

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

Carroll's Yesteryears
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1913-20 Chautauquas
by Joe Getty

NOTE: Article copied from Joe's original, no newspaper clipping on file

During the second decade of the 20th century, the tent Chautauqua that visited Westminster each year was a major attraction in the social life of Carroll County.

"Chautauqua in 1913

Chautauqua opened August 6th 1913, under most auspicious circumstances with tickets all sold and every one of the ticket holders a booster for Chautauqua.

"Dr. J.H. Holmes was the platform manager or superintendent and by his able lectures and pleasing personality soon won the favor of all.

"Among the notable events of the program were lectures by Judge Ben Lindsay, Frank Dixon, Dr. Pearson, Dickens impersonations by Battis, Music and magic by the Dietrics, Rosani the juggler, concert by Forentine Band, the Swiss Yodlers, concerts by Brodbeck-Such Company and National Concert Company.

"A new feature introduced this year that proved a great success was Junior Chautauqua in charge of Miss Crapster.

"Chautauqua 1914

The opening date was August 28th and Prof. W.T. Downey was our Superintendent. Among the events which pleased most during the week were the lectures by Judge Wannamaker, Dr. Waters and Secretary of Labor Wilson, concerts by Victor's Band, McKinnie Opera Co., Adams the violin wizard, the entertainment by Ross Crane, the cartoonist and clay model molder, and "Twelfth Night" by the College Players.

"Chautauqua 1915

During the spring of 1915 there seemed to be an indescribably, indefinable something that indicated loss of interest in Chautauqua. The committee felt something must be done or this would be Westminster's last Chautauqua.

"The committee decided to ask that Dr. Turner be sent as our Superintendent, feeling sure if we could secure him the former interest and enthusiasm would be restored.

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"Dr. Turner was pastor of a large Presbyterian Church in Oxford, Pa., and not in active Chautauqua work but he generously consented to come to Westminster, everyone was delighted and it was and is the consensus opinion his coming saved Chautauqua for Westminster.

"Chautauqua began August 27th and a new feature was a parade. Moving pictures of the parade were taken and shown on the screen the first evening.

"Judge William H. Thomas made an excellent opening address and when Dr. Turner rose to respond he received an ovation.

"Some of the strong programs were the lectures by Hon. Jos. Folk, Monteville Flowers, Chauncey Hawkins and Dr. Pearson, concerts by Colangelo's Band, Crawford Adams, and the play, "The Man From Home."

"All who were present the last evening will recall the storm of applause that greeted Dr. Turner when he came on the platform to receive the 1916 contract and a motion was made for his return in 1916. It was a sincere tribute of appreciation from every member of the Westminster Chautauqua family.

"Chautauqua 1916

When it became known we were to have a woman for Superintendent there were grave doubts and fears. The women were more skeptical than the men of the result and some of the men even seemed pleased with the innovation. But when Mrs. Emily F. Gregory arrived skepticism vanished and everyone recognized we had for Superintendent a capable, tactful leader and a charming, cultured woman.

"September 1st was the opening date and a parade was held.

"Mr. S.K. Herr made the opening address, filled with wit and wisdom.

"The outstanding features of the week were the lectures of Dr. Green, Dr. West, Rabbi Levy, the play "Happiness" excellent concerts by talented musical companies and comic opera "The Mikado."

"Chautauqua 1917

Everyone will remember our 1917 Chautauqua for two reasons – the splendid program and the other, Hunt Cook was our Superintendent.

"Cook was a real fellow, bubbling over with the joy of living, a genial, entertaining cultured gentleman, a good mixer, popular with everyone and especially with the boys and girls.

"The opening day was Sept. 4th and the address was made by Charles O. Clemson, Esq.

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"One of the real features of the week was a lecture by that talented and delightful woman, Dr. Carolyn E. Geisel.

"Other lectures were given by Peter Ma Queen, Frank Dixon and Hon. Perey Alden. The Old Homestead and Chimes of Normandy delighted everyone. The McKinnie Opera Co. and other vocal and instrumental companies furnished the musical events.

"Chautauqua 1918

Our seventh Chautauqua opened September 1st.

"Dr. H.L. Elderice, just home from Y.M.C.A. work at Camp Upton, made an appropriate and intensely interesting opening address.

"Dr. Hoffman, a noted educator, was our Superintendent.

"Dr. Alton Parker, who spent many years in Russia, delivered one of the most interesting and instructive lectures of all our Chautauqua programs.

"Captain Bickers, Dr. Chas. Lovejoy and Dr. Geisel were the other lecturers and Dr. Turner spent one day in Westminster and made a splendid address.

"The big tent was packed to capacity on the evenings "The Fortune Hunter" and "Pinafore" were given.

"Chautauqua 1919

Our seven joyous days began this year August 29th and we were fortunate in securing Dr. T.H. Lewis, President of Western Maryland College, to make the opening address and it was up to the Dr. Lewis standard of excellence.

"John Mason Wells was our Superintendent.

"Eloquent and instructive lectures were given by Chancellor Bradford, Dr. Green, Frederick W. Willie and Charlton Chamberlayne. "Polly of the Circus" and the opera "Robinhood" were the big popular numbers of the week.

"The Hawaiian Singers, and Overseas Quartet were among the musical events.

"This year the original officers feeling they had enjoyed the emoluments of office long enough and believing it would be for the best interests of the Chautauqua to have a new administration, asked to be retired.

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"A committee on nominations was named and reported at one of the evening sessions the nomination of Oscar D. Gilbert, President, J. Pearre Wantz, Secretary, and Charles E. Lippy, Treasurer.

"The report was accepted and the nominees unanimously elected.

"Chautauqua 1920

September 4th marked the opening of our Chautauqua.

"H. Peyton Gorsuch made the opening address and introduced Dr. Amy, our Superintendent.

"The lectures of the week were by Dr. Curtin, Edward A. Ott, Mr. and Mrs. C.R. Adams and Lieut. Maynard.

"The Belgian Veterans Band and Varsity Chinese Club were among the musical numbers that pleased and everyone was delighted with the charming play "Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm."

"On account of a break down at the electric light plant several evening programs were given by the dim light of lamps, candles and automobile lights, but the talent and audience accepted the handicap good-naturedly and made the best of an unfortunate situation.

"Junior Chautauqua in Westminster had been a splendid success. Each year the membership has increased and Westminster has been awarded the banner several times for best Junior town.

"The Sunday union services in the big tent has been a fine feature of Chautauqua. The service is usually held in the evening, the ministers taking part and an address or sermon by the superintendent or one of the lecturers.

"In preparing this sketch the outlines given us by the Association have not been followed and when Dr. Pearson and his staff see it we shall be glad we are not within hearing or hailing distance.

"Westminster has gained the unenviable reputation of not following the instructions given in the Chautauqua book of rules and regulations, but doing things in our own way. Some of the advance representatives have been so shocked to find no ticket or other committees functioning and the officers and guarantors placid and unconcerned that we imagine their reports sent to Swarthmore were of such a dark blue shade that indigo would look azure in comparison. Our way may be all wrong, but we started that way, and as we have to this date had a reasonable degree of success we are not inclined to change and get all "fussed" up.

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"In the outline given us for the sketch, was first pictures of the original chairman and secretary. These pictures would not have added interest and certainly not beauty to the booklet, so they were omitted.

"The next suggestion was an article on the growth of Chautauqua in Westminster. We think they wanted a profound and illuminative production and to produce one that would pass muster was beyond our depth, and besides we believed a brief summary of the start of the Chautauqua here and recalling some of the notable lectures, concerts and entertainments Chautauqua has brought in the past nine years would be more appreciated. Not like Topsy, Chautauqua in Westminster did not "just grow." Dr. Pearson and his co-workers prepared the soil, planted the seed and then it required intensive watering and hoeing, but these men stayed on the job and each year a larger number of men and women of Westminster have been helping in the work of cultivation and the plant became strong and on seven days each year a bounteous and profitable harvest is garnered. Not always profitable financially for the Association, but we feel sure Dr. Pearson has never regretted bringing Chautauqua to Westminster.

"In common with other places we had our knockers and some of them wielded heavy hammers, but their numbers grew less each year.

"We had difficulties to overcome, discouragements to meet, but with optimists like Miss Mary B. Shellman, Mrs. H. Scott Roop, George R. Grumbine, O.D. Gilbert and a host of others, failure was impossible. We wish it was possible to name all of the men and women who have given of their time and energy for the success of Chautauqua in Westminster.

"They Mayor and Council recognizing Chautauqua is in the broadest sense a community affair and one of pleasure and benefit for our citizens have relieved the local committee of license fees.

"Dr. W.R. McDaniel has provided the grounds for Chautauqua all these years without one penny of rental.

"The newspapers have been generous in their support and if we may indulge in a personal work we would emphasize the fact that no chairman of a local Chautauqua committee ever had more efficient and loyal supporters than the little company that stood with the Westminster chairman through sunshine and shadow from 1912 to 1919 and are giving the new chairman the same loyal support.

"This sketch deals only with the past – the water that has passed over the wheel and gone under the bridge. But in passing the Chautauqua stream turned the wheel to grind each year since 1912 a "grist" that has furnished a week of recreation, pleasure and inspiration to a constantly increasing number of people and one of permanent benefit to Westminster and the community.

"What of the future?

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"The answer lies with you – each member of the Chautauqua family and we doubt not that you will continue to support Chautauqua and each year it will be larger and better.

"Very sincerely,
THE WESTMINSTER GUARANTORS,
Per 'GEORGE.'"