

THE TEXAS CHAUTAUQUA MOVEMENT:  
A STUDY OF THE SAN MARCOS  
INDEPENDENT ASSEMBLY

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THE TEXAS CHAUTAUQUA MOVEMENT:  
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*For Mom and Dad*

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## INTRODUCTION

As I started my graduate studies in the history department of Texas State University-San Marcos, I knew little about the history of the University and even less about the history of the small city of San Marcos. The university has an overwhelming presence in San Marcos, yet at times there appears to be little cooperation between the two entities and each seems to operate independently of the other. While searching for a thesis topic, Public History Director Dr. Patricia Lynn Denton suggested researching the New York Chautauqua or the San Marcos Chautauqua. A search for information on the San Marcos independent Chautauqua led me to Ruby Henderson's "A Source Book of Materials on the San Marcos Chautauqua, 1885-1895," written in 1938. After reading the source book, I was immediately interested in finding out more about this unique institution, especially after I realized Chautauqua's impact on San Marcos and how it has been overlooked as a significant part of local history.

Henderson's work is invaluable to the study of Chautauqua in San Marcos, since she incorporated many sources that are no longer accessible, such as interviews with individuals who had participated in the summer assembly. However, the source book is just that, a collection of copied newspaper clippings about the assembly. This source book represents the only documented attempt to record the history of the San Marcos Chautauqua. Although this left open the opportunity to analyze the history of the San Marcos Chautauqua and what effects it had, if any, on the San Marcos community,

Henderson's statements that research on the Chautauqua had been conducted too late were discouraging. Henderson was referring to the fact that it was too late to interview the founders of the San Marcos Chautauqua who had already passed away, but this statement led a few readers to believe that it was too late to conduct any further research at all. In fact, when I began my research I was told several times that I would not be able to find much information on the San Marcos Chautauqua, and as I began the project I constantly feared the moment when the sources would end. Fortunately, this never happened. On the contrary, I continually found references to the San Marcos Chautauqua and other Texas Chautauquas, and now that I am near completion of the project I wonder what other information about the San Marcos Chautauqua is yet to be discovered. The extent of the information uncovered thus far reveals the impact of the San Marcos Chautauqua, and most importantly, reveals the connection San Marcos community leaders had to the institution and their desire to improve the town of San Marcos, beginning with the educational opportunities of its citizens.

The San Marcos Chautauqua originated from the first Chautauqua located in New York. In 1874, Lewis Miller and John Vincent developed an idea: they wanted to improve the education of the nation, and they intended to do it through the training of Sunday school teachers. Chautauqua operated only during the summer, and hosted informative lectures under the shade of trees on an open platform. The newly developed institution became so successful in its first year that its outreach expanded beyond Sunday school teachers to include training for all teachers, and it provided classes for the general public. Guided by religious principles, Chautauqua continued to grow as an educational institution, and the "idea" spread across the nation. The Chautauqua

Movement consisted of three stages: the original New York institution, the independent Chautauquas, and finally, the circuits.

The founders of Chautauqua took the name from Chautauqua Lake located in western New York. Although it may have been easy for the founders to decide on a name for their summer school, the struggle since to find out the definition of the word has been more complicated. For at least a century, people have debated the meaning of the word Chautauqua and why the lake in New York was given this name. Chautauqua is a Seneca word, but the spelling has been altered in both English and French. Numerous attempts have been made to accurately define the word, and although no one knows the exact meaning of Chautauqua, several definitions and various legends have been offered. Overall, the most accepted definition is “fish taken out,” but there are different variations on the exact phrasing of this definition. The name came from a story about a group of Senecas and the strange fish they caught in the lake. After catching a fish in the lake and putting it in their canoe, the group continued their journey to Lake Erie, and once they arrived at their destination they found the fish still alive. The Senecas threw the fish into Lake Erie and eventually more fish of the same kind multiplied there, so the lake where the fish originally was caught became known as the place where the fish was taken out. Other definitions that have been offered include “sack tied in the middle,” “place of easy death,” “two moccasins tied together,” “the foggy place,” and many more.<sup>1</sup> Although the word originally may have been a physical description of the lake, or a mysterious multiplying fish, today the word “chautauqua” is synonymous with education.

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<sup>1</sup> W. M. Beauchamp, “Chautauqua and Other Iroquois Names,” *Science* 18, no. 457 (November 6, 1891): 262; Theodore Morrison, *Chautauqua: A Center for Education, Religion, and the Arts in America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 8.

The wide success of the New York Chautauqua summer sessions in the late nineteenth century encouraged the emergence of other “independent” Chautauquas across the country, particularly in the Midwest. The small town of San Marcos, situated on a spring-fed lake, became the site of the first Chautauqua in Texas. This thesis will demonstrate that the San Marcos Chautauqua is a vital component of San Marcos’ history, and not only does it continue to have a lasting influence, but it also was a progressive influence during its operation. The San Marcos Chautauqua succeeded in encouraging the development of San Marcos, provided for political involvement of women, and through its educational achievements laid the foundation for a permanent teacher’s college.

Although the independent Chautauquas became popular, entrepreneurs looked to capitalize on the independents and thus developed the circuit Chautauqua. The circuits traveled and offered small towns the opportunity to book a week on the traveling circuit. The circuit Chautauqua offered a cheaper alternative than the expense and burden of arranging a full independent assembly. The circuits became less educational and more focused on entertainment but continued to remain informative. Arguably, the circuits may have been the more popular stage of the Chautauqua Movement and certainly were the most well-known, since many famous individuals spoke on the circuit platform. Although the circuits are a significant part of the movement they are the farthest removed from the original Chautauqua concept. Since more information is available on the circuits than the independents, this paper will only briefly describe the Chautauqua circuits and how they fit within the Texas Chautauqua Movement.

When I began researching the San Marcos Chautauqua my goal was to identify what role the Chautauqua played in Texas and San Marcos and whether or not it actually was significant to the community. I also wanted to identify how the San Marcos assembly fit into the wider Chautauqua Movement. In order to accomplish this I needed to clearly define the New York Chautauqua. I also wished to clarify and identify the existence of the Chautauqua Movement in Texas and the effects that the institution had on the Southern state. I ultimately wanted to find out if Chautauqua, both in New York and in San Marcos, was a success or a failure, and the effects that it had on the larger community. Although this paper attempts to address these questions, there remain many additional resources on the Chautauqua Movement in Texas that need to be explored.

At the onset of this research project I also wanted to address the role of African Americans and Mexican Americans in the Chautauqua Movement. Unfortunately, although it is clear that these groups did play a role, even if it was only one of exclusion, sources are largely absent about the specific relations between these groups and their involvement at Chautauqua. Due to this scarcity of information, this paper only briefly addresses the role of African Americans and simply identifies the presence of Mexican Americans in San Marcos. Since resources are limited on the San Marcos Chautauqua, it is not surprising that there is even less information about minority involvement; however, even the New York Chautauqua has little documentation of the role of minority groups. This can largely be attributed to Chautauqua portraying itself as an institution that welcomed everyone, even though not everyone was equally welcome, which will be further explained in chapter one.

An analysis of the sources on the San Marcos Chautauqua will provide an overall history of the San Marcos institution and position it within the wider Chautauqua Movement. In order to accomplish this I first will establish the context of the Chautauqua Movement and its educational mission through a description of the original New York Chautauqua. Second, I will explain the history of the independents that made up the Texas Chautauqua Movement. Finally, I will explain the origins of the San Marcos Chautauqua, its development and character, and influences on the San Marcos community. Analysis of its larger significance will examine the opportunities it provided for women, its influence on education in Texas, factors contributing to its ultimate decline, and evidence of its lasting success.

The information collected for this work comes largely from the San Marcos newspaper the *San Marcos Free Press*, published in Texas during the late nineteenth century, which provides the primary record of the San Marcos Chautauqua. Documents also were collected from the Chautauqua Institution archives in New York, from the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, the San Marcos Public Library, the work of Ruby Henderson, and from the historians who wrote about the Chautauqua Movement and subsequent independent movement and circuits. The following chapters will attempt to use these resources to demonstrate the significance of the Chautauqua Movement in Texas.

## CHAPTER I

### A HISTORY OF THE NEW YORK CHAUTAUQUA

“Education, once the peculiar privilege of the few, must in our best earthly estate become the valued possession of the many.”<sup>2</sup> Written by Chautauqua founder John H. Vincent, this concept was the basis for the Chautauqua Movement that began in New York in 1874. Starting as a summer school to educate Sunday school teachers, Chautauqua helped to expand social and educational movements that continued to be popular throughout the twentieth century. Religiously guided lectures, discussions, and concerts drew in crowds to assemblies held on Chautauqua Lake, a summer vacation destination. Influenced by many educational and social ideologies developed during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Lewis Miller and John H. Vincent used these ideas to develop their “Chautauqua idea.”

This “idea” was influenced by popular and adult education in the United States, which was rooted in the self-improvement ideology that gained ground during the nineteenth century. According to historian Joseph F. Kett, interest in general self-improvement coincided with a “democratic idealism” that developed after the American Revolution when access to higher education for the general public was sought. However, due to lack of adequate public funding, universal education was not readily available. The expectation then grew that people should improve themselves through self-training. This

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<sup>2</sup> John H. Vincent, *The Chautauqua Movement* (Boston: Chautauqua Press, 1886), 2.



concept of self-improvement laid the foundation for what would later develop into adult education in the early twentieth century. During this transition from self-education to adult education, institutions developed that fostered popular education.<sup>3</sup>

The lyceum was one of the first institutions to offer Americans a means of self-improvement. Named after the garden of the Temple of Apollo Lyceus where Aristotle taught philosophy, in the United States the lyceum first offered informative lectures and, in the second half of the nineteenth century, provided entertainment to rural areas. Beginning in 1826, in order to improve work skills, Josiah Holbrook established a lyceum that provided science- and mechanics-based lectures and demonstrations relevant to textile workers in Milbury, Massachusetts. As the population of the surrounding areas began to grow and general prosperity increased, so did the number of lyceums and along with this a desire for greater cultural knowledge. Consequently, the lyceum program began to focus on cultural topics such as literature, history, and religion, rather than continuing its previous emphasis on developing skills needed in the workplace. When people migrated west prior to the Civil War, they desired the culture they had left behind in the east, so lyceums expanded west as well, first offering lectures and later adding other entertainments. The lyceum did not experience the same success in the South as in the West because leaders in the South feared the possible disruption of the established social order through the education of blacks and poor whites.<sup>4</sup> For the most part, self-improvement in the nineteenth century emphasized education for the purposes of expanding personal knowledge and cultural experiences rather than pursuing knowledge

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<sup>3</sup> Joseph F. Kett, *The Pursuit of Knowledge Under Difficulties: From Self-Improvement to Adult Education in America, 1750-1990* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1994), xii-xiii, xv-xvi.

<sup>4</sup> John E. Tapia, *Circuit Chautauqua: From Rural Education to Popular Entertainment in Early Twentieth Century America* (1997; repr., Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2008), 12-13, 15.

simply for the purpose of gaining job related skills.<sup>5</sup> Believing the lyceum to be too commercialized, Chautauqua leaders later attempted to distance themselves from association with the lyceum movement.<sup>6</sup>

Towards the turn of the century, Progressives advocated moving away from the concept of self-dependent education and towards the concept of a collective responsibility. According to historian Maureen Flanagan, individualism was the historical basis for American democracy, but with the progressive assertion of certain social rights there was a shift away from blaming the poor for their impoverishment. Jane Addams argued that the only way to achieve democracy was for people to do things for the good of all citizens, not just for individual gain. Even the Social Gospel movement argued that it was no longer enough to achieve “personal moral righteousness,” but rather it was important to improve the righteousness of all society.<sup>7</sup> These ideals, whether politically or religiously motivated, sought the betterment of all levels of society and contributed to the establishment of educational opportunities for the general public, including compulsory education for children and increased access to adult education.

The public forums movement further demonstrates how a sense of a collective responsibility was growing in urban areas. Historian Kevin Mattson argues that in order for a true democracy to be realized, citizens must participate in political dialogue with each other to debate and compromise on political issues that affect the general public. Mattson insists on the essential role that the city played in progressive reform and the

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<sup>5</sup> Kett, *The Pursuit of Knowledge Under Difficulties*, xiv.

<sup>6</sup> Andrew C. Rieser, *The Chautauqua Moment: Protestants, Progressives, and the Culture of Modern Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 103.

<sup>7</sup> Maureen A. Flanagan, *America Reformed: Progressives and Progressivisms 1890s-1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 33-34.

development of a “sense of a public.”<sup>8</sup> He also argues that the town meeting established a standard during the nineteenth century that persisted as the ideal for democratic participation. As cities grew, problems related to urban growth needed to be solved, and the increased popularity of the public forums movement provided the means for public discussion of these issues. The movement first began with the establishment of the People’s Institute of New York in 1897. The Institute sponsored lectures attended by crowds of around one thousand people, which were followed by a question and answer session. Unlike the lyceums, the People’s Institute started with culturally based lectures, and in the second year the focus shifted to legislative matters. The People’s Institute inspired the establishment of other forums across the nation, particularly in the Northeast, and the forum became a free and open opportunity for the general public to be introduced to, as well as to discuss and debate, important issues of the day.<sup>9</sup>

Although Chautauqua did not provide the same open access as later provided by the public forum, it did embrace its basic principle of providing a space in which people could gather to discuss major contemporary issues. It also embraced both the concept of self-improvement and that of collective responsibility. While historian Maureen Flanagan argues that the New York Chautauqua fell short of satisfying the needs of the public forums movement because of its admission price, its religious affiliation, and lack of wide access, Chautauqua may have influenced the development of forums.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, through its independent Chautauquas and the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle (CLSC), Chautauqua provided benefits that the forum did not. First, it extended the

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<sup>8</sup> Kevin Mattson, *Creating a Democratic Public: The Struggle for Urban Participatory Democracy During the Progressive Era* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 9.

<sup>9</sup> Mattson, *Creating a Democratic Public*, 4-5, 8-9, 14-15, 41-43.

<sup>10</sup> Flanagan, *America Reformed*, 39.

opportunity for education and discussion of important topics to rural Americans. Since most reform and political development occurred in major cities, the rural influence of Chautauqua was exceptionally important. Second, while the structure of the public forum did not allow for a full debate between lecturer and the public, Chautauqua provided the opportunity for independent study and formal education, which made for a more intelligent public.<sup>11</sup> The CLSC reading circles also facilitated the intimate interaction longed for in the town meeting. Prior to and during the Progressive Era, the need of the public to discuss and solve political issues through the public forum, the need for practical training and entertainment found in the lyceum, and the need to have access to higher education led to the success of Chautauqua.

A passionate dedication to both education and Christianity inspired Lewis Miller and John Vincent to establish the Chautauqua Institution. Miller and Vincent were committed to education and religious fulfillment from very early on in their lives, and they wanted to bring structure to self-instruction, and thus help foster popular education. Chautauqua found its niche as a Sunday school, camp meeting, and vacation destination, all designed to heighten the cultural knowledge of individuals through personal study. Chautauqua co-founder John Heyl Vincent was born in Alabama in 1832. As a young child he studied vigorously, but later was unable to secure a formal college education due to his commitments as a Methodist Episcopal preacher. Vincent's missed chance at a college education is often attributed as the reason he so determinedly pushed for access to

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<sup>11</sup> Mattson, 46.

education for those who also missed their chance. He was a licensed preacher by the age of eighteen, and became a bishop in 1888.<sup>12</sup>

Throughout his life Vincent was actively involved in Sunday school work, which led him, in 1868, to meet Lewis Miller, future co-founder of the Chautauqua idea. Lewis Miller, born in 1829, was equally as enthusiastic as Vincent in pursuing an education, and became a successful businessman and inventor.<sup>13</sup> “Each a visionary,” Vincent was the preacher and Miller the businessman, and they continued these roles in their leadership positions at Chautauqua. Miller managed the business affairs and often supported Chautauqua financially, while Vincent became the public face of Chautauqua and often lectured during the summer season.<sup>14</sup> Since both shared the same passion for education and the improvement of Sunday schools, Vincent and Miller began collaborating on their idea to improve general education by training Sunday school teachers and standardizing teaching methods. They came up with an idea on how to improve society, and for them it actually worked.

Located in the southwest corner of New York State, Chautauqua Lake was first home to the Fair Point Methodist camp meeting, which began in 1871. Often hosted by Methodists, camp meetings began around the end of the eighteenth century and provided a gathering place for outdoor religious revivals.<sup>15</sup> In many ways the Fair Point camp meeting was not so different from its successor, the Chautauqua assembly. The camp meeting at Fair Point offered a place for people to set up tents, provided two steamboats

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<sup>12</sup> Jeffrey Simpson, *Chautauqua: An American Utopia* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Publishers in association with the Chautauqua Institution, 1999), 34.

<sup>13</sup> Inventors ran in the family as Miller’s daughter Mina married inventor Thomas A. Edison.

<sup>14</sup> Quote from Simpson, *Chautauqua*, 33; Theodore Morrison, *Chautauqua: A Center for Education, Religion, and the Arts in America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 17-20, 23, 25-26; Alfreda L. Irwin, *Three Taps of the Gavel: Pledge to the Future, The Chautauqua Story*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Chautauqua, New York: Chautauqua Institution, 1987), 15.

<sup>15</sup> Rieser, *The Chautauqua Movement*, 20-21.

for travel across the lake, and advertised itself as not exclusively reserved for Methodists. Most importantly, it was a place where people could, at a reasonable cost, enjoy a vacation that was dedicated to “God’s Service for His worship.” The Fair Point meeting was designed as a summer resort “to offer to the religious public a summer retreat that shall be morally as well as physically helpful, which shall be comparatively within the reach of all.”<sup>16</sup> The main, and most important, aspect that made the Chautauqua assembly unique compared to its antecedent was the inclusion of an educational structure. Lewis Miller, who happened to be on the board of trustees of the Chautauqua Lake Camp Meeting Association, recommended Fair Point to Vincent as the place for their Sunday school. In 1873 Vincent and Miller visited the shores of Chautauqua. George Vincent, son of John Vincent, accompanied his father and Lewis Miller to Fair Point. Upon arriving, George was the first to jump off the boat onto the grounds, and ever after proudly claimed himself to be the very first Chautauquan.<sup>17</sup>

Founders Vincent and Miller leased the Fair Point land for their summer Sunday school, the Chautauqua Lake Sunday School Assembly, and on August 4, 1874, the first Chautauqua Assembly was held. Previous meetings of the Fair Point association prepared the grounds and thus allowed the Chautauqua Assembly to continue the camp meeting tradition of hosting lectures in an open tent structure.<sup>18</sup> However, Vincent always carefully prevented the emotionalism of the camp meeting from ever reaching the lecture platform. He thwarted one revivalist’s attempt to engage Chautauquans in lively songs,

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<sup>16</sup> “Chautauqua Lake Journal, 1873, Tells of Camp Meeting Days of the Pre-Chautauqua Era,” in “Chautauqua Assembly,” Box 1, Folder C, Historical Research Boxes, Oliver Archives Center, Chautauqua Institution, New York (hereafter cited as OAC).

<sup>17</sup> Morrison, *Chautauqua*, 32.

<sup>18</sup> Irwin, *Three Taps of the Gavel*, 15; Morrison, 32.

which he considered too reminiscent of the camp meeting.<sup>19</sup> This is one of the many examples that demonstrate the sincerity of Vincent's efforts to keep Chautauqua as a respectable institution. Even camp meetings began to convert themselves to the Chautauqua design after the success of the summer assembly. At the same time, the Sunday school movement promoted increasing the number of available schools and standardization among Sunday Schools.<sup>20</sup> The founders originally designed the Chautauqua Assembly as a place for the education of Sunday school teachers during the summer months, but its popularity and success allowed it to quickly expand beyond this focus to a religiously founded middle-class resort and popular education institution.<sup>21</sup>

Vincent promoted the summer assembly through publications such as *The Sunday-School Journal*, for which he was editor. Nearly four thousand people from across the country and around the world participated in the opening of the Chautauqua Assembly on August 4, 1874. Over the course of the two-week long assembly it was estimated that between ten thousand and fifteen thousand people participated in the first season. During the assembly visitors camped on the grounds and enjoyed a variety of lectures on Sunday school teaching and the Bible. Upon completion of the season, two hundred people participated in an examination that covered their studies, and one hundred and fifty-two of those passed and received diplomas.<sup>22</sup>

The assembly was ultimately a success, so Vincent and Miller made plans for the following season. A visit by President Ulysses S. Grant, an old friend of Vincent, gave

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<sup>19</sup> Rieser, 42-43.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 32-35.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 19-38.

<sup>22</sup> Simpson, 33-34.

the 1875 season an extra boost of popularity.<sup>23</sup> Grant was one of many famous people to visit Chautauqua and the first of five presidents to visit Chautauqua to date.<sup>24</sup> Prior to the start of the 1876 season, the Fair Point Camp Meeting Association officially sold the fifty acres of Fair Point grounds for one dollar to the assembly, and soon after the community name was officially changed from Fair Point to Chautauqua. Vincent and Miller expanded the 1876 season to three weeks and added science-based lectures to the program. It was also during the 1876 season that Frances E. Willard, later president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, spoke on the Chautauqua platform. The assembly season was again expanded in 1879 to six weeks and currently the summer season runs for nine weeks.<sup>25</sup> In 1883, the name Chautauqua Lake Sunday School Assembly was officially condensed to the Chautauqua Assembly, and again changed in 1902 to its current name of Chautauqua Institution.<sup>26</sup>

The founders of Chautauqua kept programs moral and suitable for the Christian audience. They limited entertainment in order to maintain a strictly wholesome format. Since the availability of leisure time was increasing for middle-class Americans, concern arose over whether or not this free time was being spent appropriately and productively. Thus, Chautauqua became a suitable middle-class vacation destination, which encouraged people to spend their leisure time properly.<sup>27</sup> Although both Vincent and Miller were Methodists, they did not limit participation to Methodists and from the

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<sup>23</sup> Simpson, 37.

<sup>24</sup> According to Chautauqua Institution archivist Jonathan Schmitz, there were four U.S. presidents who visited Chautauqua while president (one of whom came in the off-season), another who came after being president, and four who visited prior to holding the office of president, Jonathan Schmitz, "Did 9 Presidents Speak at Chautauqua?" (this article was intended for publication in the *Chautauquan Daily* but never was published) 2009, in the author's possession.

<sup>25</sup> Simpson, 37-38.

<sup>26</sup> Irwin, 15.

<sup>27</sup> Rieser, 48.



beginning encouraged Chautauqua to become an “all-denominational” Protestant institution, thus theoretically allowing participation by more individuals.<sup>28</sup> Those excluded because they fell outside the Protestant faith took up the Chautauqua concept and formed their own assemblies.<sup>29</sup>

Although the foundation of Chautauqua was educational, it also was a religious summer resort. Numerous summer resorts appeared later in the nineteenth century to satisfy the vacation needs of a growing middle class. Religious resorts also flourished that provided a moral framework and did not have the “temptations” of other vacation destinations, such as alcohol, smoking, and gambling. Activities at these resorts were especially limited on Sundays. These characteristics allowed for a more respectable and safer vacation. Chautauqua encompassed the religious resort by restricting behavior and observing Sunday, but it was not all seriousness and also provided appropriate and healthful recreational activities.<sup>30</sup> An exciting addition to the 1885 and 1886 seasons included the Royal Scooter, a roller coaster on 500 feet of track that rode “the course like lubricated lightning, making the trip in thirteen seconds.”<sup>31</sup> Embracing the principle of self-improvement, Chautauqua provided a resort atmosphere filled with entertainments but still allowed leisure time to be spent pursuing self-education.

Adding to its appeal as a wholesome summer vacation, Chautauqua held another attraction for the middle-class. Influxes of immigrants and the growth of urban areas created conditions that were disturbing to Protestant white middle-class citizens.

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<sup>28</sup> Vincent, *The Chautauqua Movement*, v.

<sup>29</sup> Rieser, 124-125.

<sup>30</sup> Cindy S. Aron, *Working at Play: A History of Vacations in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 110-111, 119.

<sup>31</sup> “The ‘Royal Scooter,’” in “Royal Scooter: Chautauqua’s Roller Coaster,” Box 16, Folder P, Historical Research Boxes, OAC.

Chautauqua embraced ideas of anti-urbanism and attracted people who wanted to escape the offensive qualities of cities that were dirty, chaotic, and filled with “inassimilable” immigrants.<sup>32</sup> Since Chautauqua predominantly appealed to the middle-class, it has been criticized for being inaccessible to the general population. Chautauqua attendance was limited to only those who could afford to travel and pay the entrance fee, but the privately funded institution offered free admission on Sundays, something that it continues to do to this day. Although participation was limited to those who could afford to attend the assembly, the principle behind the “Chautauqua idea” was to give an opportunity for an education to all people. While some Chautauqua participants may have wanted to escape those who were inassimilable, others attempted to share the Chautauqua experience. This is especially seen in the spread of independent assemblies and the cooperation within CLSC circles.

Visitors bought a pass to Chautauqua and could spend anywhere from a day to the full season term. Guests found lodging in the hotel or rented wooden platforms on which to set up tents. Most renters furnished and decorated their tents and, despite the cramped quarters that offered little privacy, attempted to make a space that felt like home.<sup>33</sup> During the day people attended lectures and participated in a variety of activities. The author of an article from 1900 mockingly commented on the full program offered, stating, “any unoccupied time which can be discovered by the aid of a microscope of high power is devoted to the study of Greek, Hebrew, Metaphysics, Mythology and Ice Creamology.”<sup>34</sup> As this quote indicates, the program at Chautauqua was varied and, if

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<sup>32</sup> Rieser, 130-131.

<sup>33</sup> Simpson, 59-60.

<sup>34</sup> “Life on the Lake,” *The Daily Illustrated Chautauqua Tourist*, August 25, 1900, in “History of Chautauqua,” Box 5, Folder A, Historical Research Boxes, OAC.

they so desired, left visitors with little idle time. Programs were available for adults as well as children, and were religious as well as secular, and educational as well as recreational. The 1900 article also mocked the seriousness with which Chautauqua management attempted to ensure that all participants had a gate pass, and sarcastically mentioned a failed attempt to “measure the air consumed by each visitor, so as to charge a percentage thereon.” Although the leaders of the Chautauqua Institution had noble intentions, others perceived that they were possibly taking the “idea” too seriously. Despite this, Chautauqua continued to draw in large crowds every summer.

Chautauqua patrons included those who were only interested in a summer vacation and entertainment and those who were committed to serious schoolwork; however, despite their differing motivations, everyone who attended the assembly was exposed to new and often controversial ideas. Founder Lewis Miller argued that important contemporary social questions such as temperance, labor rights, and the rights of women needed to be addressed. Chautauqua lectures provided a safe way to encourage middle-class exposure to and acceptance of progressive ideals.<sup>35</sup> Theoretically, Chautauqua was a place where people could discuss social issues with an open mind. Miller also believed that a general desire for the “arts” was increasing, which meant access also needed to be increased. The Chautauqua Institution continues to be most widely known for the performance training that is conducted there every summer. Today, young dancers, artists, and musicians go to Chautauqua for summer training. The Chautauqua Institution also provides guests with many ballet, theater, and opera performances.

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<sup>35</sup> Discussions with Chautauqua Institution archivist Jonathan Schmitz.

In his history of the movement's origins, founder John Vincent contended that no matter the position, age, or occupation a person holds he or she must fully take advantage of opportunities for self-enlightenment. Through hard work the majority of people who do not have easy access to education can gain more value from it than is typical of persons for whom opportunities come easily. According to Vincent, anyone could turn his or her home into a college, and through education an individual could become a well-rounded person.<sup>36</sup> The underlying principle of Chautauqua was the concept of self-improvement, and consequently it provided activities for those of all ages.

Although Chautauqua fulfilled all the functions of a summer religious resort, its most important function and the one through which it influenced the most people was education. From its beginning, Chautauqua conducted lectures and lessons with the intention of improving the instruction of Sunday school teachers.<sup>37</sup> Since Sunday schools were important to public education prior to compulsory attendance laws, Chautauqua's founders believed it was important for religious educators to receive the same training as all other teachers.<sup>38</sup> Due to its success the Sunday school teaching program quickly expanded its curriculum, while still retaining the values and principles of the original Chautauqua Sunday School Assembly. Vincent justified the expansion of Chautauqua lessons beyond the Bible to include such courses as science and history because he believed nothing was truly secular when all things were under God. This concept easily allowed secular teachers to participate in the same training as Sunday school teachers at Chautauqua. Educational opportunities were expanded yet again, and went beyond the

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<sup>36</sup> Vincent, vi-viii, 2-4, 10.

<sup>37</sup> Vincent, 17.

<sup>38</sup> John C. Scott, "The Chautauqua Movement: Revolution in Popular Higher Education," *The Journal of Higher Education* 70, no. 4 (July-August 1999): 390.

original goal of training teachers. In 1878, Chautauqua adopted a home-study correspondence school open to anyone, called the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle (CLSC).<sup>39</sup> Chautauqua continued to hold the summer assembly, which complemented the CLSC, but this new program allowed year-round instruction and was available to those who could not travel to the New York Chautauqua, although attendance was still encouraged if possible.

Through the CLSC individuals who did not have the time or ability to go to school could study independently from home. The course was designed for those who had little free time, and participants were required to read for only small periods of time each day. If students kept to the schedule they would complete the course in four years (similar to the traditional university). Comprehension of materials was demonstrated through a series of tests. A sufficient score allowed the student to pass and receive a diploma. All students who received a diploma were encouraged to attend Recognition Day, an elaborate graduation ceremony held during the Chautauqua summer assembly.<sup>40</sup> Some members even went beyond the required course and added “seals” to their diplomas through the completion of additional readings. In 1887 this practice was formally organized into “The Guild of the Seven Seals,” labeled by Vincent as the “highest order” within the CLSC.<sup>41</sup> As its flexible structure suggests, Chautauqua was meant to help those who did not have the opportunity to attend college, and to more generally encourage education and discussion. However, this did not limit attendance, and many accomplished and educated individuals such as doctors, lawyers, and those

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<sup>39</sup> Vincent, 30-31, 80.

<sup>40</sup> Vincent, 112.

<sup>41</sup> “History of the Guild of the Seven Seals: 1878-1944,” in “CLSC,” Box 6, Folder A, Historical Research Boxes, OAC.

who already had college degrees participated in the CLSC. Vincent always emphasized that the CLSC was not intended to be a replacement for college training, but instead an opportunity for those who did not have the ability to go to school or wished to supplement their education.<sup>42</sup>

Since the CLSC was not intended as formal training the workload was not overly labor intensive. The original CLSC course required students to read twelve books a year for four years, or one book a month. The overwhelming demand of CLSC books created a shortage in supply from the publishers, so by 1880 the number of books required was reduced, and select readings from the *Chautauquan* were then required. The *Chautauquan* was a monthly publication that included articles on numerous topics, as well as news from local circles, tips on how to best study the readings, and review questions. Due to changes in publishers, by 1900 readings from the *Chautauquan* no longer were required, although it still contained educational readings until the end of its publication in 1913. After the reading requirements were reduced, typically four books a year were required of CLSC graduates, and today the CLSC requires members to read a total of twelve books.<sup>43</sup>

The home study course structure of the CLSC did not limit participants to self-guided independent study. The CLSC inspired study groups and reading circles typical of the time, in which students could discuss various topics, and it remains the oldest continuous book club. Although an annual membership fee still applied for official enrollment, local circles assisted in diminishing the costs of the CLSC because students

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<sup>42</sup> “The Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle,” 1888-1889, in “Personal Correspondence,” Margaret Miller Newman Gifts to the Chautauqua Archives, OAC.

<sup>43</sup> Mary Lee Talbot, CLSC Alumni historian, phone interview by author, July 12, 2010; “The Chautauquan (1880-1913),” from the Chautauqua archives finding aid, OAC.

were able to share books.<sup>44</sup> Many who joined the groups were not officially enrolled but still participated in the readings.<sup>45</sup> The CLSC drew international attention and membership enrollment included individuals from numerous countries, including Japan, Mexico, India, and Russia.

The CLSC circles provided not only self-education opportunities, but also provided moral cultivation. During the late-nineteenth century several prisons in the United States had active CLSC reading circles available for prisoners.<sup>46</sup> Progressive Era reformers believed that prisons should be modeled after society in order to have successful rehabilitation of inmates. To accomplish this, inmates needed to be educated but they also needed a positive influence from the community.<sup>47</sup> One inmate from the Nebraska State Penitentiary reflected on his transformation due to membership in the CLSC. In 1890, he wrote that despite ridicule from other inmates for being enrolled, he found benefits in CLSC membership, “in new morals, in new ideas, in being able to look every man in the face without his clapping his hand on his pocketbook for fear that you are going to hold him up—for your reading will show in your face.”<sup>48</sup> Chautauquans demonstrated a sense of collective responsibility by providing inmates enrolled in the CLSC with books, which they then shared, and by assisting in directing the reading

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<sup>44</sup> “The Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle,” 1888-1889, in “Personal Correspondence,” Margaret Miller Newman Gifts to the Chautauqua Archives, OAC.

<sup>45</sup> Rieser, 167.

<sup>46</sup> “Chautauqua Work in Prisons, 1886-1895,” in “Circles in Prison,” Box 1, Folder 10, Alfreda Irwin CLSC Files, OAC.

<sup>47</sup> David J. Rothman, *Conscience and Convenience: The Asylum and its Alternatives in Progressive America*, rev. ed. (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 2002), 5, 118, 127, <http://www.netlibrary.com.libproxy.txstate.edu/Reader/> (accessed June 17, 2011).

<sup>48</sup> Charles E. B. quoted in James P. Eckman, “Missionaries of Culture: Chautauqua in Nebraska’s State Penitentiary, 1889-1894,” *Nebraska History* 71, no. 3 (Fall 1990): 142, in “Circles in Prison,” Box 1, Folder 10, Alfreda Irwin CLSC Files, OAC.

circles.<sup>49</sup> In this way, the CLSC became a means to improve and shape the moral character of citizens in addition to granting access to education. James P. Eckman, in his analysis of the CLSC in the Nebraska State Penitentiary, revealed that Progressives wanted prisoners to be treated as individuals and strived to reform inmates, which they attempted to do in part through the CLSC.<sup>50</sup>

In its efforts to publicize the important educational work being conducted at Chautauqua, management utilized the press to notify people of the summer assembly and to encourage attendance. The Chautauqua Press also was established to oversee the production of publications intended for the CLSC and all other Chautauqua periodicals, including the *Assembly Daily Herald* and the *Chautauquan*.<sup>51</sup> A few of the books from the first year of the CLSC reading, which demonstrate the Chautauqua fusion of secular and religious education, include Vincent's *English History*, Bradford K. Pierce's *The Word of God Opened*, Henry White Warren's *Recreation in Astronomy*, J. Dorman Steele's *Fourteen Weeks in Human Physiology*, and A. D. Vail's *Greek Literature*.<sup>52</sup>

Women overwhelmingly participated in the CLSC, which reflected both their desire for access to education and the limits imposed on them in gaining a formal education. The very first class of the CLSC to graduate in 1882 originally recruited 8,246 students, of which 1,694 graduated. The class of 1882 enrolled five women for every three men, and three times as many women as men graduated.<sup>53</sup> Integral to the operation of the CLSC was Kate Kimball. A graduate of the program herself, in 1878 she became

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<sup>49</sup> "Report of the 'Look Forward Circle' Lancaster, Nebraska," July 1, 1892, in "Circles in Prison," Box 1, Folder 10, Alfreda Irwin CLSC Files, OAC.

<sup>50</sup> Eckman, "Missionaries of Culture," 143.

<sup>51</sup> Vincent, 157-158, 42, 140, 205-207.

<sup>52</sup> "CLSC Reading List, 1878-1965," Folder "1885" in CLSC Banner Box #1 Years 1882-1901, OAC.

<sup>53</sup> Vincent, 156-157.



the CLSC's executive secretary at the age of eighteen, and then held the position of its central administrative officer until her death in 1917. Kimball was responsible for correspondence concerning the CLSC, wrote for the *Chautauquan*, assisted with selecting circle books, and acted as an agent for women enrolled in the program.<sup>54</sup>

The success of the CLSC helped to encourage the establishment of the Chautauqua College of Liberal Arts (CCLA). The CCLA provided educational opportunities for those men and women interested in more serious study than that received from the CLSC. According to Vincent, the CLSC provided books to read, but the College provided coursework for students to *study*. Students received assignments and instructions via correspondence and regularly returned examination-papers to demonstrate mastery of the lessons. More was expected of the college student than of those who followed the CLSC, as CCLA enrollees were expected to study just as hard as students at any other college or university.<sup>55</sup>

The positive results of the CLSC and the CCLA led to the establishment of the Chautauqua University, which combined and oversaw all the educational efforts of Chautauqua. The University held regular classes in the summer and offered the correspondence system throughout the rest of the year. An individual wishing to enroll in the Chautauqua University wrote to the central office at Plainfield, New Jersey, and then received information detailing the requirements and readings. The student paid an annual fee of ten dollars and an initial enrollment fee of five dollars. Once matriculated, the student was put in contact with at least one professor who guided him or her through "lesson papers." A student in the University was free to work at his or her own pace.

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<sup>54</sup> Rieser, 191-192.

<sup>55</sup> Vincent, 179-182.

Founders of the Chautauqua University asserted that the University was not intended to compete with other universities, so those who had the means to attend a traditional university should do so and reserve the Chautauqua University for those who, for whatever reason, did not or could not attend college.<sup>56</sup>

Although the University was short lived, lasting only from 1883 until 1892, it had a significant impact on public education. It was a victim of its own success, as other universities and colleges picked up on the Chautauqua idea of extension courses and correspondence classes and drew students away from the Chautauqua University.<sup>57</sup> Many of the educational ideas that developed at Chautauqua, especially adult education, inspired other universities to adopt similar principles. One example was William Rainey Harper, who assisted in organizing the University of Chicago in 1892. Prior to his work at the University of Chicago, Harper began as a teacher and then became principal of the Chautauqua College. Under Harper's direction the University of Chicago adopted many of the characteristics that made up Chautauqua, such as the extension program, correspondence course, and university press. Chautauqua was not always the first to develop these programs, but was able to accomplish them on a wider scale, and was the first to have extension service on a national level.<sup>58</sup>

Chautauqua not only inspired educational developments, but it also influenced social movements and clubs. On numerous occasions Chautauqua began programs that were then adopted by other institutions, ultimately contributing to its decline when educational needs were being met elsewhere. The public library movement got its boost

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<sup>56</sup> Theodore L. Flood, ed., *The Chautauquan* (Meadville, Pennsylvania: The Chautauqua Press, 1884-1885), 5:232, 60-61, 119-120.

<sup>57</sup> John C. Scott, "The Chautauqua Movement," 392, 395, 398.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 393, 401-402.

from the overwhelming demand for CLSC books. The idea for the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) developed at the first Chautauqua summer assembly. Even the National Congress of Mothers, which would later develop into the Parents Teacher Association (PTA), began at Chautauqua.<sup>59</sup> Reading circles and book-a-month clubs also were inspired by the CLSC.

Women overwhelmingly dominated educational opportunities provided by Chautauqua, which of course was sometimes noticed by men. Women joined the CLSC reading circles for various reasons, including merely as an opportunity for entertainment and social purposes, but also for educational reasons. At a time when education was not as easily obtainable for women as for men, these circles offered a level of education they could not get elsewhere, especially for poor or black women. Some attempts were made to integrate reading circles, but racism prevented full integration. African American women overcame this by establishing their own reading circles, such as the Chautauqua Circle of Atlanta. Establishing independent organizations and clubs was a common occurrence for Southern black women since they were often denied the same privileges that Northern black women or Southern white women received.<sup>60</sup> The reading circles, much like other women's clubs, gave women organizational skills necessary for political action. Although most women who participated were white and middle-class, the original design of the organization was to allow the working class to participate in an organization of higher education. The reading circles allowed members to spare some expense through

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<sup>59</sup> John C. Scott, 392, 395.

<sup>60</sup> Jacqueline Anne Rouse, *Lugenia Burns Hope: Black Southern Reformer* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1989), 4.

sharing books, and many more people participated in the circles without officially enrolling and therefore paid no member dues.<sup>61</sup>

Although it may have prepared women for public activism, the nature of the CLSC did not radically challenge gender roles. A woman remained at home while completing her CLSC work and could read intermittently throughout her required home duties, which helped reduce the fear that education was a threat to femininity and domesticity. Rieser notes that since the CLSC reading did not incorporate practical or professional training, the message that Vincent was sending women who graduated from the CLSC course was “now that you have learned about the world around you...you need stray no farther than the kitchen door.”<sup>62</sup> Although this is correct and the CLSC did not provide adequate vocational training, it was designed to improve the lives of people who could not take advantage of other opportunities. Even if Vincent did not intend for women to gain vocational training, women could still apply the skills they gained through the CLSC. Chautauqua provided an opportunity to women who otherwise would not be able to experience any educational training, and even if a woman was not able to leave the kitchen, this does not mean that what she learned through the CLSC was not of value to her. In addition to this, educated mothers also meant better opportunities for their children.

Despite the overwhelming influence and presence of women, Chautauqua’s leaders seemed to ignore or overlook how much women shaped and defined Chautauqua. Historian Andrew C. Rieser observed that, according to Chautauqua literature, between eighty and ninety percent of CLSC participants were women, and despite, or perhaps in

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<sup>61</sup> Rieser, 163-164, 167, 178.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 190.

response to this, promotions encouraged male participation. Rieser also documented the extent to which the CLSC allowed for the educational advancement of women, noting that while 32,684 women graduated from United States colleges between 1882 and 1893, within those same years 27,141 women graduated from the CLSC.<sup>63</sup> Perhaps since Chautauqua was not identified as a distinctly female institution, women were able to more easily influence their male counterparts and assert their presence at the assembly and ensure that it was free of “masculine vice,” especially alcohol.<sup>64</sup> It was well known that Vincent did not support female suffrage and believed that women accomplished most in the home. Moreover, he initially was uncomfortable with female speakers at Chautauqua. Despite Vincent’s beliefs, however, women who pushed for greater participation at Chautauqua began to influence his ambivalent feelings to the extent that during the early 1900s he began to lose his opposition to women’s suffrage.<sup>65</sup>

There is no question that Chautauqua participation also was overwhelmingly dominated by whites. African Americans did establish their own Chautauquas, and by the 1890s there were black Chautauquas in the South and Midwest.<sup>66</sup> As previously noted, some white women attempted to integrate CLSC reading circles but faced racist opposition.<sup>67</sup> There is no evidence that Chautauqua prevented the participation of black members, but it is clear that blacks did not participate in overwhelming numbers. In 1900, George E. Vincent reported, “we have colored students every year and are glad to accord them the treatment which any self respecting American Citizen should receive.”<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Rieser, 166, 167.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 200.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 163-166.

<sup>66</sup> Aron, *Working at Play*, 116.

<sup>67</sup> Rieser, 178.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 129.

Jubilee Singers were invited to perform at Chautauqua, but this was not a particularly progressive move, since Jubilee Singers were often acceptable to whites because they conformed to black stereotyping. However, the appearance of Booker T. Washington at Chautauqua continues to be a proud event in its history. Chautauquans prided themselves on the progressive and open platform at Chautauqua and its inclusive program, so they did not adopt a formal policy of exclusion.<sup>69</sup> Again, even if the Chautauqua designers had something different in mind, the participants influenced the outcome. There is no record indicating that African Americans or anyone else was formally prevented from attending, but just because blacks were not formally excluded does not mean they felt welcome or even wanted to participate in the activities at Chautauqua.

There are almost no records concerning African American participation and roles at Chautauqua, although there is evidence that blacks participated in domestic service there. The Phyllis Wheatley Cottage served as the black boarding house, which, significantly, was located off the grounds.<sup>70</sup> The parody newspaper article written in 1900 comments on the hypocrisy of the Chautauqua platform that promoted inclusion but really excluded, suggesting that at least some whites noticed the limits of black participation. The article sarcastically observed, “Chautauqua attends to the liberties of the colored man by working him for a season ticket, seeing to it that his working hours cover the time of entertainment, and sending him off the grounds to get his hair cut.”<sup>71</sup> The statement demonstrates that African Americans were allowed to participate in the events and exchanged labor for free access to the grounds (a practice that continues today

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<sup>69</sup> Rieser, 131, 148-149.

<sup>70</sup> “The Phyllis Wheatley Cottage,” in “Cottages for Rent, 1888,” Box 5, Folder D, Historical Research Boxes, OAC.

<sup>71</sup> “Life on the Lake,” *The Daily Illustrated Chautauqua Tourist*, August 25, 1900, in “History of Chautauqua,” Box 5, Folder A, Historical Research Boxes, OAC.

for all employees and volunteers), but could not actually attend any events since they were too busy working. Additionally, personal services and lodging were not just segregated, they were not available on the Chautauqua grounds for African Americans.

Despite such limitations, the success and popularity of the New York Chautauqua inspired independent Chautauquas to open across the country, which made up the second phase of the Chautauqua Movement. The independents were smaller versions of the original New York Chautauqua. Established in small towns, an independent usually was held during the summer and the management arranged for lecturers and other educational opportunities. Many attempted to imitate the “mother” Chautauqua as closely as possible while others simply adopted the name. For this reason, the New York Chautauqua encouraged independents but did not hold itself responsible for any other assembly. Vincent recognized thirty-nine independent Chautauquas in 1885, including the Texas Chautauqua at San Marcos. Additional chapters of this thesis will elaborate on the independent movement in Texas and San Marcos.<sup>72</sup>

The final stage of the Chautauqua Movement, and the stage for which it is the most well known, was the circuits. Beginning in 1900, Keith Vawter, who worked for the Redpath Lyceum Bureau, arguably the most successful lyceum organization to operate in the United States, wanted to organize the independent Chautauquas of the Iowa area. By that time, lyceums offered lectures and entertainment to their patrons. Vawter joined forces with Roy J. Ellison and created the Standard Redpath Chautauqua in 1903 in cooperation with the Redpath Lyceum Bureau. They intended to offer a traveling Chautauqua package, complete with prearranged speakers and entertainers, to towns in Iowa that already were hosting independents. For financial reasons they also decided to

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<sup>72</sup> Vincent, 41-42.

include towns that did not have Chautauqua assemblies on their circuit stops. In 1904 the first circuit Chautauqua began. Similar to the lyceum movement, other circuit providers sprang up to provide service, especially in the Midwest. Small communities would pre-book their town as a stop on the Chautauqua circuit. Traveling from town to town, the circuit remained in a community for a week. For ease of travel, the circuits used circus tents to house their “Chautauqua.” They used different designs and colors to differentiate themselves from the circus, and these came to distinguish the famous “Chautauqua tent.” By 1914 the circuit Chautauqua replaced most independents because it was cheaper to book a week on the circuit rather than host an entire assembly, and the circuits were able to offer a more varied program and secure better “talent.”<sup>73</sup> Although the circuits are the most famous stage of the Movement, they are the most distant from the original Chautauqua design. The circuits relied on the prestige of the Chautauqua name, but diluted its significance by associating it with vaudeville type entertainment, a stereotype Chautauqua has yet to overcome.

Similar to the transformation of the lyceum, the Chautauqua Movement began by offering educational opportunities through the New York Chautauqua and the independents, but then transformed, and through the circuit began to offer more entertainment. In the beginning the circuits also offered an educational platform with educational and self-improvement lectures. Furthermore, the circuit advertised itself as moral and educational, very similar to the New York Chautauqua. However, it eventually encompassed forms of entertainment that Vincent tried so hard to prevent and to distance from the Chautauqua name. Similar to the independent, the circuit did bring ideas to rural places; it brought education, entertainment, and provided a platform to discuss

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<sup>73</sup> Tapia, *Circuit Chautauqua*, 1-3, 8-9, 25, 27-28, 31-32.



politics and contemporary issues. It expanded from rural areas into more urban areas, and as it expanded, the circuit's focus turned more toward entertainment and drifted away from offering lectures. Circuit talent included singers, actors, magicians, politicians, and a variety of other entertainments. The circuit became extremely commercialized and eventually was connected to the original Chautauqua in name only. The circuits quickly peaked and rapidly declined. Their peak was in the year 1924, when 10,000 communities participated in the circuits, but their numbers began to decline the following year. The Circuit Chautauqua ended around 1930 due to competition from other entertainments, such as movies and the radio.<sup>74</sup>

As described, the complete Chautauqua Movement is divided into three parts: the New York institution, the independents, and, finally, the circuits. Writer and Chautauquan Jeffrey Simpson divided the original New York Chautauqua's history into four parts. First, from its beginning to 1925 Chautauqua was a "national podium," and it was during this time that the independents and the circuits emerged and branched off. Its second phase occurred under president Arthur Bestor, who expanded the Chautauqua Institution's program to include music and the arts so that it became the "nation's first arts festival," for which Chautauqua is still well known today. After pulling itself out of near financial ruin in 1936, Chautauqua entered its third phase, the "dormancy" period, which lasted for thirty-five years. Its final period was the "renaissance of Chautauqua" that began in 1970. Although people always went to Chautauqua, it was in this last period that younger supporters began participating, renovations were initiated, and Chautauqua "began to engage the world again and be recognized as a national forum."<sup>75</sup> The

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<sup>74</sup> Tapia, 32, 44, 51-52, 59, 75-78, 90, 99, 110, 182.

<sup>75</sup> Simpson, 21, 26.

Chautauqua Institution continues to offer programs such as the opera, theater, arts, dance, lectures, and special studies classes.

It is not unusual to see the Chautauqua name appear in any history that studies education, progressive reform, or the United States at the turn of the century. Often Chautauqua is only briefly mentioned, but the accumulation of these instances provides evidence of its widespread influences. Chautauqua was born out of the camp meeting tradition, but the founders deliberately excluded the emotionalism associated with the camp meeting. Chautauqua was a response to both the Sunday School Movement and the need to standardize teaching, it embraced nineteenth century self-improvement philosophies and its institutions, but it also was an institution of popular education. Although Chautauqua was a place where all Protestant faiths were welcome it was not a place where all people were equally welcome, so African Americans and other groups compensated for this by establishing their own assemblies. The Chautauqua institution did not radically challenge set gender roles but did allow a place where women had access to education and the chance to participate with and influence men. Last but not least, Chautauqua was and still is a summer resort. Encompassing all these influences and roles, Chautauqua was a very unique institution. The Chautauqua idea was so valuable and appealing that it encouraged visitors to establish their own Chautauquas, just as Reverend Horace M. DuBose did in the small town of San Marcos, Texas, which started the Texas Chautauqua Movement.

## CHAPTER II

### THE TEXAS CHAUTAUQUA MOVEMENT

Influential in progressive reforms and women's organizations in Texas and the nation, Anna J. H. Pennybacker believed that if something like Chautauqua had existed prior to the Civil War, then "civil strife might possible [*sic*] have been averted. Chautauqua has taught people from all parts of the Union to know, to understand, and to love each other."<sup>76</sup> Pennybacker's powerful statement reveals the faith and commitment that individuals had in the Chautauqua idea. Although the Chautauqua Institution was not able to prevent war, through the independent movement it was able to unite the nation in the ideals of universal education and moral uplift.

Overall, the independent Chautauquas receive the least amount of attention in the study of the Chautauqua Movement, and in some cases are overlooked all together. They receive less recognition because the New York Chautauqua and the better-known circuits often overshadow them, and because independents existed primarily in small towns and communities, which was the very reason they were so important. Also contributing to the incomplete history of the independent movement is their relatively brief period of popularity, a tendency to regard them as simply part of the circuit, and a scarcity of sources. Most independent Chautauquas ceased to exist after the cheaper entertainment-

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<sup>76</sup> Mrs. Percy V. Pennybacker, November 1934, "Some Information About Chautauqua Institution, Chautauqua, New York," (copied by Mrs. Joseph M. Perkins on February 2, 1954 from the Texas Federation News), in "Chautauqua Women's Club," Box 16, Folder Q, Historical Research Boxes, Oliver Archives Center, Chautauqua Institution, New York (hereafter cited as OAC).

based circuits replaced them; however, a few continue to this day, such as the Colorado Chautauqua, which has been in continuous operation since 1898.<sup>77</sup> Despite not receiving enough attention in secondary sources on the wider Chautauqua Movement, independents contributed to the growth and development of many towns and cities across the United States, and in many cases were central to the development of public education.

As was stated in the previous chapter, some independents attempted to imitate as much as possible the mother Chautauqua, while others adapted the concept to fit their local needs, but whatever the motive the popularity of the independent Chautauquas spread across the nation. The number of independent assemblies peaked in 1885, the year that the San Marcos, Texas, Chautauqua started.<sup>78</sup> Figures for the exact number of independents vary, but according to historian Andrew Rieser a total of one hundred independents existed prior to 1900. Half of these independents were in the Midwest, sixteen were located in the South, with the rest located on the West coast, in the Rocky Mountains, and in the Northeast. Since six independents existed in Texas alone before 1900, it is likely these figures underestimate the number of independents across the nation, and reveal the difficulty in tracing the history of the independent movement. Independents have been strongly identified as a rural movement, typically not existing in major cities but often not far removed from them.<sup>79</sup> Harry S. McClarran attempted the task of creating a complete work on the independent Chautauquas in his unpublished manuscript, “The Flying Fish: A History of the Independent Chautauqua Assembly Movement.” McClarran accounted for approximately 460 independents that existed

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<sup>77</sup> Colorado Chautauqua Association, “History of Colorado Chautauqua,” [www.chautauqua.com](http://www.chautauqua.com) [accessed February 6, 2011].

<sup>78</sup> Andrew C. Rieser, *The Chautauqua Moment: Protestants, Progressives, and the Culture of Modern Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 52.

<sup>79</sup> Rieser, *The Chautauqua Moment*, 51-52, 54.

across the nation from the establishment of the New York Chautauqua until the writing of his manuscript in 1994, most of which ceased operation early in the twentieth century.<sup>80</sup>

The most significant contribution of the Chautauqua Movement was the spread of education to isolated areas throughout the nation. The original Chautauqua was only accessible to people who were able to travel to New York, so it was largely the independents that brought culture and education to rural America, and later the circuits continued this trend although they tended to be more focused on profit and entertainment. Texas was not an exception to the spread of the independents, and despite the northern origins of the movement, the Chautauqua idea was eagerly welcomed into the southern state. According to research collected by McClarran and from local newspapers, Texas was home to at least ten independent Chautauqua assemblies as well as many Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle (CLSC) reading circles. Texas' leaders established independents to improve education, culture, entertainment, and religious understanding, and to encourage settlement and the prosperity of developing towns. Although in some cases accounts are limited by the scarcity of sources, the following will briefly describe the history of the Texas Chautauqua Movement through its independents.

Prior to the spread of the Chautauqua idea, Texas citizens struggled over the issue of how to provide access to public education within the state. Early in the nineteenth century, state leaders encouraged the development of a public school system in Texas, yet finding the funding necessary to support free schools posed a problem, resulting in little progress. Funding for schools in the Republic of Texas was initially supplied through the sale of land, but the low prices intended to attract settlers did not provide enough funds to

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<sup>80</sup> Harry S. McClarran, "The Flying Fish: A History of the Independent Chautauqua Assembly Movement," Unpub. Ms., 1994, Box 26, McClarran Collection, OAC.

support a public school system, and public sentiment opposed taxation for public education. When Texas was granted statehood in 1845, the new constitution made provisions for public education. State leaders recognized the value of an educated citizenry, but still not much developed in the way of public schools and access to education was limited.<sup>81</sup>

Throughout the nineteenth century, Texas' leaders adopted a series of constitutions that contained provisions for a public school system, but these still did not provide an adequate number of new schools and teachers. Under Radical Reconstruction, the new state constitution of 1869 reformed the public school system and even included a compulsory attendance law. Funding for public schools was provided by the sale of public land and a permanent school fund supplied by property taxes and other revenues. Despite these efforts, public education was not provided on a wide scale and the compulsory law created complications for farmers, who saw requiring children to attend school as encroaching on parents' rights and removing needed labor.

After Reconstruction ended, a new constitution was written in 1876. A political backlash to Reconstruction led to unproductive educational policies and previous reforms to the school system were eliminated. The unsuccessful "community system" was established, which left organizing schools up to parents and the community.<sup>82</sup> By the time Chautauqua arrived in the state, popular thought among Texans increasingly favored a free public school system.<sup>83</sup> Efforts to improve education were increasing, but the

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<sup>81</sup> Gene B. Preuss, *To Get a Better School System: One Hundred Years of Education Reform in Texas* (College Station, Texas A&M University Press, 2009), 7-8.

<sup>82</sup> Preuss, *To Get a Better School System*, 9-11; C. E. Evans, *The Story of Texas Schools* (Austin, TX: The Steck Company, 1955), vii.

<sup>83</sup> Frederick Eby, *The Development of Education in Texas* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1925), 193.

disparities between rural and urban schools and between those for whites and those for African Americans and Mexican Americans persisted. Lack of trained teachers was particularly a problem in rural areas.<sup>84</sup> In 1949, the Fifty-first Legislative Session of Texas passed Senate Bills 115, 116, and 117, which became known as the Gilmer-Aikin bills. This new legislation reorganized the public school system and provided funding for schools that resulted in the improvement of the entire public education system in Texas.<sup>85</sup> However, prior to these needed reforms, the independent Chautauqua was one institution that played an important role in filling the educational needs of both children and adults.

While all Texans may have found it difficult to secure a good public education, African Americans had to face many additional obstacles to attending schools. Historically, whites opposed providing African Americans with equal educational opportunities out of fear that an educated African American population would pose a threat to white political domination of the state. After emancipation, many African Americans quickly sought the education that previously had been denied them. During Reconstruction education of African Americans in Texas was severely limited under the constitution, but the Freedmen's Bureau assisted in opening schools for blacks.<sup>86</sup> Afterwards, blacks continued to experience social and educational segregation and discrimination, which caused them to form their own secular and religious organizations to take care of their needs.<sup>87</sup> For this reason it is unlikely that many African Americans actively participated in the Texas independent Chautauquas. They faced persistent

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<sup>84</sup> Preuss, 14-17; Evans, *The Story of Texas Schools*, viii, 135.

<sup>85</sup> Rae Files Still, *The Gilmer-Aikin Bills: A Study in the Legislative Process* (Austin, TX: The Steck Company, 1950), 1.

<sup>86</sup> Joel Williamson, *A Rage for Order: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 7-9; Eby, *The Development of Education*, 263-264.

<sup>87</sup> Alwyn Barr, *Black Texans: A History of African Americans in Texas, 1528-1995*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 106.

violence and opposition in school and elsewhere, but many African Americans continued to ensure that their children went to school. According to the 1890 state superintendent of public instruction, the population of students in Texas for the year ending in August of 1889 was 523,110, of which there were three white children in school for every black child in attendance.<sup>88</sup> When interest in public education increased around 1880, educational opportunities increased for African Americans as well, although these opportunities continued to be segregated. Black teachers overcame this by creating their own professional organization, the Colored Teachers' Association, in Austin in 1884.<sup>89</sup>

Coinciding with the need to build schools for a better educational system, the state also needed well-trained and educated teachers. Frederick Eby, in his work on *The Development of Education in Texas*, explains that prior to the Civil War and up until the establishment of the first normal school, the teachers of Texas were poorly trained, a problem that was worse in rural areas.<sup>90</sup> According to Eby, teachers fell into one of three categories: itinerants who used teaching as a transitional position until they could find something better, missionaries, and those who were educated "scholarly men." Unfortunately, there were many more itinerant teachers than scholarly men.<sup>91</sup> To address this problem, the state of Texas founded a teacher training school, the Sam Houston Normal Institute, in Huntsville in 1879. At the same time, funds also were given to the Prairie View Institute for African American teacher training.

It was in this context of efforts to improve public education, among other reasons, that independent Chautauquas were first established in Texas. During the summer, when

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<sup>88</sup> *Williamson County Sun*, January 30, 1890, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin (hereafter cited as DBCAH), microfilm.

<sup>89</sup> Eby, 263-264, 270, 274, 278.

<sup>90</sup> A normal school is a school for training teachers.

<sup>91</sup> Eby, 293.



children were on break from school, teachers were able to attend summer normal schools to get additional training and to prepare for examinations for teaching certificates. Rural schools were especially in need of educated teachers, since most trained teachers wanted to teach in the better-funded schools found in urban areas.<sup>92</sup> Independent Chautauquas catered to these needs, as Chautauqua leaders often arranged for summer normal school sessions to coincide with the meetings of the independent, as it did in San Marcos (discussed in further detail in chapter three).<sup>93</sup> As also was the case in San Marcos, the establishment of an independent Chautauqua led to a new normal school. Since the Normal Institute in Huntsville was not able to train all the white teachers that were needed, normal schools were opened in Denton, in 1890, and San Marcos, in 1903. Until other schools that offered summer classes, training, and teaching degrees replaced them, the normals were vital to the public education system, and they found important sources of support in the independents.<sup>94</sup>

The first independent assembly in Texas was the San Marcos Chautauqua established in 1885, which launched the Texas Chautauqua Movement. The second Chautauqua organized in Texas was the Texas State Chautauqua in Georgetown, which operated from 1889 until 1895. Just as with the New York Chautauqua, Georgetown was first a site of camp meetings. The success of Chautauqua in San Marcos stimulated some citizens from Georgetown to seek control of the Texas Chautauqua Assembly that was originally connected to the assembly in San Marcos.<sup>95</sup> Formed after the first San Marcos assembly to promote Chautauqua in the state, the Texas Chautauqua Assembly was the

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<sup>92</sup> Eby, 306.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 296-297.

<sup>94</sup> Evans, 105, 408-409.

<sup>95</sup> Clara Stearns Scarbrough, *Land of Good Water, Takachue Pouetsu: A Williamson County, Texas, History* (Georgetown, Texas: Williamson County Sun Publishers, 1973), 248.

self-appointed official Chautauqua organization of Texas. After the closing of the 1888 San Marcos Chautauqua season, “bids” were received for the title of Texas Chautauqua Assembly that led to transferring the “official” Assembly to Georgetown. Although the association was moved to Georgetown, the San Marcos assembly continued uninterrupted until 1895.<sup>96</sup>

Citizens of Georgetown were attracted to the Chautauqua idea as soon as it arrived in Texas. In her history of Williamson County, Clara Scarborough comments, “when the chautauqua movement hit the country in the 1880s, Georgetown citizens became interested. By August, 1885, ferns were reported to be growing in the fountain on the Georgetown Chautauqua grounds.”<sup>97</sup> Although it seems quite the coincidence that preparation for the Chautauqua occurred the same year as the first San Marcos summer assembly, this demonstrates the appeal and significance of independent Chautauquas. Despite their close proximity, both assemblies operated until 1895. Reverend William H. Shaw, who simultaneously served as Second Vice-President and Superintendent of CLSC work, was first secretary of the Texas Chautauqua Assembly while it was in San Marcos.<sup>98</sup> Shaw corresponded with Kate Kimball, executive secretary of the CLSC, about CLSC work at Georgetown and confirmed the citizens’ enthusiasm for acquiring the assembly when he wrote, “we at last have a Chautauqua here.” Georgetown citizens donated two hundred acres for the purposes of the Chautauqua and raised \$10,000 to secure the support of the Texas Chautauqua Assembly.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Texas Chautauqua Assembly, Program of the Texas Chautauqua Assembly of Georgetown Texas (Georgetown, July 2-19, 1889), 1, located at DBCAH.

<sup>97</sup> Scarborough, *Land of Good Water*, 279.

<sup>98</sup> Reverend E. O. McIntire served as First Vice-President at the same time that William H. Shaw served as Second Vice-President.

<sup>99</sup> William H. Shaw to Kate Kimball, March 19, 1889, Box 16, Folder 1, Kate Kimball Correspondence, OAC.

Preparations for the new assembly quickly moved forward in order to get it ready for opening day. On August 27, 1888, the Georgetown Texas Chautauqua Assembly was organized and on April 16, 1889, the cornerstone of the Tabernacle was laid. Situated on the north bank of the South San Gabriel River, visitors crossed a suspension bridge in order to reach the assembly grounds, which were covered in fresh spring fountains and contained the open Tabernacle. Guests were treated to “leading educators, ministers, lecturers, entertainers...choral and vocal presentations, oratorical contests,” the Chautauqua Band, and even Professor J. B. Dunn’s Texas museum of several thousand “specimens of insects, reptiles, fowls and animals.”<sup>100</sup>

In order to ensure that a visitor would return for the following season and have as comfortable a stay as possible, many accommodations were made for the Chautauqua guest. Lodging included furnished and unfurnished tents and cottages, and the cost of boarding was \$25 for the entire four-week assembly. Admission to the grounds was fifty cents for a day and four dollars for the season. A furnished 10x12 tent for one with a floor could be rented for a dollar per day, five dollars for a week, and ten dollars per session. Meals were fifty cents each, one dollar for the day, or five dollars for the week. The railroad also offered reduced rates during the assembly session.<sup>101</sup> Comforts provided to visitors included the dining halls, refreshment pavilions, and fresh water pumped from the springs. Among the summer homes built by wealthy Georgetown citizens near the assembly grounds was Captain Sparks’ Castle, a large castle-like stone dwelling.<sup>102</sup> Management prepared the grounds and lodging, and “provided much in the way of

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<sup>100</sup> Scarbrough, 248, 279; *Williamson County Sun*, April 17, 1890.

<sup>101</sup> William H. Shaw to Kate Kimball, April 8, 1889 (information is from a flyer titled “Texas Chautauqua Assembly” located on the back of the letter to Kimball), Box 16, Folder 1, Kate Kimball Correspondence, OAC.

<sup>102</sup> Scarbrough, 214.

recreation, arranging for socials, boating, and driving, promising a fine display of fireworks, and setting aside an evening for a *soiree scientifique*.”<sup>103</sup>

From the beginning, the organizers of the Assembly recognized the possibilities that hosting a Chautauqua had for the citizens of Georgetown. To maximize its appeal, the managers of the Georgetown Assembly maintained the Chautauqua design and promoted their “University in the woods” as an assembly free of denominationalism. A Texas Chautauqua Assembly announcement stated “every intellectual, moral and religious movement falling within the perview of Chautauqua work will be promoted.” The Assembly managers attempted to maintain a high standard, since they considered the Chautauqua the “peoples’ institution.”<sup>104</sup> These statements reveal two important motives of the Assembly organizers: they wanted the independent to truly meet the needs of the people of Georgetown, but they also wanted to carefully guide what influenced the people and ensure that it was moral as well as educational.

The Texas Chautauqua Assembly’s commitment to the community included assuming responsibility for the education of Texas citizens and teachers. By 1890, Georgetown already was host to the Williamson County Teacher’s Institute, the Williamson County Colored Teacher’s Institute, the Williamson County Sunday School Convention, and was, and still is, home to Southwestern University.<sup>105</sup> Unlike many small Texas towns, Georgetown already had established educational institutions prior to the arrival of Chautauqua. Georgetown boosters listed Southwestern University as one of

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<sup>103</sup> “Texas, Georgetown, Texas,” 1889, Clippings, Box 12-Oregon: Willamette Valley-Texas, Georgetown, McClarren Collection, OAC.

<sup>104</sup> William H. Shaw to Kate Kimball, April 8 1889 (information is from a flyer titled “Texas Chautauqua Assembly” located on the back of the letter to Kimball), Box 16, Folder 1, June 10, 1891, Kate Kimball Correspondence, OAC.

<sup>105</sup> *Williamson County Sun*, February 6, 1890, April 17, 1890, DBCAH, microfilm.

the reasons that the Texas Chautauqua would best be located in Georgetown and also because of Georgetown's accessibility, attractiveness, and reputation as "a place of refinement and culture."<sup>106</sup> Therefore, motivation for acquiring the Texas Chautauqua Assembly most likely went beyond needing an educational institution and included the prestige of being the location of the Texas Chautauqua. The campaign to make Georgetown the headquarters of the CLSC in Texas also represented an effort to use Chautauqua to boost the city's prominence. Nevertheless, the Georgetown Texas Chautauqua Assembly continued an education mission.

Dr. C. C. Cody illustrates the close connections that quickly developed between local educational institutions and independent Chautauquas. Cody organized a summer normal school at Southwestern University in 1888, and also was involved in the Sabbath School Convention.<sup>107</sup> The summer normal subsequently became part of the Texas Chautauqua Assembly in 1889, and Cody went on to become president of the Assembly the following year.<sup>108</sup> The Texas Chautauquas attracted people such as Cody who supported the development of both public education and religious study. The independent hosted competitions open to "both secular and religious" schools in which gold medals were given to boys for oratory and girls for elocution. After the addition of a hall for agricultural and horticultural goods from Williamson County, Dallas editor William Shaw of the *Texas Farmer* gave a speech on agricultural day.<sup>109</sup> Special days also were

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<sup>106</sup> Texas Chautauqua Assembly, Program of the Texas Chautauqua Assembly of Georgetown Texas (Georgetown, July 2-19, 1889), 1, located at DBCAH.

<sup>107</sup> Scarbrough, 248.

<sup>108</sup> *Williamson County Sun*, April 17, 1890, May 5, 1887, DBCAH, microfilm.

<sup>109</sup> *Williamson County Sun*, April 17, 1890, DBCAH, microfilm.

held for organizations such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), and the CLSC.<sup>110</sup>

Undeniably, entertainment in the rural South during the late nineteenth century was heavily influenced by an evangelical lifestyle, whether it was in embracing or denying moral pressures. Professional entertainments did not reach the rural South until the twentieth century, and until modern entertainment was available for rural populations, most found recreation in visiting town or friends, through church organizations, and through games and social activities. Historian Ted Ownby explained that the home was considered a sacred place, so many men of the South sought their own recreational opportunities where they could escape the moral rigidity of the home. Ownby further explained that for evangelical Southerners entertainment through socialization occurred in the home and also within the church. These types of gatherings were typically deemed morally suitable since they were free of the sins typically associated with male indulgences.<sup>111</sup> This type of moral recreation, also seen in the camp meeting, was available through the local independent Chautauqua. At the assemblies, men and women could find recreation that was considered safe and proper, and, if they obeyed the standard set by the New York Chautauqua, was free of masculine vice. Also unique to independent Chautauquas was that it was a place where men and women could mingle, and together enrich not only their spiritual side but their intellectual one as well. Lectures provided by the independent had the added benefit of exposing rural areas to culture and new ideas.

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<sup>110</sup> William H. Shaw to Kate Kimball, April 8, 1889 (information is from a flyer titled "Texas Chautauqua Assembly" located on the back of the letter to Kimball), Box 16, Folder 1, Kate Kimball Correspondence, OAC.

<sup>111</sup> Ted Ownby, *Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, and Manhood in the Rural South, 1865-1920* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 4, 39, 137, 138, 193.

Organizers of the Georgetown Assembly were able to combine educational and recreational activities through a varied and full schedule for the 1890 season. The season included lectures by Reverend Dr. Talmadge from Brooklyn, New York, and on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July a concert and fireworks that celebrated the nation's independence. Other events included speeches by Jahu DeWitt Miller, who was promised to be the "richest treat of the encampment of 1890," and a musical festival. Another notable feature of the Chautauqua was the national reunion of Odd Fellows with a "grand banquet" and an appearance by a "celebrated orientalist" who was promised to provide "rare opportunities for the study of eastern manners [and] customs." The assembly was depicted in the local press as being "replete from beginning to end with attractions not heretofore presented to the people of the south-west," a statement that seems to challenge the quality of entertainments brought by competing Chautauquas.<sup>112</sup>

Texas citizens even influenced a Chautauqua outside of the state, the Colorado Chautauqua, which also combined education and entertainment. Located in Boulder, Colorado, the Colorado Chautauqua was started in 1897 by the President of the University of Texas and other individuals, including teachers who wanted to establish a summer school. Over 4,000 people attended the first assembly of the Colorado Chautauqua when it opened on July 4, 1898. After the turn of the century, rather than offering the traditional Chautauqua program, the Colorado Chautauqua shifted focus to accommodate the local population. It is likely that the continuous success of the Colorado Chautauqua can be attributed to its change in platform that accommodated local citizens, particularly the large mining population. The assembly hosted rock drilling contests and lectures by William Jennings Bryan, Charles Evans Hughes, and Billy Sunday. Lectures

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<sup>112</sup> Quotes from *Williamson County Sun*, April 17, 1890, DBCAH, microfilm.

included topics on “labor problems, the emancipation of women, social service, religious themes, peace movements, creative arts and crafts and scientific topics.” The assembly did not succumb to the circuits, and has been in continuous operation to this day.<sup>113</sup> In 1963 the Colorado Chautauqua offered music, lectures, a judo demonstration, and an international folk dance festival for free, and films for a small fee.<sup>114</sup>

In addition to educational and recreational opportunities, city leaders saw the potential to accelerate the development of their growing towns with the establishment of an independent Chautauqua. Populations and the economy expanded during the late-nineteenth century despite periods of economic depression in the 1870s and 1890s, although the economic downturns may have led to the decline of the San Marcos and Georgetown Assemblies, both of which ended in 1895. The construction of railroads facilitated both economic development and the establishment of independents by connecting rural Texans with growing urban areas that provided exposure to culture and social opportunities.<sup>115</sup> The Chautauqua idea was used to help the growth of newly established towns, such as in the case of Myrtle Springs in Van Zandt County. Rich in agriculture, fruit horticulture, and health-giving mineral springs, the area was perfect for the location of a Chautauqua. In 1891, N. A. Matthews of Wills Point, Texas, was interested in developing the town of Myrtle Springs and thought that a Chautauqua would be the ideal way to bring in settlers and vacationers. He intended to promote the town as a

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<sup>113</sup> “History of Colorado Chautauqua,” Colorado Chautauqua Association, [www.chautauqua.com](http://www.chautauqua.com), February 6, 2011.

<sup>114</sup> Mary Dickson, “Colorado Chautauqua First in West,” *The Colorado Daily*, July 1, 1963, Box “Colorado,” Folder “Boulder News Clippings,” Chautauqua Network, OAC.

<sup>115</sup> Alwyn Barr, “Late Nineteenth-Century Texas,” *Handbook of Texas Online* <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/npl01> (accessed April 2, 2011).



“splendid health resort.”<sup>116</sup> Matthews illustrates the potential use of the assembly for urban development. In 1891 the town of Myrtle Springs was on the rise and desired to be a place of “health, wealth, and happiness,” and therefore wished to promote economic development through the Chautauqua, encouraging business, building schools, and encouraging vacationers drawn in for the springs.<sup>117</sup>

Matthews also promoted Chautauqua in the nearby town of Wills Point. A local store, B. B. Rose’s Chautauqua, offered a first-class book for anyone who purchased five dollars or more in goods at the store, which offered a variety of items. A local paper reported that the Chautauqua reading circle formed in Wills Point was one of the most important things that the community had done in a long time. In addition to stating that the goal of the circle was noble in its spread of knowledge, the article stated the circle would provide a much-needed public library for citizens. It also recognized the social opportunities presented by the reading circle, but expressed the belief that socialization would remain secondary to the intellectual opportunities. Finally, the article expressed hope for a month long school in the summer so that Wills Point could “share the honors with beautiful San Marcos,” which demonstrates the admiration of the San Marcos assembly along with suggesting its authority as the official Texas Chautauqua.<sup>118</sup> This reference to the Wills Point Chautauqua made no mention of the religious aspect of Chautauqua, and seemed most focused on the educational opportunities that it could provide.

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<sup>116</sup> N.A. Matthews to T. L. Flood, September 15, 1891, Box 26, Folder 4, Kate Kimball Correspondence, OAC.

<sup>117</sup> *Herald* from Myrtle Springs, November 19, 1891, DBCAH.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

Businessmen contributed to the establishment and prosperity of the Chautauqua idea in Paris, Texas, as well. Cooperation between the pastor of the Paris Cumberland Presbyterian Church and the manager for the power and light and streetcar companies resulted in the Chautauqua held in Warlick Park in Paris. Visitors had easy access to the railroad, which was very significant to the growth and development of the independents. Patrons camped on the grounds and enjoyed lectures, Bible study, music in the pavilion, and the summer theater. Reportedly, “the afternoon and evening programs...had ‘a great influence in elevating the taste of Paris for better music and entertainment of the higher class.’” It is unclear how long the Paris assembly lasted, but it was operating around 1905. Eventually, the Paris independent gave way to the circuit Chautauqua. After a fire destroyed the town in 1916, Charles Horner, owner of the Redpath-Horner Circuit Chautauqua, donated ticket sales to the Paris Chautauqua committee for continued “improvement of chautauquas in future years.” The circuit visited the town of Paris at least from 1916 to 1920.<sup>119</sup>

Similar to many of the developing towns in 1890, Weatherford, Texas, was interested in possibilities for growth but focused more on the religious aspects of Chautauqua in promoting their assembly. The *Daily Constitution* reported in August and September of 1890 that town residents had obtained a charter and \$10,000 in capital stock, secured grounds that were ready to be improved, and chosen a board of directors. Ambitious hopes for the Assembly included “the construction of a grand institution which shall be a temple of wisdom and a resort for recreation that will make Weatherford

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<sup>119</sup> Kirk Hunter and Maureen Moore, “Old Paris Chautauqua Lives Only in Memories,” Box “Texas,” Folder “Other Texas Cities,” Chautauqua Network, OAC.

a name at home and abroad.”<sup>120</sup> Prepared grounds welcomed the first Weatherford Assembly in 1891. The first season, which lasted from July 1<sup>st</sup> to July 8<sup>th</sup>, has been described as more of an encampment than a Chautauqua Assembly, since there were no “special days” and no Recognition Day. However, the Assembly did host a few of the features common to other independents, including a Sunday School Normal, Bible study, music, and lectures. The Weatherford Assembly also hosted a Ministers’ Class and Woman’s Class. The second season operated under the name of the Texas Sunday School Encampment, held from July 30 until August 8 of 1892. The second season reported an increase of more than one hundred percent participation over the previous year. The season was complete with CLSC work, lectures, an Amphitheater, Hall of Philosophy, and a Children’s Hall.<sup>121</sup> *The Weatherford Enquirer* reported that “on both Sundays of the encampment a regular, full fledged Sunday School will be conducted, and all the Sunday school [*sic*] of the city are cordially invited to be present and join in the work.” On Sundays the gates were opened to the public.<sup>122</sup> Of special interest is that on September 26, 1890, a Weatherford newspaper reported that professor Hjalmar H. Boyesen stated “Chautauqua is the most American thing in America,” a quote that Theodore Roosevelt would later be famous for saying.<sup>123</sup>

The Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Synod of Texas, supported the establishment of another independent at Glen Rose in 1898. The 1899 season lasted from July 27<sup>th</sup> to August 6<sup>th</sup>. Located half a mile from the town of Glen Rose, the fenced

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<sup>120</sup> “The Chautauqua,” *Daily Constitution*, Weatherford, August 30, 1890, September 6, 1890, DBCAH, microfilm.

<sup>121</sup> “Weatherford, Texas,” Clippings, Box “Texas,” Folder Weatherford, Chautauqua Network, OAC.

<sup>122</sup> “The Sunday School Encampment,” *Weatherford Enquirer*, July 28, 1892, DBCAH, microfilm.

<sup>123</sup> *Daily Constitution*, Weatherford, September 26, 1890, DBCAH, microfilm.

Chautauqua grounds contained a tabernacle and artesian well. The visitors participated in CLSC work, Bible studies, and of course, lectures both educational and entertaining.<sup>124</sup> In 1899, the Texas Synod of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church moved the Glen Rose Chautauqua to Waxahachie due to the influence of Reverend J. C. Smith, pastor of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church located there. The first assembly of Waxahachie was held July 26 to August 6, 1900, along a creek in West End Park. More than seventy-five tents were set up in the park and a pavilion was built. Participation in the Waxahachie Assembly continued to grow from 1900 until 1904. In 1902 organizers made further improvements, including construction of a new auditorium, in anticipation of large crowds. At that time, Waxahachie had a population of about 7,000 and was home to Trinity University. The Assembly included participation in the CLSC and Sunday school work. In 1903, Anna V. Miller conducted a demonstration cooking school, and Professor McKeen conducted a demonstration of wireless telegraphy.<sup>125</sup> In 1905, management reported, “despite the reported success of the Assemblies, expenses were not being covered. The organizers asked the city to purchase the Park grounds and improvements for \$5,000.”<sup>126</sup> Despite such economic difficulties, the Waxahachie Assembly continued until the 1930s. Fortunately, the Chautauqua Auditorium was preserved and restored in the early 1970s, and in 2000 citizens in Waxahachie revived the Chautauqua Assembly.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> McClarran, “The Flying Fish,” OAC, 805.

<sup>125</sup> “Waxahachie, Texas,” 1902, Clippings, Box “Texas,” Folder “Waxahachie,” Chautauqua Network, OAC.

<sup>126</sup> “1899 to 1905,” Box “Texas” Folder “Waxahachie,” Chautauqua Network, OAC.

<sup>127</sup> Waxahachie Chautauqua Preservation Society, “About Us,” Waxahachie Chautauqua Preservation Society, <http://www.waxahachiechautauqua.org/about.htm> (accessed April 4, 2011).

At the same time that these Texas towns fulfilled their needs for education, recreation and economic prosperity, they also facilitated the creation of a public space for women. Although their experiences must have varied, Texas women were given the opportunity to speak publicly on the lecture platform and be leaders in the CLSC. Historian Anne Firor Scott has argued that most women in the late-nineteenth century did not necessarily see themselves as being oppressed despite the difficulties they faced, because most “were too much occupied taking care of families or earning a living to do much else.” The task of improving the lives of women was left up to middle-class women who had more free time.<sup>128</sup> Unlike members of most women’s organizations, women associated with the New York Chautauqua, the independents, and the CLSC were able to become active leaders in organizations that were supported by both men and women. Chautauqua provided a safe place for the middle class to be exposed to new ideas, which also provided the opportunity for women to influence men.

Men may have attempted to monopolize the leadership and administration of the Chautauqua Movement, but it was largely because of women that it gained its influence and popularity. Women were restricted in their opportunities as they could not vote and struggled to have equal access to education. Despite these obstacles, middle-class women collaborated in forming clubs and groups that allowed them to help other women. A phenomenon swept the nation as they founded literary societies that transitioned from “self-education to community improvement and eventually to national political action.”<sup>129</sup> Women manipulated what was open to them to their advantage, including Chautauqua. Certainly, not all CLSC groups had an agenda of reform, but through

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<sup>128</sup> Anne Firor Scott, *Natural Allies: Women’s Associations in American History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 80.

<sup>129</sup> Anne Firor Scott, *Natural Allies*, 111.

forming social organizations women were taking progressive steps. Chautauqua provided women with the additional protection of being a religious institution. Scott emphasizes that women were able to push for reforms through religious organizations that otherwise would have appeared “alarmingly radical.”<sup>130</sup>

The CLSC in Georgetown demonstrates how women were able to work with men as well as independently. Their participation in Chautauqua was not restricted to the summer months, because the CLSC functioned throughout the year. The CLSC in Georgetown combined entertainment, education, and discussion of current affairs as well as lessons based on the *Chautauquan*. In January of 1890, both male and female members of the Georgetown reading circle met and discussed lessons on Latin literature and Roman history. The “exercises were pleasantly varied by instructive table-talk, humorous reading, and vocal music, to the edification, entertainment and delight of all.” Also on the schedule of events for the “table-talk” was the discussion of the revolution in Brazil that had taken place a couple of months previously. One CLSC meeting started off with members writing down a wish for the New Year, and these wishes were drawn from a basket and read aloud.<sup>131</sup> In these circles women and men were able to interact with each other socially as well as intellectually.

The CLSC provided an opportunity for women and men to actively participate in education, entertainment, and discussion of progressive ideas as equals. Men not only were in attendance at the Georgetown meeting, but also helped to elect Lucy Harper president. The circle welcomed guests and boasted that most who came as visitors once or twice became members. It was more than a social club, and recruited additional

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<sup>130</sup> Anne Firor Scott, 85.

<sup>131</sup> *Williamson County Sun*, January 16, 1890, DBCAH, microfilm.

members by stating, “all who are ‘Chautauqually’ disposed—i.e. all who desire to reach a higher social, moral, educational, and religious standard—are invited to attend.”<sup>132</sup> The New York Chautauqua facilitated women’s leadership, as when it appointed Emma Hamilton as CLSC agent for the Texas Chautauqua, and paid her a salary for her work at the assembly.<sup>133</sup> In 1890, Reverend W.W. Pinson, pastor of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, established another CLSC reading circle for men and women in San Antonio. The circle was called the “The San Antonio Circle,” which at its establishment had a membership of thirty-six people who met every other Friday evening.<sup>134</sup>

The popularity of reading circles in places like Georgetown and San Antonio started out strong, but not all Texas citizens shared in the enthusiasm. In 1891, W. W. Pinson sent word to Kate Kimball that the CLSC had not been as successful as it had been in 1890, apparently due to not having the “right crowd,” so it is likely that the circle did not have enough serious participants. However, he believed the future of the CLSC was still promising. Pinson asked Kimball for a representative of the CLSC for the 1892 season. He believed that he could get thousands to join the CLSC if he could dedicate all his time to it, but since he could not he asked for a representative, as he believed the CLSC “needs an advocate here in Texas. They do not understand it.”<sup>135</sup>

The Texas Chautauqua Assembly in Georgetown attempted to be the authority on Chautauqua in Texas, but the real authority for the independent resided with the New York Chautauqua. The Georgetown Assembly advertised itself within the state with

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<sup>132</sup> *Williamson County Sun*, January 30, 1890, DBCAH, microfilm.

<sup>133</sup> Emma B. Hamilton to John H. Vincent, July 27, 1890, Box 23, Folder 8, Kate Kimball Correspondence, OAC.

<sup>134</sup> Emma B. Hamilton to Kate Kimball, November 14, 1890, Box 23, Folder 8, Kate Kimball Correspondence, OAC.

<sup>135</sup> W. W. Pinson to Kate Kimball, July 21, 1891, Box 26, Folder 5, Kate Kimball Correspondence, OAC.

circulars that sent a “greeting to the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circles of the State” and extended “a hearty welcome to all who may attend our session of 1890.”<sup>136</sup> Although the Georgetown Assembly attempted to connect with all the CLSCs of Texas, they relied on the mother Chautauqua to mail circulars to all the CLSC branches. W. W. Pinson, who corresponded with Kate Kimball, expected an increase in participation and interest in the 1890 season. He assured her that “the management feel sure that Christian people who desire a few weeks of profitable diversion cannot find in Texas so good a place for the purpose.”<sup>137</sup>

Indicative of the experience of the Chautauqua Movement, the Georgetown CLSC initially generated considerable enthusiasm within the community, but that interest quickly dissipated. Reports of the 1892 season stated that the “C. L. S. C. interests are reported as gaining ground.” The CLSC classes met separately and participation in “Chautauqua work” was encouraged through daily Round Tables and “other exercises.”<sup>138</sup> The 1892 season report noted that these “exercises indicated the degree of C. L. S. C. spirit”; however, in the final season the assembly report suggested a lack of support with its statement that “all measures will be taken to increase the interests of the C. L. S. C.”<sup>139</sup>

During the Georgetown Assembly’s final years supporters believed that there would be many more successful seasons, but ultimately the Assembly ended due to financial difficulties. In October of 1894, prior to the final season, the Texas Chautauqua

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<sup>136</sup> “Texas Chautauqua Assembly,” 1890, Box 22, Folder 2, Kate Kimball Correspondence, OAC.

<sup>137</sup> W. W. Pinson to Kate Kimball, May 14, 1890, Box 22, Folder 2, Kimball Correspondence, OAC.

<sup>138</sup> William H. Shaw to Kate Kimball, March 19, 1889, April 8, 1889, Box 16, Folder 1, Kate Kimball Correspondence, OAC.

<sup>139</sup> “Georgetown Texas,” Clippings, Box 12-Oregon: Willamette Valley-Texas, McClarren Collection, OAC.



Assembly reported that the previous season revealed a promising “new lease of life” since the Assembly was no longer in debt, a state it had been in for several years. Despite predictions for a “long and useful future” the Georgetown Assembly only lasted one more season. The Texas assemblies shared lecturers, and in the 1894 season Horace M. DuBose, founder of the San Marcos Chautauqua, was one of the “chief lecturers” at Georgetown.<sup>140</sup> The Texas Chautauqua Assembly was down to a two-week season by 1894 and ended in 1895, the same year that the San Marcos assembly was discontinued. Scarborough attributes the ending of the assembly to financial difficulties it suffered a few years after it began.<sup>141</sup>

Although the Georgetown Assembly was not able to sustain participation, the Chautauqua Movement spread throughout Texas. In April of 1890, the *Weatherford Constitution* included an announcement for a Chautauqua and camp meeting in Corpus Christi. Corpus Christi also held a Chautauqua in July of 1891.<sup>142</sup> On December 20, 1901, the *Corpus Christi Caller* announced plans for a summer normal in 1902 due to the success of the one held in 1901. Another Chautauqua was held in Mineral Wells from 1905 to 1907, but similar to many of the other independent Chautauquas, little is known about it. Visitors went to Mineral Wells for its health giving waters, thus making it a great destination for a Chautauqua vacation. The Chautauqua Assembly Hall had seating for 3,500, and visitors had the use of bathhouses, two amusement parks, and four theaters, among other amenities. These attractions drew people away from the

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<sup>140</sup> Quotes from “Talk About Books,” October 1894, Box 12-Oregon Willamette Valley-Texas, McClarren Collection, Texas, OAC.

<sup>141</sup> Scarborough, 281.

<sup>142</sup> *Hays County Times*, July 3, 1891, in Ruby Henderson, “A Source Book of Materials on the San Marcos Chautauqua, 1885-1895” (Faculty Publications-Curriculum and Instruction, Texas State University, 1938), 221.

Chautauqua, so the 1905 season received much less than the expected participation.<sup>143</sup> By 1907, additional entertainment included moving pictures, baseball, and a week of various entertainments provided by the Elmhurst Park Casino High Class Vaudeville.<sup>144</sup> A Chautauqua assembly was also held in Dallas in 1906 and from June 23<sup>rd</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup> in 1907 under the management of G. D. Gray.<sup>145</sup> The Dallas mayor, Stephen J. Hay, reported on the success of the Dallas Chautauqua Association's 1907 season because of good attendance and financial profit. On the final day of the 1907 assembly participants listened to a lecture by Frederick Warde on the Christianity of Shakespeare. Although a more thorough analysis of the Dallas Chautauqua is needed, preliminary findings reveal that the focus of the assembly was on providing lectures and performances.<sup>146</sup> In addition to these assemblies, in 1900 in Callahan County the town of Chautauqua was established, but it only lasted until about 1936.<sup>147</sup> The town of Chautauqua reflects the importance that the name Chautauqua had for Texas, and it also reveals how quickly its influence subsided.

As the popularity of the independents declined in Texas, the Chautauqua Movement continued in the circuits, which made frequent stops throughout the state. Even many years after the circuits declined, the Chautauqua legacy continued in Texas, as seen in the revival of the Chautauqua in Waxahachie, and the spirit of Chautauqua was revived in Jim Hightower's 2002 and 2003 Rolling Thunder Chautauqua Tour, which traveled across the nation. Described by Charlotte Canning as "intended to forge bonds

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<sup>143</sup> Kirk Hunter and Maureen Moore, "Mineral Wells Chautauqua Remains a Footnote to the Famous Health Resort's History," Box "Texas," Folder "Other Texas Cities," Chautauqua Network, OAC.

<sup>144</sup> "Elmhurst Park Casino High Class Vaudeville all this Week!" *Morning Health Resort*, August 1, 1907, Mineral Wells, DBCAH.

<sup>145</sup> "Dallas," Clippings, Box 12-Oregon: Willamette Valley- Texas, McClarren Collection, OAC.

<sup>146</sup> "Chautauqua is Ended," *Dallas Morning News*, July 1, 1907, DBCAH, microfilm.

<sup>147</sup> John G. Johnson, "Chautauqua, TX," *Handbook of Texas Online*, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hrc46> (accessed April 4, 2011).

among existing progressive organizations and create local and national political coalitions in the atmosphere of a festive community gathering,” the tour included “musicians, comedians, artists, satirical troupes, and other performers.”<sup>148</sup> After speaking at the Boulder Colorado Chautauqua, Jim Hightower was inspired to start a political movement based on the Chautauqua concept. Hightower intended for the tour to forge coalitions within cities in order to get people to talk and work together on the issues, while at the same time creating a social and political movement. The first stop on the tour was in Austin, Texas, but it did not stop there and traveled across the country. The Rolling Thunder Tour lasted only a couple years but it laid the foundation for grassroots action, and the tradition carries on at Wisconsin’s annual Fighting Bob Fest.<sup>149</sup>

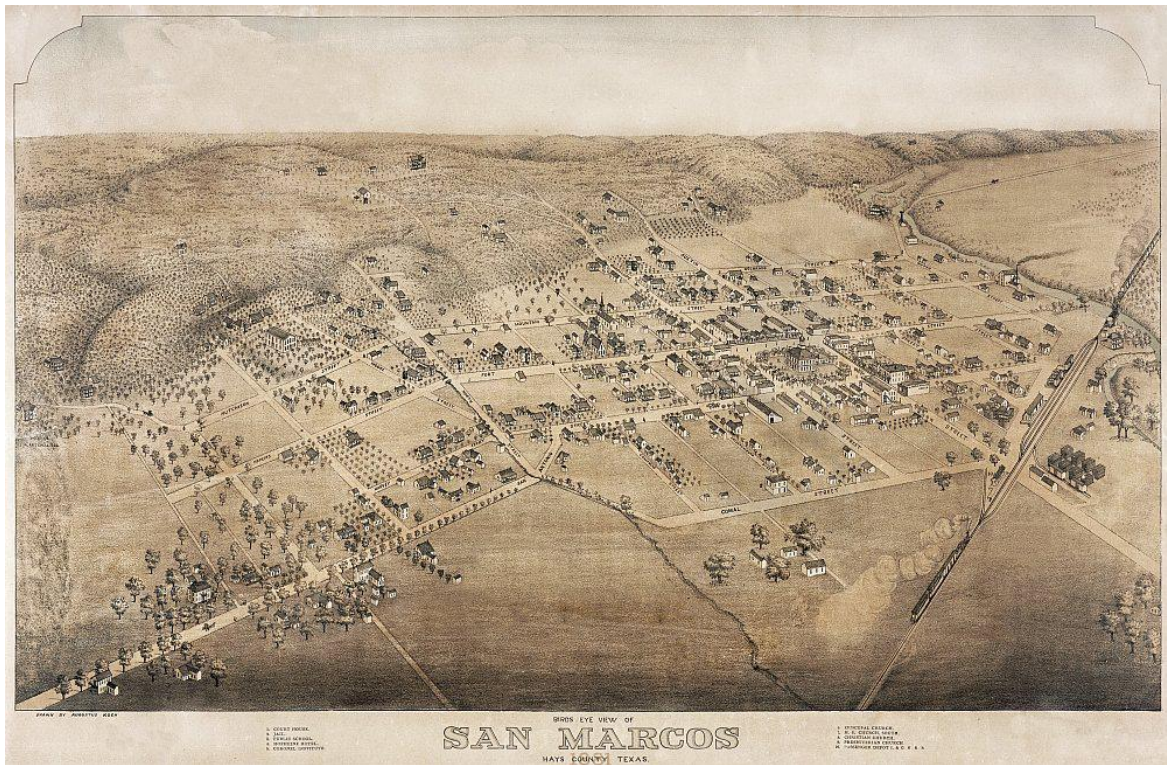
Although many of them were short-lived and poorly documented, these local Chautauquas played important roles in Texas towns. The independent assemblies that made up the Texas Chautauqua movement influenced the progression of education by facilitating summer normal schools, encouraged the economic development and prosperity of new towns, and acted as vehicles for moral influence through religious education. Overall, the independents of Texas maintained the Chautauqua idea and brought access to education and culture to individuals in isolated areas. Despite this similarity, the independents satisfied different needs in different communities. They not only were significant to Texas, but also were a vital part of the overall Chautauqua Movement, serving to disseminate its ideals. Although the independents were not able to compete with emerging forms of entertainment, such as motion pictures and the popular

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<sup>148</sup> Charlotte M. Canning, *The Most American Thing in America: Circuit Chautauqua as Performance* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2005), 226.

<sup>149</sup> Jim Hightower, phone interview by author, June 10, 2011.

circuits, they fulfilled the educational needs of their communities until more permanent solutions were established.



### San Marcos, Texas, in 1881 by Augustus Koch

Map courtesy of True North Publishing [www.texasmapstore.com](http://www.texasmapstore.com)

### CHAPTER III

#### THE SAN MARCOS CHAUTAUQUA

In 1888, an advertisement for the San Marcos independent stated, “no effort will be spared to give the people of Texas an assembly worthy of the great idea it is to represent. Its motto is better homes, better society, better state, better church.”<sup>150</sup> The San Marcos Chautauqua attempted to do just that as it set off the Texas Chautauqua Movement. William H. Shaw, the Pastor of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in charge of the San Marcos CLSC work, wrote to John Vincent in 1887, that the San Marcos Chautauqua Board of Trustees decided to make the San Marcos Sunday School Assembly a part of the Chautauqua Movement. The assembly managers wished to incorporate the “various [departments] of the Chautauqua Idea” and use Chautauqua books. Although there was no formal association with the Chautauqua Movement aside from the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle (CLSC), Shaw asked Vincent to admit the assembly into the Movement.<sup>151</sup> This declaration was made two years after the initial establishment of the San Marcos Chautauqua, but San Marcos leaders demonstrated from the very beginning their desire to be part of the great Movement. Although the platform of the San Marcos Chautauqua drifted from the original

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<sup>150</sup> “The Texas Chautauqua,” *Corpus Christi Caller*, April 14, 1888, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin, (hereafter cited as DBCAH), microfilm.

<sup>151</sup> William H. Shaw to John H. Vincent, September 5, 1887, Box 14, Folder 13, Kate Kimball Correspondence, Oliver Archives Center, Chautauqua Institution, New York (hereafter cited as OAC).

Chautauqua design in order to attract more people, this actually was still imitating the progression of the overall Movement.

Crucial to the establishment and success of any independent Chautauqua was transportation to the assembly grounds. In the 1880s, San Marcos, Texas, located in Hays County, was a small town predominantly made up of farmers. The International and Great Northern Railroad depot and the Missouri, Kansas and Texas railroad were completed in 1880 and 1886, respectively.<sup>152</sup> Arrival of the railroad was important to not only the industrial economic advancement of San Marcos, but it also allowed visitors to attend the assembly who were from outside the local area. Railroads often collaborated with managers of independent Chautauqua assemblies, offering special rates to visitors. A visitor to the Texas Chautauqua could ask for the “San Marcos tickets” to secure a discounted fare.<sup>153</sup>

San Marcos was well suited to the establishment of an independent Chautauqua, but the needs and goals of the diverse population conflicted and posed a problem for the survival of the assembly. The first settlers of Hays County used the land mostly for raising livestock, and the area later was used to grow cotton.<sup>154</sup> A survey of the 1880 U.S. census for San Marcos, Texas, reveals that the population consisted of approximately twelve hundred people, about seventeen percent of which were African American, around four percent were identified as “mulatto,” and the remainder was recorded as white. Mexican Americans made up a small percentage of the San Marcos population and

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<sup>152</sup> Frances Stovall et al., *Clear Springs and Limestone Ledges: A History of San Marcos and Hays County* (San Marcos, TX: The Hays County Historical Commission, 1986), 149-150.

<sup>153</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, May 1, 1890, in Ruby Henderson, “A Source Book of Materials on the San Marcos Chautauqua, 1885-1895” (Faculty Publications-Curriculum and Instruction, Texas State University, 1938), 182.

<sup>154</sup> Dudley R. Dobie, *A Brief History of Hays County and San Marcos Texas* (San Marcos, TX, 1948), 22.

mostly worked as sharecroppers in San Marcos and Hays County. Occupations of male residents of San Marcos consisted of a large portion of farmers along with an even distribution of typical jobs needed for a developing town, such as a blacksmith, grocer, barber, banker, or physician. Among women who identified their occupations, a large majority were listed as “keeping house” or “at home.” Although many women may have identified themselves as “at home,” most would have contributed to the upkeep of the farm. Those women with occupations outside the home usually were categorized as “launderer” or “wash woman.”<sup>155</sup> Census records reveal that San Marcos was a small rural town consisting of predominantly farming families, whose primary interests no doubt focused on meeting subsistence needs. Several wealthy men also settled in the San Marcos area. The primary controversy that developed out of the San Marcos Chautauqua was a conflict of interests between middle-class residents and the farming community.

Various accounts refer to San Marcos as an educational center due to its early desire for education and establishment of multiple education institutions. At least forty schools existed in San Marcos prior to the establishment of Southwest Texas State Normal School in 1899.<sup>156</sup> Leading citizens of San Marcos were intent on reinforcing this identity, which is demonstrated by their support for the establishment of the Chautauqua, and later the permanent normal school. A local home served as the first school in San Marcos until a schoolhouse was built in 1849.<sup>157</sup> In September of 1890, M. C. McGee moved the Lone Star Business College from Kyle, Texas to San Marcos. The college was

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<sup>155</sup> U.S. Census 1880, June 10, 1880, San Marcos Public Library, TX, microfilm.

<sup>156</sup> Ronald C. Brown with David C. Nelson, *Up the Hill, Down the Years: A Century in the Life of the College in San Marcos, Southwest Texas State University, 1899-1999* (Virginia Beach, VA: The Donning Company/Publishers, 1999), 26.

<sup>157</sup> Walter Edward Willis, “The History of Education in Hays County, TX” (master’s thesis, University of Texas, 1937), 29-31, 50.



located on the corner of Woods and Comanche Streets.<sup>158</sup> One of the more note-worthy schools of San Marcos was Coronal Institute, a co-educational Methodist high school, located on the corner of Moore and Hutchison Streets, which opened in the late 1860s. After outbreaks of yellow fever resulted in the deaths of students in other areas of Texas, Coronal Institute boasted that no student deaths had occurred and attributed this to the “unusual healthful climate” of San Marcos.<sup>159</sup> This healthful climate and the alluring springs of San Marcos also attracted Reverend Horace M. DuBose to establish the first Texas Chautauqua at San Marcos.

Reverend DuBose, a Methodist minister from Houston, visited the Chautauqua in New York, and, upon his return, searched for a suitable place to establish a Chautauqua in Texas.<sup>160</sup> While overlooking the San Marcos Springs from atop a hill in 1885, DuBose was captivated by the beauty of San Marcos. For this reason, he decided that San Marcos would be the home of the Texas Chautauqua. In selecting the San Marcos Springs, DuBose was continuing a symbolic tradition of the Chautauqua Movement; many independents built their assemblies on lakesides to reinforce their connection to the New York Chautauqua.<sup>161</sup> Residents became so enthusiastic about the prospect of having a Chautauqua that they quickly undertook plans for its establishment, and within just a few months they held the first summer assembly of the Texas Chautauqua.<sup>162</sup> The *San Marcos Free Press* considered the establishment of the Chautauqua as “quite a feather in the cap

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<sup>158</sup> “Lone Star Business College at San Marcos, Texas,” Lone Star Business College, Tula Townsend Wyatt Collection, San Marcos-Hays County Collection, San Marcos Public Library, TX.

<sup>159</sup> Stovall, *Clear Springs and Limestone Ledges*, 148-149.

<sup>160</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, August 20, 1885, in Henderson, *A Source Book*, 16.

<sup>161</sup> Julie R. Nelson, “A Subtle Revolution: The Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle in Rural Midwestern Towns, 1878-1900,” *Agricultural History* 70, no. 4 (Autumn 1996): 656.

<sup>162</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, June 11, 1886, in Henderson, 1.

of San Marcos,” as it revealed that San Marcos had achieved an exalted position “intellectually, morally and religiously speaking.”<sup>163</sup>

At the first public meeting to organize the opening of a Chautauqua there were many residents of San Marcos in attendance, along with many of its “leading business men,” who showed a willingness to invest in its future.<sup>164</sup> After participants decided that a Chautauqua should be established, they chose directors, many of whom were prominent men of San Marcos. A committee appointed to acquire land for the establishment of the Chautauqua purchased approximately fifty acres from Judge William Daniel Wood for \$5,000. Similar to the New York Chautauqua, independents typically arranged for stockholders to purchase shares of interest in the Chautauqua for \$10 each, and San Marcos was no different. Purchase of a share entitled the individual to membership, which meant that he or she had the right to vote in Chautauqua affairs, could lease or own lots on the property, and was not required to pay admission to enter the grounds. Charter members were not allowed to receive any money from the institution, and membership was restricted to whites. William D. Wood was the town’s major supporter for this effort, contributing \$500 to the Chautauqua.<sup>165</sup> Investments made by the citizens of San Marcos demonstrate the faith they had in the success and importance of the concept of Chautauqua. Since they were not allowed to directly profit from the assembly, investment was made simply on the belief of the great service of the coming Chautauqua. Although investors in the new assembly demonstrated their interest in the Chautauqua idea for the

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<sup>163</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, June 18, 1885, DBCAH, microfilm. The weekly *San Marcos Free Press* was enlisted to publish the account of the first Chautauqua meeting. Subsequently the *Free Press* continued to publish updates on the summer assemblies.

<sup>164</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, June 11, 1885, DBCAH, microfilm.

<sup>165</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, August 20, 1885, DBCAH, microfilm.

overall betterment of San Marcos, investors also stood to profit indirectly from the increased number of visitors. Ultimately, for them, it was a good deal all the way around.

In anticipation of the coming assembly, San Marcos boosters immediately prepped the newly designated Chautauqua Hill. The Texas Chautauqua, officially named the San Marcos Sunday School Assembly and Summer Institute, was a state chartered institution. Supporters improved the grounds, and piped water from the San Marcos Springs to provide cool fresh water for visitors. Most importantly, Tom Code built an ice plant in 1883, so ice cream was readily available.<sup>166</sup> DuBose ensured that tents were available the first year, but a permanent wooden tabernacle that could seat over a thousand visitors later replaced them.<sup>167</sup> The tabernacle was iconic of the Chautauqua independent movement; many small towns built open tabernacles to comfortably seat their guests. Not only did the building of the tabernacle recreate another aspect of the New York Chautauqua, but it also further demonstrated the investment that San Marcos citizens were willing to commit to the new Chautauqua.

The San Marcos assembly followed the tradition of both Christian camp meetings and the New York Chautauqua in holding its sessions during the summer. During the summer assembly visitors could rent tents and camp on the ground, stay in one of two hotels in town, or board with a local family. Entrance fees onto the grounds were twenty-five cents a day, seventy-five cents a week, and two dollars for the full assembly term. People were invited to bring their picnic lunches, or could eat at the provided restaurant. Once on the grounds, visitors gathered under the tents to hear sermons, discussions, and a variety of lectures. The local *Free Press* reported that approximately five hundred people

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<sup>166</sup> Zora M. Talbot, *Stringtown* (Corpus Christi, TX: The University of Corpus Christi Press, 1961), 54.

<sup>167</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, August 6, 1885, June 25, 1885, DBCAH, microfilm.

attended the opening of the assembly, including “home folk” and many from “abroad.” Typical attendance at the assembly ranged anywhere from a few hundred to over fifteen hundred people. It is significant that maximum attendance often exceeded the entire population of San Marcos.<sup>168</sup> Before Chautauqua became an annual tradition, Methodists hosted camp meetings in San Marcos during the summer. Campers went for a day or camped out for the entire duration. During the camp meeting, everyone brought their own rawhide-bottomed chairs, complete with branded initials on the backs, to set up underneath the “brush arbor” to listen to services. Everyone also participated in the picnic lunch at noon.<sup>169</sup> In San Marcos, as in New York, the camp meeting tradition was the starting point for the Chautauqua.

After initial improvements of the Chautauqua grounds, subsequent years included plans to enhance the grounds, make them more comfortable, and ease transportation on the Hill. Money invested by stockholders went to improvements and necessary maintenance of the assembly. Improvements lasted beyond the life of the Chautauqua, and were improvements for the town of San Marcos. In 1886 supporters constructed the tabernacle on Chautauqua Hill to accommodate the growing number of visitors, and although it had ample space many deemed it lacking in aesthetic appeal.<sup>170</sup> Since the tabernacle was a simple wooden structure, boosters called on local women to each grow a plant or to bring flowers to be placed at Chautauqua to improve its attractiveness.<sup>171</sup> This act demonstrated the desire to keep the assembly an attractive place, but also indicated

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<sup>168</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, August 6, 1885, quotes from August 13, 1885, August 27, 1885, DBCAH, microfilm.

<sup>169</sup> Talbot, *Stringtown*, 53.

<sup>170</sup> See *Illustrations*, beginning on page 101, for photographs of the tabernacle.

<sup>171</sup> *Hays County Times*, May 25, 1888, *San Marcos Cresset*, April 24, 1886, in Henderson, 69, 33.

how Chautauqua managers called on the citizens of San Marcos to contribute and participate in the success of the summer assembly.

Chautauqua founders believed the San Marcos location should be modeled after the New York assembly; however, they gave themselves full authority over the institution, which included any needed adjustments. Founders initially considered whether or not to incorporate the issue of diplomas and university courses like the New York Chautauqua, and later adopted a program similar to the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle (CLSC).<sup>172</sup> The distance and inability of the New York Chautauqua to control independents led it to sanction their establishment without assuming responsibility for individual assemblies. San Marcos organizers attempted to maintain contact with the New York assembly in order to preserve the Chautauqua ideal and because they respected the original institution. In 1885, the co-founder of the original Chautauqua, John Vincent, officially recognized the San Marcos Texas Chautauqua its first year in the list of independent assemblies in his work *The Chautauqua Movement*.<sup>173</sup> In 1887, Vincent even read a letter from Reverend DuBose on the New York assembly's Recognition Day that described the development of the San Marcos assembly and its plans for the future. DuBose reported, "good progress has been made and a steady growth has brought us to the threshold of success." He also reported the management's plans for improvements and their intention for full cooperation with the New York Chautauqua. Finally, DuBose stated that supporters of the San Marcos Chautauqua were enthusiastic and loyal to the "Mother of Assemblies."<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, June 18, 1885, DBCAH, microfilm.

<sup>173</sup> John H. Vincent, *The Chautauqua Movement* (Boston: Chautauqua Press, 1886), 42.

<sup>174</sup> "San Marcos, Texas," from the *Chautauquan*, October 1887, in Box 12-Oregon: Willamette Valley-Texas, McClarran Collection, OAC.

The managers followed the example of the Mother Assembly and described their Chautauqua as an “undenominational” institution, a Sunday school, and “Christian summer resort,” and were most insistent that “nothing immoral will be permitted on the grounds.”<sup>175</sup> The San Marcos Chautauqua restricted behavior and certain activities on the grounds, such as drinking, and devoted Sundays to religious observance. This was reflective of the New York Chautauqua, which had its own police force to enforce similar rules.<sup>176</sup> Organizers of the San Marcos institution expected a certain level of decorum from participants and wanted rules and regulations to be followed. One rule required any person who destroyed property, including plants and animals, to perform community service to pay off the associated fine. Supporters of the institution wanted its influence to extend beyond the grounds. They felt that the prestige of having a moral institution such as Chautauqua carried with it certain expectations of the citizenry, such as a responsibility to address the issue of underage boys receiving alcohol from local bars.<sup>177</sup> The San Marcos assembly, like the original Chautauqua, deliberately promoted their assembly as a wholesome middle-class vacation destination and used it to push forward moral reform.

The advantages of San Marcos having a Chautauqua extended beyond moral influences and included the possibilities of economic development. Although investors were prohibited from profiting directly from Chautauqua, there was increased profit and benefits to local San Marcos businesses. Visitors rented and purchased tents for camping on the grounds, stayed in the hotels, and boarded with local families. Boats could also be

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<sup>175</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, August 20, 1885 DBCAH, microfilm.

<sup>176</sup> Andrew C. Rieser, *The Chautauqua Moment: Protestants, Progressives, and the Culture of Modern Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 42.

<sup>177</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, July 15, 1886, DBCAH, microfilm.

rented to travel the San Marcos River. Restaurants and ice cream parlors were available on the assembly grounds, and if families did not want to eat out they could purchase goods from “door-to-door” grocery services.<sup>178</sup> Local stores took advantage of the Chautauqua name, selling “scratch-books, suitable for taking notes of Chautauqua lectures and exercises” and “Chautauqua plaid suits.”<sup>179</sup> Although San Marcos stood to profit from the summer assembly, it still needed support from the community to ensure its survival. As it was not publicly funded, it was completely dependent on admission fees and local support. Chautauqua organizers enticed investors with the prospect of increased property values resulting from the improvements made to the assembly grounds. The *Free Press* reported a list of Chautauqua financial contributors that included “names of nearly every property holder or business man of the town.”<sup>180</sup>

Supporters contributed large investments in the Chautauqua idea in San Marcos, and the major driving force for leaders was the prestige of being involved in a movement of educational and religious value. Many of the investors in the San Marcos movement were wealthy Christian men who were interested in organizations that encouraged good values and positive outcomes for the people and town of San Marcos. Middle- and upper-class participants and promoters had honorable intentions in pushing for improvement of San Marcos and its people, but this did not mean that they knew what those individuals wanted. Therefore, it is important to the story of Chautauqua to, as best as possible,

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<sup>178</sup> *Texas Chautauquan*, July 9, 1888, in Henderson, 86-87.

<sup>179</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, August 27, 1885, DBCAH, microfilm.

<sup>180</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, December 27, 1888, April 22, 1886, December 15, 1885, in Henderson, 112-113, 34-35, 30.

understand the leaders and supporters of the institution and the motives influencing them.<sup>181</sup>

Arguably the most dedicated San Marcos Chautauquan was Reverend Horace M. DuBose. The appointed director and a regular participant at all the summer assemblies, DuBose gave many speeches on a variety of topics that were always highly lauded by attendees. DuBose was one of the few San Marcos members who actually traveled to the New York Chautauqua, and this reinforced his adherence to the movement's principles.<sup>182</sup>

DuBose supported the essential qualities that defined the San Marcos Chautauqua, and his participation in its programs continually demonstrated his dedication to Christianity and education. He was superintendent of the Students' Union, later supported the CLSC, and gave numerous theological speeches and sermons.<sup>183</sup> DuBose encouraged women to actively participate in the assembly and even to give lectures, and he was a strong advocate of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). However, he was not a strong supporter of women's suffrage. DuBose was applauded by the *Free Press* for his "safe and sound" position on woman's suffrage. His stance was that if "woman's right to vote were wrong, it would fail, but if right it would prevail and no opposition could prevent it, for God will be with it."<sup>184</sup> Despite his lack of enthusiastic support, women's suffrage gained support and appeared more frequently in later years on the Chautauqua platform. Even John Vincent, who initially was very resistant towards

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<sup>181</sup> R. B. Tozier, "A Short Life-History of the Chautauqua," *The American Journal of Sociology* 40, no. 1 (July 1934): 72.

<sup>182</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, June 18, 1885, DBCAH, microfilm.

<sup>183</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, September 10, 1885, *Texas Chautauquan*, July 2, 1888, July 18, 1888, in Henderson, 24, 76, 98.

<sup>184</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, August 20, 1885, DBCAH, microfilm.



women's suffrage, softened his stance due to the overwhelming support on the Chautauqua platform.<sup>185</sup> In addition to his commitments to the San Marcos Chautauqua, DuBose was president of the Texas State Sunday School Convention held in Corsicana, Texas, in June of 1888. Similar to Chautauqua, the convention promised to be undenominational, and DuBose's participation in this assembly further reinforces his commitment to religious education.<sup>186</sup> As late as 1888, DuBose was living in Tyler, Texas, but by 1890 he had moved to Los Angeles, California. Despite the move, DuBose remained the Superintendent of Instruction and continued his dedication to the San Marcos summer assembly.<sup>187</sup>

Directors of the assembly were selected from some of San Marcos' more illustrious citizens. Those chosen to be resident directors of the San Marcos Chautauqua included Charles Hutchings, George T. McGehee, Judge William D. Wood, and Edwin J. L. Green. Reverend Horace DuBose was selected to be one of the directors from "abroad." Not all of the managers of the San Marcos assembly were from San Marcos; some of them lived elsewhere in Texas, including Austin, Tyler, and Galveston.<sup>188</sup> McGehee, Wood, and Green were all wealthy Christian businessmen who had been elected to political offices including State Legislator, State Senator, and District and County Clerk of Hays County, respectively. Accounts of those involved in the Chautauqua describe them as men who contributed to the San Marcos community and

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<sup>185</sup> Rieser, *The Chautauqua Moment*, 180-184.

<sup>186</sup> "Sunday School Convention," *Corpus Christi Caller*, May 19, 1888, DBCAH, microfilm.

<sup>187</sup> William H. Shaw to Kate Kimball, June 13, 1888, Box 14, Folder 13, Kate Kimball Correspondence, OAC; M. O. Keller to Theodore L. Flood and John H. Vincent, August 8, 1890, Box 23, Folder 8, Kate Kimball Correspondence, OAC.

<sup>188</sup> William H. Shaw to Kate Kimball, April 10, 1888, Box 14, Folder 13, Kate Kimball Correspondence, OAC.

were interested in any endeavor that was for the “good of the community.”<sup>189</sup> An article in the *Free Press*, published on August 18, 1887, described Edwin Green as a successful businessman, hard worker, and “ambitious to excel in whatever vocation he was engaged.” Green helped organize The First Christian Church of San Marcos in 1869. Green also served in Rip Ford’s Regiment during the Civil War and was a member of the Ku Klux Klan organized in Hays County after the war. Although sources indicate the Hays County Klan never killed anyone, the impact of this organization must have lingered to the days of the Chautauqua.<sup>190</sup> Like most Southern states, tensions from the Civil War and Reconstruction persisted for many decades. Texas leaders demonstrated an interest in the education of African Americans through the founding of black normal schools, but racism remained a significant problem.

Women associated with the Chautauqua also tended to be prominent in public life. One of the most influential women was Anna (Hardwicke) Pennybacker of Austin, who was a progressive reformer and influential leader in the woman’s club movement in both Texas and the nation. She was active in the movements for educational reform and women’s rights, and became actively involved in the New York Chautauqua.<sup>191</sup> She lectured at the San Marcos assembly and participated in the accompanying Summer Normal School hosted at the Chautauqua.<sup>192</sup> From 1901 until 1903 Pennybacker was state president of the Texas Federation of Women’s Clubs, and from 1912 until 1916 she was

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<sup>189</sup> W. D. Wood, Ed J. L. Green, George T. McGehee, Vertical Files, DBCAH; L. E. Daniel, *Types of Successful Men of Texas* (Austin, TX: Eugene Von Boeckmann, Printer and Bookbinder, 1890), 503-504.

<sup>190</sup> Dobie, *A Brief History of Hays County*, 28, 37, 40-41.

<sup>191</sup> Maurine Fussell, “Mrs. Percy V. Pennybacker of Austin wrote ‘History of Texas,’” *Dallas News*, April 11, 1942, Vertical Files, DBCAH.

<sup>192</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, July 22, 1886, July 29, 1886; *Hays County Times and Farmers’ Journal*, August 7, 1886, San Marcos Public Library, TX, microfilm.

national president of the General Federation of Women's Clubs.<sup>193</sup> Pennybacker also was appointed to a committee in 1921 to review the education system in Texas.<sup>194</sup> She then went on to become president of the Chautauqua Women's Club for many years, during which time she helped save the New York Chautauqua from closing down. By 1933 the New York Chautauqua was in debt and the serious possibility of ending the assembly was looming. The debt was largely attributed to the improvement projects during the 1920s. In order to avoid foreclosure \$150,000 needed to be raised by the end of August of 1936. The campaign to raise the funds was in constant suspense until the last day, when Mrs. Pennybacker secured the final donation. Through the Women's Club, Pennybacker received the remaining balance from John D. Rockefeller, Jr.<sup>195</sup>

Although men founded and managed the assemblies of both New York and San Marcos, women played significant roles in the Chautauqua's success and many of the people who participated in the assembly were women. Many women were even stockholders in the Chautauqua assembly.<sup>196</sup> Since the Chautauqua was intended as a school for all teachers it provided greater access to education for women, an important development because women made up the majority of teachers. Moreover, the correspondence school complemented ideals associated with a woman's role. Correspondence study meant that women did not have to leave their homes to educate themselves. As long as women remained in the home, their education through the Chautauqua did not radically challenge any gender notions in education.

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<sup>193</sup> "Mrs. Pennybacker Among Group to Make Peace Plea," January 20, Chautauqua Women's Club, Box 16, Folder Q, Historical Research Boxes, OAC.

<sup>194</sup> Frederick Eby, *The Development of Education in Texas* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1925), 315-316.

<sup>195</sup> Theodore Morrison, *Chautauqua: A Center for Education, Religion, and the Arts in America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 106-108.

<sup>196</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, June 25, 1885, DBCAH, microfilm.

During the 1880s and 1890s women faced substantial limitations on their participation in political and public spheres, particularly in the South. The main avenue through which women pushed their interests was volunteer organizations; however, women's clubs and organizations were slow to form in Texas. In the South many disapproved of women speaking publicly. Some women more than overcame these limitations at the San Marcos Chautauqua. At Chautauqua women lectured, hosted the WCTU, and even pushed for women's suffrage. Women played a significant role for the San Marcos Chautauqua, since their communal efforts were important to the survival of the Chautauqua until 1895.<sup>197</sup> Significantly, possibly the only mention of any African American participation at the San Marcos assembly was the contribution of "Colored women's efforts on temperance," which was found in the program for July 11, 1888.<sup>198</sup> It is not clear whether or not African American women participated in this discussion, but it is clear that the importance of the issue of temperance crossed racial lines. Despite their prejudice, through African American schools and temperance efforts, white Texans recognized that all citizens had in common the need for education and moral reform.

As Chautauqua progressed, more women appeared on the lecture platform. Women's lectures focused mainly on temperance or education, but some entertained, such as Mrs. Mollie E. Moore Davis, who delighted visitors with her recitation of poetry on Texas.<sup>199</sup> During the first summer assembly, the *Free Press* asserted that anyone who was against women speaking at Chautauqua were wrong to think so, given the excellent speech delivered by Mrs. Beauchamp, president of the Texas WCTU. Even John Vincent,

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<sup>197</sup> Judith N. McArthur, *Creating the New Woman: The Rise of Southern Women's Progressive Culture in Texas, 1893-1918* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998): 1-5, 33.

<sup>198</sup> *Texas Chautauquan*, July 10, 1888, in Henderson, 89.

<sup>199</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, July 11, 1888, in Henderson, 94.

who did not like women to lecture, especially when it was on suffrage, considered Frances Willard of the WCTU an accomplished speaker.<sup>200</sup> Many of the Chautauqua men overcame their dislike of women speakers when women spoke on a cause they supported. Men also did not hesitate to call on women for support, which was necessary since success of the Chautauqua was largely based on community effort. Boosters asked local women to grow plants or flowers to increase the attractiveness of the tabernacle, and women raised money from the community to build a cottage on the Chautauqua grounds for DuBose to use during his stay at the assembly. Chautauqua provided entertainment for everyone, and supporters encouraged children to attend, allowing women to bring their entire family.<sup>201</sup>

Discussion on the lecture platform often addressed the roles of women, such as one on WCTU Day that focused on whether or not women should be heard in churches. The final decision was that they should, in fact, be heard.<sup>202</sup> Chautauqua lectures increasingly supported women's social activism outside the home. When Professor M. C. McGee spoke on the role of women in the workforce, he advocated that women were strong and intelligent and fully capable of working outside the home, although not necessarily in exactly the same jobs as men.<sup>203</sup>

As the existence of "WCTU Day" suggests, women's participation in the Chautauqua went beyond simply growing flowers to make it a charming spot. Chautauqua served women's interest on the assembly platform, as demonstrated by

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<sup>200</sup> Rieser, 166.

<sup>201</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, August 20, 1885, September 3, 1885, July 22, 1886, DBCAH, microfilm; *San Marcos Cresset*, April 24, 1886, *Texas Chautauquan*, July 2, 1888, in Henderson, 33, 78-79.

<sup>202</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, August 19, 1886, DBCAH, microfilm.

<sup>203</sup> Prairie City Business College Booklet, 1889, McGee File, Tula Townsend Wyatt Collection, San Marcos-Hays County Collection, San Marcos Public Library, TX.

lectures such as Dr. Thrall's "The Higher Educated Woman." Many women lectured and instructed classes, including Miss Harrison, who spoke on "What is True Culture."

Participants greatly anticipated the arrival of Miss Fanny Armstrong, a strong advocate for women's rights who edited the *Woman's Journal*.<sup>204</sup> Woman's suffrage became a recurring topic on the lecture stand, and the WCTU emphasized its importance for the "suppression of saloons." Dr. Heidt argued that women were equal to men in the attainment of education in his speech "Woman and the University," which women in the audience greatly appreciated. In addition to promoting women's education, the Chautauqua regularly held WCTU Day along with daily meetings of the organization. The *Free Press* complimented the women of San Marcos in one of its issues and recognized their efforts in ensuring the success of the assembly.<sup>205</sup>

In addition to incorporating women's issues, after the initial years San Marcos organizers included a greater variety of lectures and activities that served both educational and moral goals. This coincided with the addition of the New York Chautauqua's correspondence school, the CLSC. Classes included art, penmanship, philosophy, oratory, music, astronomy, and additional lectures on different topics.<sup>206</sup> The Chautauqua platform hosted a Bible meeting in its first year in which several representatives read the Bible in twelve different languages, accompanied by a history lesson and the date of first translation for each language.<sup>207</sup> Bible Day is an excellent example of the blending of educational and religious focus at Chautauqua.

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<sup>204</sup> The *Woman's Journal* was a women's rights publication.

<sup>205</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, November 3, 1886, July 11, 1888, *Texas Chautauquan*, July 9-10, 1888, July 18, 1888, July 21, 1888, in Henderson, 44, 81, 102-103, 90, 95, 97, 98.

<sup>206</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, May 3, 1888, in Henderson, 66.

<sup>207</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, August 27, 1885, DBCAH, microfilm.

During the summer assembly, students gained education opportunities at the same time that teachers received needed training. In order for teachers in Texas to keep their teaching certificates they had to attend summer normal schools for training. The organizers of Chautauqua encouraged the Texas State Sunday School and State Normal Institution to hold their meeting in conjunction with the San Marcos Chautauqua assembly. This merger allowed teachers to benefit from Chautauqua classes, and also increased the number of participants at Chautauqua. Many of the courses of the summer Normal and Chautauqua meetings became intermingled. Each institution seemed to benefit from the other. Many women participated in the Normal school because women made up the majority of teachers.<sup>208</sup> San Marcos wanted the schools located there because it reinforced the image of the city as an educational center, and after the Chautauqua closed, city officials pushed to have a permanent normal school in San Marcos.<sup>209</sup>

Eventually a normal school would be located in San Marcos and the Chautauqua property was donated to establish the school.<sup>210</sup> A teachers' institute meeting in December of 1892 pushed to secure an additional normal school in Texas from the state legislature. Coronal Institute was given this opportunity in 1893; however, it failed to secure the necessary state approval needed to issue diplomas to teachers. Ronald C. Brown argues that the amenities established for the Chautauqua visitor made San Marcos the logical choice for the new Texas normal school. He further states, "The Chautauqua

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<sup>208</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, July 22, 1886, DBCAH, microfilm.

<sup>209</sup> *Texas Chautauquan*, July 18, 1888, Sixth Annual Announcement of the San Marcos Chautauqua, Bulletin, June 1890, in Henderson, 93, 99, 176.

<sup>210</sup> Willis, "The History of Education in Hays County," 105.

decade strengthened San Marcos' commitment to education and awakened an interest in tourism."<sup>211</sup>

The San Marcos Chautauqua had a strong educational mission that extended beyond the assembly. One of the most defining characteristics that the San Marcos institution adopted from the Chautauqua movement was the CLSC correspondence school. San Marcos members first created their own version of the CLSC in the form of the Students' Union, a home school formed in the first year of the assembly. The increased interest in the correspondence school coincided with the changing opinion of many Texans who by the 1880s, increasingly supported the idea of free public schools. As was true of many other Texans, San Marcos citizens were advocates of popular education and a majority voted to allow free public schools in San Marcos.<sup>212</sup> For those who could not attend public schools, the correspondence school allowed students to study at home for the majority of the year, and then they would be able to attend lectures during the summer assembly. Ideally, the students would only have to attend those lectures that were of interest to them, rather than having a required course of study similar to that of a traditional university. Students paid a fifty-cent annual fee to be in the program and were expected to purchase their own books. This naturally led to a greater need for reading circles in which individuals could share texts, thereby reducing individual expenses. Students also had to pay to attend the summer assembly. Stimulated by these activities, the *Free Press* announced that San Marcos "must become the educational and social center of the state."<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Brown, *Up the Hill, Down the Years*, 26-27.

<sup>212</sup> Eby, *The Development of Education in Texas*, 193.

<sup>213</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, July 9, 1885, August 20, 1885, August 27, 1885, DBCAH, microfilm.



There were deeper social concerns underlying the efforts of the San Marcos Chautauqua to expand its educational services. Since the CLSC was so crucial to the New York Chautauqua it is likely that the San Marcos Students' Union was predicted to have equal importance to the local assembly; therefore, it is not surprising that DuBose undertook the position of superintendent of the organization. In September of 1885 there were sixty people enrolled in the Students' Union. The stated goals of the new organization were to provide education for those who did not have access to it and to "fill up the leisure hours of home life, in country, village and town, with pleasant and profitable mental recreation."<sup>214</sup> This demonstrates the desire among many reformers to guide country dwellers in the best use of their time. It also was related to the cause of temperance, which often was rooted in the concern that people were spending their money on alcohol instead of on something more worthwhile.

Middle-class reformers believed that if people spent their time studying they would not have time for less desirable activities. Another popular theory was that the uneducated masses presented a threat to the middle-class, especially when they were able to vote, which made their education a social and political necessity. New York Chautauquan Thomas DeWitt Talmadge stated, "the ignorant classes are always the dangerous classes. Demagogues marshal them. They are helm-less, and are driven before the gale."<sup>215</sup> Providing popular education served both social and political needs for the organizers of Chautauqua who were driven by these concerns. These reasons also justified educating African Americans, though not necessarily in the same schools.

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<sup>214</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, August 27, 1885, September 3, 1885, September 10, 1885, DBCAH, microfilm.

<sup>215</sup> Rieser, 131.

The Students' Union did not succeed as planned, so the managers turned to the New York Chautauqua for guidance. According to the *Free Press*, students did not initially take the classes seriously and did not always complete the work. Without the structure provided by a traditional university, students were completely responsible for completing their own lessons. People became more interested in the social opportunity presented by the organization than in serious study. The San Marcos Chautauqua eventually replaced the Students' Union with the CLSC and attempted to stay in contact with and receive guidance from Kate Kimball, executive secretary of the CLSC. William Shaw, director of the CLSC in San Marcos in 1887 and 1888, wrote to John Vincent asking for instructions on enrolling members and conducting examinations.<sup>216</sup> Shaw's request for advice demonstrated the San Marcos assembly organizers' efforts to cooperate with and receive influence from the New York Chautauqua.

Dedicated to the importance of the CLSC, William Shaw attempted to increase the number of students in the correspondence school in Texas. Shaw's dedication to the movement is evident in his statement that "what the Missionary Dept. of the Church is to the religious world, so I regard the C.L.S.C. to the intellectual."<sup>217</sup> He further emphasized that the Chautauqua idea was especially important to the state of Texas because many of the towns are "so far removed from centers of thought and culture."<sup>218</sup> Shaw visited the New York Chautauqua in 1882, and like DuBose, was inspired by the institution, and also wished to encourage other people to take up CLSC work.<sup>219</sup> After Shaw left for the

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<sup>216</sup> W. H. Shaw to Kate Kimball, September 5, 1887- June 13, 1888, Box 14, Folder 13, Kate Kimball Correspondence, OAC.

<sup>217</sup> William H. Shaw to John H. Vincent, September 5, 1887, Box 14, Folder 13, Kate Kimball Correspondence, OAC.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

Georgetown assembly, M. O. Keller took over CLSC work in San Marcos. As superintendent of the CLSC for the 1890 season, Keller was promised a commission of ten to twenty percent on goods sold, free lodging in a tent, and a one-dollar a day salary during the summer assembly. Keller enlisted thirty-five people into the CLSC class for the 1890 year, distributed tracts, sold badges, and even lectured during the assembly. An order of twenty sets of books was given to Mrs. F. Smith, who operated a bookstore and ordered the CLSC books.<sup>220</sup> If the books were ordered from the 1890-1891 reading list, then in addition to readings from the *Chautauquan* the book list included James Richard Joy's *An Outline History of England*, Henry A. Beers' *From Chaucer to Tennyson*, Adams Sherman Hill's *Our English*, William Cleaver Wilkinson's *Classic French Course in English*, Alexander Winchell's *Walks and Talks in the Geological Field*, and John F. Hurst's *Short History of the Church in the United States*.<sup>221</sup> Allowing the local bookstore to order the needed books made it easier for CLSC circle organizers.

Many of the Chautauqua leaders were wealthy businessmen, but individual expenses were an issue for some of Chautauqua's leaders. After the close of the assembly, Keller continued to oversee the San Marcos CLSC circle throughout the year.<sup>222</sup> In 1890, Keller had some difficulty obtaining the promised one-dollar-a-day salary for his summer CLSC work, and wrote several times to the New York Chautauqua inquiring about it. He was eventually paid his salary.<sup>223</sup> It is notable that Keller was

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<sup>220</sup> M. O. Keller to Kate Kimball, November 22, 1890, Box 23, Folder 8, Kate Kimball Correspondence, OAC.

<sup>221</sup> Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle, "CLSC Historic Book List, 1878-2009," Chautauqua Institution, <http://www.ciweb.org/> (accessed June 4, 2011).

<sup>222</sup> M. O. Keller to Kate Kimball, November 22, 1890, November 5, 1890, Box 23, Folder 8, Kate Kimball Correspondence, OAC.

<sup>223</sup> M. O. Keller to Theodore L. Flood and John H. Vincent, August 8, 1890, Box 23, Folder 8, Kate Kimball Correspondence, OAC; M. O. Keller to Kate Kimball, November 29, 1890, Box 23, Folder 8, Kate Kimball Correspondence, OAC.

attempting to seek a salary for the CLSC work since many of the operators of the assembly seemed to contribute on a voluntary level. However, many of these operators were independently wealthy, and Keller must have wanted to participate in Chautauqua work but still needed to be able to earn an income. Keller does not reveal the same passion about the importance of the Chautauqua idea previously expressed by William H. Shaw. For the 1891 season, Keller believed he was not initially offered enough money to justify giving up church work to conduct CLSC work for the duration of the summer.<sup>224</sup> Eventually, Keller was again offered his one-dollar-a-day salary, and he continued to supervise CLSC work for the 1891 assembly.<sup>225</sup> “How to Organize a Local Circle,” an article by Reverend Jesse L. Hurlbut, makes no mention of an officer receiving pay for their work.<sup>226</sup> This is significant because the Chautauqua system was not necessarily set up to make a profit, and was originally supposed to be accessible to those who might not be able to afford an education.

The success of the independent Chautauqua came from the generosity of the people who were inspired by the idea rather than those interested in turning a profit. However, it did take money to allow the assembly to operate year after year, and if the people whom managers were inspired to help were not readily embracing the Chautauqua idea, it may have been quite discouraging. The expense of maintaining an independent assembly is what led many others to buy a week on the circuit instead. During the late-nineteenth century, as Progressives discovered that private philanthropy was not enough

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<sup>224</sup> M. O. Keller to Kate Kimball, June 12, 1891, Box 23, Folder 8, Kate Kimball Correspondence, OAC.

<sup>225</sup> M. O. Keller to Kate Kimball, July 27, 1891, Box 24, Folder 4, Kate Kimball Correspondence, OAC.

<sup>226</sup> Theodore L. Flood, ed., *Chautauquan* (Meadville, PA: The Chautauqua Press, 1884-1885), 5:161-162.

to solve social problems, so did the assembly leaders realize they needed more than private support to fully realize the Chautauqua ideal. If Keller needed to give up other work in order to devote time to the assembly, others also must have had to make sacrifices if they were to give it their entire attention—unless, of course, they only went for a day.

Despite some possible financial difficulties, the popularity of the independent Chautauqua was strong for several years. News of the San Marcos Chautauqua spread not only across Texas, but also across the nation. The *Free Press* reprinted numerous pieces published by other Texas newspapers supporting the Chautauqua, including ones from San Antonio, Austin, and Galveston. In 1886, even the Colorado press published a story on the San Marcos Chautauqua assembly and congratulated Texas on being so progressive as to accept the New York concept, while also expressing surprise that Texas had such an institution before Colorado. The Colorado paper also announced that the people of Texas “are no longer unwilling to adopt a good thing simply because it originated in the North or the East.”<sup>227</sup> This reflects the tension that continued to resonate in the South against the North after the Civil War. The importance of the Chautauqua idea surpassed this animosity in favor of the goal of education and religious understanding. Newspaper editors in particular supported the Chautauqua and its educational programs because only educated individuals who could read would become subscribers. Although citizens of Colorado were disappointed in not establishing a Chautauqua before Texas, Colorado can now boast about having one of the few

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<sup>227</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, June 3, 1886, DBCAH, microfilm.

assemblies in continuous operation to this day. In cooperation with Texas educators, Colorado established an independent assembly in 1897.<sup>228</sup>

Perhaps due to such favorable publicity, several cities of Texas vied for the chance to locate a Chautauqua assembly in their hometown. In 1888 the Texas Chautauqua Assembly was formed to encourage the growth of Chautauqua within Texas, and this organization initially supported the San Marcos assembly. Shortly after the close of the 1888 San Marcos summer session, a debate began on the possibility of moving the organization to another city in Texas. Ultimately the Texas Chautauqua Assembly voted to move to Georgetown. The only person on the voting committee who voted to not move the Assembly was, of course, Reverend DuBose. One man from San Marcos and William H. Shaw of Austin, supervisor of the CLSC at San Marcos, voted for the move to Georgetown. The CLSC at Georgetown remained under the direction of Shaw.<sup>229</sup> W. W. Pinson was Treasurer for the San Marcos assembly in 1888, but later worked for the Georgetown assembly.<sup>230</sup> This transfer caught the attention of other Texas cities, including Austin and La Grange, who had special interest in the location of the Texas Chautauqua.<sup>231</sup> Although it is not entirely clear why the transfer took place, possible reasons include that the association wished to start a Chautauqua that did not already have an established management and to locate somewhere that had the possibilities for financial security. Georgetown argued it was best suited for the Chautauqua because of its location, attractiveness, university, and “health-giving waters.” Prior to the

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<sup>228</sup> “History of Colorado Chautauqua,” Colorado Chautauqua Association, [www.chautauqua.com](http://www.chautauqua.com), February 6, 2011.

<sup>229</sup> Texas Chautauqua Assembly, Program of the Texas Chautauqua Assembly of Georgetown Texas (Georgetown, July 2-19, 1889), 1, located at DBCAH.

<sup>230</sup> William H. Shaw to Kate Kimball, June 13, 1888, Box 14, Folder 13, Kate Kimball Correspondence, OAC.

<sup>231</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, August 9, 1888, January 10, 1889, San Marcos Public Library, TX, microfilm.

Assembly's vote, the *Austin Daily Statesman* published an account of a representative of Georgetown stating that "the Chautauqua would be a valuable acquisition to our city, and we must have it."<sup>232</sup>

After Georgetown hosted their first Chautauqua assembly in 1889, a rivalry between the "original" and the "official" Chautauqua began, in which each one attempted to out-do the other with entertainers and guests. Despite the competition, annual assemblies continued in San Marcos until 1895. As there was no official sanction by the New York Chautauqua for any independent assembly, the authority of an "official" Texas Chautauqua was relevant only to that board, which existed after the start of the San Marcos institution. In addition, the San Marcos assembly continued to be recognized by the mother Chautauqua.<sup>233</sup> Although the San Marcos Chautauqua continued, during the process of negotiations over the move of the Texas Chautauqua Assembly some San Marcos citizens feared this meant the end of their Chautauqua. The management made an attempt to collect unpaid subscriptions to the stock of the assembly in order to prevent the move of the Texas Chautauqua Assembly, but this was not enough. Once the transfer occurred, DuBose gave word to San Marcos to prepare for the next season.<sup>234</sup> After the transfer, and prior to the start of the 1889 season, an individual from San Marcos remarked that their Chautauqua was "a very lively corpse."<sup>235</sup> Despite this, the 1889 season gave promising reports and a renewed interest in the Chautauqua seemed to occur beginning in the 1889 and 1890 seasons. A change in the overall program can also be

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<sup>232</sup> Jean Haskell Speer, "Cowboy Chautauqua: An Account of its Origins in Central Texas, 1885-1890," *The Southern Speech Communication Journal* 45 (Spring 1980): 255-256.

<sup>233</sup> "San Marcos, Texas," *Chautauquan*, 1890, 1891, Clippings, Box 12-Oregon: Willamette Valley-Texas, McClarran Collection, OAC; Speer, "Cowboy Chautauqua," 260-261.

<sup>234</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, October 18, 1888, November 22, 1888, San Marcos Public Library, TX, microfilm.

<sup>235</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, February 7, 1889, San Marcos Public Library, TX, microfilm.

seen at this time as more variety was added to the program along with additional entertainment.

Despite the Texas Chautauqua split, the San Marcos assembly managers continued to adapt the Chautauqua platform to attract visitors. By 1888, the San Marcos assembly consisted of the departments of the Teachers' Normal Institute, Kindergarten School, Sunday School Normal Institute, CLSC, School of Philosophy, School of Theology, School of Languages, School of Music, School of Oratory, Penmanship and Free-hand Drawing.<sup>236</sup> In 1890 a correspondence secretary of the San Marcos CLSC wrote to other reading circles in Texas to try to encourage their attendance at the San Marcos summer assembly, a strategy also pursued by the Georgetown assembly.<sup>237</sup> San Marcos CLSC supervisor Keller reported to New York that the 1891 season had the most attendance and "best program" in the history of the assembly.<sup>238</sup> The assembly made similar reports in other years, except in 1894, which was a season with lower attendance but was a financial success and turned a profit. In 1894 Dubose and president E. P. Raynolds were "more encouraged at the present outlook than at any other time in the history of the pioneer assembly of the Southwest."<sup>239</sup> Although they saw great success for the assembly they would only have one more season.

San Marcos leaders had to face the problem that among Texans attending the Chautauqua, like those participating in the New York assembly, only a few were interested in serious study. The majority of participants and major contributors were

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<sup>236</sup> William H. Shaw to Kate Kimball, April 10, 1888, Box 14, Folder 13, Kate Kimball Correspondence, OAC.

<sup>237</sup> M. O. Keller to Kate Kimball, November 29, 1890, Box 23, Folder 8, Kate Kimball Correspondence, OAC.

<sup>238</sup> M. O. Keller to Kate Kimball, July 27, 1891, Box 24, Folder 4, Kate Kimball Correspondence, OAC.

<sup>239</sup> "San Marcos, Texas," *Chautauquan*, 1894, Clippings, Box 12-Oregon: Willamette Valley-Texas, McClarran Collection, OAC.



interested primarily in entertainment with only limited educational value. Initially, the Chautauqua program focused on religious and secular education, but later more entertaining activities were added to attract greater participation. Entertainments and activities on the Chautauqua grounds included, among others, the Chautauqua Guards, a choir, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), the Chautauqua Social Club, football, rowing, and even a steamboat to carry passengers along the San Marcos River.<sup>240</sup> Also similar to the New York Chautauqua, young people used the summer assembly as an opportunity to meet possible spouses.<sup>241</sup> One participant of the San Marcos assembly reflected, "Surely we remember the Chautauqua. We did most of our courting right up there on that Hill."<sup>242</sup>

Although additional entertainments were added to the program, every year the San Marcos Chautauqua still included educational opportunities. As the San Marcos Chautauqua progressed, organizers added more lectures, classes, and activities. Chautauqua brought both classical and practical courses to the community. Practical classes included courses on bookkeeping, commercial calculation, and typewriting. Students could also attend the Commercial School that was part of the Business College of Austin, and those students who received lessons at Chautauqua received a discount in comparison to those who attended classes at Austin.<sup>243</sup>

Following the path of the New York Chautauqua, initially the San Marcos assembly managers attempted to avoid any "entertainments" that lacked decorum. During its first years it conformed to the religious and educational standard, but in the interest of

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<sup>240</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, July 15- July 22, 1886, DBCAH, microfilm; *Texas Chautauquan*, July 2, 1888, in Henderson, 79.

<sup>241</sup> Rieser, 219.

<sup>242</sup> Mr. and Mrs. Curtis Ivey, interview by Ruby Henderson, in Henderson, 317.

<sup>243</sup> *Texas Chautauquan*, July 10, 1888, in Henderson, 91.

increasing attendance additional entertainments were added. For instance, Farmer's Day became a regular tradition, which appealed to the farming community that dominated the San Marcos population. The events associated with this day focused on a farm show with prizes and awards for best of livestock or best-grown crops, activities that varied considerably from the Chautauqua standard.<sup>244</sup> After the inclusion of Farmer's Day a report about the Chautauqua in the *Free Press* stated "the farmers in the country are beginning to take much interest in Chautauqua. This is a move in the right direction." Farmer's Day in 1890 had a large attendance, and "hundreds of farmers and old Texans" participated in Alamo Day.<sup>245</sup> Although the Chautauqua program deviated from the original format, the organizers attempted to give the community what it wanted.

Despite some changes and setbacks, the Chautauqua leaders persisted in working to ensure the success of the assembly. The directors continually called upon the community for support; they emphasized that it would only be successful through continued attendance and financial support. The Chautauqua assembly did receive donations and support from the community, especially from women.<sup>246</sup> However, support for the Chautauqua was not coming from the entire San Marcos community. The Colorado press complimented Texas for being progressive enough to adopt an institution from New York, but the compliment was due to only *some* of the residents of Texas. Although the San Marcos leaders were progressive in embracing the educational ideals of the Chautauqua Movement, many of the rural citizens of Texas may not have been as supportive of their ideals. Rural areas in the South were particularly a challenge for

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<sup>244</sup> *Hays County Times*, June 26, 1891, in Henderson, 214-215.

<sup>245</sup> Quotes from *San Marcos Free Press*, July 24, 1890, San Marcos Public Library, TX, microfilm.

<sup>246</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, January 10, 1889, *Hays County Times*, February 20, 1891, in Henderson, 116, 195.

progressives, as rural southerners were resistant to change and outside influences. They may also have found Chautauqua less appealing because of the over-whelming influence of women.<sup>247</sup> Therefore, the needs and wants of the farming community, a significant part of the local population, conflicted with the motivations of the Chautauqua management. Whether rural Texans did not like the northern institution or simply did not want to spend their free time in religious education, the Chautauqua platform needed to be broadened in order to entice a larger percentage of the local population to attend.

Changes made to entice additional participation led to some changes in the fundamental principles of the Chautauqua ideal. Nearly every year, press coverage of the San Marcos Chautauqua deemed the assembly a great success, only later to declare that the independent needed improvement based on the attendance of the previous assembly. The San Marcos Chautauqua was successful in many of its efforts, but struggled with inconsistent attendance. By 1888 the directors felt that changes were necessary in order to make the Chautauqua a lasting success. They recommended choosing new directors who were experienced in the management of Chautauquas, and adding more variety and entertainment to the program.<sup>248</sup> Perhaps this influenced the move of the Texas Chautauqua Assembly to Georgetown.

Lack of entertainment was not the only contributor to the decline of the San Marcos and all independent Chautauquas. Progressives had a strong belief that private philanthropy would never by itself be successful in undertaking significant reforms, many of which required government support. This applied to not only educational needs but to many other issues that affected social justice. Chautauqua can be seen as an institution

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<sup>247</sup> William A. Link, *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 212-214.

<sup>248</sup> *San Marcos Free Press*, June 28, 1888, in Henderson, 65.

that became obsolete when publicly funded schools took the place of services provided by Chautauqua, and when flashier entertainment drew away attention. The religious summer assembly had to compete with entertainments like the Ringling Brothers Circus, which came to San Marcos in 1894.<sup>249</sup> Many independent assemblies failed quickly, and comparatively the San Marcos Chautauqua had a successful run.<sup>250</sup> In 1895 the San Marcos Chautauqua hosted its final assembly, and press coverage and attendance were at its lowest.

In addition to possible hard economic times and competition with new forms of entertainment, attitudes about education were changing. The founding principle of Chautauqua was the improvement of Sunday school teachers. As the idea of free public schools continued to gain support, so did secularization within education. As religion and education became more divided so did the institutions that supported each. However, public opinion did not necessarily change on the matter and many continued to feel that the union between religion and education was important and opposed secularization of education. In fact, Dr. R. L. Dabney of the University of Texas, Gustave Cook, and H. Teichmueller debated this topic on the San Marcos Chautauqua lecture platform in 1886.<sup>251</sup> Despite their efforts, secularization of education would eventually succeed, and this can be seen in that a secular normal school replaced the San Marcos Chautauqua.

After the closing of Chautauqua, San Marcos officials continually pushed to have a permanent state normal school located in their town. Finally, in 1899, plans were initiated to begin the school. The eleven acres that made up Chautauqua Hill became the

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<sup>249</sup> *Hays County Times and Farmers' Journal*, October 19, 1894, San Marcos Public Library, TX, microfilm.

<sup>250</sup> Rieser, 81.

<sup>251</sup> Eby, 202-203.

property of the city of San Marcos after Chautauqua ended. San Marcos then donated the Hill to the state for the purpose of establishing Southwest Texas Normal School (now Texas State University-San Marcos).<sup>252</sup> Construction of the Main Building began in 1902 and the school officially opened in 1903. William D. Wood and Edwin J. L. Green, both Chautauqua organizers, became members of the school's Board of Trustees.<sup>253</sup> On September 9, 1903, Southwest Texas opened to 303 students and 17 faculty members.<sup>254</sup> It became the third normal school in Texas, after the Sam Houston Normal Institute in Huntsville in 1879, and North Texas in Denton in 1890. Southwest Texas progressed through normal school, normal college, state teachers college, and state college before being designated a state university in 1969.

Although the San Marcos Chautauqua was gone it continued to have influence in the school that replaced it. Students of Southwest Texas normal school, similar to Chautauqua students, studied history, math, English, music, botany, and other subjects. Although the focus of the new school was not on training Sunday school teachers, on providing religiously guided education (although Southwest Texas had religious student organizations), or on directly influencing the general public, the spirit and roots of Chautauqua never left Chautauqua Hill. Over the years, Chautauqua has had a lasting influence on what is now Texas State University-San Marcos, including the debate group called the Chautauqua Literary Society and a newsletter called the *Chautauquan*. The Chautauqua Literary Society was the first men's debating club at Southwest Texas. According to Ronald Brown, debate was an essential early activity at Southwest Texas,

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<sup>252</sup> Joe B. Vogel, "Fifty Years of Teacher Education: A Brief History of Southwest Texas State Teachers College, San Marcos, Texas, 1901-1951," (1951), *Faculty Publications-Journalism and Mass Communication*, Paper 3, <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/jamcfacp/3> (accessed June 30, 2011).

<sup>253</sup> Willis, 105-106; Brown 21.

<sup>254</sup> Brown, 155.

and due to this importance it is significant that the title Chautauqua was chosen. In the 1920s women of Southwest Texas created the Pennybacker Literary Society in honor of Anna Pennybacker, one of the more influential women of Chautauqua and the nation.<sup>255</sup> Just as nationally the word Chautauqua is synonymous with education, so it was at the University demonstrated by the publication named for Chautauqua.

Embracing the movement at the height of its popularity, the San Marcos organization attempted to conform to the ideals of the Chautauqua Movement, but the middle-class northern-influenced movement did not appeal in the long run to rural Texans, and changes necessary to increase participation changed the original Chautauqua design. However, the assembly succeeded in encouraging the development of the San Marcos community. Thousands of visitors utilized its resources and local businesses, and the desire to beautify the Chautauqua grounds left San Marcos with permanent improvements. Internal community efforts were also strengthened in order to encourage the Chautauqua's success. A significant impact of the Chautauqua was allowing women to become politically and socially active in the San Marcos community, and more importantly in rural Texas. Women were able to push their interests on the Chautauqua platform and overcome restrictions on public speaking. The Chautauqua also brought popular education to a rural area, and laid the foundation for the establishment of San Marcos as an educational center. Overall, the Chautauqua was popular and successful, even if not among all the residents of San Marcos. The San Marcos Chautauqua left behind an educational legacy that allowed the establishment of the university that now resides on Chautauqua Hill.

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<sup>255</sup> Brown, 28-29, 42-43, 47, 86.

## CONCLUSION

Through the New York Chautauqua, the independents, and the circuits, the Chautauqua Movement influenced the educational development of the nation and much more. Defining the New York Chautauqua and the subsequent Chautauqua Movement can be difficult due to the complexity of the institution and its widespread influence. Chautauqua consisted of educational, religious, and self-improvement programs in the atmosphere of a summer resort. The concept of Chautauqua inspired Progressive reformers to establish independent Chautauquas throughout the United States and these in turn stimulated the creation of the circuits. Secondary sources about Chautauqua often analyze only one aspect of the Chautauqua Movement, and these histories are vital in order to uncover the full history of Chautauqua. However, in comparison to other topics, there are relatively few of these secondary sources available on Chautauqua, and its full impact has not been adequately explored. This may be due to the fact that the focus of United States history is currently attempting to encompass something beyond a white, Protestant, middle-class history. Thus, it may not be as appealing a topic, since Chautauqua did not reach out to the general masses in the same way that other progressive institutions did.

The Chautauqua Movement's most important influence, which is difficult to measure and easy to overlook, was on the individuals who attended the sessions. Although the impact of Chautauqua may not be as obvious as that of other educational

and cultural influences, the fact that so many secondary works on the Progressive Era mention Chautauqua demonstrates its importance. Many of the reformers of the Progressive Era improved living conditions for people, only to have their efforts labeled as failures because large-scale change did not happen until government intervention was enforced. Chautauqua had a positive impact on the local level, providing access to education for many people who otherwise would have been denied the privilege. It also had a larger impact, influencing the development of higher education, teacher training, the building of libraries, and correspondence education.

Since piecing together the many aspects of Chautauqua can be difficult, it was not until my visit to its archives and stay during the summer season that I truly appreciated and fully experienced the ideas behind the movement. My trip to the New York Chautauqua archives to conduct research on the San Marcos assembly led to a five-week internship at the Chautauqua Institution archives during the 2010 summer assembly. It was then that I realized that Chautauqua cannot be fully appreciated until it has been experienced. Although the visit was over one hundred and thirty years after the founding of the “idea” and many things were very different, in its isolation the Chautauqua Institution still very much embodies its original purpose and design. A haven from the outside world, the Chautauqua Assembly has been in continuous operation since its founding.

After just a day or two on Chautauqua Lake, it became obvious why Reverend DuBose was so inspired to recreate his experience at the assembly for others. Stepping inside the gates is like stepping back in time, and one is confronted by a whole different attitude. Everyone says “hi” to everyone they encounter. Walking and biking are the



primary means of transportation on the grounds. Although it may cost more to buy a season gate pass than it did in 1874, the overall format of the Chautauqua season has not changed much. Visitors rent or own cottages, Sunday continues to be a free day open to all visitors, and lectures, which are still held in the open amphitheater, continue to be one of the main events during the season. The topics of daily lectures still range from political to educational and informative or religious. Visitors also are invited to sign up for one of the many classes offered as Special Studies. Classes are designed for individuals of all ages and with a variety of interests. They include instruction in art, music, dance, computers, hobbies, writing, cooking, religious study, and much more. Even the CLSC continues in full operation. Daily church services are also held, and there are plenty of recreational activities as well, such as weekend sail boat races, golf, shuffleboard, and swimming. Guests are invited to enjoy many talented performances, including ballet, opera, theater, and art. There are special activities happening constantly, and on the fourth of July everyone is dressed in red, white, and blue. It continues to be a wonderful family summer resort.

Another aspect of Chautauqua that has not changed much is that most of the patrons continue to be white middle-class Protestants. The Chautauqua Institution does not widely advertise itself, and relies on the loyalty of the same families, generation after generation. Although Chautauqua does not have the same educational mission to educate the masses as in the past, it still has an educational format and a full schedule.

The New York Chautauqua began with an idea by John Vincent and Lewis Miller. They wanted to assist in the education of everyone by improving the education of Sunday school teachers. The idea quickly evolved and they started a movement that improved

educational opportunities for many people across the nation. It also provided women with the opportunity to voice their opinions and become politically influential. They changed education by introducing summer school and correspondence education. Chautauqua founders kept the summer assembly moral with religiously guided lectures and activities. Patrons were also able to enjoy a recreational summer resort, and had ample activities to keep them busy. Chautauqua attracted serious students along with those interested in a summer vacation. The assembly continued to thrive and, despite a few down periods, it continues to offer summer goers education, religion, fun, and enlightenment. It remains a wholesome summer vacation. Through a moral institution the Chautauqua platform eased middle-class individuals into exposure to and acceptance of new progressive ideas.

The “idea” was so powerful that many picked it up and wanted to inspire others as they were inspired at Chautauqua. Cities and towns across the nation established their own miniature Chautauquas. The independent Chautauqua ranged from replicas of the original to ones with a unique identity that simply adopted the name. The independents are the most overlooked aspect of the Chautauqua Movement, since they remained at the local level. Like many other community-based progressive efforts, they can easily be forgotten because their impact was local rather than national in scope. Despite this, the independents encouraged the establishment of schools and libraries, and allowed for social and political circles to develop.

Despite the wounds that still persisted between the North and the South, Texas as well as other Southern states embraced the movement. At least ten independent Chautauquas were established in Texas. The establishment of these assemblies was more important to the community than the New York Chautauqua because the independents

were established in areas that were not near educational centers, and often were fairly isolated. Many Texans were so thrilled with the idea of having an assembly they set up the Texas Chautauqua Assembly to foster the growth of the Chautauqua idea and its principles of education in Texas. Texas was even part of the CLSC system. The legacy of Chautauqua continues to live on, as Waxahachie citizens revived their Chautauqua Assembly in 2000. Chautauqua in Texas meant not only educational opportunities and religious education, but it also assisted in the growth and development of new Texas towns.

The most well known aspect of the Chautauqua Movement, and the most distant from the original design, was the circuit. The circuits were the most entertainment-based aspect of the Chautauqua Movement, and gave the movement additional notice because many prominent people lectured on the circuits. Although it evolved into an entertainment show, just like its predecessors it provided the opportunity for people in isolated areas to be exposed to new ideas and current events. The circuits also provided a cheaper, less risky alternative to investing in an independent. Although a few Texas towns gave up their independents in favor of a spot on the circuit, the influence of the independents carry on to this day.

One town where the Chautauqua Movement exerted its influence was San Marcos, Texas. Captivated by the influence of Chautauqua and the desire to spread the idea, Reverend Horace M. DuBose brought the idea to San Marcos and to Texas. City officials were at once excited about the prospect of the Chautauqua. The new summer assembly greatly influenced the town and physical improvements were laid out. The independent assembly allowed for a practical and classical education for the people of

San Marcos, along with an opportunity for entertainment. The assembly platform provided a place for people to gather and discuss these ideas. The San Marcos Chautauqua provided a political outlet for women as well, so they were able to voice their needs at a time that was not usually welcoming of women's public influence. Besides education and religious study, Chautauqua also provided an opportunity for "culture," something that many people in isolated areas were denied. Presenters read poems, performed music, and gave lectures on numerous topics.

The San Marcos assembly attempted to follow the example of the original Chautauqua in New York, by placing the assembly on the springs, by adopting their own CLSC, the Students' Union, then later by enrolling citizens in the official CLSC. They held a recognition day, hosted lecturers, held classes including religious study classes, educated teachers through the normal school, and wanted to do something good for the people of San Marcos. Although it may never be possible to find out exactly who attended the assembly, there seemed to be something for everyone. When the assembly was not drawing enough crowds, management adjusted the schedule to appeal to a wider variety of people, specifically to the farming community. The San Marcos Chautauqua was a transition for the growing town. It was not built to provide long-term public education, and simply provided a service to the people of San Marcos. Although the Chautauqua assembly was not able to provide full public education it laid the foundation for Chautauqua Hill to be an educational spot, and paved the way for the building of the normal school that led to the university that continues to prosper to this day, Texas State University-San Marcos.

Chautauqua's founders designed the institution to provide access to education, but Chautauqua became obsolete once government support was allotted for public education. Even today the founders' ideals have not yet been fully realized, as an education is still not equally accessible to everyone. Chautauqua provided the opportunity for serious study in religious education, and created the wholesome family vacation destination. Overall, the most important aspect of Chautauqua was that it provided the opportunity for people to have access to education, and it allowed individuals to undertake a program of self-improvement while at the same time encouraging communal involvement and responsibility. The goal of the Progressives was to educate people in order to improve their conditions so people could gain advantages in life and career. An educated public makes for a more responsible general population, and knowledge is something that all people should have the opportunity to obtain. Prior to Chautauqua, and in many ways since then, education is something that has been reserved for the wealthy. The elite have more free time to devote to studies and the ability to pay for education. The Chautauqua founders wanted to improve education, but also wanted to provide people the opportunity for self-enlightenment. John Vincent and Lewis Miller tried hard to give people the opportunity to learn, although many may take it for granted, this was a noble task and ultimately their "idea" continues to influence the nation.

San Marcos citizens were provided this opportunity for an education. Although the San Marcos assembly may not have been able to satisfy the full needs of a public school in San Marcos, the desire for improvement meant that it paved the way for the university that now strives to give that opportunity. Thus, the San Marcos Chautauqua legacy continues.

## ILLUSTRATIONS



View of the inside of the Tabernacle located on Chautauqua Hill.

Photo reproduced from the  
San Marcos-Hays County Collection  
at the San Marcos Public Library, Texas



View of the Tabernacle on top of Chautauqua Hill. A few tents are located on the hill, and corn crops are growing at the base of the hill.

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## **VITA**

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