

A STUDY OF THE CIRCUIT CHAUTAUQUA
IN REPRESENTATIVE MICHIGAN
COMMUNITIES

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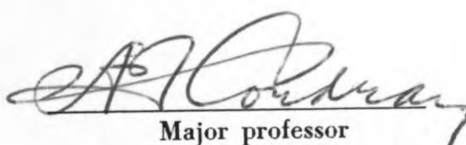
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A STUDY OF THE CIRCUIT CHAUTAUQUA
IN REPRESENTATIVE MICHIGAN COMMUNITIES

By

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

It is interesting that the circuit chautauqua is remembered with nostalgic vividness by so many but has been objectively studied by so few. It is strange that such a movement, embracing, as it does, the fields of history, sociology, speech, and education, has been the object of so few critical studies. Perhaps it is because the chautauqua is a nebulous thing, slipping easily out of the reach of those who would classify and catalog it. Yet such a social institution, as do all sociological phenomena, arose because of a need and lived only as long as that need lasted. An objective study of the chautauqua, then, would seem valuable because it becomes a study of the needs and desires of the people it served. As a speech study it has special interest for it explores a time when the platform was of particular importance in the American scene.

What was chautauqua? Webster's New International Dictionary (second edition) defines it: "Chautauqua (From Chautauqua Lake, Town, and County, in Western New York) An assembly for educational purposes conducted more or less on the plan of the summer schools at Chautauqua, New York, hence, a similar entertainment or lectures or series of meetings combining entertainment and educational features, often held out of doors, in a tent etc."

In the following pages, the various developments of the chautauqua movement are briefly presented. The chautauqua movement began as a religious meeting held out of doors at Lake Chautauqua, New York. It is

usually referred to as the "Mother Chautauqua" in this paper. The Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle is a home study offspring of the Mother Chautauqua. Both of these activities are still in existence. The "permanant" or "Chautauqua Assemblies" are still another phase of the movement which attempted to set up comparable patterns of the Mother Chautauqua in various parts of the country. A few, in modified form, still exist.

In this paper, however, the author is concerned primarily with the movement as most Americans remembered it--the circuit or traveling chautauqua. A commercial venture, the circuit chautauqua gave three to seven day programs in circus tents during the summer months. A circuit consisted of a group of from fifty to one hundred fifty towns, located in the same general area, all having contracted with one of a number of booking organizations for a 'season' or week of the uniform program offered. The lecturers, musicians, and other performers moved from town to town in the circuit. Because of relatively short distances between towns and long term contracts which could be made with the "talent" the plan proved economically successful and for thirty years the big brown tents were a familiar sight in the towns and villages of America.

In this study the author has attempted to trace that circuit movement as it appeared in certain representative towns in Central Michigan in order to more nearly discover what the chautauqua was and what it meant to the people it served. Such a study is made more interesting when one examines the vastly different opinions concerning the meaning

and value of the chautauqua movement. Was chautauqua, as Sinclair Lewis once stated, "Nothing but wind and chaff and the heavy laughter of yokels?"¹ or was it an embodiment of the original idea defined by Bishop John H. Vincent: "Self improvement in all our faculties, for all through all time, for the greatest good of all people...a divine idea, a democratic idea, a people's idea, a progressive idea, a millennial ideal"?²

There were many, particularly in the small villages, who looked upon chautauqua as the dawning of a new and better era and such editorials as this one which appeared in the Clinton, Indiana Saturday Argus were common:

Clinton can never again be what it was. Gone are the narrow, petty persecutions for principle's sake. The old order has passed. Its shackles are shattered. The Chautauqua did it... from now on it will be a matter of growth and development, the seed of a new plant has been planted in this city and already in its first tiny leaves may be read the signs of a greater and better city, toleration of others' opinions, a stronger general desire to learn the truth...Not such the civil war stirred the nation has there been any public enterprise here that was at heart more genuinely a work of high and noble purpose than the chautauqua....³

But there were many who were unimpressed, either with the movement or its supporters. Carol Kennicutt, the discontented heroine of Sinclair Lewis's Main Street went to the chautauqua at Gopher Prairie

¹ George S. Dalgety, "Chautauqua's Contribution to American Life," Current History, 34:59, April, 1931.

² Gregory Mason, "Chautauqua, its Technique," American Mercury, 1:274, March, 1924.

³ Reprinted in the Ingham County Democrat (Mason, Michigan) July 1, 1914.

and "was impressed by the audience: the sallow women in skirts and blouses, eager to be made to think, the men in shirtsleeves, eager to be allowed to laugh, and the wriggling children, eager to sneak away."⁴

Such differences in opinion were not uncommon. In general, the larger cities either ignored the chautauqua completely or poked fun at what they called its "dreary earnestness." Quite often the more sophisticated communities singled out the high moral standards of chautauqua, as symbolic of its bucolic nature. William James, after a visit to the Mother Chautauqua, wrote:

This order is too tame, this culture too second rate, this goodness too uninspiring. This human drama without a villain or a pang. This community so refined that ice cream soda water is the utmost offering it can bring to the brute animal in man. This city simmering in the tepid lakeside sun. This atrocious harmlessness in all things--I cannot abide them. Let me take my chances again in the big outside worldly wilderness with all its sins and suffering. There are heights and depths, the precipices and the steep ideals, the gleams of the awful and the infinite; and there is more hope and help a thousand times than in the dead level and quintessence of every mediocrity.⁵

Chautauqua, however, took itself much too seriously to worry much about what the sophisticates were saying, and went its own way. Dr. William S. Sadler, addressing the International Lyceum and Chautauqua Association in 1923 said: "Lack of moral character and ethical standing may not always seriously handicap an actress, entertainer or musician on the American stage today, but such a lack of moral worth is,

⁴ Sinclair Lewis, Main Street (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1920) p. 237.

⁵ Mason, op. cit., p. 275.

and I believe always will be, sufficient for disbarment from the platform of the American Chautauqua."⁶

The reason for this moral earnestness is readily apparent. Chautauqua was representative of the community it served. It had to reflect tastes and standards of local committees in its programs in order to receive a renewal contract. Hibschan says: ". . . such being the case, the difficulties and shortcomings of chautauqua as a movement or institution can be understood only as one understands the people of the community to which chautauqua goes."⁷

Most critics agree that chautauqua was a fascinating composite of some of the best and worst in American traits. Its talent ranged from Billy Sunday to Herbert Hoover--and from the Swiss Bell Ringers to Galli-Curci. Dalgety comments: "It supplied an outlet for classical music and noisy jass; finished professional acting and amateurish claptrap; genuine education and charlatan quackery; genuine reform and sensational muckraking; lofty patriotic utterances and cheap sentimental drivel....It was considerably less highbrow than a university, but infinitely more intellectual than a circus."⁸

Objective studies of the chautauqua movement are very few in number.⁹ While a number of books have been written about the Mother

⁶ Mason, op. cit., p. 276.

⁷ Harry Hibschan, "Chautauqua Pro and Contra," North American Review, 225:595, May, 1928.

⁸ George S. Dalgety, op. cit., p. 59.

⁹ For some unexplained reason, writers often fail completely to mention the chautauqua in the chronicles of this period. For example, Mark Sullivan makes no mention of it in his exhaustive six-volume Our Times. (New York C. Scribner Sons, 1926).

Chautauqua,¹⁰ very few have been concerned with the circuit movement.

An excellent study of the circuit movement from a sociological standpoint has been made by Tozier at the University of Iowa.¹¹ One of the few factual accounts of the whole subject is John S. Noffsinger's Correspondence Schools, Lyceums, Chautauquas. Other helpful background books include those by Orchard (1923) Vincent (1899) and Hurlburt (1921).

Several popular books on chautauqua have appeared in recent years. Gay McLaren's Morally We Roll Along gives an interesting account of chautauqua as seen by a trooper of many years. Victoria and Robert Case have published a recent book entitled We Called It Culture which is very readable but poorly documented and sometimes inaccurate.

The books given here as well as a number of periodical articles which have been found to be of interest are listed in the bibliography. Of particular value from the standpoint of factual, objective reporting are those by Pearson (1912) Frank (1919) Dalgety (1921) and Talley (1921).

The lyceum, whose history is briefly recounted in the next chapter, was a closely allied movement. Its interesting history has been the object of several excellent studies. Cecil B. Hayes, The American Lyceum is probably the standard work on the subject. These dealing with the lyceum include studies by Stoddard (1928) Caldwell (1923) and Erbank (1948). Professor Carl Bode of the University of Maryland is now

¹⁰ Including those published by the Chautauqua Press which, besides publishing the monthly magazine Chautauquan for many years, published about seven hundred volumes on a variety of subjects.

¹¹ Roy Becker Tozier, "The American Chautauqua, A Study of a Social Institution," (Unpublished Doctor's Thesis, The University of Iowa, Iowa City, 1932).

completing a book to be called "American Lyceum--Town Meeting of the Mind" which will deal with the lyceum from 1830 to 1860.

In the following chapters, the author has attempted to briefly recount the early beginnings of the circuit chautauqua and allied movements and to reconstruct, through the media of its contemporary press and other sources, what the chautauqua was really like and how it was received in certain communities in central Michigan.

CHAPTER II

EARLY BEGINNINGS

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EARLY BEGINNINGS

The origins of the chautauqua are rooted in two movements growing out of the religious revival of the early part of the nineteenth century. One of these movements was the Methodist camp meeting, which in turn had evolved from the occasional religious revival conducted by circuit riders for the ephemeral settlements of the westward migrations. In certain sections of the country the moving frontier left permanent settlements and revivals were held at fairly regular intervals. Whole families attended, living in tents and returning year after year. It has been estimated that as many as twenty or thirty thousand persons attended one or more of these meetings. One such place was Fair Point, New York, on Chautauqua Lake.¹

The second movement which was to culminate in the chautauqua idea was the Sunday school movement, an outgrowth of the occasional attempts of men and women to supply some form of elementary instruction for poor and working children. In 1780 Robert Raikes, an English publisher, conceived the idea of founding a school where working children could get some of the fundamentals of learning and religion. The school was held on Sunday but had no connection with the church.

The idea spread rapidly and in 1785 the first American Sunday school was founded. The secular school soon declined, however, with the development of the elementary and monitorial schools in the East

¹ John S. Noffsinger, Correspondence Schools, Lyceums and Chautauquas (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1926), p. 7.

during the first quarter of the nineteenth century, and in its place the Bible school, sponsored by the Protestant churches, arose. The religious Bible school was further promoted by the organization of the American Sunday School Union in 1823.²

In 1873, two gifted, unusual men, Reverend John H. Vincent and Lewis Miller met at Fair Point and the phenomenal social institution known as the "Chautauqua"³ came into being. Vincent was a Methodist minister and an enthusiastic supporter of the Sunday school movement. A man of vision and ideas, he had come to Fair Point to plan a series of institutions to train Sunday school teachers. Lewis Miller proved to be an ideal co-worker. A practical, wealthy manufacturer of farm machinery, he suggested the Sunday school institution be consolidated and held in the open, and the next year the first Sunday School Teacher's Assembly was held "to utilize the general demand for summer rest by initiating daily study with healthful recreation and thus render the occasion one of pleasure and instruction combined."

At first the assembly confined its program to religious subjects, but in a short time cognate religious subjects and later on secular

² Frank P. Graves, A Student's History of Education (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1922) pp. 237-242.

E. P. Cubberly, Public Education in the United States (New York, Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1934) pp. 121-123.

³ A. E. Wiggam points out in the Bookman (June, 1927) that there are sixteen ways of spelling "chautauqua" all of which are etymologically, philologically and historically correct. The word is generally attributed to the Senecas who spelled it T'KENCHIAT A' KWEN meaning "one who has taken out fish there." There are, however, numerous other explanations. As used here, capitalization is used only when indication is made of the settlement at Lake Chautauqua.

cultural subjects were added and in a few years the assembly was, in actuality, a full-fledged summer school, one of the first of its kind in the United States. In 1874 a session of twelve days was held, by 1884 it was fifteen days and by 1894 it was eight weeks. By 1900 more than two hundred courses were being offered in eight academic and twelve special schools, housed in permanent buildings.⁴

The spread of the chautauqua idea was furthered by several nationwide enlargements of the Lake Chautauqua plan. The first of these was the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Society founded in 1878 to give "students outlook on the world of thought" by short stories in literature and science, guided reading, and reports and correspondence with experts. The idea met with instant success, seven hundred registering at Chautauqua the first day of the course, and before a month was over every book shop and library in the country was out of Green's Short History, the first book on the list.⁵ In 1886 the reading course was systematized in a four year cycle including an English year, an American year, Greek year and Roman year.

The reading was serious and scholarly. For example, recommended reading for one year included A Survey of Greek Civilization in 340 pages by J. P. McGaffey, professor of ancient history in the University of Dublin and a three hundred fifty page volume known as Growth of the French Nation by a Yale professor, George B. Adams. Another book

⁴ Noffsinger, op. cit., p. 109.

⁵ Elizabeth Vincent, "Old First Night," New Republic, 40:95-97, September 24, 1924.

recommended highly was Down Grade--A Book to Save Tempted Young Men by A. P. Graves. It was certainly true that "They were serious and earnest, these chautauquans, and they were undaunted by the most ponderous volumes if they thought they held some precious grains of wisdom."⁶

An idea of the extent of the C.L.S.C. may be gained by the fact that half a million persons have enrolled for the reading course since its beginning, a fifth of whom finished the course and received diplomas.⁷ The organization, it is interesting to note, is still active and graduates many students each year.

The influence of chautauqua was felt in yet another important manner through the rise of the "permanant" chautauquas, patterned after the mother institution and dedicated to the ideal of social regeneration through religion and education. Between two hundred and three hundred were organized and operated for various periods of time. One of the first of these was the Bay View Assembly near Petoskey, Michigan, which, under the control of the Michigan Camp Ground Association, held its first meeting August 1, 1876. C. D. Whitcomb reported in 1884 that Bay View comprised, "360 acres of land extending one and one-fourth miles along the beach and one-half mile back with a great part of the land platted into lots and a large number of cottages ranging in cost from two hundred dollars to more than a thousand, having been built."⁸

⁶ Dorothy Wynn Downs, "Chautauqua, a Unique American Institution," Travel, 79:22-25, August 1942.

⁷ Noffsinger, op. cit., p. 110.

⁸ C. D. Whitcomb, A Lake Tour to Picturesque Mackinac, Detroit, 1884.

The next year Reverend Vincent reported the assembly as:

650 acres of land overlooking a beautiful bay upon Lake Michigan, near the Northern extremity of the lower peninsula of Michigan. . . the location is one of rare beauty and healthfulness; the climate equitable; and the pure, cool Northern lake breezes are invigorating. Especial facilities are furnished by the railway and steamboat companies. Nearly one hundred and fifty cottages have already been erected. There are a large hotel, an auditorium with seating capacity of 2500, a chapel, a restaurant, good dock, offices, and an excellent system of water-works supplied by inexhaustable fountains from a high point near the centre of the ground. There are annually held at Bay View, Sunday-school Normal Meetings, sessions of the Michigan Ministerial association; and in the season of 1885 an education department was organized. The aim is to make Bay View, Michigan, "A Michigan Chautauqua." A C.L.S.C. Recognition Day, Roundtable Conferences etc. will be held. The assembly is thoroughly catholic in spirit, and all denominations have a hearty welcome.⁹

It is interesting to note that the Bay View Assembly still functions although its program is vastly different. Since the beginning of the century, Albion College has provided much of the leadership for the community and for many years has been sponsored the Bay View Summer College where many teachers and students of Albion and other colleges gather each summer.

The chautauqua assemblies, at length, however, found themselves in financial difficulties and attempts were made to organize the various groups in order to provide for an exchange of talent and economy of operation. The Western Federation of Chautauquas in 1897 and the larger International Chautauqua Alliance in 1899 were established, but failed to meet the needs of its members and within a few years passed out of existence.

⁹ John H. Vincent, Chautauqua Movement (Boston: Chautauqua Press, 1896) p. 289-290.

The Lyceum

An important impetus to the development of the chautauqua was its historical predecessor, the lyceum movement. In 1816 a New Englander named Holbrook ran quaint advertisements offering to "go before groups for disquisition upon science, superstitions, politics or theology, for what they shall deem worthy to pay my living."¹⁰

In 1826, forty farmers and mechanics united to form the Milbury, Massachusetts branch of the American lyceum. This was the first time the word "lyceum" was used in the United States to distinguish the bringing together of people to hear educational lecturers.¹¹ Holbrook, who subsequently became known as the father of modern education, organized lyceums, as he said, "To improve conversation by introducing worthwhile topics into the daily intercourse of families, neighbors and friends." By 1834, 3,000 of these community organizations were in existence. The local bodies affiliated with the county lyceums, which in turn were part of state groups. All lyceums finally came under the aegis of the national lyceum, the last national convention being held in 1839. The movement declined as rapidly as it arose. A few lyceums survived mostly in Massachusetts where the famous Salem and Concord lyceums flourished for many years after the movement had died out in other places.

¹⁰ Upton Close, "The Lecture Business," Saturday Review of Literature, 21:15, January 13, 1940.

¹¹ The term "Lyceum" originated in Athens, being the name given to the building or grove near the temple of Apollo Lyceus where Aristotle taught and as such became famous.

Hayes points out that "The lyceum was an educational institution peculiarly fitted to the people of the United States during the second quarter of the nineteenth century. . . Town lyceums held weekly meetings at which lectures and talks were given by members, or by members of other lyceums, who had some information not possessed by all. They discussed topics of general interest, debated, or watched the performance of some scientific experiment."¹²

Many famous men of letters appeared on the lyceum platform. Speakers on the famous Salem lyceum, for example, included Rufus Choate, the Endicotts, the Peabodys and the Pickerings. Alexander Graham Bell in 1877 delivered his first lecture on the subject of the telephone. The Concord lyceum heard Emerson, Oliver Wendell Holmes, James Russell Lowell, Louis Agassiz, Horace Greeley, R. H. Dana, Jr., Charles Sumner, Henry Ward Beecher, Henry James, Edward Everett Hale, Matthew Arnold, Julia Ward Howe, Charles Francis Adams, and scores of others.¹³

The original lyceum as conceived by Holbrook was an educational project in which the lecturing was done by people of the community. Ralph W. Emerson, for example, gave ninety-eight lectures without pay because he was a member of the local Concord lyceum.¹⁴

¹² Cecil B. Hayes, The American Lyceum, Department of Interior Bulletin No. 12, 1932.

¹³ Truman H. Talley, "The Chautauqua--an American Achievement," Worlds Work, 42:172, June, 1921.

¹⁴ Lyceumite and Talent, June 1912, p. 17.

Home talent paled however, and outside lecturers began to come in. Emerson soon was able to demand five dollars and an extra tip of four quarts of oats for his horse. The fees gradually increased until in his later days he commanded \$150 to \$500 for a single lecture. Professional lecturing pleased the people and the lyceums began to multiply. They sprang up in the East where the committees would work directly with the lecturers. John B. Gough in one year received 1600 invitations to lecture.¹⁵ Then came the idea of a lyceum bureau to deal with both committees and talent. To James Redpath, a writer and newspaper correspondent, goes the credit for organizing in 1868 the first commercial lecture bureau. Redpath, observing the difficulties under which both lecturers and the local committees worked, undertook to make the arrangements for Charles Dickens on an American lecture tour. The tour took in the amazing sum of \$228,000, a record, according to Upton Close, that has never been equaled.¹⁶

Other commercial lyceums were organized and were doing a vigorous business when the chautauqua assemblies were finding themselves in financial difficulties.

Records have been found which indicate that Michigan had its share of lecturing during these early days. Famous names, for example, appeared on the Lansing platform as early as December 12, 1868 when I. I. Hayes spoke on "Artic Life and Scenery." Hayes received a fee of one

¹⁵ Lyceumite and Talent, June 1912, p. 17.

¹⁶ Close, op. cit., p. 16.

hundred dollars. Samuel L. Clemens delivered a Christmas eve lecture on December 24, 1868, with the acrimonious title "An American Vandal Abroad." Clemens also received one hundred dollars. The same fee was paid to Wendell Phillips, who spoke on December 28, 1870, and Henry W. Shaw, the famous "Josh Billings" who lectured on January 24, 1871. Samuel Clemens received \$125 for a lecture entitled "Out West" on December 15, 1871.¹⁷

Many of our important and valuable institutions stem from the lyceum movement. Dexter points out such organizations as the United States Weather Bureau, library extension, museum of natural history, National Education Association and the American Association for the Advancement of Science are direct contributions of this movement.¹⁸

Business men, pondering the success of the commercial lyceum, the mushroom growth of the C.L.C.S., and the springing up of the chautauqua assemblies, saw the hunger of the American people for knowledge and entertainment and began to investigate the possibilities of fulfilling that need. In 1904, the last and greatest phase of the chautauqua story began--an idea that was to carry the big chautauqua tents to every corner of the land and to bring an amalgam of knowledge and

¹⁷ These interesting notes were reported by David E. Heineman of Leland, Michigan, in a letter to the editor of Michigan History Magazine, Volume XV, 1931, p. 136. Heineman reported the material was contained in a receipt book neatly printed and bound, each page of which has the caption "Young Men's Society of Lansing"; the book contains the treasurers receipts for payment of lectures and fees, and in almost every case, the autographéd signatures of the recipients.

¹⁸ Edwin Grant Dexter, A History of Education in the United States (New York: MacMillan Company, 1904), p. 570.

entertainment to one out of every eleven men, women and children in the United States sometime during every calendar year.¹⁹

The Rise of the Circuit Chautauqua

The chautauquas which were to come to Michigan and to other states were, then, of several forms. Already described, the original Mother Chautauqua at Lake Chautauqua, New York, and its counterpart the "Chautauqua Assemblies" such as Bay View, most nearly represented the original idea of camp meeting and Sunday School. Another form which existed side by side with the circuit chautauqua was the "Independent" assembly. The Independent assembly was similar to the circuit chautauqua except that they were not part of a circuit organization in which the same program was shared with a number of other towns in the vicinity. In Lansing, as in many other towns, the Independent assembly preceded the circuit plan, holding chautauquas from 1909 until superseded by the Redpath circuit in 1912. In other towns, where the assembly was well organized, the Independent groups continued to function and did not become part of a circuit. Independent assemblies found they could thus set the times of their chautauqua and the length of their programs. The bureaus, such as Redpath, serviced both groups.

The lyceum, already described, is still another form of the movement. As one writer has put it, "Chautauqua was merely lyceum in the light pongee of summer." Certainly the differences between the two

¹⁹

F. C. Bray, "Chautauqua Fifty Years Young," Review of Reviews, 70:71-76, July, 1924.

were not marked ones, chautauqua reaching approximately the same type of people and the same sort of community during the summer months as did the lyceum in the winter. Most of the bureaus handled talent for both chautauqua and lyceum and the two existed side by side for many years.

An example of the growth and extent of these several branches may be seen in an analysis of the June, 1914, issue of the Lyceum Magazine, a trade publication for chautauqua and lyceum bureaus. This publication reported the closing of 15,000 lyceum courses and the opening of 2338 circuit chautauquas along with an estimated 600 independent assemblies.

A list of the chautauquas reported in the Midwest includes the following circuits:

63	Coit-Alber Chautauqua System, Cleveland
80	Central Chautauqua System, Indianapolis
40	Co-operative Chautauqua Association, Bloomington
264	National Lincoln Chautauqua System, Chicago
230	Redpath Chautauquas, Chicago

Most of the various bureaus worked in close cooperation with each other particularly in the exchange of talent. Chautauqua 'headliners' were often found under the sponsorship of five or six bureaus, each bureau taking him for several months at a time.²⁰

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An example of this interchange of talent is the booking of Ralph Parlette, famous lecturer and editor, during 1915-1916. Booked on the Redpath-Horner circuit for the entire chautauqua season, Parlette then went on the following lyceum schedule: Pacific coast: September 20 to November 13, Ellison-White Lyceum Bureau of Boise, Idaho. West: November 15 to 27, Mutual Lyceum Bureau, Chicago. Northeast: November 29 to January 1, 1916, Coit Lyceum Bureau, Cleveland. Southeast: January 3 to 22, Alkahest Lyceum System, Atlanta. Southwest: January 24 to February 12, Redpath Lyceum Bureau, Dallas. West: February 14 to 26, Redpath Lyceum Bureau, Chicago. Northwest: April 3 to 15, Redpath-Vawter Lyceum Bureau, Cedar Rapids, Northeast: April 17 to May 13, Coit-Lyceum Bureau. Reported in Lyceum Magazine, March 1915.

In 1904 an officer in the Redpath Lyceum Bureau, Keith Vawter, organized the forerunner of the circuit chautauqua. Vawter was less than thirty years old, a small, quiet, very keen man with a genius for organization.²¹

Vawter had an idea he could serve the chautauqua assemblies of Iowa by supplying them with lyceum lecturers. He also conceived the idea that there were many towns in between the assemblies that would welcome chautauqua assemblies, yet had no pavilion. By obtaining a circus tent, Vawter thought he could bring the assemblies to these towns and at the same time make the best use of his talent. In 1904 he booked fifteen towns in Iowa and Nebraska. Different kinds of contracts were used; in some places towns kept the gate receipts above a certain sum, in others towns were persuaded to guarantee a certain number of season tickets. Vawter opened that year under the name of the Standard Chautauqua Bureau.²²

The program was augmented by morning sessions and discussions led by representatives of the bureau.

This first season was not a success, and Vawter then conceived the idea of allowing the committee to take all the financial risk by guaranteeing the sale of a number of season tickets. He decided to concentrate on selling the community on the educational and cultural values of chautauqua. It was this idea--carried out to the last--that allowed

²¹ Tozier, op. cit., p. 6.

²² Ibid. Tozier reports this information gained by personal interview with Keith Vawter.

the great expansion of chautauqua on almost no capital and that in the end was to help in its eventual collapse.

It might be pointed out that this was one of the fundamental differences of chautauqua and lyceum. The lyceum operated on the time-honored principle of bringing a program to town and letting the people 'take it or leave it'. —

The Prohibition party in 1905 purchased seven tents and enough talent for seven days, and were able to conduct seven assemblies in one week. Midland circuit opened in 1905 followed by Associated Chautauquas in Kansas and Oklahoma and the White and Freeman circuit the same year. In 1907 the Lincoln chautauqua began in Illinois. Other systems rapidly came into existence.²³ By 1912 there were in six mid-west states alone, almost 600 such chautauquas.²⁴

The organization of the circuit chautauqua through the years changed very little from the way Vawter conceived it in 1904. During the summer months, three to seven day programs were given in circus tents in towns of from 500 to 10,000 and larger. The 'talent'²⁵ moved from town to town in the circuit. Because of relatively short distances between stands and long term contracts with the talent, the plan proved economically successful. The usual daily program consisted of a lecture together with music, dramatics or other entertainment both in the

²³ Tozier, op. cit., Chapter V.

²⁴ John S. Noffsinger, "The Circuit Chautauqua," Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, Volume III, 1930.

²⁵ As used in chautauqua, "talent" is a generic term for lecturers, musicians, readers or others who appeared on the platform for pay.

afternoon and evening. A central theme such as community improvement, public health, civic pride, or education usually dominated the program.

Contracts were sold communities by advance salesmen and were iron-clad. The bureau agreed to put on a chautauqua--the talent was never mentioned by name--"during the chautauqua season" in return for which they were guaranteed a certain amount.

After contracts were secured in the various towns, an advance man was sent to each community to help make final arrangements. This man helped with the ticket sales, got the promotion program started, secured a place for the big tent and advised the bureau and the platform superintendent of local conditions.

Directly in charge of the chautauqua was this platform superintendent, usually a minister or school superintendent, who stayed in the town during the chautauqua, supervised the putting up and taking down of the tent, collected the contract for the next year, and acted as general overseer. It was a job calling for diplomacy and sound judgment as several incidents in the following chapters will indicate. The Horner circuits, for example, reported that the superintendent was "especially cautioned to respect the religious sentiment in every community." Problems, such as what to do with the chautauqua on Sunday, varied widely with the community visited and presented different and vexing problems to the chautauqua superintendent.

Under the direction of the superintendent was the tent crew, usually composed of college boys who put up and took down the big tent, sold tickets, issued programs and, in general, had a wonderful time.

CHAPTER III

THE CHAUTAUQUA IN LANSING

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1909

In 1909 Lansing was an enterprising little city of 30,000, a city which had increased its population eighty nine percent in a decade and one which was to continue to grow nearly as fast in the decade to come.¹

It was an interesting time. The man in the street was discussing the Cooke-Perry North pole controversy. Chase Osborn, later to become Governor of Michigan, had just published his fourth book, "The Andean Land" and President Snyder of the Michigan Agricultural College was being considered for Secretary of Agriculture in President Taft's cabinet. Four electric lights were being installed on the Michigan Avenue bridge to achieve, said the State Journal hopefully, "A Great White Way." Runaway horses constituted much of the days news. It was a peaceful, pleasant time and the town had not yet recognized the approaching signs of the automobile age, at least not if we are to judge by an editorial in the July 26th issue of the Lansing State Journal:

The editor of the Journal has a deep seated and long standing grouch against automobiles. Perhaps fuel may have been added to this flame of hatred by the fact that the editor does not own a chug-chug wagon and probably never will be able to do so but the feeling had its origin when as a pedestrian he had been obliged to resort to flight and the protection of a telephone pole in order to escape some charging gasoline demon or has nearly seen himself whisked to the hereafter by being run over by a machine while crossing the street.

¹ By 1920 Lansing had, according to the United States Department of Commerce Census figures, a population of 57,327--an increase of 83.6% in ten years.

Lansing at this time had two vaudeville houses, one large theater and several movie houses. The opera house on August 14th presented the first play of the season with Corine as 'Mlle Mischief' (ein Toller Maidell).

On July 15, 1909, the State Journal carried an announcement of what was apparently Lansing's first chautauqua:²

Last evening the Eureka Glee Club of Springfield, Ohio, gave a concert. This evening an exhibition will be given by "Mascot" the best educated horse in the world, who has given performances all over the world and has twice been commanded to appear before King Edward. Carrie Nation will give an address Friday evening and the chautauqua will close Saturday evening with another concert by Carter's Virginia Warblers-- a band of colored singers.

In the same issue, the State Journal pointed out that Eaton Rapids had a "chautauqua assembly" for the first time in its history but that it was not on a large scale and the meetings were confined to the evening.

That all was not to be easy for the chautauqua in Lansing was evident when on September 2nd the State Journal printed its first stand concerning the movement in an editorial entitled "Chautauqua Vaudeville":

Scarcely had the echo of Speaker Cannon's gavel died away in the Hall of Representatives on the last day of July before many of the members were on trains headed for the chautauqua circuit, there to complain and exploit and review upon their own standpoints, the work of the season. The chautauqua idea, born of good old Doctor Vincent's ambition, here in the West at least, has lost all semblance of its dignified and educated character. The chautauqua is now only a sort

² While the State Journal does not say what circuit this was, Herbert Asbury's Carrie Nation, (New York: Alfred Knopf 1929) p. 303 quotes her as saying, "From the first of July 1909 to the last of August, I have been secured by S. M. Holloday of Midland Bureau of Des Moines, Iowa."

of summer vaudeville. A strictly business proposition which appeals to the sensational and morbid elements of human nature.

It will be noticed that today most of the chautauqua stars are either straight out Democrats harping upon revolutionary theories, or disconsolate Republican 'insurgents' who delight to air their theatrical emotions in the tawdry arena of chautauqua curiosity. There is no place for the careful and thoughtful statesman in this place of violent tears. Only the reckless purveyor of oratorical stunts is wanted by the managers of chautauqua. Soberness of speech, wisdom and caution are entirely too tame to attract the box office invitation. What for instance, would be the demand for LaFollete on the lecture platform if he were a serious student of statecraft and unskilled in the art of oratorical acrobatics? . . . in the fierce competition with the three headed calf and the clay modeler, the chautauqua orator must strain to keep up his reputation.

In the following pages we will see how this premature opinion changed almost as completely, in a few years, as did the editor's viewpoints on the horseless carriage.

1910

In 1910, the chautauqua began in Lansing in earnest under the auspices of the Lansing Business Men's Association. An eight day program was brought to town and set up in East Side Park, and the committee in charge issued the following announcement:

The Lansing Chautauqua was organized under the auspices of the Business Men's Association, not primarily as a money making proposition but we believe that in broadening the horizon of of the social and intellectual life of our citizens we are working out a better civic condition and thus enhancing the chances for our successful future. What the forum was to ancient Rome the chautauqua has become to the United States of America with the difference that there was only one forum while in America almost one thousand chautauquas are in active operation in all parts of our country and the number is rapidly increasing as the years go by.

The committee went on to point out that many of the great reforms of the day were largely traceable to the chautauqua lecturer, that the movement was thoroughly undenominational and that it appealed to the thoughtful and cultured.

"More and more," the announcement said, "In these strenuous times people feel the need of a little vacation. Earnest people are hardly willing to waste time in a vacation which does not bring them a little intellectual uplift; hence the phenomenal growth of the chautauqua idea.

"In presenting the following program the management is not building for the present only, but for the future as well. Our aim is to furnish physical recreation, mental food and heartening whole-souled attractions to all."³

The program offered in Lansing that year included Governor Hoch of Kansas, Father J. Daly of Milwaukee speaking on, "Is a Boy Worth Saving?" and Edward Amhurst Ott with his lecture, "The Haunted House". A farmers' day featured the agricultural expert with the felicitous name of Colonel Bob Seeds speaking on "How God Makes Soil Fertile". Opie Read and Ralph Bingham were also included. Senator Gore, blind senator from Oklahoma, was originally scheduled to speak, but had to cancel his engagement because of his senate activity. Senator Gore was much in the headlines at this time because of his activities in exposing bribery in land sales.

Senator Gore's place was taken by Adrain Newens, who gave readings from the "Sky Pilot". A former professor of oratory, Newens' performance

³ The State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) July 16, 1910.

was commended by The State Journal on July 25th: "A better entertainer than Mr. Newens never stepped upon a Lansing platform. Breathless interest, frankly streaming tears, hearty laughter, showed his magic power."

The concerts by the Hruby Brothers Concert Company were poorly attended--only two hundred persons were reported in attendance. The majority of the listeners to the concert series were outside the tent.⁴

Halfway through the week, the big tent was moved to the Third Ward Park. Many of the committee thought the East Side Park was too inaccessible.

On Wednesday, "Farmers Day" was held and was, according to the State Journal for July 29th, "A dismal failure as far as farmers are concerned, there being less than a dozen farmers present." Colonel Seeds mentioned in his opening address that the chautauqua "looked as though it had been pulled off before it was ripe."

The next day, however, Opie Read, who was to headline chautauquas for many years to come,⁵ gave his reading of "Lem Junklin at the Chautauqua" and for the first time, the big three thousand seat tent was filled. The State Journal on July 25th reported: "Six feet four inches of genial humanity radiating good nature and homely philosophy. He

⁴ The State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) July 16, 1910.

⁵ Ten years later, Opie Read spoke to the 1,700 employees of the Reo Motor Car Company in Lansing and, according to the Reo house organ, he made a tremendous hit. His subject was "Human Nature and Politics". (Reported in The Lyceum News, March, 1920.)

assumed the character of old Lum and until the close of the evening was old Lum and nobody else. On a quaintly humorous style he dwelt upon the follies of the day, and his impressions of life. His talk was spiced with epigrams such as "Music is the maple syrup of the soul"; "Some of the greatest truths are given with a smile"; and "I believe missionaries can do more good helping the sweat shop workers in our great cities than in singing hymns to Chinamen."

1911

In spite of its inauspicious reception in 1909 and 1910, the Lansing Chautauqua Assembly brought a nine-day⁶ Chautauqua to Lansing from June 24th to July 2nd. The chautauqua was held at the League Ballpark at Kalamazoo and Walnut.⁷

The big tent, 90 x 120 feet, easily held twenty-five hundred persons. Season tickets were two dollars and promotion schemes this year included sending one thousand tickets to prominent Lansingites which admitted them to the first several days free after which they could be exchanged for regular tickets by paying the full price.

The program was a full and complete one and included an unusual array of famous names. Among them was Senator Robert LaFollette who

⁶ Nine day chautauquas were found only in the 'independent' assemblies. Redpath, at least on their Western circuits, had only five day and seven day programs.

⁷ Not a very convenient place, apparently, for the audience was forced to climb under the grandstand to get to the tent.

spoke on "Popular Government", President George E. Vincent, of the University of Minnesota, speaking on "The Larger Selfishness" and "Mind of the Mob", Champ Clark talked on "Picturesque Public Men" and the labor leader of the day, John Mitchell, delivered an address. Earnest Thompson Seton spoke on "The Boy Scout Movement" and Leslie Willis Sprague on "Learning to Live in Cities."

Other attractions included the return of Adrain C. Nevins; William Sterling Battis, known throughout the circuits as "The Dickens Man"; the Chicago Glee Club; Robert Marker Miles with his lecture on "Tallow Dips" and Dr. Edward A. Steiner speaking on "The Trail of the Immigrant."⁸

Governor Osborn opened the chautauqua program speaking on "Reciprocity."

One of the interesting features of this chautauqua was the round table discussions carried on by C. H. Plattenbury, platform manager, during afternoon "study hours."

Discussing "The City Beautiful" Plattenbury told of some of the sore spots in Lansing, pointing out that tin cans, filth and shacks of all kinds lie along the bank of the river which might be a beauty spot. He said that he walked on Lansing streets and found the sidewalks yet unswept and dirty. He called attention to the public drinking cup in the state capitol and said Michigan was far behind Western states in that respect. A general discussion followed his talks in which

⁸ The State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) June 21, 1911.

representatives of the Grange, the Federation of Women's Clubs and various other organizations told what had been attempted and what is planned for the future of Lansing.

An editorial in the State Journal next day, June 29th, entitled "From an Outsider" reported:

"Tin Can Alley," "Shack Boulevard" and "Rubbish Terrace" received particular mention by C. H. Plattenbury, platform manager, at the Chautauqua round table Tuesday afternoon. They are familiar sights every day in Lansing. Once upon a time there was a civic improvement association formed, the banks of the river were to be beautified, the alleys were to be clean as the streets and the "spotless town" regime was to come into its own. Collectively the citizens of Lansing want this city to be clean and sweet-smelling; individually there are many property owners who do not care whether the town is neat and natty or not.

On another round table study hour, Plattenbury asked: "Why is it that we have so many lodges today? Why is it that nearly every man you meet belongs to a lodge? . . . Because the church is not doing its duty, the lodge is doing the work which is the mission of the church and which the church has fallen down. . . the trouble with the church is that they are 'full of skeletons' deeds of the past instead of the future. . . ."⁹

Lectures ranged from the inspirational Mrs. Florence D. Richards, who spoke the first night on "The Future and What it Promises" by saying, "I am an optimist and believe this is the best hour of the best day since time began" to the hard-headed political talk of Senator Thomas R. Gore, who spoke against high tariff.

⁹ The State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) July 8, 1911.

Large crowds greeted both Senator Gore and John Mitchell. Mitchell, speaking on "The Philosophy, Purposes and Ideals of the Trade Labor Movement," said:

If the interests of labor and capital were identical, as some declare, there would be no chasm to bridge, if their interests were irreconcilable, then any effort to harmonize them would be futile. It is because I believe that neither of these can stand the test of close analysis that I have devoted so large a part of my life to the advancement of the trade agreement as the best means of bettering the relationship of employer and employee. The ideal of the trade union is not so much to secure advantage for the exceptional man as to bring about a general and progressive uplift of the great mass of wage earners.

Financially, the chautauqua was in a precarious position. Secretary J. G. Hammond, of the local committee, reported on June 28th, that \$1650 was on hand and that if another one thousand dollars came in between that time and the end of the assembly they would come out more than even. However at the end of the program, the local group found itself between eight hundred and one thousand dollars behind. This meant a deficit of between eight and ten dollars per guarantor. However-- and this is one of the peculiarities of chautauqua which happened again and again--despite the deficit it was agreed that another chautauqua would be held next year. The guarantors expressed themselves in favor of the program because of its high character and general worth and willingly agreed to make good the deficit.

Secretary Hammond stated, however, that he believed just as good a course could be given next year for less money, the talent to cost about fourteen hundred dollars instead of \$2150 as it did this year. A six day chautauqua program instead of a nine was pointed out as being just as satisfactory in other places with some of the weaker talent

eliminated and twelve numbers being given instead of eighteen. The total expenses of the chautauqua in Lansing during 1911 was twenty eight hundred dollars.

Jackson, said Hammond, had had a chautauqua for five years and this year was the first time it had even so much as paid for the tickets out of the receipts. This time, he claimed, the receipts were four hundred dollars more than the expenses of the course, many other cities having the same experience.¹⁰

1912

1912 marked the beginning of the Redpath circuit chautauquas in Lansing and the man who more than any other, exemplified chautauqua, headlined the program. William Jennings Bryan was chautauqua and for thirty years he was "good for forty acres of parked Fords, anywhere, at any time of the day or night." Critical studies of Bryan and his speaking are fairly extensive and no attempt is made in this paper to do more than report his visits to central Michigan.¹¹

¹⁰ A check of the Jackson (Mich.) Citizen Press and Citizen Patriot files during 1912-1920 revealed no mention of a chautauqua in Jackson from that time on although residents could remember the city having one "a long time ago."

¹¹ An interesting but undocumented story of Bryan is told by Robert and Victoria Case in We Called It Culture Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1948, pp. 87-135. Speech theses dealing with Bryan include: Elizabeth Gilliar, William Jennings Bryan, A Study of the Psychology of Persuasion (1931) University of Minnesota. Grace E. Harper, Critical Study of the Elements of Persuasion in the Speeches of W. J. Bryan (1929) University of Southern California. Theodore S. Long, The Campaign Oratory of W. J. Bryan (1938) University of Wisconsin, Harold L. Ahrendts, Public Reaction to Selected Speeches of W. J. Bryan as revealed by Contemporary Comments in the Press of Nebraska. (1943) University of Michigan.

Tickets for the Bryan lecture were in demand weeks before he was to appear. The State Journal reported on July 17th, that at the YMCA, center of ticket activity, requests from Owosso, Grand Ledge, Mason, Leslie, St. Johns and other towns were pouring in. It was characteristic of the Bryan era that the exact title of his lecture was not known in advance.

Bryan appeared in six other towns in Michigan that year.¹² Typical of the small town's reaction was that of Charlotte which had a "Bryan Day." All businesses in town were closed from two o'clock until four thirty, he was greeted at the train by thousands and a big street parade, led by the state militia band, followed.¹³

Redpath, by 1912, was conducting four circuits, the largest of which had 134 different cities on its list. The Lansing program was one of thirty eight cities on the circuit.¹⁴

In 1912, the Lansing Chautauqua, for the first time, was an unqualified success. The program was a seven day affair and was again held at the baseball park. The superintendent was I. B. Gilbert, a former St. Johns, Michigan, school official, who was in charge during July 17th-23rd when the program was given.¹⁵

¹² A search of the Redpath Files (Chicago, Office) reveal these to be: Monroe, Mt. Clemens, Flint, Charlotte, Niles and Plymouth.

¹³ The State Journal, (Lansing, Michigan) July 17, 1912.

¹⁴ From files of the Redpath Bureau, (Chicago Office).

¹⁵ The State Journal, (Lansing, Michigan) July 16, 1912.

A typical example of the difficulties encountered by the chautauqua superintendent came up at the beginning of the program. Although the baseball park had been contracted for, a stubborn baseball manager refused to move the date of a double-header and intimated the chautauqua should pay him \$250 if he would. The matter was settled and the show went on as scheduled after the manager agreed to publicize the coming games in the chautauqua program.¹⁶

The State Journal editorialized on July 16th:

The attention of the public is directed toward the chautauqua program which opens in this city tomorrow. Certain it is that a more interesting and at the same time educational number of programs has never before been offered to people of Lansing. First among the noted men who will appear on the chautauqua platform is William Jennings Bryan. Although he has been before the public for many years, Mr. Bryan was never more popular than today. The record of his recent battles in the Baltimore convention is still fresh in the minds of the people, and the city is fortunate in having the opportunity to hear him speak.

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If the chautauqua offered less than it does; if the programs were below instead of above the standard, there would be no reason for expecting this city to support it. But the program is all that can be asked and there can be no excuse if Lansing fails to respond.

Redpath, as did all circuits, used college men for the tent crews and believed in letting the people know about it. The State Journal reported on July 18th:

"The men who are accompanying Superintendent Gilbert are all college students. By employing college men to drive stakes, pitch tents, sell

¹⁶ The State Journal, (Lansing, Michigan) July 19, 1912. The following year when O. D. McKeever of Columbus, Ohio was platform manager, he was required to substitute for Mrs. Isabel Garghill Beecher, a reader of national reputation, with an hour's notice. His performance, said the State Journal next day, "Is of much credit to himself and incidentally, to Redpath bureau." (August 4, 1913).

tickets and assist in other ways to make the chautauqua a success, Redpath bureau is able to help a large number of students who are working their way through school."

Besides Bryan, other noted men appeared on the platform in 1912. Ex-governor Hock of Kansas reappeared with his message on pure food laws; Judge Blair, who had disfranchised two thousand citizens of Adams County, Ohio for illegal voting, told his story. Poet-humorist Wallace Bruce Amsbury presenting "A Dignified Interpretation of Good Literature," drew a crowd of one thousand on July 18th.

Writers and critics of the chautauqua movement have pointed out the availability of the platform to anyone with a message.¹⁷ Judge Marcus A. Kavanaugh who spoke on "Traitors to Justice" talked eloquently on reforms needed in law and told his audience that he could not bring about reforms within his own profession and so was taking his case to the 190,000 people on the Redpath circuit. A long editorial entitled "The Law's Delay" in the State Journal the next day (July 24th) testified as to his effectiveness.

Bohumir Kryl, "The Greatest cornetist in the world" and a standard favorite for many years, appeared with his band.

Redpath, in 1912, instituted a program of using scout masters for the training of boys. Six men were taken from the Chicago headquarters where they had gained practical experience, and sent out on the circuits.

¹⁷ See Glen Frank, "Parliament of the People," Century 98:401-16, July, 1919; Paul Pearson, American Academy of Political and Social Science Annuals. Volume 39-40, 1912. pp. 21-26.

At this time the National movement was but two years old.¹⁸

W. B. Hopkins appeared on the Lansing program and on Thursday morning about thirty boys gathered at the tent for preliminary instruction in boy scout work. Hopkins discussed the organization, scout laws and principles. Before he had finished, a large number of mothers had come into the tent.¹⁹

Hopkins was also attempting to form a Camp Girls group, similar to the Boy Scouts, under the sponsorship of the YMCA. On the last day of the program, exhibitions were given by the boys.

At the close of the week-long program, nearly seven hundred tickets were guaranteed for the next year and the return of the Redpath bureau was assured. "Considering the amount of rain which has fallen during the week," reported the State Journal on July 24th, "The big tent has been unusually well filled and Lansing has been loyal to the chautauqua--much more so than in the past. Especially was this true last Saturday when about 700 turned out to hear one of the most elequent addresses of all given by former Governor Hock of Kansas while in the evening when a heavy rain fell, the audience was larger by one hundred people."

¹⁸ The Boy Scout movement was incorporated February 8, 1910 although individual troops were organized previous to that time. J. P. Freeman writing in Michigan History Magazine Vol. XXII, 1938, pp. 261, reports that J. A. Vandis, the boys work secretary of the YMCA for Michigan had organized a troop in connection with his camp, previous to 1910. In 1910 the State of Michigan organized a state committee in scouting. Governor Ferris was on the National Council. A long discussion of this incipient movement appeared on the front page of the State Journal for July 24th.

¹⁹ State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) July 18, 1912.

A full page advertisement in the State Journal for July 16, 1913 announced that season tickets were now on sale for the Redpath Chautauqua beginning on July 28th. The article pointed out that there were nearly twelve hundred chautauquas in the United States and Canada and that Redpath alone, from its headquarters in Iowa, Kansas City and Chicago sponsored six hundred of them.

The Redpath circuit in Michigan this year grew from six towns in 1912 to twenty towns in Michigan in 1913.²⁰

Ticket headquarters were again at the YMCA but tickets were on sale at about twenty-five places throughout the city. Two advance men for Redpath arrived several days ahead of time and erected banners and posters throughout the city. The location of the big tent for 1913 was Shiawassee and Chestnut streets.²¹

One of the integral parts of the chautauqua, stemming from the program started by Keith Vawter, was the morning lecture. Usually carried on by the platform manager, the program was attended by thrifty women who wanted full value for their season tickets.²² The morning lecturer for 1913 in Lansing was R. E. Kline and the title of his

²⁰ A search of the Redpath files (Chicago Office) reveals these to be: Niles, Kalamazoo, Battle Creek, Charlotte, Hastings, Lansing, Ypsilanti, Monroe, Mt. Clemens, Port Huron, Lapeer, Flint, Saginaw, Alpena, Alma, St. Johns, Muskegon, South Haven, Benton Harbor, Dowagiac. These were all seven day programs and represented the largest increase in towns covered that Redpath was to have in Michigan.

²¹ State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) July 23, 1913.

²² Case, op. cit., p. 38.

lectures included: "Poetry in Personal Life," "Relation of Literature to Human Movements," "Social and Moral Power of the Novel," and "The Drama--the Mirror of Life."

Attractions for this year included a debate on socialism between Representative J. Adam Bede of Minnesota and ex-Mayor Emil Seidel of Milwaukee. The two greats of the lecture platform, George L. McNutt and Dr. Frank W. Gunsaulus were scheduled to speak. Both men had watched the movement grow. Gunsaulus, pastor of the Peoples Church in Chicago and later president of Armour Institute, had been in demand as a lecturer on the old independent chautauqua assembly. He resented the growth of the circuit chautauqua at first, later becoming one of its staunch supporters.

His Lansing address on "William Earnest Gladstone" included the following: "Statesmanship prefers the wheat grain to the ruby. The ruby will never change unless to deteriorate, it has no generative power. Given the opportunity for growth, the product of the wheat grain becomes the multiplied power of its truth."²³

7. Paul McNutt was another old-timer on the platform, a man who had written press material for the pioneer circuits in 1905 and 1906.²⁴ Known as the "Dinner pail man" for his championship of the cause of the common man, he held his Lansing audience for two hours speaking on "Culture and Democracy." His topic was described as "A heart to heart

²³ State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) July 31, 1913

²⁴ Ibid.

message of appeal for the boyhood of America." "It is the ragtime of life to hold that the aim of a boy's education shall be to make a living," he said, "It is the making of a life that counts."²⁵

The Ben Greet Players, doing the "Comedy of Errors", brought out the largest crowd of all. This excellent group of Shakespearean players became very famous on the circuits and were instrumental in breaking down the prejudice against drama in smaller communities.

Other speakers on the platform this year included Dean W. T. Sumner on "The Dawning Consciousness of Women's Sex Loyalty" which periphrastic title concealed a discussion of reform in marriage laws. Ex-governor Joseph W. Folk of Missouri on "Fight for a State" and Dr. Eugene A. Bartlett speaking on "Wealth from Waste." The perennial Bohumir Kyril was back with his band, and a presentation of Parnelli's opera, "The Lover's Quarrel" helped round out the program.

Pledges sufficient to insure a program for 1914 were secured during the close of the assembly.

The itinerary for the 1914 program was announced by Redpath to include the cities of Niles, Kalamazoo, Battle Creek, Charlotte, Ypsilanti, Monroe, Mt. Clemens, Port Huron, Lapeer, Flint, Saginaw, Alpena, Alma, St. Johns, Muskegon, Hastings, South Haven, Benton Harbor and Dowagiac.²⁶

²⁵ State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) July 31, 1913.

²⁶ By the start of 1914 Redpath had secured additional guarantors for Belding, Cheboygan, Charlevoix, Traverse City, Manistee, Grand Haven, making a total of twenty seven Michigan towns holding seven day chautauquas and the largest group Redpath was ever to have in Michigan. After 1914, the number of towns holding Redpath chautauquas gradually declined. From Redpath Files, (Chicago Office.)

1914

In 1914, the Women's Civic League undertook to sponsor the chautauqua in Lansing. An auto parade led by the Reo Band, helped stir up interest. It was announced that one thousand tickets were available at two dollars. After the first thousand were sold, the price was to be \$2.50.

New trends were beginning to show clearly in the chautauqua program. The Ben Greet players were back again this year with a version of "Twelfth Night", and once more the audience overflowed the big tent and "heartily enjoyed" the show.²⁷ Music was beginning to fill more and more programs. This year a two day all-musical program included Bohumir Kyril, the Westminster choir and the famous Dunbar Bell Ringers.

Lecturers on the Redpath program included Edward Amhurst Ott, giving his talk on "The Haunted House";²⁸ Frank B. Wendling on "Face Behind a Face"; Leslie W. Sprague, "Learning to Live in Cities"; and Montaville Flowers, "Color Guard and Picket Line".

The superintendent this year was President Horace Ellis, of Vincennes University, the Republican candidate for State Superintendent of Public Instruction in Indiana. C. M. Sanford was in charge of the

²⁷ The State Journal, (Lansing, Michigan) August 6, 1914.

²⁸ Ott, who lectured all year around, was for eleven years Dean of Drake University's College of Oratory. He was the author of several textbooks. Writing in The Lyceum Magazine July, 1914 in an article entitled "Eighty Opportunities", Ott made a plea for brevity in lecturing. "Space writing is bad for literature," he said, "it is worse for lectures. Perhaps all lectures are too long. I plead guilty, and am repenting and using the blue pencil every day. The greatest enemy to eloquence is an unnecessary word. We all fear the verbosity of others, why not tremble at our own?"

morning lectures. Sanford, who had studied psychology under de Garmo, Titchener and Whipple at Cornell University, had a varied teaching background. His lectures were penetrating and critical. One such morning lecture, as reported in the State Journal for August 8, 1914, could be repeated nearly verbatim today:

Political parties, churches and schools, if they are to serve, must do the things that society needs to have done. This is an age where all institutions of society are being examined and tested.

As American people we have expended vast sums in our public schools and, of course, expect commensurate returns. There are many who feel that our schools are failing to minister to the needs of society. . .

The greatest single need is a more efficient body of teachers. Instead of young, immature girls we need teachers who are old enough to have developed personalities that are dynamic. Our teachers too often allow their character batteries to run low and as a result their work instead of being inspirational is deadening--is of the humdrum sort.

Our teaching force throughout, should have as many men teachers as women, and each should represent the very highest type of manhood or womanhood possible. That we do not have better teachers is due to the wretched salaries we pay. . .the next move is to draw the most capable young men and women and we must do this by paying them salaries commensurate with their ability.

The very purpose of the average high school is wrong. Why should the chief aim of a high school be to prepare students for college when less than three percent ever go to college. . .?

It was announced from the platform that Lansing would be obliged to pledge for the sale of seven hundred season tickets at \$2.50 each to secure the Redpath circuit for 1915. Advanced prices, according to the bureau, were due to the increase in quality of programs offered next year. A preliminary canvass was made on Friday evening and a

number of the pledges necessary were secured.²⁹

"No clock ever strikes twelve all the time; not every chautauqua is a best number, but we must bear in mind that often the number that disappointed you, pleased your neighbor highly," declared Reverend Ray Hardy, Minister of Pilgrim Congregational Church, who spoke on behalf of the Women's Civic League, which had decided to sponsor next season's assembly of talent. Reverend Hardy pointed out that \$2,700 must come through the gates before the Redpath bureau would make expenses.

Congressman Patrick H. Kelley, in supporting the chautauqua said, "It seems to me that any number on the program is worth the fifty cents it costs on the season ticket. The lecture by Edward Amhurst Ott, the other evening I regard as worth to any boy and girl in Lansing who heard the message, the price of a season ticket. Lansing people want the chautauqua and I do not believe there will be any difficulty in disposing of the number of tickets necessary to insure an assembly for 1915."³⁰

1915

The Redpath Bureau in 1915 opened its chautauqua circuit in Jacksonville, Florida on April 15th, and worked northward until September 10th, setting a record for the longest season ever attempted by a chautauqua circuit in America.³¹

²⁹ Other circuits were raising prices. In the smaller communities there was more grumbling over increasing the cost of a season ticket. In Mason, for example, the Lincoln system was accused of being part of a trust, when in the following year they attempted to raise the price to \$2.00, and as a result Mason had no chautauqua in 1916. See Chapter IV. From Ingham County Democrat (Mason, Michigan) August 25, 1915.

³⁰ State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) August 8, 1914.

³¹ State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) July 15, 1915.

The tents were larger this year, and seated 2400 in comfortable garden settees. The Women's Clubhouse Association sponsored the chautauqua and the committee was made up of delegates appointed by the various clubs affiliated with the association. Season tickets, transferable among members of the same family, went up in cost to \$2.50 for adults and to \$1.25 for children up to sixteen.

The featured attraction this year was Alice Nielson, prima donna soprano of the Metropolitan and Boston Opera Company.

An innovation was the closing of the chautauqua on Sunday. The tents standing idle over Sunday, reported the Lyceum News, cost the management over \$20,000.³²

A feature of the chautauqua in 1915 was the introduction of the pseudo-scientific lecture. Montraville Wood, assisted by his daughter, gave a "popular scientific demonstration of gyroscope and ultra violet ray." The performance consisted of Professor Wood's struggle with a gyroscope measuring twenty-four inches and weighing twenty-eight pounds; a demonstration of a practical model of a monorail car operating on a slack wire over the heads of the audience and the producing of handwriting on the canvas wall with a ray of light for a crayon.³³

³² Lyceum News, May 1915, p. 23.

³³ State Journal (Lansing, Michigsn) August 3, 1915. Reports the Lyceum Magazine for May, 1915: "Professor Wood's patents have now reached the hundred mark, his most recent patent granted being the one pertaining to the automatic locks for the Panama Canal, to be shown at the Panama Exposition. Mr. Wood is now working on the storage of light from the sun whereby he will be able to light your home without wires or pipes, storing the light in the wall-paper of your home."

What appeared to be one of the first attempts to expand the dramatic activities of the chautauqua did not fare so well. The State Journal reported on August 3rd:

One of the largest audiences of the assembly saw William Owen and company's presentation of "The Servant in the House." As the 'drain man' William Owen is all that could be desired and the interpretation of Charles Ram Kennedy's masterpiece is safe in his hands. While chautauqua audiences are willing to make allowances for the handicaps under which dramatic renditions are given on a tent platform, some of the characterizations fell short of what Lansing has come to regard as the Chautauqua standard.

The first rumblings of the European war were beginning to be felt in this country and on the chautauqua platform the reactions were varied. Sylvester A. Long, speaking on the subject, "Hungry People" said:

In a great calamity the man who has only technical training will blow out his brains, but the one who has caught the soul of education can sit hungry and ragged upon the ruins reading Shakespeare or St. Paul and know that he is rich and fortunate . . . the lyceum and chautauqua stands forth for high idealism. People want entertainment of which they need not be ashamed, they need music of fine sentiment and red blood. They are hungry for the hope-giving and constructive lecture. It may require extra effort, but whether with or without military preparedness we must arm with hope and fortify with idealism.³⁴

Other chautauqua men were beginning to realize the import of the European war. Apparently such a lecturer was Frank Dixon whose subject was supposed to be "Taking Stock of the Town":

Frank Dixon's lecture Tuesday night was heard by a good sized audience. His recommendations for every growing city were: A plan embracing economy, beauty, permanency and dignity. An efficient health department and a city manager plan for municipal government.

³⁴ State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) July 30, 1915.

Departing from his lecture theme to strike a blow for national preparedness, Mr. Dixon gave statistics showing we are the most defenseless nation in the world. Congress has spent \$150,000,000 every year and we have practically nothing to show for it, he said. 'China is our rival in extravagance and inefficiency, and with the world in conflagration, it is time that some honest man confesses he smells smoke. Only the mercy of God Almighty can save us from the incompetence to which congress has reduced us.'³⁵

The reactions to this plain talk were quick and blunt. The next day the State Journal, in an editorial entitled "Taking Stock" said:

Dr. Frank Dixon who lectured before a Lansing Chautauqua audience on "Taking Stock of the Town" touched a number of tender spots without gentleness and made those who heard him squirm now and then.

His suggestions are probably compiled after a thousand times more study and thought than is spent upon a criticism of them but the fact remains that a large number of Dr. Dixon's theories can be carried out under a kind of paternal despotism. To make them workable the individual must be submerged entirely and the state glorified exclusively.

Will we, as a country, submit to this form of rule? We decidedly will not. The moment the government whether it be national, state, or municipal makes a move along the lines of paternalism, the great American public lets out a roar.

There are disadvantages to our democratic system of government as Dr. Dixon looks at it, we cannot regulate the hourly life of the individual or prescribe all his business dealings. So as a consequence the state suffers to some extent and reforms are slow in coming.

But who would change? Those who would can take the next boat across.

Other attractions included Thomas Brooks Fletcher, who was advertised to speak on "The Martyrdom of Fools." Several days before, however, he remembered he had given the same lecture in Lansing last year

³⁵ State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) August 5, 1915.

and changed his subject to "Tragedy of the Unprepared." A dramatic lecturer, Fletcher was editor of the Marion, Ohio Tribune and was spending his tenth year on the circuits. Typical of the vast audiences reached by top drawer talent, were the 84,000 people who had paid to hear Fletcher speak in 1914. Averaging more than two hundred engagements each year, it was estimated that one million people had heard him give "Tragedy of the Unprepared," "The Modern Judas" and "The Martydom of Fools."³⁶

Although preceded by a great deal of advance publicity, including a private railroad car, the concert of Alice Nielson was not an outstanding success. Estimates were for five hundred dollars to be taken in from the sale of single admissions but, according to Superintendent H. J. Alvis, only \$285 was collected.³⁷

One of the many troubles connected with running a chautauqua was apparent on Alice Nielson night. A considerable portion of the audience entered the tent before the gate keepers came on duty and while the crowds in the tent were conservatively estimated at from two hundred to three hundred, an effort to collect from them after they were seated secured but fifty dollars.³⁸

The contract which had been signed by the Women's Civic League the previous year provided that the women guarantee the chautauqua bureau \$1750. Above this figure the women were to have half of every season ticket sold and ten per cent of anything over \$2500 in gate

³⁶ Lyceum Magazine, August 1914, p. 51.

³⁷ State Journal, (Lansing, Michigan) August 10, 1915.

³⁸ Ibid.

receipts. While they were able to make the guarantee, profits were small and the women were somewhat discouraged. "The ladies will not undertake to back the chautauqua for next years," said Mrs. E. B. Johnson, head of the committee, "unless we have the united cooperation of the whole field of women's clubs."

Redpath stood fast, however, on its traditional guarantee policy. Said Superintendent Alvis: "If Lansing wants the Redpath Chautauqua next year someone must become sponsor of the project since the institution is too big a thing to manage and take the risk of making our expenses in each town."³⁹

1916

A group of business men and community leaders decided to sponsor the chautauqua in 1916 and under the general chairmanship of Ray Morton Hardy, committees were formed to cover all phases of the work, including committees representing the Chamber of Commerce, publishing committee, committee to organize the factories and committee to sell tickets in each of the churches.

The State Journal reported on July 1st: "More and more the chautauqua is coming to be regarded as a municipal affair, and in keeping with this spirit the committee in charge have stated explicitly that all profits that might be derived from the chautauqua this year will be made part of a permanent fund to be used to perpetuate the Lyceum and chautauqua movement in Lansing."

³⁹ State Journal, (Lansing, Michigan) August 10, 1915.

One of the selling campaigns worked out by the business men involved the organizing of the fourteen churches in the city into selling teams of five and ten who planned to make a canvass of the city in one afternoon. One hundred fifty workers planned to sell twelve hundred advance tickets in four hours. To aid the campaign, a prize of twenty-five dollars in gold was offered to the church selling the largest number of tickets in proportion to its membership.⁴⁰

The State Journal aided the cause in an editorial on July 22nd:

The nation's schools are closed for the summer and yet tens of millions of Americans are going to school. They are the nation's grown up pupils who attend the chautauqua meeting.

.

They say that 112,000,000 people will attend chautauqua meetings in the United States this year. Of course there aren't that many of us altogether but why cavail? Many of us will attend several times. Anyhow, a vast army of men and women will take part in this wonderful education movement stirring up their sluggardly mental currents, gather a fresher and truer outlook on life and going home better, wiser and cheerfuller citizens.

The big attraction for the 1916 Redpath chautauqua was the appearance once again of William Jennings Bryan. Bryan's Michigan tour took him to Port Huron, Lapeer, Flint, Saginaw, Belding, Alma, St. Johns, Lansing, Charlotte and Battle Creek. The chautauqua was to open on August 4th and provided a seven day program under a big new tent.⁴¹

⁴⁰ State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) July 22, 1916.

⁴¹ The finest ever used, reports the State Journal on August 2nd. Included were all modern appliances and equipment known to the tent builders art. Not only was the tent waterproof, but in addition to the usual storm fastenings, there were double storm ropes on the inside of the tent. The tent was so strongly built, it was claimed, that it would require a cyclone strong enough to move permanent frame buildings to move it from its foundations.

Bryan's lecture was well attended, as always. Previous to the lecture, he dined with thirty-five leading democrats at the Hotel Downey. On the platform he was introduced by Governor Ferris as "One of the great Americans."⁴²

Equal suffrage, prohibition and peace were dealt with by Mr. Bryan in his lecture on "The Four Pictures." That the "Day of peace for which the ages have been waiting" was near at hand and that the United States had now the opportunity of writing "The most glorious page of history" were assertions of Mr. Bryan in the concluding phase of his lecture in which he dwelt with peace. His solution is the "substitution of co-operation for combat."

"Our nation must now decide whether it will adapt the philosophy of Pilate or the philosophy of Christ, the philosophy of force or the philosophy of love," he said. Had Europe spent one tenth as much in promoting the prescription of peace as it did in preparing for war, there would be no war. In two years the debts of the present war have equaled the sum of the costs of all the wars of history and for five hundred years to come the little children of the countries at war will be born with the yoke of debt around their neck."

In typical manner, Mr. Bryan renewed his pledge to total abstinence: "In all the tests since Daniel's time, water has proved better than alcohol" was one assertion. Another was: "drink is a greater bondage to the negro than was slavery." Again, "No brewer, no saloon-keeper would ever write on a man's recommendation, 'and he drinks' if he expected that man to obtain his job."⁴³

⁴² State Journal, (Lansing, Michigan) August 4, 1916.

⁴³ Ibid.

The next day, on August 4th, the State Journal in an observant editorial entitled, "WJB" pointed out:

Lansing entertained and was entertained by a most distinguished guest on the occasion of the opening evening of the chautauqua. Distinguished public men are not an absolute rarity and neither are extinguished public men, but the whole country holds but one man who has managed to remain distinguished throughout a series of extinguishments such as falled to the heartbreaking lot of W. J. Bryan.

One is forced to believe that WJB owes to chautauqua and lyceum the continuence of his public favor. A past master of the art of graceful expression--a skillful word painter, he has remained a favorite of the lecture platform, no matter what his political vicissitudes. As he told his audience last night he has three times in the last twenty years offered to surrender the lecture platform for periods of four years but each time has been sent back to the platform by a public which does not seem to care to let go of a perfectly good chautauqua speaker even to make a president.

With the hold he has on the American public as a speaker, and with the respectful hearing he is always assured, Mr. Bryan could exert a most powerful influence in this country if he could but divorce himself from his political history, or failing in that could give any guarantee that he is out of politics for the future, so that what he says, might not be suspected of being said for political purpose.

A penetrating analysis of conditions in Lansing was made by Allen D. Albert, president of the International Association of Rotary Clubs. Mr. Albert, editor of the Minneapolis Tribune as well, was well received and was widely quoted in the next issue (August 9th) of the State Journal. The same day an editorial pointed out: "Mr. Albert's expert inspection of Lansing under the microscope confirms what many serious minded residents of the city are beginning to feel, that if Lansing is to fulfill its present promise some logical plan of preparation for growth must be laid out, financed and carried out."

The 1916 program also included a naturalist, Earnest Harold Baynes, who made such an impression on his audience that at the conclusion of his lecture, a bird club was formed.⁴⁴

Dr. E. T. Hagerman presented his inspirational lecture: "Develop a personality. Your body is your house to live in. Make it as attractive as you can but be sure there is something in the house."

Charles Stelzle, lecturing on "Church and the Man Outside" used a questionnaire as an interlude to his address on the relations of the church and the working man.

Although the program was stated by both ticket holders and committeemen to be one of the best in chautauqua history, there was nothing in the treasury after the expenses were met. Crowds remained about the same and the torrid heat was held to be responsible for the lack of increase in the crowd. However it was once more decided to hold a chautauqua the next year and the Municipal Lyceum Committee, which was in charge of the winter lyceum course conducted in the various churches in the winter, decided to place tickets on sale early in September.

While Lansing was unable to raise a guarantee, St. Johns and Charlotte each sold nearly one thousand tickets for the coming season.⁴⁵ We shall note this phenomenon more closely in the next chapter.

⁴⁴ State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) August 5, 1916.

⁴⁵ Ibid., August 12, 1916.

1917

The Redpath directors had met in April of 1917 and passed a resolution directed to President Wilson promising the use of chautauqua "to promote patriotic influences" and "to inspire the people to greater heights of loyalty." Many of the lectures in 1917 and 1918 were devoted to that end.

President Wilson expressed his appreciation of the work the chautauqua was doing in a letter to the International Lyceum Association dated December 14, 1917:" . . .the work that the chautauqua is doing has not lost importance because of the war, but rather has gained new opportunities for service. . .let me express the hope. . .that the people will not fail in the support of a patriotic institution that may be said to be an integral part of the national defense. . ."

In Lansing, Mayor Reutter appointed Reverend F. W. Corbett to the Municipal Chautauqua Committee. Included on the committee were Superintendent of Schools J. W. Sexton, James O'Conner, Reverend M. L. Fox, J. Arthur Pino and Homer Cappock.

The star attraction this year was the war lecture by Robert Bowman, holder of the French "Cross of War" and a former volunteer with the American Ambulance Corps in France. Bowman was advertized as telling part of the inside story of the resignation of General Joffre. Lantern Slides showed actual war scenes, including a close up picture of the bursting of a large caliber shell.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) July 31, 1917.

Dr. Martin D. Hardin of Chicago spoke on "America and the World of Tomorrow." He was billed as "A man looking for peace with a gun in his hand." He said: "Germany must be thoroughly beaten and brought to her senses. There can be no hope of world peace until this is brought about."⁴⁷

"Gatling Gun" Fogelman,⁴⁸ known as the "Billy Sunday of business" said: "A real salesman does not use words "buy" and "sell" in approaching his customers; rather his enthusiasm for his product, his intense knowledge of his customer's mental and physical characteristics, combined with his own ability are the marks of a successful salesman."

Others on the 1917 program included Jeanette Rankin, congresswoman from Montana, Dr. George L. McNutt, "The Dinner Pail Man," and "Fraulein Marie Mayer, the "Mary Magdalene" of the Passion Play at Oberannergau.

Another Gilbert and Sullivan light opera was presented, "The Mikado." Other musical offerings included Createore's Band, the Bohemian Orchestra and the Indian Princess Watahwaso.

An interesting addition to the Redpath offering in 1917 was the introduction of community singing. Strangely enough, it was an incident in Lansing which brought it about. During the previous season Reverend Ray Hardy, one of Lansing's most enthusiastic chautauqua boosters, had led the audience in singing during a heavy rain in which the speaker could not be heard. As a result, Redpath offered him a position

⁴⁷ State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) August 2, 1917.

⁴⁸ So called because his rate of speaking was about three hundred words per minute.

on the circuit as a community sing leader, and Reverend Hardy resigned his East side pastorate to accept the offer.⁴⁹

1918

The last chautauqua that Lansing was to have opened for its usual seven day run on August 6th. The tent was pitched on the Kalamazoo street school grounds. This was the year of the "War Chautauqua"; and as one of the programs said, it was "An exceptionally strong list of speakers chosen with war conditions in mind to create and sustain patriotic feeling."

The war speakers included James F. Pershing, brother of General Pershing, speaking on "Backing Up the Boys," and Sir John Foster Fraser with his authoritative lecture on "The Checkerboard of Europe." Captain George F. Campbell, an English flying ace, told of his experience as "A Soldier of the Sky."

Several of the old favorites were also included. Lou Beauchamp once more gave his inspirational talk, "The Sunny Side of Life." This archetypical lecture was given the amazing total of seven thousand times and Beauchamp never needed to write another. Dr. Frank W. Gunsaulus, often called "The World's Greatest Preacher" was back again to speak about "America and the World War."

A great deal of music was also on the program. Highlighting the musical side was a production of "The Chocolate Soldier" and the appearance of Miss Margery Maxwell, soprano of the Chicago Grand Opera.

⁴⁹ State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) July 28, 1917. (See pages 41 and 46.)

A musical variety show was also presented. Entitled "Dunbar's Revue", it consisted of a travesty on "The Mikado", a minstrel program, a succession of novelties, a group of songs entitled "Melody Land" and two numbers in which local people participated, one entitled "Parade of the Allies" and the other "Spirit of Joan of Arc." Such a review, although probably highly entertaining, would have been severely frowned upon by chautauqua audiences of an earlier day.

Other talent included Mrs. Christine Frederick, with her lecture on patriotic service through efficiency in the home, and Frank Mulholland speaking on "Business and the War." Miss Clarrisa Harold told about "The Man Who Stayed at Home" which was a story "based on the insidious intrigue of Germany's spy system."

The program was well received, as it had been in other places,⁵⁰ but the structure was beginning to weaken. One of the most crippling blows chautauqua was to receive was the addition of the war amusement tax of ten percent. Said the State Journal on August 5th: "A government war tax will be collected on all chautauqua season tickets this year. This tax must be paid once and for all before the ticket is used for the first time. The tax is 25¢ on adult season tickets and 13¢ on children's season tickets. The tax is collected by the government and in no way benefits either Redpath or the local chautauqua committee."

The idea of chautauqua being labeled as amusement rather than as culture or knowledge was a new conception to many towns and they began,

⁵⁰ In Kalamazoo the program was so well received that 1,022 seats were added in the enclosure. State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) August 5, 1918.

as we shall see, to look upon chautauqua in a different light.

At the end of the week when the question of ticket pledges came up, the guarantees were not signed so readily as had been hoped, and the State Journal wrote on August 14th: "It has not been decided whether or not there were enough of them (guarantors) to guarantee expenses for a return next season."

Apparently there were not enough, for the era of the chautauqua in Lansing was over and, while the program went on in Michigan for many years, the big brown tents never again returned to the capitol city.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHAUTAUQUA IN SMALLER COMMUNITIES

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THE CHAUTAUQUA IN SMALLER COMMUNITIES

The chautauqua really belonged to the villages and towns of rural America. Noffsinger reports that a check of 1,430 places having chautauquas showed that twenty five percent were villages of 750 population or less, fifty percent were villages of 1,750 or less, seventy five percent were towns and villages of 6,000 or less.¹ Oftentimes a smaller community would carry the same program as a city and pay the same guarantee--and with much greater success. Charlotte, for example, ran the same seven day Redpath program as did Lansing, although a community only one tenth the size. Charlotte never had the financial difficulties that Lansing had, and while Lansing's last chautauqua was in 1918, Charlotte continued to have programs until 1928.²

One may conclude that the chautauqua was essentially a small town institution--and as such, its program and character reflected the interests of rural America.

In the vicinity of Lansing, Michigan there were a number of towns and villages which had chautauquas. Two communities, Mason and Stockbridge, are studied in this paper in closer detail as representative of the town and village chautauqua. Many others are reported briefly as a comparative study.

¹ John S. Noffsinger, Correspondence Schools, Lyceums and Chautauquas. (The MacMillan Company, New York, 1926) p. 126.

² Redpath Bureau files (Chicago). In 1919, when Lansing was no longer on the circuit, Charlotte guaranteed the Redpath Bureau \$1925 in season tickets to bring the program back in 1920. This was an increase of two hundred season tickets over last years pledge of 525 tickets. This enthusiastic approval was not dampened, apparently, by a rise in the cost of the tickets.

The Chautauqua in Mason

Mason, Michigan, was founded in 1838, incorporated as a village in 1865 and by 1914 was a bustling town of about 1,800. It had, according to a 1915 newspaper account, an excellent water system, municipal electric lighting plant, Bell and Citizen phones, two strong banks, two weekly newspapers, an opera house and two good hotels.³

Mason held its first chautauqua in August of 1914, when it brought the Lincoln circuit to town for a seven day program. The pattern of chautauqua in Mason, as we shall see, was an enthusiastic beginning followed by a fluctuating reception in the years following. The local board of directors in Mason, under the leadership of F. E. Densmore, put on an active campaign to sell one thousand tickets. The tickets were \$1.50 for adults and one dollar for children from eight to fifteen years of age. The advance man for Lincoln, Benjamin Bull, helped make plans for a booster trip to surrounding towns and twenty-two automobiles loaded with nearly 100 Mason boosters made a tour of Aurelius, Eden, Leslie, Fitchburg, Stockbridge, Millville, Dansville, Williamston, Pine Lake and Okemos. Said the Ingham County Democrat, "We cannot do enough of this friendly visiting between towns."⁴

The Lincoln bureau was different from a number of others in that it had no business affiliations with any other bureau or system. Its advertising in the Lyceum Magazine, June, 1914, lists its territory as

³ State Journal, (Lansing, Michigan) June 30, 1915.

⁴ July 22, 1914.

including Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Maryland. By its ninth season, 1914, it had operated 896 chautauquas.⁵

Mayor Bregman opened the exercises by introducing Superintendent Southwell of the Lincoln system, who outlined the program and introduced the talent for the day.

One of the outstanding events was the appearance of Governor Malcolm R. Patterson of Tennessee speaking on, "Why I Changed Front on My Country's Greatest Question."

Reported the Ingham County Democrat on August 12, 1914.

The speaker in a lucid and convincing manner showed why he had forsaken the wet or wrong side of the liquor question and was a pronounced advocate of local option, finally coming out for absolute prohibition because he thought it right for the betterment of mankind and the country. He proclaimed that the sale or manufacture of liquor never had done and never could do any good. That it was not a question of state rights and personal liberty but a question for the government to deal with and a question that until the government did take hold of and settle never could be settled right. He was given close attention and frequent applause. Governor Patterson was district attorney six years, congressman six years and governor of his state twice.

William Lloyd Davis of the University of Wisconsin showed a versatile ability by presenting in the afternoon a Kipling recital and in the evening a lecture on "The Soul of the Community."

⁵ One explanation of why the Lincoln system may have had no business affiliations is given by Gay MacLaren. Miss MacLaren states: "The Lincoln. . . was an out and propaganda enterprise, organized to promote the cause of prohibition. It failed, while the chautauqua movement was at its peak of prosperity." From Morally We Roll Along Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1938, p. 223.

These lectures on community betterment seemed to fare better in the cities.⁶ The Democrat reported:

Mr. Davis liked our town generally, but told us some of the things we needed, like a complete change in our school system, a public sewer system, community library, etc. Some of his ideas are impracticable, in our judgement at the present time; they may come in the future, but we are not ready for them at present, will not be until there is a radical change in the community.⁷

Other lectures on the 1914 program included Doctor Frank Brainard of California with his stereoptican lecture on the Panama Canal and the Panama Exposition, and Belle Kearney, speaking for women's suffrage in a lecture entitled, "The American Woman of Tomorrow." The Democrat reported: "Her lecture was very instructive and one good thing about it, she had an excellent voice that could be heard in all parts of the tent."⁸

Congressman Fred S. Jackson of Kansas lectured on "You, I and Uncle Sam" and "What Makes Kansas?" Doctor George LaMonte Cole gave a stereoptican lecture, "Before You, What?" which, strangely enough, was a descriptive account of the cliff dwellers of the Southwest.

Music on the Lincoln circuit included the Royal Black Hussar Band, an eighteen piece organization typical of similar groups which for many

⁶ Sometimes these lectures must have been inappropriate. In Stockbridge, a pleasant little village of large green lawns and roomy, old fashioned porches, an old-time resident, interviewed by the author, recalled with an amused chuckle the lecturer who earnestly told Stockbridge residents that what they really needed was a "children's playground."

⁷ August 12, 1914.

⁸ Ingham County Democrat, August 12, 1914.

years formed the musical background of chautauqua. Gay MacLaren reports there was always a supply of White Hussars which could be sent out on a moment's notice in groups of from eight to twenty-five. Said Miss MacLaren:

The program for a hussar concert was always the same, from the opening rendition of "The Boys of the Old Brigade" to the last "O Say Can You See" played by the entire band.

Eventually there were so many companies sent out that disputes began to arise. . . finally some of the Hussars changed their trousers and became Black Hussars. Others became the Imperial Grenadiers and still others, the Royal Dragoons. But whatever kind of regiment they were, they all sang "The Boys of the Last Brigade."⁹

Also presented this year was the opera "Bohemian Girl" by the National Grand Opera Company.

The vast moral gulf between the chautauqua and the itinerant medicine show is illustrated in the following account taken from the Ingham County Democrat for August 12th:

Wyoming Bill's Wild West show, which was here last Friday, came with advance reports of gambling. It is reported that the manipulation of the shell game caught some of our people. . . We will venture the assertion that not one of the people who lost their money at the game could have been induced to purchase a \$1.50 season ticket to the chautauqua.

On August 12th, the first chautauqua was over and the Democrat reported:

Mason's first chautauqua will close this evening and it goes without saying that it has been a success in every particular. Those who have not been in attendance have been the losers very materially. There has been given a first class program of music, lectures and other entertainment that has been wholesomely refreshing and pleasing. The officers and committees have

⁹ Gay MacLaren., op. cit., p. 227.

worked strenuously and cheerfully to carry the project to a successful ending and now announce to the good people of Mason and vicinity that there will be another program next year. . . People of Mason and surrounding country are advanced in intelligence and have the proper spirit for such worthy enterprises and we all know that all are willing to aid. . .

Other communities reported successful chautauquas. The little village of Portland reported: "An idea of the hold which the chautauqua idea has secured in Portland is seen in the action of local residents in pledging five hundred tickets for next year's chautauqua in exactly fourteen minutes."¹⁰

Other Lincoln chautauquas, having the same program as Mason, were reported in Eaton Rapids and Grand Ledge. A four day chautauqua was held in Perry, a five day program in Leslie and a seven day Redpath chautauqua in Charlotte.¹¹

1915

The Lincoln system put on its second six day chautauqua in August of 1915. A new feature of the Mason chautauqua was the addition of the Junior Chautauqua, conducted by a playground expert, in which training was given the children in sports, folk dancing, games, and story telling.

The Junior Chautauqua, which became a popular part of nearly all circuits, grew from the simple need of taking care of the children while

¹⁰ State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) August 24, 1914.

¹¹ State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) August 1st to 24th, 1914. An unusual procedure occurred in Owosso when the Central Chautauqua Bureau brought a four day chautauqua to town without a guarantee and as a result lost six hundred dollars. Once was enough, apparently, for the bureau refused to come back unless five hundred dollars in season tickets were pledged. (August 20, 1914).

the parents attended the meetings. However, as children's programs developed, the junior group was given a place of its own on the adult program with the result that the hitherto most recalcitrant parents turned out in great numbers to see their children put on pageants and plays on the chautauqua platform.

Say Victoria and Robert Case:

". . .today's supervised playgrounds, youth training centers, community pageants and nationwide interest in juvenile delinquency were rooted to a large extent in the enormously widespread chautauqua influence. The ground work was laid in chautauqua for movies for children, newspaper organization of children's clubs, Boy Scouts, Campfire Girls and other groups, junior orchestras, summer camps and a host of activities of a similar nature.¹²

Mr. Carl Backman, present Western manager of Redpath and a chautauqua official for many years, and his wife, the former Gay MacLaren, agree that one of the strongest influences in keeping the chautauqua going after the war was the influence of the children. These young people, nurtured by a whole generation of "chautauqua weeks" persuaded their doubtful parents of the good the chautauqua was doing and prolonged its life history, in some cases, for nearly a decade.¹³

The children in Mason in 1915 put on a pageant, "The Festival of Nations." This play represented the coming together in America of all nationalities and the contributions each made to our recreative life with the final scene depicting the amalgamation of these races and their customs into one great people.¹⁴

¹² Victoria and Robert Case, We Called it Culture (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1948) p. 149.

¹³ Information gained from personal interview with Carl Backman.

¹⁴ Ingham County Democrat (Mason, Michigan) August 11, 1914.

Another popular children's pageant was "Good Fairy Thrift" presented on nearly all Redpath circuits several seasons later. The Ingham County News on August 2nd described it:

. . .It was a very good play in three scenes with lots of music, songs, dancing and drills. Many guests among whom were George Washington, Martha Washington, good fairies were invited to the christening of America. Good Fairy Thrift was overlooked and not invited, making her very jealous and angry. For vengeance she sent her stepsister Wastefulness to attend, who gave an omen that young America would be wasteful; have beauty, fertility, strength and wealth but waste them all...This made all very excited, but scene Two showed that Wastefulness's words were coming true, nothing being saved at all.

Scene Three found Wastefulness overpowering Fairy Thrift who was crowned Queen of the Fairies. In the finale of the project, all of the children sang the "Star Spangled Banner."

Said the News succinctly: "This taught a good lesson which would be well for the boys and girls to take to heart."

Lecturers on the 1915 program included Colonel G. A. Gearhart who gave two lectures. Said the Democrat:

We did not hear Colonel Gearhart in the afternoon but his evening lecture was deep and scholarly. He appealed to the young to get an education, to be honest and manly, respect womanhood, avoid liquor and tobacco and be saving, not miserly. He had a good voice and clear enunciation and you could understand every word.¹⁵

This description fits in well with his bureau's delineation of him in the Lyceum Magazine for July, 1914: "Each lecture is designed to be morally and intellectually strong, popular, up-to-the-minute; to have logical construction, pure English and choice diction and as such has received the commendation of many educators."

¹⁵

Ingham County Democrat (Mason, Michigan) August 25, 1915.

Ex-senator William E. Mason of Illinois spoke on "Presidents I have Known." This lecture had been scheduled in Mason last year but the Senator had to cancel it because of illness. In spite of rainy weather, large crowds turned out for the event.¹⁶

Senator Mason discussed personal experiences with presidents and public men. According to the Democrat for August 25th, he paid a fine tribute to President Wilson in his efforts to keep us out of war. The speaker scored William Jennings Bryan for resigning from the cabinet at this critical time.

"We wish every imperialist in the country could have heard the senator's remarks on the Philippines question," continued the article, "It would be no discredit to our country to haul down the stars and stripes from the islands. We agreed to do this with Cuba and the Philippines and have only half kept our promise."

Harold Martin Kramer, whose lecturing according to the Lyceum Magazine for July 1914, "aims to lead audiences away from gloom to light" in his Mason lecture "dwelt on the brotherhood of man and how we should help and encourage those in trouble. He flayed the gossipers and put in some good words for equal suffrage."

A pseudo-scientific lecture was also on the program this year. Reno B. Weldoun explained many experiments with electricity, light, shadow, and sound. Mr. Weldoun, for example, welded two pieces of iron together with a fire started with an icicle for a match.

¹⁶ Ingham County Democrat (Mason, Michigan) August 25, 1915.

Honorable J. K. Coddington, ex-warden and warden-to-be of Leavenworth, talked about prison life. "On one thing," said the Democrat, "he was very emphatic. That was that most of the prisoners were cigaret smokers or dope fiends."¹⁷

The Lincoln system also had its share of music and drama. The Arden Drama Players presented "The Taming of the Shrew" and the Royal Welsh Ladies Choir gave a concert.

Between numbers of the Sunday program, the Superintendent brought up the ever-present question of pledges for next year. The Lincoln bureau announced an increase to two dollars in the cost of a season ticket and called for pledges. Almost no one responded. By the following day about half of the previous year's total of 523 season ticket pledges were obtained. Said the Democrat in its usual chatty manner: "The matter is now in the hands of the committee but as less than half of the required tickets were pledged it does not look like a chautauqua for 1916, unless the Lincoln people get off their high horse."¹⁸

Apparently the Lincoln system did not relent as to its prices, for there was no chautauqua in Mason in 1916.

Other towns in the vicinity were faring better. Charlotte had no trouble pledging eight hundred tickets for a return of the seven day

¹⁷ Ingham County Democrat (Mason, Michigan) August 25, 1915.

¹⁸ The Ingham County Democrat, which ceased publication this same year was an informal newspaper both in writing and spelling. Its unorthodox style while journalistically questionable, gives an interesting picture of Mason during these days. It must be realized, however, that such an individualistic newspaper might also have been informal in its gathering and interpretation of the facts.

Redpath circuit, and Grand Ledge and St. Johns were able to guarantee six hundred tickets each.¹⁹

1917

After an interval of one year, about thirty-five business men of Mason decided they wanted another chautauqua and contacted a Coit-Alber circuit to put on a five day program in Mason beginning on July 26th.

Coit-Alber, a member of the Affiliated Lyceum Bureaus,²⁰ was welcomed to Mason with a front page story which, once more, emphasized the moral tone of chautauqua. Said the Ingham County News on July 19th:

The chautauqua is an American institution that is a benefit to and for the entertainment of everyone. All live cities regard them as an institution and the small price of season tickets as a big dividend-paying investment. Through this medium only can the best talent in the country be brought to the small city, and the fact that each entertainment is high class and wholesome makes it one of the few places where a whole family can spend an hour of profit and pleasure without a chance of questionable features.

The chautauqua opened on Thursday with a concert by the Florentine Musicians and a lecture by Colonel William H. Miller of Spokane, Washington, who lectured on "It isn't Your Town, It's You." On Friday the Metropolitan Male Quartette preceded a lecture by Dr. Yutaka Minakuchi,

¹⁹ The State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) August 11-16.

²⁰ The affiliated Lyceum Bureau was an example of how smaller circuits banded together for better exchange of talent and mutual economies. It included the Coit Lyceum Bureau of Cleveland; White Entertainment of Boston; Mutual Lyceum Bureau of Chicago; Alkahest Lyceum System of Atlanta; Dixie Lyceum Bureau of Dallas; Ellison-White Lyceum of Boise-Portland; and the Coit-Alber Chautauquas of Cleveland. Coit-Alber had two circuits: a five day and a seven day operating in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana and Michigan. Lyceum Magazine, July 1917.

a Japanese orator who "presented some unusual ideas in regard to the so-called Japanese peril."²¹ On Saturday the New York City Marine Band played a concert and Senator Harold C. Kessinger, of Illinois spoke on "America First." Said the Ingham County News: "In a very brilliant manner he showed how it was up to the people to win the war. He strongly censured the corporations and the manufacturers that are becoming such through child labor. He showed how by working the children so hard would rob the country of their aid when needed."²²

"Sunday's Program," said the same paper on July 26th, "is subject to change and the public is assured that nothing will be presented that is out of harmony with the sacred nature of the day." The Sunday program included the Gullotta Trio and a vocalist. One of the rules that was never broken on chautauqua was that nothing was ever presented that could be considered out of keeping with the moral standards of the small town.²³ Someone on the program that Sunday must have been a bit careless for the Ingham County News reported: "Some people took exception to some of the humorous songs by Mrs. Dickey believing they were not in harmony with the sacred character of the day as was advertized."

²¹ Ingham County News (Mason, Michigan) July 19, 1917.

²² Ibid., July 19, 1917.

²³ Official sanction for this attitude was given by the adaptation of a united contract by the Chautauqua Managers Association stipulating that, "a lecturer's contract could be broken at the manager's will if the lecturer "conducts himself improperly" i.e., 'in violation of agricultural mores.' "As reported by Gregory Mason, "Chautauqua, its Technique" American Mercury 1:274-280, March, 1924.

Governor George W. Clarke of Iowa lectured on "Ideals of Public Duty" on Monday. He appealed to America to realize that Germany had been steadily winning and only the most united and sustained effort on the part of the United States could turn the tide in favor of the Allies.²⁴

There was some dissatisfaction in Mason at the close of the program. Several of the numbers were considered weak and said the Ingham County News on August 2nd, "coupled with the hot weather had a tendency to discourage many from attendance, and as a result the feeling, to say the least, lukewarm toward a chautauqua in 1918." The newspaper expressed alarm at this attitude towards chautauqua and suggested the community investigate other bureaus in order to obtain a stronger program.

In other communities near by, chautauqua was faring better. In Owosso, which had a Coit-Alber program, the crowds were so large they filled the street outside. The State Journal reported on July 26th: "The crowd seemed almost unanimous in favoring the return to Coit-Alber next year."

Lansing, Charlotte and St. Johns reported Redpath seven day circuits, Williamston reported a five day Redpath program and Portland reported a Community Chautauqua²⁵ beginning on August 30th.²⁶

²⁴ Ingham County News (Mason, Michigan) August 2, 1917.

²⁵ Community, along with Redpath and Swarthmore, became the 'big three' in the 1920's when many of the smaller and less efficiently organized circuits had to sell out.

²⁶ State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) July 5th - August 30th, 1917.

1919

In 1919, after an absence of one year, the chautauqua returned to Mason, this time with a five day Redpath program held from August 9th to August 14th.

Only one lecture of the purely inspirational type appeared on the program this year. This was Doctor E. T. Hagerman with his message, "The Man With One Window". Other lectures were informational in nature such as that of O. E. Behymer on "The Romance of Business," and Doctor Stephen A. Lloyd on "Child Welfare and Home Environment." Several warmed-over war lectures were also presented. Elwood T. Bailey spoke on "America's Today Gleaned from Yesterday's 'Over There'" and Miss Stella Fuller, a Red Cross nurse, spoke on "The America of Tomorrow."

Music included the Dunbar Male Quartet, the Lombard singers and entertainers, Miss Henrietta Conrad, New York dramatic soprano; and the Steely Concert Company.

Probably the most successful play ever given on the chautauqua circuits, "It Pays to Advertise," was presented in Mason this year and was, as it always seemed to be, one of the most successful numbers. Every seat in the tent was taken and a row of seats put around the tent besides.

"It Pays to Advertise" featured a company of eight people and, according to Gay MacLaren, was first produced by William Keighley.²⁷ Later on, Keighley produced for the circuits "Smilin' Through,"

²⁷ Gay MacLaren, op. cit., p. 138. Keighley was later to become a director for Warner Brothers and produced such famous pictures as Green Pastures.

"Nothing But The Truth," "Cappy Ricks," and Drinkwater's "Abraham Lincoln."

A larger ticket sale than any previously held chautauqua resulted in a total of \$931.00. This gave the committee, for the first time, a good margin over the amount guaranteed.

Only a few chautauquas were reported in the State Journal for 1919. Portland held a five day program from August 21st to August 25th and Charlotte had its usual successful season. Eaton Rapids also reported a chautauqua although rain kept the attendance to a minimum.

1921

One last attempt was made to bring the chautauqua back to Mason. In 1921 the Browne-Cavanaugh Post of the American Legion brought a three day Radcliffe program to town. No longer, however, was it the big week for the community. On the front page of the Ingham County News for August 11, 1921 appears the heading: 'BIG CARNIVAL COMES HERE THIS MONTH' while at the bottom of the page is the cryptic announcement: 'Radcliff Chautauqua Opens.'

The chautauqua featured an operatic trio and an address by John J. Tigest on "Value of the Individual" and "American Political Ideals". On the second day, the Kuehy concert company appeared and the chautauqua director talked on "A community program" and in the evening on "America's Social Ideal". Playground supervision was under the direction of Miss Marian F. Harvey. On the third day the Simpson sisters furnished the preludes while William E. Stinson lectured on "How to Put the Program into Effect" and "America's Industrial Ideals."

In spite of rather unusual ticket arrangements which provided the option of using the ticket up in one afternoon or allowing one person to see the six entertainments, there was not very much interest. Crowds were small and the backers lost considerable money. This was the last attempt--the chautauqua was finished in Mason.

In other communities there was much more interest this year. Redpath brought their big seven day program to Eaton Rapids, Charlotte, and Alma. Traverse-Newton, a three day affair, performed in Williamston, Laingsburg, Brighton, and Dewitt. Community Chautauqua signed up Portland, Howell, and Fowlerville. On Community this year, Lloyd C. Douglas, described as a "minister, a writer, an orator of much talent" spoke on "Personality" in the afternoon and on an unDouglas-like topic in the evening, "Life a Business Proposition."²⁸ In Howell the tent did not arrive and the program was held the first day in the high school. Attendance, reported the State Journal on August 9th, taxed the seating capacity at every performance. In Brighton, "Cappy Ricks" was declared to be "the best entertainment of the course."²⁹

Dewitt, bringing its first chautauqua to town, ran into trouble when rain flooded the grounds and the Traverse-Newton circuit was forced to hold their programs in Woorman Hall. Nothing daunted, the community enthusiastically pledged enough tickets for a return engagement in 1922. In Alma, always a good chautauqua town, one hundred ticket sellers made things easy.³⁰

²⁸ State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) August 6, 1921.

²⁹ Ibid., July 20, 1921.

³⁰ Ibid., July 2 - August 20, 1921.

The Chautauqua in Stockbridge

The little village of Stockbridge, Michigan, located about thirty five miles to the southeast of Lansing, presents an example of the chautauqua as it appeared in a small village. Only a village of eight hundred, Stockbridge supported a chautauqua from 1914 until 1923.³¹

In 1915, for example, the Stockbridge chautauqua was scheduled from July 31st to August 4th. For six weeks preceding the event, the Stockbridge Brief-Sun, the community weekly, ran banner headlines announcing the event. The stores advertised "chautauqua suits" and "chautauqua specials" and interest in the event was high. Season tickets for the 1915 program were \$1.50, considerably under Lansing's \$2.50 for the same year but the same price as Mason's program. Single tickets were twenty five cents in the afternoon and thirty five cents in the evening except on "Band Day" (August 4th) when the afternoon price jumped ten cents and the evening ticket cost fifty cents.

The tent and company arrived in a pouring rain on July 31st, and the tent crews were thoroughly soaked as they put up the big canvas.³²

The program opened on Saturday afternoon with a prelude concert by Montanelli's Venetian Quartette followed by a lecture by George H. Spencer entitled "Dreamers and Schemers" In the evening another half

³¹ Files of the Stockbridge Brief-Sun.

³² The 1915 season was one of the rainiest in chautauqua history and the continuous inclement weather forced a number of the smaller circuits to close down. (Information from personal interview with Miss A. M. Weiskoff, then an official with the Dunbar circuit and now office manager for Redpath's Chicago office.)

hour entertainment was presented by the quartette and Spencer talked again, this time on "Preparedness for Peace."

The second day was Sunday and, as was common on all Sunday chautauquas, the afternoon program was opened with a prayer by Reverend Stephens and the evening program was similarly introduced by Reverend Adair. The preludes were given by Frederick M. Marsten's musical entertainers. Mrs. Demarchus Brown lectured both afternoon and evening. In the afternoon, her subject was "Her Long Road" while in the evening it was "Modern Life and Literature." Ray Newton, a magician, also entertained with feats of magic.

On the third day the Winifred Townsend Concert Company gave a concert in the afternoon and a prelude at night. Congressman M. Clyde Kelley, congressman from Pennsylvania, spoke on "Machine Made Legislation."

The Kilties Band provided the musical entertainment on the fourth day giving a prelude in the afternoon to Doctor E. G. Shouse's lecture on the "Humor and Philosophy of Habit" and a grand concert in the evening. Miss Jean Campbell was the Soprano soloist.

On the last day, the Stratford Opera Company presented the musical portion of the program while Fred Eastman gave the lectures. Mr. Eastman's titles are indicative: "Taking Stock of the Old Town" and "Waking Up the Village".

The evening program is interesting because it represents the sort of programming which lecturers were forced to accept. The first part of the evening program was a concert of popular numbers. This was

followed by Mr. Eastman's lecture and after the lecture, the opera company presented selections from "The Mikado." Thus the lecture was presented between two musical selections. While music after the lecture was not so common, it was nearly inevitable beforehand. Nearly every lecture was preceded by some sort of prelude, if not music, usually lighter entertainment. Thus the mood of the audience was usually not conducive to serious thinking or listening and it presented a double challenge to the lecturer to "hold his audience"--the test of any chautauqua lecturer.

At the close of the program five hundred tickets were pledged for the return of the chautauqua. It is revealing to compare the ticket pledges of various sized towns in the vicinity. In 1915, for instance, we find the following:³³

<u>town</u>	<u>size</u>	<u>pledges</u>
Stockbridge	800	500
Grand Ledge	3,000	600
Charlotte	5,000	800
St. Johns	3,900	600
Lansing	44,000	less than 700

It would seem, then, that the size of the community was a factor in the success of the chautauqua financially and that the smaller communities, with their lack of other competing activities, were better able to support vigorously the chautauqua program.

³³ Brief Sun (Stockbridge, Michigan) August 5, 1915.
State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) July 16th, August 11th, August 15th, August 18th, 1915.

The next year the Ladies Welfare Club of Stockbridge handled the ticket sales and the five day program was, according to the Brief-Sun for September 7, 1916, "A very attractive and well balanced program." Inspirational lectures included Doctor L. E. Follansbee speaking on "Genius and Gumption" "which we believe," said the Brief-Sun on September 7th, "was the best lecture ever given in the village. What boy or girl, man or woman can't think on the inspiration, the big-hearted pleasant-voiced and eloquent speaker gave us during our hour talk?"

Other lecturers included Hans P. Freece speaking on the "Inside of Mormonism"³⁴ and Benton C. Crowl's "Get There and Stay There." The honorable George E. Gorman spoke on "Patriotism and Pork" and Bryon C. Piatt lectured on "Inside the Law."

Music was furnished by a number of groups, including the Chicago Orchestral Quintet, the Theresse Sheehan Concert Company, Angelo Vitale and his Concert Band and the Swiss Alpine Yodlers.

Once more the program was successful and the guarantee of \$750.00 was made.

By 1922, the chautauqua had been reduced to a three day program in Stockbridge but was still being held successfully. The 1922 chautauqua was a free one--the expenses being borne by sixty or seventy local citizens. "The Chautauqua," said the Brief-Sun in explaining the

³⁴ Such a subject is reminiscent of the early days of the Lyceum. James B. Pond made the Lyceum famous when he brought to the lecture platform Ann Eliza, the nineteenth wife of Brigham Young, with her story of Mormon life. Upton Close, "The Lecture Business," Saturday Review of Literature, 21:15, January 13, 1940.

reason for the free program, "is not a money making scheme--never was and never will be. But a strictly educational proposition."³⁵

Once again, the three act play, "It Pays to Advertise" was presented and a crowd estimated at between one thousand and 1500 were present. A large crowd unable to get into the tent waited outside.³⁶

O. D. McKeever gave his lecture, "Sunny Side of Life" for approximately the nine hundredth time. McKeever had been an inspirational lecturer for twenty years and reportedly had been heard by about two million people.³⁷

Other lectures included T. F. Paris speaking on "Selling at Par" and "Community Welfare" and two lectures by W. D. Cornell, "Battle of the Intellect" and "Buried Alive."

The music was furnished by the Waverly Girls Concert and the LaSalle Bell Ringers Quartette.

On the third night, one hundred people stepped forward and signed the contract assuring the community a chautauqua in 1923, the tent was taken down and sent to Camden, and the community settled back once more into its accustomed ways.

In 1923, the chautauqua returned to Stockbridge for the last time. The Traverse-Newton Company presented a three day program August 6th, 7th, and 8th. The only lecturer on the program was V. G. Lacy who spoke

³⁵ Brief-Sun (Stockbridge, Michigan) August 3, 1922.

³⁶ Brief-Sun (Stockbridge, Michigan) August 17, 1922.

³⁷ Information from special pamphlet published as part of the Brief-Sun during August 1922.

on "Making the Dream Come True" and "A World in Trouble." Josh Lee, the humorist, presented "Sense and Nonsense"; and Ash Davis, the cartoonist, gave a lecture-recital. The Landis Concert Band and the Herrod Jubilee Singers furnished the music. As was typical of the post-war chautauqua, the play was the thing and this year it was "A Pair of Sixes" in three acts.

The last mention of Chautauqua we have is an article in the Brief-Sun for August 9, 1923: "From opinions expressed by those attending the entertainment, they are considerably better than last year. Several have inquired whether the village will have a chautauqua next year but no canvass has yet been taken and it is impossible to say."

CHAPTER V

IN RETROSPECT

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IN RETROSPECT

This was chautauqua. In "looking back" in this chapter we shall note certain trends in the movement, its size, the evolution of the chautauqua lecture and the chautauqua program. We can, perhaps, note some of the contributions of chautauqua and some of the reasons for its decline. We can conclude that as it appeared in Lansing, Mason and Stockbridge, so it appeared in thousands of other towns and, as with the towns reported here, its reception, influence and life history were different in each community.

Its size was tremendous. At the close of the war, the Bureau of Statistical Research made a study of attendance at chautauqua and reported 4,947 chautauquas were held in 1918; 6,552 in 1919; and 8,581 in 1920. In all, 511 lecturers were used; 46,368 lectures were delivered and 5,757 persons were employed in 1920. There was an aggregate attendance of 35,497,550.¹

Chautauquas were held in each of the states, Iowa holding the greatest number (436) and Alabama the least (four). At the time of the survey, in 1921, there were more than thirty chautauquas operating more than one hundred circuits or furnishing talent for independent chautauquas.²

¹ Roy Becker Tozier, "The American Chautauqua, A Study of a Social Institution," (Unpublished Doctor's thesis, the State University of Iowa, Iowa City, 1932) pp. 64-65.

² Loc. cit.

The Chautauqua Lecturer

The evolution of the chautauqua lecturer provides us with an indication of the development and decline of the chautauqua movement. At first, the lectures were inspirational in nature. This type, known as the "Mother-Home-Heaven" lecture, was by far the most popular. Noffsinger reports that an analysis of three thousand lectures revealed that fifty three percent belonged to this category.³

Keith Vawter pointed out that the Mother-Home-Heaven lecture was popular in all states but that Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska were perhaps the most receptive.⁴

The New Republic on June 9, 1924 defined the Mother-Home-Heaven lecture as "A coupled-up series of platitudes about the desirability of truth and virtue given in an earnest, simple style and with a touch of sentiment whenever possible."

Whatever it was, the inspirational lecture was the great favorite of Michigan audiences. Some of the titles are indicative: "If I Could Live Life Over," "The Man Worth While," "Sour Grapes," "He Who Thinks He Can".

It is easy to make fun of the inspirational type lecture and hard to be kind to it. But no other type of speaking achieved nearly its support or extent. Perhaps the goal of all such lectures was Russell H. Conwell's "Acres of Diamonds". Men heard it and thirty five years

³ As reported by Edward C. Lindeman, "After Lyceum and Chautauqua, What?" Bookman 65:246, May, 1927.

⁴ F. C. Kelley, "What 20,000,000 people Like to Hear," American 87:32-33, June, 1919.

later took their children to hear it. Delivered six thousand times, Comwell used the proceeds to build the largest church in America as well as Temple University, which enrolled then over ten thousand students.⁵

Keith Vawter pointed out that managers considered three phases of each lecture. First, the interest that people have in the subject itself. Second, the way the speaker "gets it across", which includes his delivery and the general impression made by his personality. Finally, there is the after affect--some of the speakers could bring the audience to their feet but the next day few would be able to remember anything. Others may not make a good first impression but their remarks would be quoted all the following winter.⁶

The first class of speakers were known as twenty four hour men because their impression endured only twenty four hours. Vawter classified Bryan as a twenty four hour man because he spoke in broad generalities rather than specific points which could be more easily remembered.

Each lecture was carefully reported on by a daily tabulation. The score sheet rated each lecture on how it impressed the audience--whether the people resented it, tolerated it, or liked it.⁷

Second in importance was the "informational" lecture which gained its greatest impetus during and after the first World War. During the

⁵ W. C. Crosby, "Acres of Diamonds," American Mercury 12:104, May, 1927.

⁶ F. C. Kelley, op. cit., p. 33.

⁷ Loc. cit.

war the chautauqua was a sounding board for the influencing of public opinion and, aside from the patriotic appeals, audiences were given practical advice on everything from the conservation of food to the proper use of cosmetics. Informational lectures included such widely separated topics as discussions on current events, illustrated travel-ogues, community welfare lectures and popular science discussions.

Far sighted leaders of chautauqua saw the value of the informational lecture and aided greatly in its development and extension. Such men included Arthur Coit, president of the extensive Coit-Alber system, Harry P. Harrison, general manager of the many Redpath circuits and Paul M. Pearson, president of the Lyceum and Chautauqua Association.⁸

A. D. Albert defined the informational lecture as "The talk of one who knows a subject authoritatively, preferably one of the sciences, and has the unbelievably rare ability to talk of it entertainingly."⁹

That was the great difficulty. There were many with the knowledge but few were able to present it effectively. Said the inspirational lecturers, with some justification, "It is easier to give 'information' to those of us who have platform power than to give platform power to the man who has 'information'".¹⁰

Most chautauquas managed to balance the lecture program with part "inspirational" and part "informational" lectures, with the latter becoming more popular after the war.

⁸ A. D. Albert, "Tents of the Conservative," Scribners 72:57, July, 1922.

⁹ Ibid., p. 58.

¹⁰ Loc. cit.

Either kind, however, lectured under adverse circumstances when they lectured at chautauqua. Chautauqua tents were open at the sides which allowed whatever noise and distraction there was outside to enter. The lecturer's voice had to compete with the children who often played at the rear of the tent, the honking of automobiles outside and the whistle of trains. Crying babies were vainly shushed and taken outside, restless children circulated--it was no place for a man of sensitive feelings.

The lecturer had to remember always that the chautauqua was a family affair, that he was speaking to a mixed group, and that his lecture had to be "popular". It had to be easily understandable yet with "something the audience could take away with them" or as Mason says, "five parts sense and five parts nonsense."¹¹

The Chautauqua Program

As with the inspirational lecture, the chautauqua program reflects the rock-ribbed conservatism of the small towns it served. An interesting survey of the tastes of chautauqua audiences was made by one of the musicians who served on the same circuit as Allen D. Albert.¹² This musician, leader of a group which specialized in playing requests, kept a diary of selections played during a season. Says Albert:¹³

¹¹ Gregory Mason, "Putting the Talk in Chautauqua" Outlook: 128:418-20 July 6, 1921.

¹² Presumably, Lansing audiences were among those counted in the survey for Albert was on Redpath in 1916 and appeared in Lansing on August 7th, speaking on "The City of Lansing."

¹³ Allen D. Albert, op. cit., p. 56.

Toward the end of the tour he and I went over his diary. We found that the whole number of selections which had been asked for more than once or twice only did not exceed nineteen. . .The nineteen favorite selections were:

"A Perfect Day"
"Love's Old Sweet Song"
"The Palms"
"One Fine Day" from "Butterfly"
"Goodbye" (Tosti)
"My Heart at Thy Dear Voice" aria from
"Samson and Delilah"
"Aloha Oe"
"Song of the Evening Star"
"Absent"
"I Hear You Calling Me"
"Cujus Animam" from the "Stabat Mater"
"Minuet in G" (Beethoven)
"Melody in F" (Rubinstein)
"Humoresque" (Dvorak)
"The Largo" from "Xerxes" (Handel)
"Pilgrims Chorus" from "Tannhauser"
"Spring Song" (Mendelssohn)
"Meditation" from "Thais"

It is interesting to note that only about four of these selections were popular songs and that, even though jazz was very popular in the cities, there was none asked for by chautauqua audiences. One might ponder also the fact that a cross section of America asked for "Cujus Animam," from Stabat Mater as one of its most popular selections.

In the field of drama, it is easy to follow the gradual breakdown of prejudice against the theater. First came the dramatic readers. Shakespearean plays, being next to the Bible in respectability, were the next logical step and appeared on the circuits about 1913. In several years such semi-religious plays as "Servant in The House" were greeted by large crowds. Finally carefully-selected popular plays were a successful part of nearly all circuits.

Contributions of the Chautauqua

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to define the contributions of chautauqua except in general terms. Who, for instance, could measure the aftermath, in a community, of a visit of the chautauqua? Who could measure the increased interest in discussion, the home reading, the influence of chautauqua on the children? Much of the program was chaff and much of it was absurd, as we have seen in the programs presented in Michigan. But some of it was vital, intelligent and extremely worthwhile.

Some of the contributions are more easily measured than others. There can be little doubt, for instance, that the chautauqua gave the Boy Scout movement in Lansing much of its impetus. (page 35) Such widely divergent activities as the formation of bird-study clubs (page 50), the growing interest in education (page 40), the new consciousness in civic improvement (page 28) or the vital part played in national defense (page 51) were contributions that were real and vital.

There were many who felt as did ex-governor Adolph O. Eberhardt of Minnesota when he said: "If I had the choice of being the founder of any great movement the world has ever known, I would choose the chautauqua movement."¹⁴

Even after the gloss and glitter, the superficial and the shallow are considered, chautauqua's greatest contribution, perhaps, was in its

¹⁴ Frank McLure, "Under the Big Tent," The Independent, 82:503, June 21, 1915.

essentially democratic nature. Theodore Roosevelt called the chautauqua, "The most American thing in America." Woodrow Wilson expressed this democratic need, so well fulfilled by chautauqua, in eloquent terms when he said in his 1912 campaign:

The whole purpose of democracy is that we may hold counsel with one another, so as not to depend upon the understanding of one man, but to depend upon the counsel of all. For only as men are brought into counsel, and state their own needs and interests, can the general interests of a great people be compounded with a policy suitable to all. . .so, at this opening of a new age, in this its day of unrest and discontent, it is our part to clear the air, to bring about common counsel to set up a parliament for the people.¹⁵

Decline

The passing of the chautauqua puzzled many Americans. As late as 1923, ten million people bought in excess of 35,000,000 admissions to chautauqua performances. But the day of the peripatetic university was about over. Arising out of the compulsions of isolation, the chautauqua had given the people what they wanted--a look at the outside world. By the early 1920's however, isolationism was no longer the chief desideratum in the formation of institutions; and chautauqua, like the circuit rider, the camp meeting, and the itinerant preacher, was no longer able to meet the needs of its patrons.

The desires and interests of the people were changing. In 1910 the editor of the State Journal could write of his "deep seated grouch against automobiles" (page 22) but his newspaper ten years later ran

¹⁵ Glen Frank, "Parliament of the People," Century, 98:401, July, 1919.

four pages of "automobile news" in every issue. This same editor could find two full pages of motion picture attractions in 1920 and any number of firms offering bargains in Atwater-Kent radios. As Gay MacLaren said, "The circuits had gradually folded up their tents and, not unlike the Arabs, silently stolen away. They had given way before the onslaught of the radio, the moving picture, and "the car in every garage."¹⁶

What was more important, however, was the new type of social structure growing out of the emphasis on the machine age. Instead of the old neighborhood groups, people tended to associate with those whose interests were similar and as a result, "interest groups" developed. Chautauqua, based on a simpler and more democratic era, was no longer needed.

The cities, with their many and varied interests, were first to forego chautauqua. Lansing held its last program in 1918. In the smaller or more isolated communities, the chautauqua went on for another decade. Redpath, for example, maintained a circuit in Michigan until 1930. But these were the remnants--when the last tent was put away, the chautauqua was gone forever. Unlike many other social institutions, the chautauqua left no off-spring institution to remember it by. Today, nothing remains of the phenomenon that was the traveling chautauqua; it lives only in the nostalgic memories of those who watched it grow, flourish, and having fulfilled its purpose, vanish from the American scene.

¹⁶ Gay MacLaren, op. cit., p. 295.

Summary

The chautauqua movement had its roots in two religious revivals, the Methodist camp meeting and the Sunday school movement. In 1873, John H. Vincent and Lewis Miller instituted a combination Sunday school institute and open-air camp meeting at Lake Chautauqua, New York. This was the origin of chautauqua. With the establishment of the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle, the Chautauqua summer school and the Chautauqua assemblies, the idea was spread throughout the country.

The lyceum movement, which had flourished as an open forum in the early part of the nineteenth century, became, after the Civil War, commercial booking agencies which were able to furnish the talent and experience necessary to develop the circuit chautauqua.

Diluting the essentially religious nature of the Mother Chautauqua, the circuit chautauqua brought to the towns and villages of America, an amalgam of popular education and entertainment. Because it fulfilled a need, the traveling chautauqua became very successful and reached as many as forty million people during one season.

In Michigan the circuit chautauqua flourished in many towns and villages of the state from 1909 until 1930. Three of those communities are reported in this paper: Lansing, Mason and Stockbridge.

In Lansing, the first program was presented in 1909. Although only moderately successful, especially during its early years, the chautauqua in Lansing continued until 1918. Many celebrities appeared on its Redpath programs.

Mason and Stockbridge represent the smaller town and village chautauqua. Mason held a chautauqua from 1915 until 1921 with varying degrees of success. Stockbridge, a village of only eight hundred, supported a chautauqua from 1914 until 1923. Many other communities in the vicinity of Central Michigan are reported as a comparative study.

At first the programs were highly moralistic and inspirational in nature, later on more entertainment was presented, the drama was gradually introduced, and the importance of the lecturer declined.

With the advent of better communications and transportation, the interest in the circuit chautauqua declined. The need for community participation was fulfilled by local civic interest groups. The motion picture and the radio lessened the feeling of isolation. After the World War, the desires and tastes of the American people changed and the chautauqua was no longer needed. Because the circuit chautauqua operated on complete community support by means of previously guaranteed sales; when that support began to falter, the chautauqua was unable to survive and soon passed out of existence.

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