

Ever Hear
of
Chautauqua?

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by

Fred South
Prophetstown Area Historical Society
July 2025

Introduction

“Chautauqua” was a cultural and social movement that started in upstate New York in the 1870s and flourished until the mid 1920s. During this time, hundreds of touring Chautauquas presented lectures, dance, music, drama, and other forms of “cultural enrichment”. In rural America, big tents served as temporary theaters for these productions. Lectures by author Mark Twain, suffragette Susan B. Anthony, or a production of “The Tale of Two Cities” are the kinds of entertainment one could expect at a Chautauqua show. The Chautauqua Institution still thrives in Chautauqua, New York.

Teddy Roosevelt once called the traveling Chautauquas “the most American thing in America”. This form of live entertainment faded with the growing popularity of radio and motion pictures.

The Chautauqua Movement was the largest event that has ever existed in the US or Canada. Taking its cue from the preceding Lyceum movement the first Chautauqua was held on idyllic Lake Chautauqua (hence the name) in 1874. Its mix of arts and entertainment became an instant hit. By the turn of the 20th century there were Chautauquas held one coast to the other. In 1904 the Chautauqua idea got on the rails and went mobile. Held in large brown tents Chautauquas were found in nearly every town in the country. Powered by its superstar speakers, international music stars, theatre, vaudeville, scientists, and politicians it had become a sensation. By 1924 a 1,000 Circuit or Traveling Chautauquas were playing in over 10,000 towns with an attendance of over 40,000,000 Americans. Chautauquas were based on the idea that learning continued throughout life. The Chautauqua Movement's mix of education and entertainment was the predecessor of today's NPR, TED talks, and influenced modern journalism, television, and politics. Chautauquas were always set in an idyllic setting, among the trees, by a shore, or in a park. When Chautauqua came to a town all normal activity stopped as each town's citizen's dedicated a week of their lives to learn, to be entertained, and to join in community.

The traveling Chautauquas disappeared during the Great Depression, but the original Chautauqua continues to flourish on the shores of Lake Chautauqua.

From *The New Old Time Chautauqua*.



A 1921 Chautauqua in Alaska

Chautauqua in Prophetstown

Prophetstown CHAUTAUQUA

....PROGRAM.... JULY 11 to 16, 1916

First Day

- 2:30 P. M., Opening Exercises and Announcements
2:45 P. M. Musical and Literary Program
Morrow Bros. Male Quartette
3:15 P. M. Lecture, "The Man of Vision"
F. M. Price
7:30 P. M. Morrow Brothers
An Entire Evening of Music, Mirth and Novel-
ty Features introducing the Morophone

Second Day

- 2:30 P. M. Musical Prelude
The Chicago Saxophone Quartette
3:15 P. M. Lecture, "The Secret of Gladness"
Cecil C. Carpenter
7:30 P. M. Musical Prelude
The Chicago Saxophone Quartette
8:15 P. M. Humorous Lecture, "The Mud Turtle"
Cecil C. Carpenter

Third Day

- 2:30 P. M. Musical and Literary Prelude
The Wilhoit Sisters
3:15 P. M. Lecture "A Voice from the Underworld"
Congressman Botkin of Kansas
7:30 P. M. Prelude
The Wilhoit Sisters
8:15 P. M. Lecture, "The Irrepressible Conflict"
Hon. J. D. Botkin

Fourth Day

- 2:30 P. M. Entertainment
The Chautauqua Entertainers
3:15 P. M. Crayon Lecture, "Lights and Shadows"
James R. Barkley
7:30 P. M. Musical and Dramatic Prelude
"The Chautauqua Entertainers"
8:15 P. M., Crayon Lecture, "My Country 'Tis of
Thee"
James R. Barkley

Fifth Day

- 2:30 P. M. Musical Prelude
The National Glee Club and Bell Ringers
3:15 P. M. Lecture, "Talks, Wise and Otherwise"
Leo Howard
7:30 P. M. Entire Program
The National Glee Club and Bell Ringers

Sixth Day

- 2:30 P. M. Entertainment
Tyrolean and Swiss Alpine Singers and Yodlers
3:15 P. M. Lecture
"The Kentucky Mountainer, His Needs and
His Customs"
Samuel Justin Sparks
7:30 P. M. Grand Closing Concert
Swiss, German and American Folk Songs
The Swiss Yodlers
8:15 P. M. Lecture
"Mothers of Men"
Samuel Justin Sparks

From the *Echo*.

PATRONIZE THE HOME CHAUTAUQUA

IT IS OF HIGH GRADE TALENT
AND ALL SHOULD AVAIL
THEMSELVES OF GOING

You Should Give it Precedence Over
the Cheap Shows From Which
You Take Nothing Away

For several years there has been a desire on the part of many of our people for a better Chautauqua program, one in keeping with several of our towns of smaller population who were paying double the amount for their talent.

In keeping with this desire twenty-five of your business men have pledged themselves to dispose of 400 season tickets at \$2.00 each—\$800, or about \$32.00 per person. They have looked after advertising and various other duties as well as divided territory for the sale of tickets. It has been very much of a surprise to your committee, the excuses offered for not purchasing, both in town and on rural routes. Many farmers give as excuse that they will be threshing, etc. The "Little Eva" tent show of last week found 196 automobiles on our streets and the show company took out of our midst, conservatively estimated, over \$700 for the one night. Four of your committee have driven 80 miles over two rural routes and sold four tickets.

The program of the Chautauqua offers the finest of talent for 20c each for ten numbers. Several of our adjoining towns have already had the Mutual company this year and we have the most flattering reports of their course.

If success is to be made of this chautauqua it must be made a community affair, each one willing to do his or her part, whether possible to attend all or part of the numbers.

If the preference of this community is for the type of "Little Eva" show and not for a wholesome and educational program, then the business men can cash up and quit. It is up to your preference.

Frank Cleaveland
H. H. Waite
O. P. Petty
C. W. Fenn
Ticket Committee

From the *Echo*.

1917 07 15



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PROPHETSTOWN CHAU- TAUQUA NEXT WEEK

PROMISES TO EXCEL ANY PRE-
VIOUS ENTERTAINMENT OF
THE KIND IN TOWN

Talent is of the Very Best and Se-
lected With View to Pleasing the
Most Esthetic Tastes

The Prophetstown chautauqua will be on next week commencing Thursday and ending Monday. The program is an interesting one and all should attend, giving the business men support in their ambitions to bring to the town an array of talent that is of no mediocre ability but of the highest grade. Some of our citizens have had the pleasure of seeing and hearing some of the numbers and they tell us that they are high grade and that all should avail themselves of seeing and hearing them. They say, judging the other numbers by those which they are acquainted with, that the five days will be full of interest and all should be there to take advantage of what will be easy of access.

The business men have been to no little trouble to advertise this chautauqua, and as they are standing sponsor for the expense of getting them here, and as all will receive their money's worth, it will be no more than fair that the business men be encouraged to go on in the good work. Buy season tickets and help to assure the expenses and put a little money in the treasury for another year of entertainment. Everybody giving of their little helps in the aggregate. The load is easy when the burden is borne by all and so let's all go to it with a will and help in a laudable enterprise, beneficial to the town and one calculated to be an uplift for all. Let's don't be slackers but be on the job for something elevating as well as entertaining.

If the committee don't solicit you for tickets they may be purchased at either Cleaveland's or Fenn's drug stores.

MORE THAN PLEASED WITH THE OUTCOME

The first day of the chautauqua on Thursday was all that could be expected. From their advent into the town the Mutual people gave the Impression that there would be something doing all the time during their stay in the place, and if the first day is any indication of what is to follow then we shall not be disappointed.

The first day's program was the Hampshire male quartet and Dr. Roland A. Nichols. The first half hour after convening at 2:30 was given to listening to the Hampshire quartet, and to say that it was a pleasant half hour expresses the story, for it was an uplift such as an audience seldom gets. It was inspiring, edifying and all that could be asked in the way of a musical treat. All have the best of voices, all have them under superb control and all have volume and melody in their singing. Surely the Hampshires are a treat.

The concert was followed by a lecture by Dr. Rowland A. Nichols and it was a noticeable fact that most of the audience who were present at the commencement of the program, stayed for the lecture, which is the exception. But their staying was to their benefit for the lecture was both entertaining and instructive as well as inspiring.

CHAUTAUQUA PROVES GRAND
SUCCESS, ATTENDANCE BE-
ING MORE THAN ANTICI-
PATED

LOCAL MANAGEMENT PLEASED

Educational Uplift From Music and
Many Grand and Studied Lectures
Worth Many Dollars to This
Community

Dr. Nichols spoke on "Saleratus" and the applications to the different characters in life were mightily apt and to the point. The main thought in the lecture was "as we think so it is" it is up to the man or lady what he or she will be for it is all in the word perseverance. If we persevere there will be no obstacle that we cannot overcome and he gave illustration after illustration to make his point clear and effective. The lecture was brought home to the young man in a forceful way. Of course the speaker said among other qualifications honor was among the first to be observed for no man would succeed if he did not possess it. Another point which the doctor emphasized was the demeanor of the young man or lady in the family and outside. It was one of the adjuncts to perseverance and success. The speaker named others in the possession of which, made for better manhood, and for more nearly the success which the ambitious mind would attain.

In all that the lecturer had to say he had an eye single to the young and there was in his talk meat for all. He is certainly for the greatest benefit to the young people in whom he is greatly interested.

The evening program was opened by the Hampshire quartet and was more extended than the afternoon program and of a little more classy nature. They were greeted by a larger audience than in the afternoon and one fully as appreciative. They left the town, we are sure with the full assurance that they were appreciative for they had the evidence given them during the program.

The lecture which followed, by Dr. Nichols, "The Man Worth While" was a good deal on the line of the afternoon lecture but treated more specifically on the characteristics that are necessary for the ideal man so far as it is possible to attain.

As in the afternoon the lecture was addressed to the young people especially. The speaker commenced his lecture by saying that it was necessary to have certain possessions in one's makeup to become "A Man Worth While"; first the man who was well born had the advantage over the man who was not. And he went on to illustrate his point by citing the great attention which was paid by breeders in the raising of pure bred animals. The point was that more attention was paid to the raising of pure bred stock than to the raising of the better class of humanity.

CHAUTAUQUA WILL BE FINE THIS YEAR

UNUSUALLY GOOD PROGRAMS
PROVIDED FOR PROPHETS-
TOWN PEOPLE

Chicago Light Opera Co., under Di-
rection of Former Local Man, Will
Be Strong Feature

Prophetstown's Chautauqua this year will be held August 18 to 22, inclusive, these dates having recently been sent out by the Mutual Bureau, from which this city has engaged its talent for this year.

The program this year promises to be one of the best ever presented here and will provide five days of wholesome instruction and entertainment for those who attend.

There will be no session on the afternoon of the first day, but the opening concert in the evening should be one of the best of the week. The prelude will be given by the Warwick Male quartet in a mixed program. Everyone likes a male quartet and this is one of the best on the chautauqua platform. The main part of the entertainment will be given by Tom Corwine, imitator of everything under the sun. His personality alone is sufficient to win an audience, and, as the greatest imitator on the American stage, in connection with his humorous and literary selections, he never fails to satisfy his audience.

The afternoon and evening of the second day brings Charles L. Ficklin, editor and lecturer, in two inspiring addresses. The Ben Hur Singers and Players, in dramatic sketches, songs and instrumental numbers, will also appear.

You will not want to miss the Girvin Orchestral Quintet, which will entertain Prophetstown audiences twice on the third day. These five men, all members of that famous organization, the Chicago Symphony Club orchestra, will provide musical numbers of the highest class, and fitting preludes to the lectures by Richard H. Hughes, who will speak on topics of universal interest, "The Quest of Happiness;" and "As We See Europe, and Europe Sees Us."

The fourth should be a big day for Prophetstown, bringing, as it does, The Chicago Light Opera Company, one of the foremost musical organizations of the United States, under the personal direction of a former Prophetstown resident, now famous as a director of light opera, Kennard Barradell, son of Mr. and Mrs. Albert Barradell of this city. In the afternoon the company will present a pleasing variety program, and in the evening will produce the well known Gilbert and Sullivan opera, "The Pirates of Penzance," in full costume and with all parts. There are nine people in the company, and not soon will Prophetstown people have the opportunity of hearing a company of equal merit at home.

On the evening of the fourth day, also, local children, under the direction of the Junior Chautauqua leader, will give a Conservation Pageant in costume. As in the past, this will be one of the most enjoyable parts of the whole program.

The closing day will bring to us one of the world's famous bandmasters, Signor Alessandro Liberati, in company with Misses Scott and Powell, readers and soloists. Many Prophetstown people doubtless have heard Liberati and his band in Chicago and other large cities. We will have an opportunity to hear this master of the cornet in an extended program. The lectures of the day will be given by M. H. Jackson, traveler and orator. Altogether a day of unusual promise.

In addition to the adult chautauqua there will be present a leader who will conduct the usual children's meetings which have proven so popular in the past.

This is going to be Prophetstown's biggest and best chautauqua year, and everyone ought to get behind the local committee and boost for its success.

Monday evening the Chautauqua Association held a meeting in the City Hall and elected officers for the coming year as follows:

President—C. E. Bates

Secretary & Treasurer—Theodore Taber

Chairman on Advertising—M. H. Baldwin

Chairman on Grounds—S. A. Warner

Chairman on Ticket Sale—M. E. Hodson

There was a good attendance and various items of interest to the association were discussed. The consensus was that we should engage a better class of entertainment.

From the *Echo*, May 18, 1921.

CHAUTAUQUA WILL OPEN ON THURSDAY

FEAST OF GOOD THINGS PRO-
VIDED FOR PROPHETSTOWN
PEOPLE

Co-Operation of Every Citizen Needed
to Make Chautauqua Success This
Summer

Prophetstown's chautauqua commences Thursday evening in the brown tent on the school grounds. The program offered for this year includes some of the best speakers and musical organizations on the platform today, and should be heard by every person in Prophetstown. Whether the chautauqua will be a success this year rests with the people, and particularly with those who last summer pledged tickets for this year. If all of them fulfill their obligations there need be no fears as to the success of the local event.

Why should you not go and take the family to enjoy these days of relaxation and wholesome pleasure? Whenever you feel like taking out the car for a cross-country trip the lack of money is never felt, and where else could you purchase for the price of a few gallons of gas five days and evenings of such high class entertainment? Come on; get your season ticket and take a vacation at home for the next five days. You're not going to have it said that Tampico paid out on its chautauqua and Prophetstown couldn't, are you? All right, then; just cast your eyes over the following program and see what's in store for you:

Thursday night—The Warwick Male Quartet and an entertainment by Tom Corwine. Everybody likes a good male quartet, and the lecturer is one of the most unique entertainers ever heard here.

Friday—The Ben Hur Singers and Players in a mixed program, and Charles L. Ficklin in two excellent lectures. You may think you don't care for lectures, but you'll like Ficklin.

Saturday—Another big day. Some more good music by the Girvin Quintet, and two lectures by Richard H. Hughes. Welsh wit and wisdom here. Don't miss him.

Sunday—In the afternoon the Chicago Light Opera Company will give an appropriate concert, and in the evening will present Gilbert & Sullivan's famous light opera, "The Pirates of Penzance," under the personal direction of Kennard Barradell, son of Mr. and Mrs. A. Barradell of Prophetstown. Preceding the opera the children of Prophetstown, under the supervision of the junior chautauqua leader, will give a pageant. This will be the biggest day of the week.

Monday—Two musical preludes by the world famous musician, Liberati, and the Scott and Powell Company. M. H. Jackson, traveler and humorist, will close the chautauqua with two fine addresses.

Don't forget the junior chautauqua for the children. They expect and deserve a good time chautauqua week.

From the *Echo*, August 17, 1921.

The Chautauqua opened in a big brown tent on the school grounds and much good entertainment is scheduled.

The local Chautauqua closed after an entertaining five days.



That big brown tent was set up on the grounds of this 1881 school. It faced Locust Street and sat in what is now the elementary school play ground.