

Chautauqua Network News

February 2008

P.O. Box 28, Chautauqua, NY 14722

The Chautauqua Network is a group of organizations and individuals committed to the communication and implementation of the chautauqua concept of building community by supporting all persons in the development of their full potential intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically. The Chautauqua Network facilitates interaction and communication among its members to further their preservation, growth and development. Mission statement adopted July 12, 1999.

Tennessee's Monteagle Assembly hosts Network meeting July 17-20, 2008

Southern hospitality will be the signature of the 25th annual Chautauqua Network conference from July 17-20 in Monteagle, Tennessee. Note that the annual meeting is one week earlier than usual.

This will be the second time that the Monteagle Sunday School Assembly has entertained the Network. The first time was 15 years ago in 1993. And it was ten years before that when Monteagle became a charter member of the Chautauqua Network. Network founder and Chautauqua Institution Historian Alfreda Irwin had lectured in Monteagle and extended an invitation for them to join the brand-new Network the following year, 1983.

Networkers and Monteagle residents Henry Crais and Bill McIntyre have put together a schedule of programs and activities for the 2008 gathering that will allow time for relaxation and enjoyment of the beauty and charm of Monteagle and its environs.

If you recall last summer at Chautauqua, N.Y., Bill promised the membership plenty of down-home Tennessee country cooking when we convened in Monteagle. And he has delivered on that promise. For a registration fee of \$125 you will be served three dinners, two lunches and two continental breakfasts. So you'all come!

Monteagle reflects the broad reach of the chautauquas

Monteagle's present-day mission appears on its website when you click 'lodging.' It reads: "The Monteagle Sunday School Assembly is a church. Its mission is the advancement of science, literary attainment, Sunday School interests and the promotion of the broadest popular culture in the interest of Christianity without regard to sect or denomination." In support of this mission, Monteagle operates an eight-week season.

Monteagle Sunday School Assembly opened on July 17, 1883 after a landscape engineer had laid out the grounds and two permanent structures had been built: a restaurant and an amphitheater. The Assembly's immediate success led to an ambitious building program. Soon many boarding houses, public meeting rooms and private cottages accommodated thousands of people who flocked to Monteagle to attend its summer schools.

Like most of the chautauquas, Monteagle has prospered and declined with the nation's changing socioeconomic conditions. Today they are experiencing a renaissance. For a more complete history of Monteagle and other relevant information, visit

www.monteaglesundayschoolassembly.org

See schedule and registration form, page 5; membership, lodging, travel , page 6.

Networker collects archival ideas by schmoozing at annual meeting

Among the 44 delegates who attended the Chautauqua Network annual meeting last July at Chautauqua, N.Y. was Rose Tomlinson of the New Piasa Chautauqua, also known as the Piasa Bluffs Assembly, in Elmhurst, Ill. As president of NPC's Chautauqua Historical Society, Rose writes a column for the organization's newsletter. Below are excerpts from her "president's message" that appeared in the fall 2007 and winter 2008 issues. She can be reached at rosiehull@aol.com

I had a wonderful time this summer at the Chautauqua Network conference at Chautauqua, N.Y. I had an opportunity to talk with folks from other places around the country about how they were preserving their community history. One topic was memorials.

So many areas around our Chautauqua grounds have memorials dedicated to special people who have been part of our community. Many types of memorials are represented: benches, trees, garden pieces, bookcases in the library, the Carillon, the rug in the Indian Giver, the furnishings of the Administration Building and much more.

All of these memorials represent very special people, but through the years some are forgotten. Tree tags are lost, signs disappear and information is buried in New Piasa board and LCIA records, old program books, the Channels and other publications; and some are just forgotten.

Last summer our Tuesday archival group collected and recorded memorial information. We took the material we received and entered it into the computer. A printed copy of this information was deposited in the archival collection at the Administration Building, while compact discs of the material were placed in our new safe.

This is the way we hope to preserve our entire collection of Chautauqua history, which includes our priceless historical photographs and original documents. Each item will be scanned into the computer, using a specialized program for historical materials. The images will be transferred to discs. Both hard copies and discs will be stored in a safe place.

But it is now apparent that we need an archives center. We have outgrown the Administration Building and are looking at space on the second floor of the Kentucky Home. My conversations last summer with Network members at other independents gave me a lot to think and dream about in this regard.

Chautauqua Institution, for example, recently took an old building, renovated it, and dedicated it entirely to the Chautauqua Institution Archives. Mt. Gretna in Pennsylvania has purchased a cottage and is redoing it into an archival building. At Lakeside, Ohio the Lakeside Heritage Archives occupies an entire building devoted to research materials pertaining to the Mother Chautauqua, the independents and the tent chautauquas. The Bay View Association in Michigan also has a wonderful building just for their archival history.

Continued on page 4.

Network Officers Elected in 2007

President: Frank Gwalthney, Ocean Park, Maine, gwalthney1@verizon.net

Vice President: George McCormick, Lakeside, Ohio, erie-@msn.com

Secretary/Treasurer: Myra Peterson, Chautauqua Institution, Chautauqua, N.Y., mpeterson@ciweb.org

Volunteer Newsletter Editor: Suzon O. Kister, Thousand Island Park, N.Y., ksuzon@hotmail.com

Mail newsletter copy to the editor at 5816 Shannas Way, Durham, NC 27713 or call her at 919-544-2514.

Professor and humorous Network speaker grades Chautauqua lectures

Networkers will remember Jeremy Genovese's presentation at last summer's Network meeting titled "Chautauqua and the Utopian Impulse." An associate professor of human development and educational psychology at Cleveland State University, Genovese captivated the audience not only with his knowledge of America's utopian movement but with his charm and wit as well. Reprinted here is a tongue-in-cheek essay he wrote for Chautauqua Institution's The Chautauquan Daily in 2006. He can be reached at jgenovese@adelphia.net

Every year Chautauquans complain about the lectures. Liberals complain that there are too many conservative speakers while conservatives grumble that their voice is rarely heard from the Amphitheater platform. It would be easy to split the difference and say that if both sides are dissatisfied then the Institution must be doing something right.

Although I think there is merit in this claim, I am going to make a different argument. I believe that both liberals and conservatives are operating on a common flawed but unacknowledged assumption: that the only purpose of a lecture is to reconfirm preconceptions.

To illustrate my point, I propose a new scale to judge the value of any lecture you hear during the Chautauqua season.

A poorly delivered lecture that you already agree with (0 points).

A great waste of time; you learn nothing and are bored on top of it. Only the hardness of the Amphitheater benches keeps you awake.

A well-delivered lecture that you already agree with (1 point).

Unfortunately, oratory is becoming a lost art. It is rarely taught in schools anymore and in politics the sound bite has replaced sustained argument. A good speech is a work of beauty and we should appreciate a talk delivered with both structure and passion. Yet there is a hidden seduction here. If you already agree with the speaker, you are not learning anything and you are certainly not being challenged. It may make us feel good, but the goal of intellectual discourse is not to make us feel smug in our certitudes.

A poorly delivered lecture that you disagree with (2 points).

I maintain that it is always better to hear points of view that you disagree with. There is a bit of folk wisdom (often falsely attributed to Ben Franklin) that tells us that "our critics are our friends, they show us our faults." If there are too many liberal speakers at Chautauqua then it is the liberals who should be complaining. Conservatives who hear only echoes of their cherished beliefs should be up in arms.

A well-delivered lecture that you disagree with (3 points)

It is always too easy to dismiss people you disagree with as having some kind of a base motive. They couldn't possibly believe that, they must be benefiting financially from their opinion, or have some hidden agenda. This assumption relieves us of the responsibility to critically examine the opinions of others. Ultimately arguments must stand on their merits and not on any characteristics of the person making the argument. If a speech agitates you, makes you feel uncomfortable or causes you to acknowledge that the issue is more complex than you originally thought, then you have profited from the experience. If it is also engaging and well argued, then so much the better.

Continued on page 4.

North Carolina retiree launches a chautauqua in the Blue Ridge Mountains

According to the Feb. 24 issue of the *News & Observer* of Raleigh, N.C., Ward Purrington of Raleigh will launch his Appalachian Institution this August at an Episcopal conference center on Lake Logan. The article states that "Purrington and his wife spent a week at the Chautauqua Institution a few years ago and came away impressed."

Modeled after Mother Chautauqua, the Appalachian Institution will offer two five-day retreats. Mornings will focus on lectures about Western civilization by professors from Notre Dame and the University of Pennsylvania.

Afternoons will be free for participants to engage in activities such as hiking, fly-fishing, golfing, tennis or other courses like art history, floral, and jewelry design. Evening options include concerts and theater.

Devoted to the arts, Purrington some years ago was instrumental in creating the Carolina Ballet in Raleigh. For a start, he has hired the director of choral music at North Carolina State University to be the first music director for the Appalachian Institution.

Details and registration information about this newest chautauqua are online at www.appalachianinstitution.org

Tomlinson on archives, continued from page 2.

People and their stories are an important part of our historical records; they should not be forgotten. Next season at New Piasa, we will focus on oral histories. They will be entered into our data base.

When I was at the Chautauqua Network meeting last summer, I listened to people from other chautauquas describe their archival programs and the buildings dedicated for safe storage. It made me realize how very far behind we are in solving this problem.

Editor's note: Rose Tomlinson and New Piasa shouldn't feel so bad. Many of the independents find the challenge of document preservation in all its aspects daunting indeed. In the February 2007 issue of this newsletter I wrote an opinion piece on this subject. I cited the 54 preservation leaflets that can be downloaded free of charge from the Northeast Document Conservation Center. It is a starting point. The website is www.nedcc.org or call 978-470-1010.

Genovese on grading lectures, continued from page 3.**A lecture that changes your mind (4 points)**

Let us stipulate that we all must believe some false ideas. Old certainties are overturned in the face of new evidence. Opinions change with age and perspective. Too often we proclaim the value of critical thinking and fail to practice it. Critical thinking calls us to be both open and skeptical; to listen to the new idea, but also to demand evidence and convincing arguments. Our hardest job is to apply these standards to ourselves. The unexamined life is not worth living, and the un-reexamined life less so.

Mark your calendars! The 2009 Chautauqua Network conference will be in Ocean Park, Maine; the 2010 meeting will be at Chautauqua Institution, Chautauqua, N.Y.

Chautauqua Network Proposed Meeting Schedule Monteagle, Tenn., July 17-20, 2008

Thursday, July 17

10:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. Registration

8 p.m. Cumberland Orchestra

4:30 p.m. Reception

Saturday, July 19

6 p.m. Dinner

9 a.m. – Network meeting

7:30 p.m. Program: Networker Tim Tomlinson presents slide/lecture on the 11 chautauquas he has visited.

Noon - Picnic/Box lunch

2 - 6 p.m. Free time for hiking, golf, a visit to nearby University of the South, Sewanee, etc.

Friday, July 18

11 a.m. Assembly program: chamber music

6 p.m. Formal dinner

12:15 p.m. Lunch

10 p.m. Sewanee Brass Symphony, University Chapel

2 p.m. Network meeting

Sunday, July 20

6 p.m. Dinner

11 a.m. Worship service

CHAUTAUQUA NETWORK 2008 ANNUAL MEETING REGISTRATION

Monteagle, Tennessee

\$125.00

(Fee includes parking, programs and five complete meals.)

Name _____

Organization _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ e-mail _____

Copy or clip and complete this form. Write your check payable to Monteagle Sunday School Assembly and add "Chautauqua Network meeting" on the memo line. Mail the form and check to Ron Buffington, General Manager, P.O. Box 307, Monteagle Sunday School Assembly, Monteagle, TN 37356. If you have questions, contact Henry Crais, hcrais@blomand.net or 931-924-5060; Bill McIntyre, 800-768-8720; or Ron Buffington, mssagm@blomand.net

See page 6 of this newsletter for information about lodgings and directions.

Housing at Monteagle, July 17-20, is limited; homestays only available if privately arranged

Three properties have been identified as places to reserve a room for the Network conference. Edgeworth Inn on the Assembly grounds has eight rooms, call 931-924-4000; Monteagle Inn, a B&B just outside the Assembly gates, has 10 rooms, call 931-924-3869; Best Western Smoke House Lodge, about 3 miles from the Assembly grounds, has 98 units, call 931-924-2091.

“Book now!” says Bill McIntyre. “We regret that we are unable to arrange homestays.”

Getting there: Monteagle is 90 miles from Nashville, which has a full-service airport. Take I-24 east from Nashville to exit 134. Monteagle is less than a mile from the exit. Monteagle is 45 miles from Chattanooga, but the latter has only a commuter airport. Take I-24 west from Chattanooga to exit 134.

Chautauqua Network Membership Application and Renewal Form

Full organization donation is \$50 a year and includes option to add photo to Chautauqua Institution website, www.ciweb.org Individual dues are \$10 a year. The dues year starts February 1. Make check payable to Chautauqua Institution and put “Network Membership” on memo line. Mail check and this form or a copy of same to Network Treasurer Myra Peterson, P.O. Box 28, Chautauqua, NY 14722.

Name _____ Organization _____

Address _____

e-mail _____ E-mail Myra to check your dues status:

mpeterson@ciweb.org

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