

The Chautauqua at Eagles Mere

by Donna Andrews, 1997

[Editor's note: Donna Andrews is a junior at Lycoming College majoring in history. This paper was prepared for an upper-level course in historical methods. In addition to accurately describing the rise and fall of the Chautauqua phenomenon in general, the paper includes much local information that is not well-known and that is being presented in a scholarly manner for the first time. We thank Miss Andrews for allowing her valuable paper to be printed in this issue of THE CHRONICLE.]

In the year 1896, the Chautauqua came to Eagles Mere. It was a grand event for the fledgling resort town. The name Chautauqua was synonymous with a particular style of moral higher learning and recreation, and the Chautauqua in Eagles Mere brought a flood of curious and studious vacationers into Eagles Mere, many of whom continued to return year after year and bring friends along with them. The original Chautauqua Institution in New York state was 22 years old in 1896, and had grown from a small summer camp into a national establishment, which continues today. The small satellite Chautauqua in Eagles Mere, however, only ran through 1902, after which formal Chautauqua meetings were disbanded. The Chautauqua in Eagles Mere failed because Americans' ideas of what made a vacation changed as the nineteenth century came to a close. No one wanted to work on their vacations anymore, and this didactic side of a vacation at Eagles Mere slowly withered and died. Eagles Mere's transformation, which took place in less than a decade, is a miniature version of the changes that took place in America as a whole.

This paper explores the history of the Eagles Mere Chautauqua and places that history in its larger context. It looks at the beginning of the Chautauqua movement, and the social era in which it was created. It also examines the creation of the Eagles Mere Chautauqua, what a visitor in 1896 would expect to find at the Eagles Mere Chautauqua, the changes that occurred in Eagles Mere over the next six years, and what caused these changes.

Origins and Purpose of the Chautauqua Movement

The Chautauqua began as an idea in the minds of two fellow Methodists, Bishop John Heyl Vincent and businessman Lewis Miller, in the mid 1800's. Both men were very involved in Sunday School education and the comprehensive training

of instructors. Vincent served on the Union Sunday School board, which was formed in 1861.¹ One of the goals of this board was a Sunday School education that would overstep the bounds of religious sects and geography to give each student an equal education. Vincent saw the way to this goal as being the standardized training of Sunday School teachers. He encouraged teachers to attend Sunday School Institutes, which were short, intensive training sessions held by local Sunday School Unions, but he dreamed of something bigger that would reach more people and provide better instruction. Miller was also highly involved in his local church and Sunday School in Canton, Ohio. For this group, he designed the most copied Sunday School building in the nation. It was semicircular, with a meeting hall in the center, and classrooms with movable partitions around the outside edge. Sunday School students could have private classes with their group, and then the partitions could be moved to allow for large gatherings. He served as a Sunday School superintendent, and knew that better schooling could only come from better equipped teachers.²

When the men met each other in 1868, they found they had many ideas and goals in common. Vincent shared his vision of a teaching institution for Sunday School teachers with Miller, and suggested a winter session to be held at Miller's Sunday School building.³ Miller objected to both time and place, but saw the value of the idea. He thought it better to hold such training in the summer, when more professionals, including school teachers, could attend. He also suggested that a more natural setting would be conducive not only to learning, but also to relaxation.⁴

Planning went ahead, and soon a site at Fair Point on Lake Chautauqua was investigated and found to be ideal. A summer camp meeting had been held there for some time, and a hotel, some cottages, an assembly hall, and cleared spots for tents were already in place. Vincent and Miller leased the property for the following August and advertisements began to run in several newspapers, including the Sunday School Journal.⁵

¹Theodore Morrison, *Chautauqua: A Center for Education, Religion, and the Arts in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 21.

²Morrison, 25-26.

³Joseph E. Gould, *The Chautauqua Movement: An Episode in the Continuing American Revolution* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1961), 4.

⁴Gould, 4.

⁵Morrison, 32-33.

The first Chautauqua in August of 1874 was a success. It was two weeks long, and included practical exhibits, such as a contour map of Palestine meant to give Sunday School teachers a working knowledge of where Biblical events took place in relation to the geography of Israel, a tent museum of mid-Eastern artifacts, customs and costumes, and sample Sunday School meetings.⁶ There were daily devotional services, nighttime Vespers arranged by Vincent, and eight sermons.⁷ Students not only took classes and attended services, but they were involved in recreational activities as well. Attendees worked together to invent and teach instructional games, concerts were held in the assembly hall, and fireworks were shot off over the lake.⁸ The schedule was rigorous and exhausting -- and regulated by a plethora of rules. Sabbaths and curfews were rigorously enforced. The 1874 session ended with a fifty question exam, after which one hundred and fifty two attendees received diplomas for their efforts.⁹

The Chautauqua at this time was an interesting paradox. It took place in a natural setting, a resort area, next to a lake. The lake was outfitted with hotels on the shore and steamboats to carry a multitude of passengers when Vincent and Miller inspected the site in 1873.¹⁰ Yet the Chautauqua was not a vacation. It was a serious effort with a serious goal, and those who attended expecting a lark came away bitterly disappointed. Many professionals attended Chautauqua to further their education and skills, and gave up part of their summer vacations to essentially go back to school.

An explanation for this paradox can be seen in the American social attitude towards vacation at this time. It was the height of the Victorian Age, which saw the revival of religious and moral concerns, and the revival of the Puritan work ethic. Victorian Americans were a profoundly religious people. Religion was behind many of their more notable reform battles and achievements of the era, including temperance, Sunday School, and the Chautauqua movement.¹¹ Religion was also

⁶Gould, 5; Morrison, 35-36.

⁷Morrison, 36.

⁸Morrison, 36-37.

⁹Morrison, 37

¹⁰Morrison, 32.

¹¹Thomas Schlereth, *Victorian America: Transformations in Everyday Life, 1876-1915* (New York: Harper collins Publishers, Inc., 1991), 260.

behind their dislike of any amusement that did not lead to self improvement. Victorian ministers railed against frivolous amusement and America's disintegrating morals. In the minds of the Victorians, hard work forged the path to heaven, idle hands did the Devil's work, and hard work in both work and leisure was thought to improve the individual.¹²

Amusement took the form of self improvement for secular as well as religious reasons; it was seen as the duty of every citizen to take part in democracy, and an active intellect was a necessity for this duty. Public lectures were much in vogue, and were given on everything, from religion to science to literature. It was not a selfish action, nor an idle one, to attend lectures for recreation. It was a way to serve your nation as well as save your soul.¹³ The fight of the working class for a shorter workday reflected this belief. Workers asserted that they had to have time for self improvement and to instruct their children, and they could not do this while working fourteen to sixteen hour days.¹⁴

Even the British, renowned for their severity and proper attitudes, were surprised by America's lack of "traditional" amusements in comparison to England. There were no noisy streets in American cities full of puppet shows, magicians, traveling bands, or dancing monkeys. A British visitor to America remarked on the strange sort of amusements to be found in New York City:

*Are there no amusements? Yes, there is a lecture room across the way...and there may be evening services for the ladies there thrice a week, or oftener. For the young gentlemen, there is the counting-house, the store...*¹⁵

Americans worked, even while not at work.

Owing much of its success to these ideals, in the years that followed, the Chautauqua continued to grow in numbers and reputation. President Ulysses S. Grant was the celebrity attendee and speaker for the 1875 session, and his presence brought thousands to Chautauqua and provided nation-wide publicity for the event.¹⁶

¹²Foster Rhea Dulles, *America Learns to Play: A History of Popular Recreation, 1607-1940* (New York: Peter Smith, 1952), 85-85.

¹³Dulles, 93.

¹⁴Dulles, 91-92.

¹⁵Dulles, 88.

¹⁶Gould, 7.

Enrollment more than doubled each year in 1875, 1876, and 1877, and the two week session was lengthened to the maximum summer vacation to provide more classes and in-depth instruction.¹⁷ Instruction in Hebrew and Greek as the Chautauqua School of Languages began in 1879, as did the Chautauqua Teacher's Retreat (School of Pedagogy), and the School of Theology opened its doors in 1881.¹⁸ In 1883, the Chautauqua Institution was recognized by the New York legislature as the Chautauqua University and given the right to confer degrees. What began as a simple Sunday School training session was in less than ten years a full-fledged university.¹⁹

Three other kinds of Chautauquas soon began to appear that mimicked the goals of the Chautauqua Institution. The first was the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle, which began in 1878, when Vincent announced his intention to begin a four year correspondence program. The course would lead members through a series of books and study manuals, and confer a certificate of accomplishment on those who finished the course. It was intended as a form of self education for adults who could not or would not attend a university, and was a part of America's quest for self-improvement. He said in his announcement that he hoped the first circle would include at least ten members. Two hundred signed up within the hour, and within ten years, enrollment was around one hundred thousand, with that many or more having dropped out or completed the program.²⁰

Another type of Chautauqua was represented by the tent Chautauquas that traveled all over the United States by rail. These stopped in small towns and offered the townspeople a taste of culture, learning, and plenty of entertainment for several days or even several weeks. They were loosely based on the plan of the Chautauqua Institution, but not at all affiliated with it.²¹

The last kind of Chautauqua was the satellite Chautauqua, often begun by those who wished to attend Chautauqua, such as church groups or independently wealthy persons, but lived at a distance. These satellite Chautauquas were held yearly in the same location. By 1890, there were over two hundred of these satellites. They replicated the Chautauqua Institution as closely as possible, although most of

¹⁷Gould, 8.

¹⁸Gould, 13.

¹⁹Gould, 13.

²⁰Gould, 8.

¹⁹Gould, 74-75.

them were not connected to the Chautauqua Institution. They were situated, when they could be, near or in a grove of trees, and close to a body of water. These sessions adhered to the Chautauqua-type schedule of religious observations, lecture, entertainment, curfews, and Sabbath observation, and sessions ranged from days to several weeks. Speakers of high local reputation spoke at these satellites, and many of them attracted a large following and successfully continued for many years.²² The Chautauqua in Eagles Mere was one example of such a satellite.

The Eagles Mere Chautauqua

The Eagles Mere Chautauqua was started by two cousins, Charles William Woddrop and Harvey S. Welch, and their influential uncles, Benjamin G. Welch, builder of the Williamsport and North Branch Railroad, and Reverend Joseph Welch.²³ The cousins had been hired by Benjamin Welch as surveyors when he was building the railroad. After the surveying job was finished, they saw their business future in the forests of the area and started a logging and mining operation based in Hughesville to log large tracts of land between Hughesville and Eagles Mere.

When building a railroad to Eagles Mere was suggested in 1891, they quickly became involved, as they had a special interest in the area. Part of their land holdings included a portion of land at the north end of the lake. Woddrop became president of the new narrow gauge Eagles Mere railroad, and Welch became general manager.²⁴ When the railroad was finished in 1892, Eagles Mere's slow growth quickened, and the cousins joined the rush to develop the area.²⁵

Woddrop and Welch were taken with the beauty of their land near the lake, and preserved four hundred acres, on which they intended to build a summer resort.

²²Gould, 10-11.

²³Barbara James and Bush James, *'Mere Reflections: A Unique Journey Through Historic Eagles Mere* (Montoursville PA: Paulhamus Litho, Inc., 1988), 90.

²⁴Thomas T. Taber III, *Muncy Valley Lifeline: The Life and Times of the Williamsport and North Branch and Eagles Mere Railroads* (Williamsport PA: Lycoming Printing Company, Inc., 1972), 26-27.

²⁵James, 79-80.

Eagles Mere was an up and coming resort area; the Lakeside, one of Eagles Mere's great hotels (with over one hundred rooms), was already in operation in 1892, as were several other great hotels, smaller boarding houses, and cottages.²⁶ The town was growing even faster with the railroad in operation, and Woddrop and Welch's site, closer to the lake than any other, must have appeared to the business-minded cousins as a gold mine.

Woddrop and Welch were skilled businessmen who knew an opportunity when it arose, and so did their uncles. The Chautauqua Institution and its spinoffs were hot items, and the site in Eagles Mere was ideal for a Chautauqua. Furthermore, with the railroad in operation, Eagles Mere had become readily accessible to thousands of Chautauqua admirers. Another hotel near the lake would have been moderately successful, but a Chautauqua was almost guaranteed success.

The part played by their uncle Rev. Joseph Welch of the Philadelphia Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church cannot be overemphasized. A Union chaplain in the Civil War, and a missionary to Texas who wound up serving for two years as that state's superintendent of public schools, Welch was in the midst of a 29 year term of service as the chaplain at Eastern Penitentiary. His theological and educational savvy, zeal and connections -- and the Victorian notion that proper training could correct even the hardened criminal -- made him the ideal, believable spokesperson and force needed to promote the venture.²⁷

As a further draw for their Chautauqua, the Welches interested General James A. Beaver, a Civil War hero and former Governor of Pennsylvania.²⁸ He became the President of the Eagles Mere Chautauqua and sat on its Board of Directors.²⁹ He led the grand opening ceremonies of the Chautauqua on August 4, 1896, and spent several days each season at the Chautauqua as an attendee and a lecturer, despite his busy political and business schedule.³⁰

²⁶James, 129-175.

²⁷Philadelphia Conference Minutes (Philadelphia PA: Methodist Episcopal Book Room, 1920), 780-781.

²⁸J. Horace McFarland L.H.D. and Robert B. McFarland, *Eagles Mere and the Sullivan Highlands* (Harrisburg PA: J. Horace McFarland Company, 1944), 51.

²⁹Annual Program, *Eagles Mere Chautauquan*, 1 June 1896, 3. (Hereafter *Chautauquan* 1896)

³⁰*Chautauquan* 1896, 3.

The site at Eagles Mere was not only a perfect setting for a Chautauqua, it was also the perfect setting for a turn-of-the-century resort. Around the end of the nineteenth century, there was an effort to get back to nature, and it was reflected in what Americans wanted to do in their spare time. This was an urban movement, created by the everyday problems of city dwelling. The back to nature movement was first marked by the creation of city parks all over America as a haven for the city dweller. These parks, for middle and upper class city-dwellers, were not only a place to escape the concerns and pollution of the city, they were also a way to bring culture and sophistication to the people. The upper classes had, for decades, despaired over the questionable entertainments and morals of the city working class. They saw their civic duty as being the civilization of the working class, and public parks would help to accomplish this goal by providing the working class with a place of civilized entertainment and sedate family fun, such as picnics and promenading.³¹ Public parks soon became a site where contested and shifting notions of appropriate leisure activities came into conflict.

The working class, did not see the same lack of culture in their lives that the upper classes did. The upper classes could afford vacations, and took them often, whereas a worker did not earn enough to leave the city. The workers took their leisure when and where they could, and resented the interference of the upper classes in their entertainment. Public parks, for the workers, were a place of recreation, where one could play games and relax. The upper classes turned the workers' empty lots and playing fields into scenic parks, where playing on the grass was forbidden.³² As workers continued to fight for their own play space, they were gradually granted their own parks in working class neighborhoods in the 1890's and early 1900's.³³

Despite strenuous opposition from religious figures and public officials, working class entertainments began to make their way into the upper classes. When they did, these entertainments were a bit more refined, but still did not fit the self-improvement mold prescribed by the Victorians. There was a craze for canoeing, hunting, swimming, fishing, hiking, and mountain climbing at this time.³⁴ Americans

³¹Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 127.

³²Rosenzweig, 131-132.

³³Rosenzweig, 135-140.

³⁴Dulles, 202.

of all social classes were heading outdoors in their free time, both men and women. Although most people still clung to the old Victorian idea that vacation must be productive, many wanted it to be productive in a beautiful setting that offered opportunities for outdoor activities, such as the grounds of a Chautauqua.³⁵

The Eagles Mere site was primitive in 1896, but it contained everything necessary for the operation of a Chautauqua. The grounds themselves were part of an untouched, if a bit swampy, forest. With a little ingenuity, a boardwalk was constructed which led from the grounds directly to the lakeside, giving Chautauqua attendees the best access to the lake to be found anywhere in town. All of the avenues were actually plank boardwalks, and when it rained, the consequences of slipping off the planks were severe.³⁶ Spaces were cleared for tents, some small cottages and a central dining hall were constructed, and a fence with a gatehouse was built around the grounds. The fence and the gatehouse were to separate the Chautauqua community from the rest of the world, and also to regulate attendance, including tickets, and to enforce curfews. The gates closed at nine o'clock in the evening, and if you were outside the gates then, your only hope was to find one of the holes that mysteriously appeared in the fence.³⁷ The assembly hall was constructed on a level area close to the gate to accommodate those who only came to visit.³⁸ It was in reality a roof with canvas sides and a sawdust floor. Attendees sat on wooden benches when attending lectures, and the lecturer had a small platform.³⁹ A special one thousand pound bell was made for the Chautauqua, and it rang wake up in the morning and lights out in the evening.⁴⁰

The Chautauqua was a haven visited by mostly the middle and upper class. Vacation, in general, was an event restricted to the upper classes. Workers did not make enough money to afford a vacation. In addition, workers were not interested in improving themselves during their time off. A worker's vacation was short and entertaining -- a day in the park or a night out at the neighborhood saloon -- to offer a

³⁵Dulles, 201-203.

³⁶McFarland, 51.

³⁷James, 92.

³⁸Annual Program, *Eagles Mere Chautauquan*, June 1898, 4. (Hereafter *Chautauquan* 1898)

³⁹McFarland, 51.

⁴⁰*Chautauquan* 1896, 15.

break from the hard reality of work. The upper classes, however, attended events like the Chautauqua for a moral vacation; the attendee was assured that he was improving himself, and not just being entertained -- because that would be immoral.⁴¹

Though beyond the means of most working class families, the Chautauqua was relatively inexpensive, as the *Eagles Mere Chautauquan* repeatedly asserted. Tents could be rented for anywhere from a week to the whole season -- and rental included everything from ground rent, to board floors, to tearing down. Cottages had four rooms and a porch on two sides -- but no kitchen, as everyone took their meals in the main dining hall-- and rented for anywhere from twenty to fifty dollars a season, or seven dollars a week. Public school teachers and ministers received a half price discount on their accommodations as an encouragement to attend Chautauqua's classes. A meal could be had for a mere thirty five cents, and a meal ticket could be bought for up to a week. Those staying on the grounds received free admission to all lectures, concerts, and other events. Those in town or just visiting were admitted for a small fee, based on how long they planned to attend:

<i>Season Ticket</i>	\$3.00
<i>Full Day Ticket</i>	.30
<i>Three Days</i>	.75
<i>One Week</i>	1.25
<i>Two Weeks</i>	2.15
<i>Three Weeks</i>	2.75
<i>Children from 9 to 13, half these rates.</i> ⁴²	

Attending regular classes at one of the Chautauqua's Schools cost slightly more, as each student paid a class tuition. Private instruction could also be had, for a higher tuition.⁴³

The Welches planned the Eagles Mere Chautauqua with care to resemble the Chautauqua Institution. Not only were the grounds similar, the organization of the schools and their classes resembled those of the original Chautauqua Assembly -- as did the schedules. Several schools were established, and 1896 attendees could take courses in Pedagogy (teacher training -- including Normal Classes for teacher education), Liberal Arts (Language and Science), Fine Arts (Music, Painting, and Oratory, and Elocution), and Physical Culture (Athletics, Swimming, and Rowing). Children could attend Kindergarten, while their mothers met for instruction on giving their young children a good home environment and education. Classes met for an

⁴¹Schlereth, 209.

⁴²*Chautauquan* 1896, 16.

⁴³Annual Program, *Eagles Mere Chautauquan*, 1 June 1897, 8. (Hereafter *Chautauquan* 1897)

hour in the morning every day.⁴⁴ Even for non- students, a Chautauquan's schedule was busy.

A typical 1896 weekday and Saturday schedule was:

6:45 a.m.	<i>Morning Bells</i>
7:15 a.m.	<i>Breakfast</i>
9:00 a.m.	<i>Devotional Hour</i>
10:00 a.m.	<i>Lecture</i>
12:20 a.m.	<i>Dinner</i>
2:30 p.m.	<i>Lecture or Concert</i>
7:30 p.m.	<i>Eventide Concert</i>
8:00 p.m.	<i>Lecture or Concert</i>
10:00 p.m.	<i>Evening Bells</i>

*The hour for classes will be fixed and announced in the daily Eagles Mere Chautauquan...*⁴⁵

The Sunday Schedule was devoted entirely to religious matters, as the schedule for Sunday, August 30, 1896 illustrates:

9:00 a.m.	<i>Bible Reading</i>
10:30 a.m.	<i>Sermon</i>
2:30 p.m.	<i>Sunday School</i>
7:00 p.m.	<i>Vespers</i>
8:00 p.m.	<i>Praise Service</i> ⁴⁶

The Vesper service is worth special note. From the very beginning, it was held on the lake, whether attendees were on the boardwalk or afloat in canoes, and it took place every Sunday evening. The service was based on the program created by Vincent for the original Chautauqua, and it was nondenominational. Whichever minister happened to be available conducted the service.⁴⁷ Barbara and Bush James relate a story that must have occurred several times in the Vesper's history, with so many attending in boats. One unfortunate gentleman, complete in dress clothes, was dumped out of his canoe and in mortified silence swam back to his hotel dock, while those around him said a silent prayer for his predicament.⁴⁸ Not only were people

⁴⁴ *Chautauquan* 1896, 3.

⁴⁵ *Chautauquan* 1896, 8.

⁴⁶ *Chautauquan* 1896, 10.

⁴⁷ James, 100.

⁴⁸ James, 100.

finding their recreation outdoors, they took their religion outside as well. The Vespers took advantage of the "natural setting" of the Eagles Mere Chautauqua, and for some, it without warning became a way to contact nature directly.

As the Chautauqua Institution and Literary and Scientific Circle had its own newspaper, the *Chautauquan*, Eagles Mere had its *Eagles Mere Chautauquan*, devoted to the news and interests of the Eagles Mere Chautauqua. The *Eagles Mere Chautauquan* came in several forms, the first being an advance program for each year, the second a daily edition, and the last being an end-of-season edition. Each of these had a circulation that included not only Eagles Mere, but interested parties, former attendees, and friends of the Chautauqua all over the East Coast. The first advance program of the *Eagles Mere Chautauquan* (hereafter *Chautauquan*) was dated June 1, 1896 and included advertisements for Eagles Mere hotels, train schedules, a listing of lecturers and entertainers to perform at Eagles Mere, and tentative schedules for the season. There was a daily *Chautauquan* printed each day of each season that included detailed schedules, gossip, and a list of new guests at the Chautauqua. An end-of-season *Chautauquan* was printed each October with articles, end-of-season reports, and lists of improvements to be made before the start of the next season. Not only did the *Chautauquan* keep nineteenth century attendees informed of events and schedules, but they have provided a useful historical record. Every issue gives a snapshot of life at the Chautauqua.

Lectures outside of the Chautauqua Schools were a regular part of the program and one of Chautauqua's main attractions. Victorians attended lectures on a regular basis as a form of recreation, and Chautauqua assemblies all over the nation very heavily advertised their "platform talent." The short biographies given in the *Chautauquan* highlight, in a distinctive Victorian style, how entertaining the lecturers were. Visitors to Eagles Mere in 1896 could attend lectures given by such talent as:

- George W. Atherton, LL.D., president of Pennsylvania College, a delightfully clear and entertaining lecturer, August 26.
- Rev. Dr. P.S. Henson, pastor of First Baptist Church, Chicago, is not only a preacher of the highest distinction, but a lecturer who ranks second to no man on the American platform. He sways an audience at times with a master's spell. "From the opening sentence to the peroration he had the undivided attention and cordial sympathy of the audience. There is a freshness, a spontaneity, a sparkle of originality, a genuine humor and pathos about the lecture, that is unreportable and irresistible." August 4,5, and 6.
- Rev. Wm. H. Crawford, president of Allegheny College, displays the orator's power, in that he makes great themes intensely interesting to the common people. Joseph Cook says of his lecture on Savonarola, "I have never heard it surpassed, not even by Dr. Gunsaulus' famous lecture on the same theme, nor

by Wendell Phillips' on 'Daniel O'Connell,' nor by Dr. R.S. Storrs' on 'St. Bernard.'" August 12, 13, 14.⁴⁹

Mr. Atherton offered a lecture entitled "Foundations of Civil Liberty," while Rev. Henson gave lectures on "Grumblers," "Our Bosses," and "Fools," and Rev. Crawford lectured on "Savonarola," "John Huss," and "John Wycliffe."⁵⁰

Female lecturers were not neglected, and many took the platform at Eagles Mere, including:

- Miss Maizie Blaikie, of West Medford, Mass., a most enthusiastic and entertaining lecturer on kindergarten subjects and illustrative primary Sunday school teaching. August 4-31.
- Miss Puella Doenblaser, Mackeyville, Pa., is an ardent worker in the W.C.T.U., and a lecturer much sought after. Her lectures are always inspiring and helpful. She speaks from the heart to the heart. August 2.⁵¹

Miss Blaikie lectured on "Kindergarten," and Miss Doenblaser delivered a lecture entitled, "God's Women."⁵²

The Chautauqua also attracted writers and poets to deliver readings of their works, including:

- Fred Emerson Brooks, of New York, the poet humorist, is the most original, most charming, most interesting, and altogether the most satisfactory entertainer on the American platform. A keen critic says: "At times he is as tender as Cowper, as patriotic as Whittier, as majestic as Bryant, as funny as Mark Twain. Seldom has nature put into the same heart and brain the extremes of wit and wisdom, sense and nonsense, with the same careful judgment in mingling to bring forth laughter and tears." It will pay anyone to make sacrifices to hear Brooks. August 25, 26, 27.⁵³

Lectures were entertaining, but they also reflected the didactic side of Chautauqua: the desire to learn and make recreation and relaxation time purposeful.

⁴⁹ *Chautauquan* 1896, 5.

⁵⁰ *Chautauquan* 1896, 10.

⁵¹ *Chautauquan* 1896, 5.

⁵² *Chautauquan* 1896, 10.

⁵³ *Chautauquan* 1896, 7.

Other forms of entertainment were a regular part of the Chautauqua from the first year, and they were sometimes in direct opposition to the educational side of the Chautauqua. Entertainment came in the form of concerts, athletic competitions, bonfires, boating, bathing, rowing matches, and Eagles Mere's unique illuminated fleet and feast of lanterns. Concerts were given in 1896 and later by such groups as the Rock Band, a family who played a xylophone made of different shaped rocks, the Royal Hand Bell Ringers, the Park Sisters, who returned throughout the years of Chautauqua in Eagles Mere, and the Tyrolean Troubadours.⁵⁴ The Chautauqua had its own baseball team, which competed with visiting teams in the summer and, according to the *Chautauquan*, had a very successful record. There were weekly bonfires at which attendees roasted corn and told stories, and the lake itself was a constant source of entertainment. Countless newspaper articles and the *Chautauquan* cited scientific studies of the lake's mineral content and concluded, as an enticement to vacationers, that it was one of the safest and purest bodies of water in the world. Swimming, boating, and rowing competitions of men's and women's teams took place on a regular basis. The illuminated fleet was something special -- a unique part of Eagles Mere's heritage involving decorated boats that paraded around the lake for the delight of the audience. Often a concert was held on the beach or boardwalk during the fleet, to provide musical accompaniment to the boats. Prizes were given to the boats that presented the "best artistic effort."⁵⁵ The day after the illuminated fleet, the cottages and walkways were lit by thousands of lanterns, and attendees promenaded through the grounds while bands played.⁵⁶

The two different types of entertainment found at the Eagles Mere Chautauqua, the didactic and the fun, highlight its transitional nature. America was in the midst of a change in outlook, and the Eagles Mere Chautauqua was in the middle of it all. The conflict is directly addressed in the *Chautauquan*. The organizers of the Eagles Mere Chautauqua made it perfectly clear that although persons would get the most out of their stay at the Chautauqua by attending lectures or taking part in classes, they were by no means required to do so. There were several kinds of guests at the Chautauqua: those attending classes and intent on receiving an education, those on vacation who attended lectures and events but still had free time for fun, and those who were merely staying at the Chautauqua and did not take part in it. This was the case even in 1896, and it emphasizes the growing

⁵⁴ *Chautauquan* 1896, 7-9.

⁵⁵ *Chautauquan* 1896, 18.

⁵⁶ *Chautauquan* 1896, 9.

conflict between Victorian vacations and the "new" vacations. The *Chautauquan* had this to say on the matter:

*Chautauqua teaches that all these things [recreations] should be accompaniments of some methodical work, be it ever so little, in one or another of the various schools, but if the visitor prefers his dinner all dessert, no one will try to show him the "error of his way."*⁵⁷

In other words, none of the officers or lecturers would berate someone who was staying at the Chautauqua but not taking part; the vacationer was free to do as he choose, even if it was not productive.

The 1896 season lasted four weeks, from August 4 to August 31. It was a great success that inspired many changes in the program and organization of the Chautauqua for the next several years. Some of these changes were expansions in the Chautauqua program -- including more schools, improvements in existing schools, a longer program, and more celebrity speakers. The School of Women's Christian Temperance Union Methods was established in 1897 to train Sunday School teachers, and all of the other Schools except Liberal Arts and Pedagogy were expanded. The Schools of Liberal Arts and Pedagogy were abandoned in 1897 because of inadequate facilities. A Department of Music, a Cooking School, and classes in Scientific Dress Cutting were added in 1898. A School of Photography was added in 1901. Most schools had their own buildings, and a pamphlet from the Chautauqua Inn of 1902 shows a picture of the large building devoted to the School of Photography.⁵⁸ The four week long assembly became a six week long assembly. The Chautauqua attracted another former Pennsylvania Governor to its Board of Directors, Robert E. Patterson, and the Poet Scout, Captain Jack Crawford, was a popular talent at Chautauqua in 1897.⁵⁹

Most of the changes at the Chautauqua, however, were not improvements in the educational facilities, but in providing more entertainment and recreation. The tone of the Chautauqua was beginning to change, and the uneven balance between didactic entertainment and fun entertainment was becoming more marked. It was very clear which type was winning. The number of entertainers rose from nine in 1896 to sixteen in 1897.⁶⁰ Prior to 1898, the schools, Board of Directors, officers,

⁵⁷ *Chautauquan* 1896, 17.

⁵⁸ Pamphlet, *The Chautauqua Inn Eagles Mere Pennsylvania 1902* (Harrisburg PA: Mount Pleasant Press, 1902), 8. (Hereafter pamphlet)

⁵⁹ *Chautauquan* 1897, 18.

⁶⁰ *Chautauquan* 1896, 7-9; *Chautauquan* 1897, 8-10.

and lecturers were discussed first in the programs. There was also a marked division between the short biographies of the platform talent and the entertainers. In 1898, however, the entertainment and outdoor recreation facilities to be found at Eagles Mere were posted first in the program, and biographies of lecturers and entertainers were lumped together. In the back of the program, there were also three full pages of ads -- in addition to several smaller ads scattered throughout. These advertisements featured consumer goods, commercial leisure, railroad transportation, and even excursion runs.⁶¹ The *Chautauquan* also encouraged people to "Take a Vacation" in 1898.⁶² The weekday schedule was changed by 1899 to allow for more free time and entertainment, including the addition of a scheduled bathing hour:

A.M.	8:45	<i>Schools</i>
	9:45	<i>Round Tables</i>
	10:00	<i>Kindergarten and Training</i>
	11:00	<i>Bathing Hour</i>
P.M.	2:30	<i>Lecture or Musicale</i>
	3:30	<i>Bathing Hour</i>
	8:00	<i>Musical Prelude</i>
	8:15	<i>Lecture or Entertainment</i> ⁶³

Another change reflected a trend that was occurring all over the nation -- a difference in how Americans observed the Sabbath. The traditional observation was dedicated to rest, meditation, and church attendance.⁶⁴ Travel on Sunday was vigorously condemned. The change began among the working class, who, faced with a six day work week, took Sunday as their day of recreation. Workers would spend Sunday in the park, playing games with friends or family, or splurge for a day at one of America's new amusement parks, one of which was Coney Island.⁶⁵ The idea became very popular in every class, and left religious groups railing against this desecration of the Sabbath. The Sunday outing became popular, and many from all classes chose to attend baseball games, the theater, or spend the day in the park or on

⁶¹ *Chautauquan* 1898, 1-20.

⁶² *Chautauquan* 1898, 5.

⁶³ James, 95.

⁶⁴ Dulles, 207.

⁶⁵ John E. Kasson, *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 38-39.

the midway.⁶⁶ In central Pennsylvania, the *Pennsylvania Methodist* ran articles into the 1900's, despite the fact that it was too little too late, condemning the Sunday picnic and criticizing those camp meetings that opened their gates on Sundays, and therefore encouraged people to travel to the camp for services.⁶⁷

The Chautauqua's official attitude to Sabbath observation was given in the yearly program, but this too changed over the years. In 1896, it presented a rigorous observation: *The Chautauqua gates will be closed on Sunday to all but those who hold tickets, and no tickets will be sold on Sunday, and no admissions without tickets. This rule will be strictly adhered to.*⁶⁸

By 1897, this had changed a little:

*We desire to make Sunday a day of rest and help to all. The gates will be closed to all but those who hold tickets, and the people at Eagles Mere desiring to attend church. No tickets will be sold on Sunday.*⁶⁹

In 1898, the change was complete:

*We desire to make Sunday a day of rest and help to all. The gates will be open to all.*⁷⁰

The Chautauqua was on its way to becoming a modern resort.

The event that changed the Chautauqua the most was the opening of the Chautauqua Inn in 1899. It was meant to increase the accommodations for Chautauquans, but became something entirely different. It opened as a totally modern three story inn with one hundred rooms. It had its own generator and became the first hotel in Eagles Mere to have electricity, hot and cold running water, and its own sewage system.⁷¹ The Inn opened in mid-June, and remained open until mid-September, which meant that the Inn was open nearly a month beyond when the

⁶⁶Dulles, 207-209.

⁶⁷"And the Door was Shut," "The Annual Sunday School Picnic," *Pennsylvania Methodist*, 7 August 1902, 1.

⁶⁸*Chautauquan* 1896, 8.

⁶⁹*Chautauquan* 1897, 18.

⁷⁰*Chautauquan* 1898, 4.

⁷¹James, 95.

Chautauqua Assembly met. This allowed for even more guests to stay at the Inn for longer periods of time.

All Inn guests were admitted free to Chautauqua lectures and events. Although many attended, the entertainment found at Eagles Mere increasingly overshadowed the didactic events taking place in the Chautauqua's tent. Not only did the annual programs show signs of the change, but a pamphlet for the Chautauqua Inn of 1902 highlighted the entertainments to be found at the Chautauqua and pointed out the fact that all guests of the Chautauqua Inn were admitted to the entertainments at no cost. The pamphlet stressed the entertaining side of Chautauqua; it gave a brief description of the Chautauqua Schools, but little else on Chautauqua's didactic side.⁷²

The evolution of the Chautauqua into a common resort can be seen in some of the additions and improvements made to the Inn and the grounds over the next few years. The end-of-season *Chautauquan* of October 1900 reports that although the Inn was only two years old, already the interior was being reorganized for the 1901 season -- a writing room, smoking rooms, several parlors, and additional bathrooms were being added.⁷³ On the grounds, several improvements were being made -- including several new cottages, new parks, new walks, a new fence and improved entrance, tennis courts and croquet grounds, and (most tellingly!) a casino.⁷⁴ The traditional "lights out" of the Chautauqua at ten o'clock was also ignored within the Inn; the Inn's own orchestra played until eleven every night for the enjoyment of the guests.⁷⁵

The Chautauqua was no longer an operation owned and operated by one group of people. Pieces of the community of the Chautauqua were being sold to private individuals for the building of private cottages. The Board of Directors and the Inn management urged private individuals to buy land and build cottages, either for their own use or to rent out. It was advertised as a business opportunity in 1900:

⁷²Pamphlet, 8-14.

⁷³End-of-season issue, *Eagles Mere Chautauquan*, October. 1900, 1. (Hereafter *Chautauquan* Oct. 1900)

⁷⁴*Chautauquan* Oct. 1900, 1.

⁷⁵Pamphlet, 13.

*Why not own a cottage? Buy a lot on the Chautauqua Grounds. Big lots at small prices... A Chautauqua cottage will easily return 20 per cent. on the investment in rental, and the demand for plain but comfortable cottages within the Chautauqua grounds has been greater than the supply. Then, you may occupy it yourself. It will pay big either way. Great Opportunity to secure a desirable summer home. Invest without delay.*⁷⁶

The Chautauqua was becoming more and more a summer resort instead of a summer school.

The evolution that took place in less than a decade at Eagles Mere was a miniature portrait of what was occurring in America. Entertainment was changing; the 1890's Victorian idea of productive leisure was falling out of favor as a popular form of entertainment. Although many people continued to attend lectures and other didactic entertainments, new forms of leisure activity were rising from the bottom, from the workers. The urban working class popularized the Saturday half-holiday and the playful Sunday, and associated these days with relaxation instead of self-improvement. Their version of an urban park, the playground, became widespread in urban areas, and the use of these parks for active play spread into the middle and upper classes.⁷⁷

Even more influential in the change in American leisure were the new amusement parks of the 1890's and early 1900's, of which Coney Island was the most famous. These amusement parks were created by entrepreneurs who saw the changes in America's attitude towards leisure and capitalized on them. Coney Island laughed in the face of convention; when a person entered the gates, he or she entered a world where pleasure was the main objective, and traditional rules of etiquette were erased.⁷⁸ Coney Island became popular with people of all classes. Its relaxed style and capacity for fun were not only a sign of the changes taking place all over the nation, but also a promotion to spread the image of having fun. In a sense, Coney Island helped to educate Americans about leisure.⁷⁹

Eagles Mere had experienced, over the course of less than a decade, a similar entertainment revolution, and it had a profound affect on the Chautauqua. Following

⁷⁶*Daily Eagles Mere Chautauquan*, 28 August 1900, 4.

⁷⁷Rosenzweig, 140-143.

⁷⁸Kasson, 50.

⁷⁹Kasson, 36.

the change from didactic to pleasure seeking entertainment, the formal Chautauqua meetings and Schools were disbanded after the 1902 season. The fence came down, and the Chautauqua Inn became the Forest Inn. In 1906, the Eagles Mere Park Association was formed to manage the grounds and cottages surrounding the Inn.⁸⁰ The Victorian image of a purposeful holiday had ceased to be a draw for vacationers in Eagles Mere. Guests wanted to play, not work.⁸¹

Afterword

Though it is gone, the Chautauqua had an immense impact on Eagles Mere. Several parts of it lasted for decades, and some pieces of it can still be seen today. The grounds of the Chautauqua became Eagles Mere Park, and there are now over a hundred privately owned cottages in the Park -- including the cottage of C.W. Woddrop, now known as the Sunset Lodge.⁸² The Chautauqua bell has been removed to the village green, where it now stands as a stop on a tourist's photographic tour of Eagles Mere. The nighttime Vespers have been conducted throughout the century, the most recent service being held this past summer. The Vespers are now held only occasionally during the summer season, but they still are a part of Eagles Mere. The Illuminated Fleet, begun in 1896, is now better known as Eagles Mere's Water Carnival and held yearly at the end of August.

The Chautauqua Inn and its related buildings, the Assembly Hall and the Casino, continued to be a part of Eagles Mere for many years. Yet another change in American vacation patterns caused the demise of the Inn and its related buildings. This time the change drew a more informal cottager to the town, who found the routines and etiquette of the great turn-of-the-century hotels bothersome. The Forest Inn continued in operation until 1965, when it closed because of financial difficulties. The vacant building became an eyesore and was demolished in November 1978. Following a 1903 relocation and rebuilding as a one-story wooden structure dubbed the Auditorium, the Assembly Hall became famous as Eagles Mere's Playhouse . It has hosted such talent as Charlton Heston and Ethel Barrymore Colt. Local celebrity Alvinia Krause ran the Playhouse between 1945 and 1964, and then went on to found the Bloomsburg Theater Ensemble. The last production took the stage in 1969, and the Playhouse was dismantled soon after. The legacy of the Playhouse, and of the

⁸⁰James, 95.

⁸¹McFarland, 53.

⁸²James, 100.

Chautauqua entertainments, lives on in Eagles Mere as part of the DeWire Center's summer entertainment series -- including concerts by local musicians, and play productions by the ETC theater company. The Casino was also known as the Amusement Hall, and it offered bowling on four alleys, a dance floor upstairs, a small stage for bands, and a bar. The building remained on the grounds until 1987.⁸³

Although most of the physical remains of the Chautauqua are gone, and few remember that the Chautauqua was even a part of Eagles Mere, it continues to influence the town. Eagles Mere's distinctive summer style is a direct descendent of the Chautauqua.

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⁸³James, 96-104.

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