

Chautauqua Network News

February 2005

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

Chautauqua, New York will host annual meeting July 28 - 31

Your Network officers are planning the 2005 annual meeting as this newsletter goes to press. Program ideas include a keynote speaker on Friday morning, a panel discussion of Networkers on the role of religion in programming, a tour of Chautauqua's dedicated archives building, and more. The registration fee has been increased to \$100 in an effort to defray more expenses that are borne by the host organization. The practice of lodging attendees in the homes of Chautauqua residents continues. Although the proposed schedule indicates that farewells occur after the concert on Saturday evening, attendees are welcome to stay through Sunday and their gate passes will extend through that period.

Annual membership for individuals remains at \$10, while an organization's annual donation stays at \$50. Remember that an organization's donation entitles it to a picture on Chautauqua Institution's Web site and a link to its own Web site. Membership in both categories includes a subscription to the *Chautauqua Network News*. ►

See proposed meeting schedule and registration form on page 3; membership application and renewal form on page 6.

Networkers love to visit chautauquas and assembly sites

One characteristic of most Networkers is that they enjoy going on the road and tracking down existing or former chautauquas around the United States. Sometimes they discover one that has been lost or forgotten. Perhaps the Network should develop a basic list of destinations that members can visit. And upon completion of the list, Networkers could receive a certificate, a standing ovation at annual meeting, or some other form of recognition.

In this issue of the newsletter are three accounts of Networkers' travels and their descriptions of the chautauquas they set out to visit or serendipitously uncovered. Norm Karp and his wife Nancy, for example, stumbled upon Gulfside Assembly in Mississippi back in 2002; Tim Tomlinson and his wife Rose stopped off at Fountain Park, Ind. on their way to Bay View, Mich. last July; and Betty Lou Young, a Networker with a mission from the late Alfreda L. Irwin, and who carefully planned her trip to Spirit Lake, Idaho in the summer of 2004, found a more interesting chautauqua in Boise. Their stories follow on subsequent pages of this issue. ►

Californian accepts task to research West Coast chautauquas

By Betty Lou Young

At the 1994 Network meeting, Chautauqua Institution Historian and founder of the Chautauqua Network, Alfreda L. Irwin, asked the assembled Networkers to seek out historic chautauqua sites in their areas and record their histories as part of a nationwide project. I had already published a history of Pacific Palisades, my hometown, founded in 1922 as the last of the independent chautauquas, and had begun research on the other independents in California. When I reported my progress the next summer, Alfreda asked me to cover the entire Pacific coast, which I agreed to do.

Each year since 1995, I have visited sites in California, Oregon, Washington and Idaho, accumulating boxes of research material. In the process, I have discovered chautauqua sites that had been previously lost or forgotten. In California, for example, I learned that the first West Coast assembly convened in Yosemite Valley in 1879 with Bishop John Heyl Vincent on hand to make it official. A large contingent of Chautauquans journeyed to Yosemite from the east by rail and stagecoach for that event. Afterwards, they went on to Pacific Grove for *their* first assembly.

Spin-off independents were later established at two other northern California vacation spots: Lake Tahoe and Shasta Retreat. In southern California, a different cluster of chautauquas formed to attract settlers to the newly laid-out towns of Long Beach, Redondo Beach, Ventura and Huntington Beach.

In Oregon, I located Canby, Gearhart Park, Gladstone, Albany, Ashland, La Grande and The Dalles. Gladstone became the third largest chautauqua in the country and thrived for more than 30 years under the guidance of Eva Emery Dye. Ashland is famous today for its Oregon Shakespeare Festival performed in a theater that rests on the cement foundation of the old tabernacle.

All of Washington state's assembly sites were on islands. They included Vashon, Whidbey and Bainbridge.

Since Idaho was originally part of the Oregon Territory and had a similar history, I wanted to add that state to my research. Despite interviews with old-time residents and helpful historians, however, I was unable to get a complete account of the assembly at Spirit Lake, Idaho. Records show that it began with a bang in 1912, struggled in 1913, and thereafter functioned as a stop on one of the chautauqua circuits.

Boise, Idaho turned out to be the surprise! Begun in 1910 and billing itself as the Idaho State Chautauqua Assembly, Boise's managers offered college-level courses in literature that would be a credit to extension courses today. After three golden years, alas, Boise, too, changed to a circuit stop and lasted until the late 1920s.▶

A long-time member of the Network, Betty Lou Young is an amateur historian who has published four books of local history. She believes that the western assemblies had a distinctive character because of their relative isolation from the east and the "stunning" geographical features of each site. Young can be reached at RusticBetty@aol.com

Network Officers Elected in 2004

President: Frank Gwalthney, Ocean Park, Maine, gwalthney@prodigy.net

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

Secretary/Treasurer: Betty Nelson, Chautauqua, N.Y., wcn837@hotmail.com

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

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

Chautauqua Network Proposed Meeting Schedule Chautauqua, N.Y. July 28 - 31, 2005

Thursday, July 28

4:30 p.m. Welcome Reception

6 - 7:30 p.m. Dinner and First Session

8:15 p.m. Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra, Amphitheater; Reception afterwards.

Friday, July 29

9 - 10:30 a.m. Network keynote speaker, Hultquist Center

10:45 a.m. - Noon Lecture, Amphitheater

12:15 p.m. Lunch

1:30 - 3:30 p.m. Network meeting, Hultquist Center

4 p.m. Tour of new Archives building with Jon Schmitz, Chautauqua Archivist

5 p.m. Dinner

8:15 p.m., Special entertainment, Lee Greenwood and Crystal Gayle, Amphitheater; Reception afterwards.

Saturday, July 30

9 a.m. - Noon Network meeting, elections, Hultquist Center

Noon - Lunch

2:30 p.m. Network program

5:30 p.m. Picnic

8:15 p.m. Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra, Verdi Requiem, Amphitheater; Farewell reception afterwards.

Sunday, July 31 (optional stay-over)

10:45 a.m. Worship service, the Rev. Dr. Calvin O. Butts III, Abyssinian Baptist Church, New York City, Amphitheater

CHAUTAUQUA NETWORK 2005 ANNUAL MEETING REGISTRATION

Chautauqua, New York

\$100.00 per person

(Fee includes gate pass, July 28-31, parking, programs and some meals.)

Name _____
 Organization _____
 Street _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Phone _____ email _____

Clip or copy this form, write your registration check payable to Chautauqua Institution and mail to Chautauqua Network, Attention: Betty Nelson, Treasurer, P.O. Box 28, Chautauqua, NY 14722 Wish to stay in the homes of Chautauqua residents?

Yes ___ No ___ If 'No,' visit Chautauqua's Web site at www.ciweb.org or call 1-800-836-2787 to receive an Accommodations Directory. Have general questions? Contact Betty Nelson at wcn837@hotmail.com or call her at 716-357-6296.

Fountain Park is a chautauqua for two weeks each year

By Tim Tomlinson

The success of the chautauqua experiment by John Heyl Vincent and Lewis Miller at Fair Point on Chautauqua Lake, N.Y. in 1874 prompted the creation of independent chautauquas across the country. One such setting was the Fountain Park Chautauqua Assembly organized in 1895 that has sponsored an annual summer program ever since. Founder Robert Parker, president of the Bank of Remington, purchased land in 1893 as "an ideal place for an annual out-of-doors assembly to be held for the people of northwestern Indiana to meet to discuss religious, scientific and literary subjects."

Fountain Park, named for two wooden fountains that once stood in front of the hotel, convened a 10-day assembly in 1895 with meetings in the Tabernacle, which had been built at Parker's expense. By-laws were approved in 1897. By 1899, the assembly program encompassed two weeks. The present Fountain Park Hotel was built in 1898, the same year that silent movies were shown. Referred to as a 'Christian Church' project from 1895-1902, the Assembly frequently depended upon Parker to cover operating deficits. Fountain Park incorporated and issued capital stock in 1902.

Chautauquans everywhere will find the Fountain Park story a familiar one. William Jennings Bryan lectured before an estimated 8,000 people in 1907. A Women's Improvement Association formed in 1911 and still thrives. In fact, the Association operates the hotel. Furthermore, its members oversee the beautification of the grounds, produced a cookbook and sponsored a successful "cottage walk."

Like many other chautauquas, Fountain Park faced economic adversity. The Bank of Remington failed in 1907. Robert Parker withdrew from the project in 1908. Yet the program was firmly established and valued. Under the headline, 'Fountain Park Secure,' a local newspaper reported that "...at the appointed time, August 15 to 30, 1908, the Assembly will be held and we ask the support and cooperation of Remington and all the surrounding towns and county to help us carry on the good work of Fountain Park..." There was indeed a 1908 season. Continues on page 5.

Lakeside inspires Gulf of Mexico's black settlement of 1923

By Norm Karp

When Nancy and I traveled from our Chautauqua, N.Y. home to the Rio Grande Valley of Texas in 2002, we drove our motor home through the Florida panhandle, Alabama and Mississippi. Stopping for a few nights at Buccaneer State Park on the edge of Waveland, Miss., we switched to bicycles and pedaled along the Gulf of Mexico in the beautiful weather.

While on our bikes, we came upon a historical marker headed "Gulfside Assembly." That brought us to a full stop, as the word 'assembly' means something specific to Chautauquans. The sign told us that Gulfside Assembly was founded in 1923 by African American Bishop Robert E. Jones of the United Methodist Church, soon after he had

Continues on page 5.

Fountain Park continued from page 4.

Today, the Fountain Park land is owned by the corporation and leased in 20-year increments. The first cottage had been built in 1899. Forty cottages were up by 1905. Since 1902, at the direction of cottage owners, all cottages (and tents) are located outside the Grove, the center of the Assembly's activity. Today, there are 73 cottages on site.

Within the Grove are located the 600-seat Tabernacle, art buildings for classes, a museum, recreational hall, a food stand, gazebo, and a playground and basketball court. The present Tabernacle (auditorium) is listed on the National List of Historic Theater Buildings, National Trust Library. The original building was renovated and enlarged in 1949 and replaced in 1958-60.

Daily and weekly admission is charged. The 17.3 acre site has an area dedicated to tent and trailer camping for Assembly residents and their guests. The hotel provides rooms for visitors as well as meals for its guests, cottage owners, campers and daily patrons. This year the community celebrates its 110th consecutive assembly. The Fountain Park Web site is www.fountain-park.org ►

Networkers Tim and Rose Tomlinson of the New Piasa Chautauqua, Ill. visited Fountain Park enroute to the annual meeting in Bay View, Mich. last summer. They can be reached at Tri1933@aol.com

Gulf of Mexico's black community continued from page 4.

visited Lakeside, Ohio, the vigorous chautauqua on Lake Erie. It was a chautauqua for black people!

Nancy and I stopped at the office to learn more, meeting both the executive director and the program director. We were treated to a tour and invited to dinner and the evening program of a group of Elderhostelers who happened to be in residence.

Although the Gulfside Assembly is still run by African Americans, the guests while we were there were white. During the turbulent 1960s, this was a safe place in the south where blacks and whites met to plan protests against segregation.

A tidal wave in 1947 and Hurricane Camille in 1969 damaged buildings and ruined Gulfside's archives. Little is known about the early years. Today it operates as a multicultural conference center, spiritual retreat, training site for clergy and lay leaders, and as an idyllic location for family reunions.

A 60-acre resort with lodging for 120, Gulfside Assembly is just west of Biloxi. It is part of the Southeastern Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church at Lake Junaluska, N.C. ►

When Norm and Nancy Karp are not on the road, they make their home in Chautauqua, N.Y. Before retirement in 1996, they lived in Kittanning, Pa. Norm served as president of the CLSC Alumni Association from 1998-2003. The Karps can be reached at nancynormk@yahoo.com ►

The Florida Chautauqua Assembly at DeFuniak Springs runs Feb. 24-27 and March 3-6. Visit www.florida-chautauqua-center.org or call 850-892-7613.

FYI from the editor

► More than 20 Networkers enjoyed the warm and generous hospitality of the Bay View Association, Bay View, Mich. during the 2004 annual meeting last July. In addition to entertainment and socialization, members participated in several valuable discussions on common issues: real estate prices and taxes, sale of alcoholic beverages, achieving ethnic diversity, restoration of buildings and program financing.

► Among the Network's organizational donors whom we haven't received news from for quite awhile are the Produce Heartland Chautauqua in St. Louis, Geneva Forum, Ill., Great Plains Chautauqua Society, Bismarck, N.D., Lake Superior Big Top, Washburn, Wis., Winona Lake, Ind., Greenfield Chautauqua, Ohio, Mt. Gretna, Pa. and Mt. Tabor, N.J. We'd love to hear from you! See contact information on page 2.

Support this enduring movement. Join the Network today!

Annual Membership Application and Renewal Form

Copy or clip this form and mail to Network Treasurer Betty Nelson, P.O. Box 28, Chautauqua, NY 14722. Write check to Chautauqua Institution, putting 'Network Membership' on the memo line. Full organization donation is \$50. Individual membership is \$10. Name _____
Organization _____ City, State, Zip _____
Telephone _____ e-mail _____ Fax _____

Chautauqua Institution
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