauquan*, written and edited by Chautauquans, printed in Jerseyville, and sold as a daily paper in our community. The collection included most of "days" of the Assembly period for 1897 and 1898.

The material was photocopied and bound, and placed in the general circulation program of the college library. In addition, a second photocopy was made available to the Chautauqua Historical Society. An article from the 1897 collection, *Historic* Piasa, was reprinted in our February 2004 newsletter. The images you see on this page are from the time period the collection represents.

We signed recently an intellectual property agreement with Principia College that allows us to print a limited number of books featuring the 1897-98 materials, with some additional pages of explanation or illustration. We hope to have this material ready for sale during the 2005 season. We are not able to state the price of the book at this time. We will provide that information in the Channels during the season.





C
L
S
C

"Education, once the peculiar privilege of the few, must in our earthly estate become the valued possession of the many." This simple yet profound statement by Methodist bishop John Heyl Vincent sums up the philosophical force behind the founding of the Chautauqua movement and explains the purpose behind the founding of the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle, CLSC. Founded in 1878 at Chautauqua, New York, CLSC celebrates its 127th season in 2005. Our Chautauqua had a "Circle" as early as 1889, and "roundtable" events were a familiar part of the annual Assembly programs. Today, the Historical Society sponsors the **Benjamin St. James Fry Circle** of the national CLSC. There are ten members enrolled in the Fry Circle.

CLSC Reading List (partial)
For the 2005 Season

James Carroll, *Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews: A History.* Carroll is an historian and op-ed columnist who has lectured widely on Jewish-Christian-Muslim relations, and the author of ten novels.

Anthony Doerr, *About Grace.* Doerr is widely known for his short stories; this is his debut novel. The National Endowment for the Arts and Princeton University have supported his work and he has been awarded two O Henry prizes.

Paul Goldberger, *Up From Zero, Politics and the Rebuilding of New York.* Goldberger specializes in architectural design and urbanism, and is the architecture critic for the New Yorker magazine and the New York Times. He is interested in historic preservation and has written on the redevelopment of the World Trade Center.

Neil Baldwin, *The American Revelation: Ten Ideals That Shaped Our Country From the Puritans to the Cold War.* This is Baldwin's second CLSC selection. He first was in 1995, a book on Thomas Edison, who was married to Lewis Miller's daughter. Miller was a Chautauqua co-founder. The "revelations" range from John Winthrop's "City on a Hill" to George C. Marshall's "Marshall Plan."

Carl Dennis, *New and Selected Poems, 1974-2004.* Dennis has produced nine volumes of poetry, and was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 2002. He retired recently from the University of Buffalo's English Department. Not all of the books for the 2005 season have been selected.

For up-to-date information, check **ciweb.org/education/bookclub**. This site gives access to the book list, 1878-2004.

Piasa Bluffs Assembly (PBA) events, 120th Season

The Chautauqua Historical Society has worked with the Program Committee to establish an "Assembly program" for this season. We appreciate the assistance and courtesies extended by Katie Schaeffer, Committee chair, and by Rick Ross, a new CHS director and Program Committee member.

We believe this year's PBA events continue to reflect the type of programs that characterized our Chautauqua in its earliest years. Four events have been scheduled. The **3rd Annual Platform Lecture** will be presented on **July 10**, at 7PM in the Town Hall. This year's speaker is Eric Pistorius, a lawyer and student of local history from Jerseyville. Pistorius will speak on the 1954 controversy about the selection of a site for the United States Air Force Academy. This topic was the lead article in the October 2004 issue of the Newsletter.

The Benjamin St. James Fry Circle of the CLSC will sponsor a book review/**roundtable** discussion on **July 13** at 10:30AM at the Pink Geranium. The program will feature an audio tape of a 2002 lecture by Geraldine Brooks at the New York Chautauqua. Ms,. Brooks talked about her novel, *Year of Wonders: A Novel of the Plague*, a story about an English village struck by the plague in 1666 that voluntarily quarantined itself to reduce the threat of spreading the disease. She is also the author of *Nine Parts of Desire: The Hidden World of Islamic Women.* She has been a staff member of the Wall Street Journal, and contributes regularly to the New York Times and the Washington Post.

The next **roundtable** event will be on **July 26** at 10:30AM at the Pink Geranium. We have acquired a local "home movie" that features a trip on the famed "Dinky" in early 1941. The trip begins in Alton, and includes visits to Elsah, Principia College, Chautauqua, Grafton, the dairy estate (now the Illinois Youth Center) outside of Grafton, and Pere Marquette. With the help of today's technology, we will stop and start the film to discuss these images of the region in 1941.

The final event, an **Eventide** program in the CLSC vernacular, will be **August 8** at 7PM at the Town Hall. The program will feature two short films about other contemporary Chautauquas: the Bay View Association in Michigan and Thousand Island Park in New York.

Maybeck at Principia

The Principia College campus is a national Historic District (like New Piasa Chautauqua) and a National Landmark. The designation is given, in large part, for the architectural contributions of Bernard Maybeck (1862-1957). He was born in New York City of German immigrant parents, and was trained as an architect at the *Ecole des Beaux Arts* in Paris. Most of his output was centered on the West Coast. Maybeck's output ranged from the simple residence to the planned city. His major works include The First Church of Christ Scientist (Berkeley, 1910), the Palace of Fine Arts (San Francisco, 1913-15). Principia College was his last major work, an entire campus community. Many architectural historians rank Maybeck with such American masters as Frank Lloyd Wright.

Photo courtesy of Bob Edmunds, used with permission

On May 1, 2005 Principia sponsored an Open House, and provided also, by special arrangement a guided tour of the Maybeck collection for CHS members and guests. Robert M. Craig, professor of architectural history at Georgia Tech, led the tour. Craig is a Principia alumnus and author of a recent book, *Maybeck at Principia College*. Our group strolled from building to building, as Craig discussed Maybeck's architectural characteristics. We visited the interior of several dormitories and the Chapel. In the Chapel Craig spoke of the relationship between the college community's values and educational goals and the way these elements shaped Maybeck's building plans. The weather was marvelous, the tour and main guide were fascinating. A copy of Craig's book will be available in the NPC library, as well as a bound collection of photographs of the tour, courtesy of Bob Edmunds.

The CHS mission/purpose statement states a commitment to our Chautauqua and to local history as well. Arranging for this special tour was part of that commitment. We hope to sponsor similar events in the future. We are indebted to Bob Craig for his generous contribution of time and expertise, and to Tim Booth, and Jane Pfiefer, Special Events Coordinator and Archivist for the College respectively, for their help in organizing the tour.

Flags in the 2005 Season

With the Program Committee, we have scheduled flag raising and exchange events, and are pleased to announce that the *Chautauqua Veterans Flag Detail* will again perform these important civic duties. The group is led by Chuck Bryant, and includes Don Bryant, Larry Colbert, Gary Cooper, Dave Hagin, Bill Jackson, Joe Laffler, Bob Street, and Carl Raab. The 2005 schedule is as follows:

May 30	Memorial Day, Raise the flag: Marcia Drescher
June 12	Jack Hormell
June 14	Flag Day, no official ceremony
July 4	William Clarkson
July 7	Chautauqua Veterans Memorial Day, all flags at half-staff
July 10	Frank Nickols
August 7	Jim Thatcher
September 5	Retreat the flag

The Historical Society volunteered to arrange for the cleaning of the American flag and Christian flags that are displayed in the Auditorium.

.....preservation is progress.....
May we be worth stewards.