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Article Summary: At first independent Chautauqua assemblies provided instruction. The later summer circuit Chautauquas sought primarily to entertain their audiences.

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Photographs / Images: Keith Vawter, William Jennings Bryan, and Bohumir Kryl; local committee, 1914 Chautauqua, Lincoln; Chautauqua Park, Fullerton; inset program for the Fullerton Chautauqua Assembly, August 10-20, 1917; inset Ellison-White Chautauqua program, about 1927

CULTURE as ENTERTAINMENT

The Circuit Chautauqua in Nebraska, 1904-1924

By James P. Eckman

The program for the 1917 Chautauqua held at Kimball, Nebraska, July 4-8, 1917, characterized Chautauqua as

one of the greatest forces for patriotism among American institutions today. . . . It is the duty of the Chautauqua to look after the interests of democracy at home as well as democracy for the world. There can be no free government without free speech, and the Chautauqua platform is the most important free forum in America. To hold Chautauqua this summer is patriotic.¹

The program brochure further described the Kimball Chautauqua as "rich in entertainment, authentic information, musical inspiration, and patriotic fire."² This positive, optimistic quality of the Chautauqua spirit in the midst of a worldwide crisis reflected the distinctive tone of "uplift" so characteristic of the circuit Chautauquas. Although a pejorative and glib characterization that originated with Chautauqua's critics, the phrase "Mother, Home, and Heaven" summarized the basic message of inspirational "uplift" in the circuit Chautauquas. As one of the most successful of the circuit managers, Charles F. Horner, asserted, "[Uplift] was the quality in the speaker's life and demeanor and words that made men and women want to freshen their ambitions, to aspire a little higher, to become better neighbors and friends, to clean up the town a bit, to kiss the children when they returned to their homes, and perhaps to pray a little more."³

The emphasis on what circuit Chautauqua managers called inspirational "uplift"

continued what earlier Chautauquas saw as self-improvement. But there was a major difference: Where the older Chautauquas saw self-improvement as part of the Chautauquan ideology of culture with all of its regenerative powers, the new circuit Chautauquas preached Chautauquan "uplift" through entertainment. Circuit Chautauqua was far more escapist than its earlier cousin, the independent Chautauqua assemblies. The summer circuit Chautauquas were not designed, as were earlier Chautauquas, to regenerate through the study of books, the hearing of lectures, the participation in rational recreation, or instruction through music and culture, all in a mutually supportive subcommunity. To the circuit owners and managers, culture as entertainment did not change lives; it encouraged, it amused, it promoted respectable diversion. With this increasing emphasis on entertainment, the circuits moved away from the didactic nature of the independent assemblies, where every aspect of the Chautauqua program needed to be instructive and edifying.

In short, the restructuring and reinstitutionalization of respectable leisure time, which had defined the emergence of the earlier independent assemblies, continued with the maturing of the circuits with their culture-as-entertainment dynamic. A powerful example of Chautauqua's reinstitutionalization was the purpose statement of the Ellison-White Chautauqua system founded in 1913 in Boise, Idaho:

To manage and conduct Lyceum, Chautauqua, theatrical and circus business of all kinds; to contract with and employ and manage, and contract with others for the services of Lyceum, Chautauqua, theat-

rical and circus performers, artists, companies, attractions and talent of all kinds; to conduct Chautauqua and Lyceum courses, theatres, circuses, dramatic performances, and all other forms of public entertainments; to construct, purchase, lease or otherwise acquire, own, hold, and sell or otherwise dispose of, amusement places of all kinds.⁴

Clearly, the restructuring of the Chautauqua concept into the twentieth century centered on the appeal of culture as entertainment. As long as Chautauqua could remain distinctive in this thrust it thrived; when it became simply another entertainment choice, it could not compete.

The leadership of the mother Chautauqua expressed grave concern with the developing emphasis on entertainment and its association with the name "Chautauqua." Indeed, Daniel W. Howell, a mother Chautauqua leader, cautioned in 1908, that

The genuine Chautauqua should stand squarely and always for three things: a true patriotism, a consistent Christianity, and an improved intellect. It is not a mere entertainment bureau for giving a "rollicking good time" for so much hard cash but is an intellectual center for disseminating the ripest opinions of the best students on all subjects of human weal.⁵

That he wrote this statement in 1908 reflected an anxiety about the obvious movement of Chautauqua from its original purposes.

The antecedent for the circuit Chautauqua was really the post-Civil War lyceum, not the earlier independent assemblies. Beginning in 1826 when Josiah Holbrook organized the first lyceum bureau in Millbury, Massachusetts, the lyceum movement was a system of booking lectures for clubs, schools, churches, and

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societies. The first and most famous of the professional lecturers was Ralph Waldo Emerson, who under lyceum management, received as much as \$500 per appearance. Other professional lecturers included Oliver Wendell Holmes, James Russell Lowell, Louis Agassiz, Horace Greeley, Richard Henry Dana, Jr., Henry Ward Beecher, Edward Everett Hale, and Julia Ward Howe. The lyceum movement actually died out during the Civil War, but talent bureaus revived the lyceum lecture circuit after the war.⁶

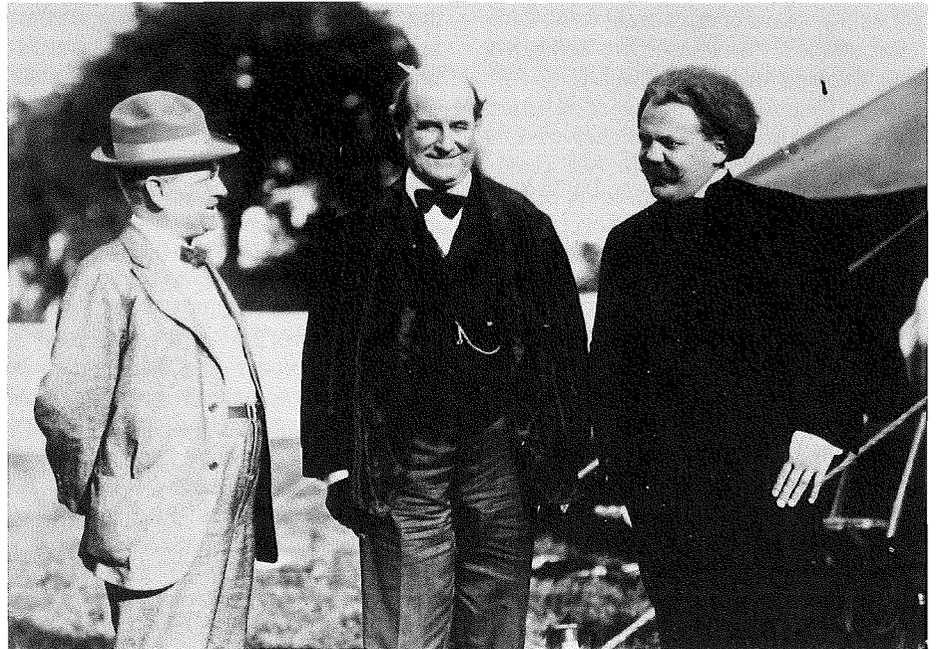
James Redpath, former newspaperman from Scotland, organized the most famous of the lyceum bureaus in 1869—the Redpath Bureau. While hearing a lecture by Charles Dickens at the Tremont Temple in Boston in 1868, Redpath learned of the irritations and difficulties of traveling lecturers. He established his bureau to alleviate distinguished speakers of the burden of personally negotiating dates, fees, train schedules, and dealings with local committees. Earning the reputation for integrity, quality, and respectability, Redpath's bureau became the chief booking office for Mark Twain, Josh Billings, Henry Ward Beecher, and other well-known personalities. Other lyceum bureaus developed in the 1870s that booked musical ensembles, humorists, and singers, as well as professional lecturers. This proliferation into other areas of entertainment was a seed that germinated in the Chautauqua circuits.⁷

The marriage of lyceum and Chautauqua began in 1904 with the genius of Keith Vawter of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, an executive of the Redpath Bureau of Chicago. He was certain that thoughtful planning could make the independent Chautauquas financially successful and, because the lyceums met during the winter months, give the Lyceum Bureau additional business during the summer months. Vawter established a nine-day program to be sold to the independent assemblies of Iowa, Nebraska, and Minnesota. Because the independents preferred to organize their own programs, however, his plan failed. Between 1907 and 1910, he reorganized his approach, which this

time met with great success.⁸

Two major characteristics defined the essence of Vawter's plan: the contract guarantee and "tight booking." The key to the Vawter contract was the guarantee. In communities that accepted a circuit Chautauqua, the organizing committee had to guarantee an agreed upon amount (often two or three thousand dollars) to Vawter's agency, the Standard Chautau-

The other key feature of Vawter's innovation centered on "tight booking," or booking towns within a comfortably manageable circuit. With the various performers divided into teams according to the day on which each team was to perform, he scheduled the Chautauqua programs for five, six, or seven days. First-day talent opened the Chautauqua in the first contracted town, then went on to open the



Keith Vawter (left), William Jennings Bryan, and Bohumir Kryl. Courtesy of University of Iowa Special Collections.

qua Bureau. Each committee member had to assume personal and legal liability for the amount of the guarantee. Although a potential difficulty, the guarantee provision actually fostered a community spirit and a competitive desire to bolster the town's good name as a center of culture and moral endeavor.⁹ Charles F. Homer highlighted this community building spirit:

The people would work in zeal for the coming Chautauqua. Often they would unite to cut the weeds, mow the grass, trim the trees, decorate the windows and even paint some buildings so that the town would be neat and handsome for the inspection of visitors.¹⁰

program at the next town on the circuit, and so on until they had completed the circuit. Arranging the talent in this manner meant that Vawter had to have tents ready at each town on the circuit. For example, a circuit of five towns required at least six tents, usually with an additional tent for emergencies. He used the sixth tent to begin a whole new circuit, after which the remaining tents of the past circuit were leapfrogged ahead to keep the circuit functioning. Through this system of circuits, Chautauqua became financially feasible for almost any town in America.¹¹ In addition, as Chautauqua performers Irene Briggs and Raymond Daboll, testified, "Instead of having to travel long distances be-

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cause of widely scattered dates, often spending sleepless nights, backtracking to keep an engagement in a town next to one where they had performed only a few days before, lecturers and entertainers on the Vawter circuit could count on an orderly sequence of dates and locales."¹² After 1910 Vawter's method became the standard model for the circuit Chautauquas.

Managing the circuits required a significant amount of organization. To maximize efficiency and order, the Vawter system involved four key individuals or groups. First, the booking agent obtained the contract from prospective towns on a given circuit. With an eye for continued expansion, his job was to procure as many contracts as possible. Next came the advance man, whose role was one of inspecting the town regarding its ticket sales and the progress of the preparation. The third individual in the organization was the platform manager, who operated the Chautauqua program. In addition, it was his responsibility to secure a renewal for the subsequent season. Finally, the crew, usually consisting of college students, erected the tent, often with local help, and served as ticket-takers.¹³

The incredible proliferation of the circuits after 1910 indicates that Vawter's method of organizing circuit Chautauqua was financially profitable. By 1921 nearly one hundred separate circuit Chautauquas reached 9,597 communities in the United States and Canada, with some forty million people purchasing single or season-ticket admissions. Although strongest in the Midwest, they covered every region of the country. The ranking of the top ten states according to number of Chautauquas in 1920 demonstrates the Midwestern predominance: Iowa (436 towns), Illinois (352), Pennsylvania (290), Nebraska (274), Kansas (260), Missouri (250), Ohio (217), Wisconsin (208), New York (201), and Minnesota (198).¹⁴ As Hugh A. Orchard, a circuit Chautauqua manager, maintained, "Through circuit Chautauqua there was a migration of thought and music from the old centers of population and culture to towns, villages, farms, and fields."¹⁵

The development of culture as entertainment in the circuits unmistakably defined the circuit Chautauqua movement in Nebraska. As mentioned earlier, Nebraska was an important state to the various circuit bureaus; in 1920, 274 Chautauquas highlighted summer entertainment choices for Nebraska citizens. The circuit managers appealed to the rural character of the state. In the 1910 Alma, Nebraska, Chautauqua program, the goal of the Chautauqua reflected this appeal: "The Chautauqua undertakes to bring to a community the refinement, the culture and the entertainment of the city with none of attendant temptations and vices." Furthermore, the program argued that Chautauqua contributed toward making "young men and women less anxious to go to the big city to live and more satisfied to remain at home, where opportunities are boundless."¹⁶

Although not the norm, a few Nebraska towns that hosted a summer circuit Chautauqua still had an existing independent Chautauqua assembly. Lincoln and Fullerton represented the two largest and most significant examples. Lincoln was the home of the famous Nebraska Epworth Assembly, established by the

Methodist Nebraska Epworth League in 1896. As a part of the Chautauqua assembly program in Lincoln, the Epworth Assembly also sponsored an Epworth League Institute and School of Methods for "the young people of our Nebraska Methodism."¹⁷ Fullerton's independent assembly, "The Chautauqua Park Association," had been formed in 1898 as an Epworth League Assembly. In 1901 a group of Fullerton businessmen assumed control of the assembly. With the incorporation of the Chautauqua Park Association in 1917, the Chautauqua assembly purchased nearly one hundred acres of land around the famous Buffalo Leap outside of Fullerton.¹⁸ To secure the talent for their summer Chautauquas, both independent assemblies contracted with the various Chautauqua bureaus. The Epworth Assembly of Lincoln often used Methodist pastors and speakers without any involvement with the various bureaus.¹⁹

To organize the summer Chautauqua and secure the necessary talent, most Nebraska towns formed a committee, which often incorporated as a Chautauqua association. In Homer, Nebraska, for example, the Chautauqua came under the auspices of the Homer Chautauqua Boosters. For



The local committee, 1914 Chautauqua, Lincoln. (NSHS-B814-22)

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the Kearney summer programs, the Kearney Chautauqua Association arranged the accommodations and talent. The same was true for the Chautauquas of Pierce, Fremont, and Kimball. Often the associations rented or even purchased land, preferably wooded, for the week of the circuit Chautauqua. In dealing with the various booking agencies of the assorted Chautauqua bureaus, this community organization had to guarantee the contract cost of hosting the Chautauqua.²⁰

For communities that did not establish a formal association or which did not have an independent assembly already in existence, an initial agreement, to allow a Chautauqua bureau to organize and establish a summer Chautauqua, was imperative. This type of agreement usually took the form of a contract:

We the undersigned, citizens and business men of _____, believing in the great advantage morally, educationally and commercially of a Chautauqua Assembly do hereby invite and give the privilege to the Redpath Lyceum Bureau to organize and establish a Chautauqua in _____ for 19__ to continue under their direction for five years. And we pledge them our most hearty support and co-operation in advertising and boosting the same.²¹

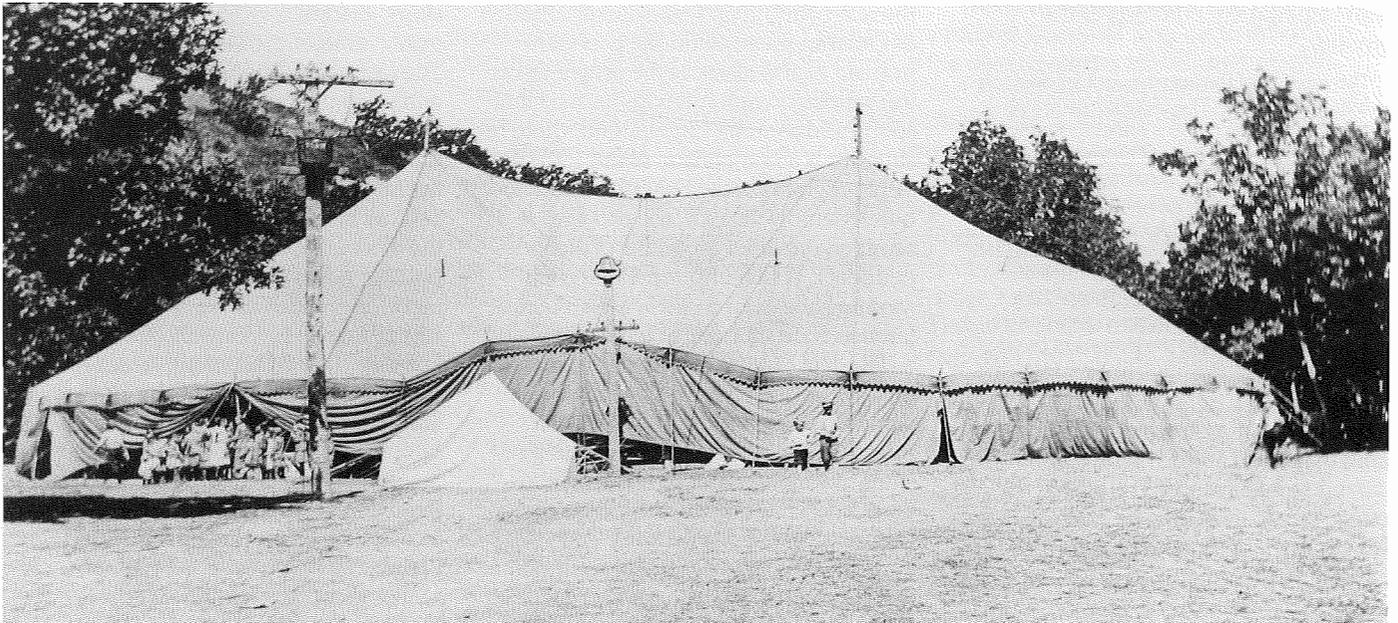
Community leaders then signed the agreement. This formal contract explains how so many small Nebraska communities, which did not have the resources to establish their own Chautauqua, could host a circuit Chautauqua during the summer months.

Whatever the method of local organization, any talent booked with the Chautauqua bureaus had to be formalized through a written contract, which established a set number of programs for a specified amount of money. The community had to agree to furnish a "suitable place on Chautauqua grounds" for the entertainment, usually including a piano that needed to be "tuned to international pitch." The contract listed the various performers, the date(s) of appearance, and the fee for each one. A representative of the community and the agent of the Chautauqua bureau signed the contract, with an inclusion about the bank through which the bureau could collect its fee. Although there existed many different forms of the contract, all included at least these elements.²²

The Chautauqua bureaus frequently encountered towns that attempted to renege on the contract. Such a case oc-

curred in Grand Island in 1911. Due to crop failure, the town leaders cancelled their contract with the Redpath Bureau for a Chautauqua. On June 26, 1911, the Redpath Bureau wrote: "Your committee or board of directors does not seem to appreciate the fact that it takes two to make or break a contract. . . . We will hold Grand Island to the contract." On June 30, 1911, R. J. Barr, superintendent of the Grand Island schools and a director of the Grand Island Chautauqua Association, responded, "The directors . . . decide[d] to take no other action than the resolution . . . to abandon the Chautauqua." Someone of the Redpath Bureau penciled over the contract "Cancel Contracts."²³ Due to the obvious costs of a lawsuit, Chautauqua Bureaus often did not enforce contract obligations upon towns incapable of meeting the financial pledge of hosting a Chautauqua.

For those Nebraskans who attended a summer Chautauqua, the cost generally was not prohibitive. Throughout the period from 1910 to the 1920s, most summer Chautauquas offered season tickets for two dollars. Generally season tickets for those eight to fourteen years of age sold for one dollar, while children under eight



Chautauqua Park, Fullerton. (NSHS-N176-2-8)

were admitted free. Tents of numerous sizes could be rented for sums ranging from seven to twelve dollars, as could tent floors for about two dollars. Other types of furniture for tent living, like beds, chairs, tables, and stoves, could be rented. For those Chautauquans not wishing to live in tents, hotel accommodations existed on the grounds (such as the Epworth Hotel on the Lincoln grounds); or a visitor could rent a room in the community. Restaurants and cafeterias provided meals, or patrons could shop at stores on the grounds that provided groceries, bread, meats, and milk. The directors of the Chautauqua tried to make it a self-contained community.²⁴ The continuity with the older independent assemblies of the late nineteenth century is evident.

Transportation to the Chautauquas was by railroad. Each of the advertising programs mentioned the easy access that railroads brought. However, the Fullerton Chautauqua gave recognition to the advent of the automobile. This was especially critical because by purchasing the grounds around Buffalo Leap in 1917, the Fullerton grounds were some distance from the railroad. Indeed, in the 1917 program, the directors argued that the appearance of the auto "has much to do with inspiring the purchase of the grounds."

The coming of the auto has put a new spirit into country life. The fact that we are off the main line of travel is rather to our advantage than otherwise. The automobile is a great cross-country carrier and people seek out and find places and localities off from lines of travel. The tourist finds a beauty at home that he never dreamed that Nebraska possessed. Within a radius of sixty miles of Fullerton (easy auto travel) there are more than twenty thousand owned automobiles and it is to the owners of these autos and their neighbors that we make this appeal.²⁵

The Chautauqua directors even advertised that "your autos will be carefully parked and guarded... The auto is the making of country life and adds fifty percent to its enjoyment." For a time, the automobile fostered growth at Fullerton, for in the 1921 program the directors attributed the financial success since the 1917

incorporation to the auto.²⁶

Marketing the circuit Chautauquas in a rural community proved a real challenge to community boosters. Advertising took many forms: calendars, streetcar cards, program folders, herald programs, window cards, large and small muslin banners, thirty-six-inch pennants, streamers, automobile banners, windshield stickers, arrow tack cards, "for sale" cards, lecture window cards, one-sheet posters, circular letters to underwriters, newspaper Chautauqua stories, display advertisements, direct mail advertisements, and special displays for specific attractions. For most communities, the program brochure was the norm for advertising the coming Chautauqua, because the whole scope of the Chautauqua schedule was available in one packet. As the circuits matured, the circuit bureaus standardized print materials and other promotional techniques. Circuit managers utilized blanket programs in which each town's name and dates could be later inserted.²⁷ This move toward mass production of Chautauqua materials lends further evidence to the restructuring of Chautauqua as an institution in American life.

That circuit Chautauqua constituted the restructuring and reinstitutionalization of Chautauqua in Nebraska is evident from an examination of the programs of the various communities in the state that sponsored a circuit Chautauqua. Quite instructive is a comparison of the 1907 and 1912 programs of the Fullerton Chautauqua Assembly. In 1907, the program resembled the older programs of the independents: A CLSC Round Table each morning at eleven o'clock, a WCTU conference each morning at ten o'clock, and a "Physical Culture" class, which focused on physical exercise and organized games for the children, at 10:30 each morning. The afternoon and evening sessions highlighted special lectures, concerts, and entertainment via stereopticon lectures and moving pictures. The 1912 Fullerton program exemplified a fundamental change of emphasis and context. There were no morning sessions, and no

emphasis on self-betterment through temperance classes or the CLSC. Instead, the redefined Chautauqua was a "Summer Resort" with its "permanent buildings, bathing pool and other conveniences for your comfort and entertainment."²⁸

By 1922 the restructuring and redefining of Chautauquan culture was complete. The 1922 Fullerton Chautauqua brochure advertised "sixteen big days" of "two great programs daily." The list of featured performances included "concert companies, jubilee singers, two big bands, opera singers, orchestras, novelty musicians, trained animals [sic] pets, Wassman the magician, humorists, lecturers, preachers, entertainers, games, and sports for old and young."²⁹ By no means unique, the 1922 Fullerton Chautauqua represented the triumph of culture as entertainment. Although the Chautauqua circuits contained preachers and lecturers on their programs, the accomplishment of the redefined Chautauquan culture brought a new meaning to Chautauquan leisure. Respectable leisure meant time away from work as time to be entertained, not time for what John Heyl Vincent had originally called "self-culture."

The format of the Chautauqua circuit program generally had two broad divisions: the inspirational lecture and the music, dramatic, or humorous segment. The lecture component of the Chautauqua program involved the use of famous orators who could draw crowds of considerable size. A list of the lecturers during the first three decades of the twentieth century in circuit Chautauqua included the most celebrated people in American politics, religion, letters, humor, entertainment, and public affairs: William Jennings Bryan, Russell H. Conwell, Robert M. La Follette, Thomas Marshall, James A. Burns, Mark Sullivan, William Howard Taft, Warren G. Harding, Glenn Frank, James Whitcomb Riley, John Philip Sousa, Billy Sunday, Will Rogers, Opie Read, Paul Pearson, S. Parkes Cadman, Ida Tarbell, Edgar Bergen, and Edna Ferber.³⁰

The most famous representative of the inspirational lecture was Rev. Russell H.

Circuit Chautauqua

Official Program

TO OUR CHAUTAUQUA FRIENDS—OLD AND NEW:

We welcome you to our Seventeenth Annual Chautauqua, and take great pleasure in presenting this eleven day program, believing it will meet with your hearty approval.

FULLERTON CHAUTAUQUA BOARD.

DR. FRANK S. FOX, Platform Manager.

MISS MABEL RILLING, Supervisor of Children's Play.

Every morning at 10:30 a Bible Study program and Round Table will be conducted by the platform manager and others, and each day Miss Mabel Rilling will conduct her children's work. We make special mention of these interesting features of the program.

Thursday, August 10th

- 7:00 p. m.—Concert, by the Fullerton Hussar Band, under the direction of William Wolters.
7:30 p. m.—Opening statement, by Platform Manager, Dr. Frank S. Fox.
8:00 p. m.—Address of Welcome, by Mayor John A. Weems.
8:15 p. m.—Response, by Secretary of the Board, Albert Thompson.
8:30 p. m.—Special Program, by Fullerton talent, under the direction of Mrs. J. Dudley Barnes and Miss Anna McClelland, with Miss Audrey Cooper, accompanist.

Friday, August 11th

- 2:00 p. m.—Concertina King, DeWillo.
2:30 p. m.—“Mascot,” Educated Horse.
7:30 p. m.—DeWillo.
8:00 p. m.—Totten, The Magician.

Saturday, August 12th

- 2:45 p. m.—Concert, The Apollo Concert Company.
7:45 p. m.—Prelude, The Apollos.
8:30 p. m.—Lecture, Dr. J. S. Montgomery.

Sunday, August 13th

- 10:30 a. m.—Religious Song Service; Sermon, by Dr. Frank S. Fox.
2:00 p. m.—Concert, The Hussar Band.
2:45 p. m.—Apollo Concert Company.
3:15 p. m.—Lecture, Rabbi Louis Wolsey.
7:15 p. m.—Music, Fullerton Hussar Band.
8:00 p. m.—The Apollos.
8:30 p. m.—Travelogue Lecturer, exhibiting rare curios, Dr. W. G. Ray.

Program

Monday, August 14th

- 2:45 p. m.—Concert, by the Brewers, Musical Entertainers.
3:15 p. m.—Hon. Gilbert M. Hitchcock, U. S. Senator.
7:45 p. m.—The Brewers.
8:00 p. m.—Weldon Frank Crossland, “The World Wide War.”

Tuesday, August 15th

- 2:45 p. m.—Miss Willmer, Reader and Entertainer.
3:15 p. m.—“The Sadlers” in unique health lectures.
7:45 p. m.—Miss Willmer.
8:15 p. m.—The Sadlers.

Wednesday, August 16th

- 10:30 a. m.—Lecture, Dr. Lena K. Sadler, Healthful and Beautiful Dress. Demonstrating and Exhibiting Gowns. (Women only.)
2:45 p. m.—Reading, Miss Willmer.
3:15 p. m.—Lecture, Dr. Lena K. Sadler, “Foods, Facts and Fancies.”
7:45 p. m.—Miss Willmer.
8:30 p. m.—“The Sadlers.”

Thursday, August 17th—Fullerton Day

(All Business Houses Closed During Afternoon)

- 2:45 p. m.—Prelude and Entertainment, Dixie Jubilee Singers.
3:15 p. m.—Lecture, Daniel McGurk.
7:30 p. m.—Concert, The Fullerton Hussar Band.
8:30 p. m.—Dixie Singers, Full Concert.

Friday, August 18th

- 2:45 p. m.—Concert, “Hansel” and “Gretel” Company.
7:45 p. m.—Prelude, “Hansel” and “Gretel” Company.
8:30 p. m.—Charles H. Tyndall.

SATURDAY, August 19th

- 2:45 p. m.—Prelude, Howard Quintette.
3:15 p. m.—Patriotic Address.
7:45 p. m.—Concert, Howard Quintette.

Sunday, August 20th

- 10:30 a. m.—Religious Song Service; Sermon, by Dr. Frank S. Fox.
2:00 p. m.—Music, The Hussar Band.
2:45 p. m.—Concert, Howard Quintette.
3:15 p. m.—Lecture, Dr. Ralph Tyler Flewelling.
7:15 p. m.—Concert, Fullerton Hussar Band.
7:45 p. m.—Concert, Howard Quintette.
8:30 p. m.—Cartoonist-Lecturer-Entertainer, Marion B. Fisk.

Program for the Fullerton Chautauqua Assembly at Chautauqua Park, August 10-20, 1917. (NSHS-F95-374.9)

Conwell's “Acres of Diamonds” speech, which he delivered over 6,000 times. Victoria and Robert Case maintained that “this single offering of Conwell's had more effect on setting and maintaining Chautauqua's ‘tone’ of inspiration than any other single factor.”³¹ Inspirational uplift dominated the speech's theme as Conwell argued that no man had the right to be poor:

Get rich, young man, for money is power, and power ought to be in the hands of good people. . . You and I know that there

are some things more valuable than money; nevertheless, there is not one of these things that is not greatly enhanced by the use of money.³²

Money was not the root of evil, Conwell contended, it was the *love* of money. Thus, Conwell advised his listeners to get rich by honorable and Christian methods and to use that wealth for good. Philanthropy was a key theme of the famous lecture. And Conwell modeled his counsel, for of the considerable fortune he made on the lecture circuit, he spent most of it

on philanthropic projects, including the establishment of Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.³³

The success and appeal of “Acres of Diamonds” were somewhat of an enigma. Why did it have so much appeal? Its popularity on the lecture circuit represented a new view of wealth that permeated early twentieth-century America: It was not intrinsically sinful to want to make money. Reverend Conwell epitomized the awareness that wealth was no longer thought of as treasures in heaven;

wealth was actual cash in hand today. For rural people who worked hard, the pursuit of wealth became a worthy goal that Conwell sanctioned as a godly calling. The address thus inspired and it entertained. Most listeners to Conwell's speech never achieved personal wealth; but most found courage and strength to carry on in their daily lives.

William Jennings Bryan embodied the inspirational ideal too. From 1904 to 1924, his speech "Prince of Peace" mesmerized thousands of people at over three thousand Chautauqua gatherings. The thesis of the oration centered on morality: Man is a religious being, and religion is the foundation of morality for the individual and the group. He claimed:

Morality is the power of endurance in man, and a religion which teaches responsibility to God gives strength to morality. There is a powerful restraining influence in the belief that an All-Seeing Eye scrutinizes every thought and word and act of the individual.³⁴

As he talked reverently about God and the mysteries of life, he reached the apex of his speech. He discussed self-sacrifice and the pure representative of that quality—Jesus Christ. Christ had sacrificed and only he could bring peace to a troubled world.

Bryan's address did not abound with profound thoughts; those in attendance had undoubtedly heard the same reflections the preceding Sunday morning in church. Instead, his brand of inspirational uplift reminded rural Americans of the simplicity of their faith. In a world of change and increasing complexity, he prompted them to recall that religious conviction was important; faith produced a needed certainty in a world in flux. His words instilled a confidence that life had a purpose and meaning. That is why on "Bryan Day" at Chautauqua as many as five thousand people could pour into small, rural communities to be entertained and inspired by the Great Commoner.³⁵

Although men like Conwell and Bryan brought the crowds to the Chautauqua, the continued program of entertainment

kept them there. One form of Chautauquan entertainment focused on music. In the 1919 Epworth Assembly program at Lincoln, three major musical entertainment groups appeared: The Metropolitan Symphony Club, "playing the world's masterpieces"; The Baldy Strang Entertainers, a harp and brass ensemble; and the White Hussars—A Singing Band, a brass band of nine men. At the Alma Chautauqua of 1910, the Cleveland Ladies' Orchestra performed, as did the Weatherwax Brothers, a male brass quartet, and the Schildkret Hungarian Orchestra, which had played at Alice Roosevelt's wedding. At the 1922 Fremont Chautauqua, the Isaac Van Grove Concert Company appeared, featuring several selections from well-known operas. Opera likewise characterized the 1912 Fullerton Chautauqua when The English Opera Singers appeared performing scenes "from the popular operas, in costume; Gypsy scenes; selections from the Oratorios; Sacred selections, etc." Popular, too, were the Virginia Jubilee Singers, Afro-Americans, who appeared at the 1907 Fullerton Chautauqua, singing "Plantation and Camp Meeting Songs, Negro Lullabies, comic and classic selections." Finally, from 1917 to 1921, community singing, in which assembly participants would join in a large community choir, emerged as a dynamic aspect of the Chautauquas. The Chautauqua manager usually employed a director who led the community choir in singing patriotic and religious songs during one of the evening sessions. In the 1919 Epworth Assembly, Charles Guthrie, who had traveled with several evangelists as their song director, served as the community music director.³⁶

Entertainment at the circuit Chautauquas also meant diversity. The 1907 Fullerton Chautauqua boasted of having the famous Rosani, "The Prince of Jugglers," who juggles and balances "whips, plates, balls, pipes, bowls, glasses, hats, swords, lighted lamps, etc." And in 1912 Fullerton hosted the Raweis Company, who performed a series of recitals "in full native costume" from the islands of the South Seas that included "peculiar ceremonies, the weird music, the crooning love bal-

lads, the thrilling canoe songs, war chants . . . of these strange Maori people." The Alma Chautauqua of 1910 boasted of Madame Reno, "the empress of Magic," whose "abundant experience, matchless skill, charming personality and magnificent paraphernalia, will enable her to present marvelous illusions and surprises that will hold the audience spellbound." Similarly, in 1917 the Fullerton Chautauqua advertised "Totten, The Magician, who will carefully explain each feature and invite your closest inspection and after it is over you wonder how it all happened."³⁷

That religion remained a fundamental consideration of the Chautauquas in Nebraska is apparent from the use of well-known Protestant ministers on Sundays, as well as during the week. The Epworth Assembly of Lincoln centered much of its 1919 program on Methodist preachers. Bishop Adna W. Leonard of San Francisco and Bishop Homer C. Stuntz of Omaha lectured during the week of July 29 to August 7. And a Methodist pastor of Washington D.C., Dr. James S. Montgomery, also shared the lecture platform with a Methodist pastor of New York City, known as "The Preacher Hobo," Dr. John A. Gray. Gray's lecture took the form of impersonating many characters he had met when he became a tramp for several months in the heart of New York.

The religious dimension of the circuit Chautauqua in Nebraska involved not only the standard denominational preacher but fiery evangelists like Billy Sunday. Sunday preached at the 1920 Fullerton Chautauqua and led "the whole procession of Chautauqua lecturers" at the Kearney Chautauqua in 1909. Indeed, in the 1909 Kearney program, Sunday was described as the "Napoleon of Evangelism," "a man's man," "kind hearted, sympathetic, with a ready wit and keen sense of humor, he uses . . . every art of the orator, actor, and preacher to accomplish his one supreme purpose—to save men and change the current of their lives."³⁸

Through the "Junior Chautauqua" movement, the Nebraska circuit Chautauquas attracted children. Staffed

Hon Alben W. Barkley ~
United States Senator *from* Kentucky

THE FOOL

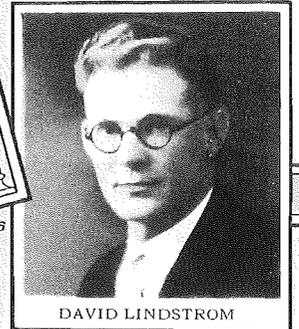


A Matchless Orator will
Discuss National Problems

A DOUBLE HEADLINE PROGRAM
Senator Barkley, Kentucky's eloquent "Iron Man," one of the most gifted sons in her hundred years' record of brilliant statesmen, adds another illustrious name to the long list who have helped make Chautauqua the great forum of America. With fearless courage, scintillating wit, withering satire and searching logic, he discusses Uncle Sam's problems of 1927.
Senator Barkley and the Haskell Indians, with their contrasting program of Indian customs in Indian costumes and white man's music in conventional dress, make Chautauqua week a double headline event equaled by no other circuit in America and no other local event of the year.



As fanciful and Joyous as the Spirit of Xmas



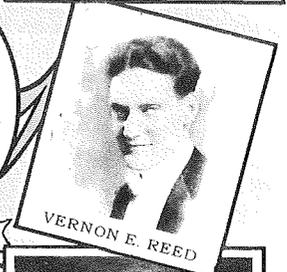
DAVID LINDSTROM



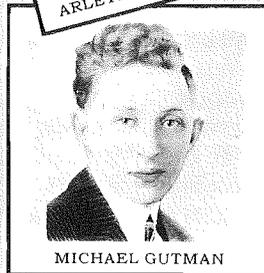
ARLETH HAEERLE



LILLIAN KAMMEYER



VERNON E. REED



MICHAEL GUTMAN



A BIT OF SURGERY



CLARENCE SCRIVNER

From Ellison-White Chautauqua program, about 1927. (NSHS-10956)

by young women who planned and directed the activities, this department of the circuit allowed the parents to receive maximum benefit from the regular afternoon and evening sessions. In addition, as children enjoyed the activities of the Junior Chautauqua, other young people and their parents bought tickets. The children's program, a modified continuation of the children's work of the independent assemblies, consisted of singing, stories, supervised team games, field meets, and special features like hikes, picnics, costume parades, and plays. For children

aged two to seven, organizers usually provided an enclosed area with swings, slides, and sand piles.³⁹

One of the most unusual attractions for children occurred at the Alma Chautauqua of 1910. Staffed by eight women, the "Seton Indian" program organized children between six and fourteen into two "bands of savage [s]." Children were told before they arrived, to have their mothers sew bright red or yellow fringes around their trousers and skirts, and to bring feathers for war bonnets. Or if that was not possible, Indian play suits were avail-

able for one dollar each on the Chautauqua grounds. At the climax of the Chautauqua,

The tribes will meet on the big platform and make peace with each other. During this half hour you will do some drills and sing some Indian songs you have learned. It will be great sport. . . . Will you join the savage band?⁴⁰

From 1908 to 1911, the Seton Indian School approach to attracting children was unique to the Charles F. Horner's Western Redpath Chautauqua.

Patriotism was an important dynamic

of the Chautauqua movement during World War I. Recognition of the services that Chautauqua rendered in furthering patriotic fervor came from top United States government officials. For example, in the 1917 Kimball program, a letter from President Woodrow Wilson to Montaville Flowers, President of the International Lyceum and Chautauqua Association, extolled the virtues of Chautauqua in the time of national crisis:

Your speakers, going from community to community, meeting people in the friendly spirit engendered by years of intimate understanding contact, have been effective messengers for the delivery and interpretation of democracy's meaning and imperative needs. The work that Chautauqua is doing has not lost importance because of war, but rather has gained new opportunities for service.⁴¹

The circuits promoted patriotism through their programs. In the 1918 Homer program, Dr. James T. Nichols lectured on "Glimpses of a World at War," and Lt. H. Gordon Manning spoke on "War—An Officer's Viewpoint." Further, the last evening of the circuit at Homer featured "U.S. Government Moving War Pictures," accenting "battle front and war activities." In addition, as part of their performance, many of the singing groups sang patriotic and war songs. And at the Kimball Chautauqua of 1917, "Liberty Maids" sang "patriotic numbers in costume."⁴²

The Congress of the United States seemed to ignore the contribution of Chautauqua to fostering patriotic enthusiasm when, in search of new revenues, it imposed a ten percent tax upon amusements, which included Chautauqua. This was especially offensive to the devotees of Chautauqua, who argued that it constituted education, not amusement. Although no concerted effort to exempt Chautauqua from the tax occurred during the war, when the Congress continued the tax after the war, Chautauqua leaders like J. S. White, of the White and Meyers Chautauqua and Louis J. Abler of the Coit-Abler Chautauquas, protested to the attorney general. Their efforts were fruitless. Thus, every program of the circuit

Chautauquas in Nebraska from 1917 to 1921 had the phrase, "The Chautauqua management will collect for the Government 10% War Tax at the gate."⁴³ Although Chautauqua leaders often refused to admit it, the United States government viewed circuit Chautauqua for what it really was—mostly commercial entertainment.

The circuit Chautauqua phenomenon declined rapidly after 1924 in Nebraska and other states served by the circuit Chautauqua bureaus. Economic hardship made it hard for rural communities to guarantee an annual summer Chautauqua. When the circuits became another entertainment option to Nebraskans, they could not compete. Finally, the circuit Chautauqua in the 1920s reached a saturation point.

The underlying premise of the early Chautauqua movement had been that moral and spiritual instruction was more important than entertainment. As an ideology of culture, Chautauquans believed that instruction in the dimensions of culture would be regenerative. Over time, however, this balance between education and entertainment shifted in favor of entertainment, the emphasis of the circuit Chautauquas after 1904. Most of the participants in the circuits were professional entertainers or lecturers who worked only within a contract format that involved agents and professional managers. Uniformity of programming usually precluded any local planning or local talent. If a community wanted a Chautauqua, it had little choice but to accept what the circuit bureaus offered. By the mid-1920s, Nebraska communities, like communities throughout the United States, stopped booking Chautauquas. Culture as entertainment had lost its appeal.

Notes

¹ Program of "Chautauqua" for Kimball, Nebr., July 4-8, 1917. Redpath Chautauqua Collection, Redpath Chautauqua and Redpath Lyceum Bureau of Chicago, Special Collections Department of the University of Iowa Library. Files on Nebr. circuit Chautauqua, boxes 1022 and 1023 (hereafter cited as Redpath Chautauqua Collection).

² Ibid.

³ Charles F. Horner, *Strike the Tents: The Story of Chautauqua* (Philadelphia: Dorrance, 1954), 39-40. On the importance of Chautauqua as "uplift," see David Mead, "1914: The Chautauqua and American Innocence," *Journal of Popular Culture* 1 (Spring 1968): 339-56.

⁴ From articles of incorporation of the Ellison-White Chautauqua System as quoted in Kristine M. Davis, "The Chautauqua Idea: Building Educational Fellowship Through Symbol and Community," *Western Journal Speech Communication* 47 (1983): 409.

⁵ Daniel W. Howell, "Assembly Ideals and Practice," *The Chautauquan*, July 1908, 250-51. Theodore Morrison documents that by the twentieth century many individuals and organizations were abusing the term "chautauqua." Morrison, *Chautauqua: A Center for Education, Religion, and the Arts in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 161.

⁶ Morrison, *Chautauqua*, 173, 175-76; Carl Bode, *The American Lyceum: Town Meeting of the Mind* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press, 1968), 3-27; Joseph E. Gould, *The Chautauqua Movement* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1961), 72-75; "C.M.," "Chautauqua," *Noticias* 14 (Fall 1973): 1-2.

⁷ Morrison, *Chautauqua*, 176-77; Gould, *Chautauqua*, 73-5; Bode, *American Lyceum*, 200, 249.

⁸ Irene Briggs and Raymond F. DaBoll, *Recollections of the Lyceum and Chautauqua Circuits* (Freeport, Maine: The Bond Wheelwright Company, 1969), 66-67; Morrison, *Chautauqua*, 177-78. See also Roland Mueller, "Tents and Tabernacles: The Chautauqua Movement in Kansas" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Kansas, 1978), 319, 320-28; Donald Graham, "Circuit Chautauqua, A Middle Western Institution" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1953), 17-20.

⁹ Morrison, *Chautauqua*, 178; Mead, "1914," 346.

¹⁰ Horner, *Strike the Tents*, 77.

¹¹ Morrison, *Chautauqua*, 178-79; Harrison John Thornton, "Chautauqua in Iowa," *Iowa Journal of History* 50 (1952): 105-08.

¹² Briggs and DaBoll, *Recollections*, 67.

¹³ Morrison, *Chautauqua*, 179-80; Horner, *Strike the Tents*, 68-90. For an extensive discussion of how the circuits were managed, see Mueller, "Tents and Tabernacles," 393-488 and M. Sandra Manderson, "The Redpath Lyceum Bureau, An American Critic: Decision-Making and Programming Methods for Circuit Chautauquas, Circa 1912 to 1930" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1981), 30-62.

¹⁴ Figures from a study by Charles F. Horner, *The Chautauqua and Lyceum in Numbers* (n.p., 1921). See also Morrison, *Chautauqua*, 181; Horner, *Strike the Tents*, 91-104; and Mueller, "Tents and Tabernacles," 331-2.

¹⁵ As quoted in Briggs and DaBoll, *Recollections*, 66. The amount of historical writing on the circuits is far greater in quantity than any other aspect of the Chautauqua phenomenon. Most helpful are the first-

Circuit Chautauqua

hand accounts by participants in the circuits themselves. In addition to the already cited Briggs and DaBoll and Horner, important accounts are Rebecca Richmond, *An American Place* (New York: Duell, Sloane, and Pearce, 1943); Harry Harrison, *Culture Under Canvas* (New York: Hastings, 1958); Victoria and Robert Ormond Case, *We Called It Culture* (New York: Doubleday, 1948); Gay MacLaren, *Morally We Roll Along* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1958); and Marian Scott, *Chautauqua Caravan* (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1939). Besides Mead's article, see Melvin Miller, "Grass Roots Chautauqua in Michigan," *Michigan History* 52 (1968): 299-309 and "The Chautauqua in Lansing," *Michigan History* 40 (1956): 257-74; LeRoy Stahl, "The Final Curtain Call: Chautauqua in Montana," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 26 (1976): 52-61; Elaine Carol Main, "'Miss Paul' Hits the Glittering Chautauqua Trail," *The Palimpsest*, 66 (1985): 129-42; T. Win Welford, "The Circuit Chautauqua in Ponchatoula, Louisiana," *Louisiana History* 26 (1985): 291-9; Ralph Spencer, "The Red Oak Chautauqua Pavilion," *Annals of Iowa* 41 (1973): 1273-78. All of these make use of the extensive collection of documents of the Redpath Bureau archives housed at the University of Iowa Library—the largest such collection of Chautauqua materials in the world.

¹⁶ "Western Redpath Chautauqua System, Alma, Nebraska," 1910, Redpath Chautauqua Collection. Although it consists of the complete records of the Redpath Chautauqua Bureau of Chicago, it does contain program and materials from other competing Chautauqua bureaus. See John Edward Tapia, "Circuit Chautauqua Program Brochures: A Study in Social and Intellectual History." *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* (1981): 167-77 for a brilliant analysis of the brochures in this collection. Tapia sees the brochures as a marketing tool reflecting the various apprehensions in America from 1904 to 1932 (e.g., fear of the city, war, economic hardship).

¹⁷ On the Epworth League Institute, see the "Nebraska Epworth Assembly" program of 1919, in Beatrice Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle Collection, MS23, Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln (hereafter cited as NSHS).

¹⁸ "Fullerton Chautauqua Association" programs of 1917 and 1921. Both programs, as well as several others, come from the archives of the Nance County Historical Society. Mrs. Jerry Imus of Fullerton provided me with copies.

¹⁹ In the Redpath Chautauqua Collection there are

several letters from L. O. Jones, president of the Nebraska Epworth Assembly, concerning the booking of various individuals for entertainment at the summer assembly. Viewing the programs in the NSHS in Lincoln indicates, however, that many Methodist speakers spoke at the Epworth Assembly without any involvement of the Redpath Bureau.

²⁰ Program brochures for Pierce (1916), Kimball (1917), Homer (1918), and Fremont (1922), Redpath Collection. The Kearney program (1909) is in the NSHS Library under "Kearney Chautauqua Assembly."

²¹ Redpath Chautauqua Collection.

²² Many examples of these contracts are a part of the Redpath Chautauqua Collection.

²³ Redpath Chautauqua Collection in box 1022 under "Grand Island."

²⁴ Survey of programs for Fullerton, Lincoln, Alma, Homer, Pierce, Fremont, and Kearney that are located in the Redpath Chautauqua Collection or the NSHS. Although the ticket prices were standard, the rental rates for tents and other equipment did vary.

²⁵ See 1917 "Fullerton Chautauqua Association" program.

²⁶ See 1921 "Chautauqua Park Association," Redpath Chautauqua Collection.

²⁷ On advertising see the various firsthand accounts by Chautauqua participants mentioned in note fifteen, especially Orchard, *Fifty Years of Chautauqua*, 235, 245, 134, and Case, *We Called It Culture*, 139-40. Also see the important discussion in Tapia, "Circuit Chautauqua Programs," 168.

²⁸ The 1907, 1912, 1921 Fullerton Chautauqua program brochures are all found in the Nance County Historical Society and were provided to me by Mrs. Jerry Imus. The brochures for the Homer, Pierce, Kearney, Lincoln, and Alma Chautauquas all reveal the program format of only afternoon and evening sessions, with a reduced or absent commitment to the CLSC or the WCTU. The increasing dominance of entertainment is clear in each.

²⁹ The 1922 program is found in the Nance County Historical Society.

³⁰ Thornton, "Chautauqua in Iowa," 112-13.

³¹ Case, *We Called It Culture*, 63. The entire speech by Conwell is reproduced in Case's book, 243-72.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Harrison, *Culture Under Canvas*, 21-23.

³⁴ Case, *We Called It Culture*, 106. The Cases reproduce, with their own commentary interspersed throughout, Bryan's entire speech, 103-10.

³⁵ Harrison, *Culture Under Canvas*, 164. On a personal evaluation of Bryan and Chautauqua, see Mary Baird Bryan, *The Memoirs of William Jennings Bryan* (Philadelphia: United Publishers, 1925), 284-95. Also see the "Official Program of the Fremont Independent Chautauqua" for 1922, where Bryan was to appear on July 23. He clearly was to be the highlight of that Chautauqua.

³⁶ On music entertainment, see these Chautauqua programs in the Redpath Chautauqua Collection: Alma (1910), Chautauqua Park Association, Fullerton (1921), Fremont (1922). The Fullerton programs of 1907 are from the Nance County Historical Society. The Epworth Assembly program of 1919 is at the NSHS.

³⁷ See programs for Alma (1910), Redpath Chautauqua Collection, and Fullerton (1907), (1912), and (1917) from the Nance County Historical Society.

³⁸ "Nebraska Epworth Assembly" program for 1919 and 1909 Kearney program in the NSHS. The Fullerton reference is from the 1921 Fullerton program, Redpath Chautauqua Collection.

³⁹ See the programs from Alma (1910), "Nebraska Epworth Assembly" (1919), and Kimball (1917). Both the Cases, *We Called It Culture*, 148-50, and Harrison, *Culture Under Canvas*, 225-28, discuss attracting children as a means of attracting the adults. Both argue that Junior Chautauqua increased ticket sales.

⁴⁰ See Alma "Western Redpath Chautauqua" Program for 1910, Redpath Chautauqua Collection.

⁴¹ Kimball (1917) program in the Redpath Chautauqua Collection. For a general account of the circuit Chautauquas and World War I, see Graham, "Circuit Chautauqua," 224-42.

⁴² See the Homer (1917) and Kimball (1917) programs in the Redpath Chautauqua Collection.

⁴³ Graham, "Circuit Chautauqua," 240-41; see the various Nebraska programs mentioned in this chapter for the statement on the war tax.