

# Chautauqua



## Tabernacle of the Lake Maxinkuckee Chautauqua Assembly

By Susie Wurster

This word, "Chautauqua" was a magical word in my childhood. It ranked right up there with World's Fair, the Spirit of St. Louis, the Belle of Louisville and Sitka, Alaska. We all have words that present to our minds the stories our parents told us about the days of yore.

The original Chautauqua began in 1874 at the lake site called by that name in New York State. Methodist Bishop John Heyl Vincent set up a Sunday school teacher's assembly designed to "utilize the general demand for summer rest by uniting daily study with healthful recreation."

This venture was so successful that other denominations soon joined the assembly. Of course, that required broadening the programs which included adding popular lectures, concerts, readings and social entertainment. The next step was to open this experience to the general public. By 1886 there were at least 50 Chautauqua schools scattered throughout the country and even a correspondence school. 1904 was the beginning of the traveling Chautauquas, which moved about from town to town during the summer months and usually gave week long programs performed in circus tents.

With that background in mind, is it so surprising that Culver would be one of the areas

which had a summer long Chautauqua? In 1899 the Lake Maxinkuckee Chautauqua Assembly was formed. The founders established the location on a raised area of 26 acres at the southern end of town, which included a beautiful grove of oak trees. The property extended south from Davis Street, was bounded on the east by the lake and on the west by Main Street. It's own steamer pier, bathing beach and railroad station added to the desirability of this site. An inviting excursion rate by the railroads as well as a post office and long distant telephone service directly on the grounds by the year 1905 were also excellent enticements. It was in this same year that the Vandalia trains began making regular stops at the Assembly gates. The guests could be housed in a variety of cottages, a "good" hotel that would accommodate over one hundred people and canvas tents for the camping enthusiasts. These tents sometimes gave the appearance of a miniature white city for they were in the midst of the area underneath the trees near where the large tabernacle structure was situated.

Just imagine on a soft summer night the lecturer or musicians performing under this huge tabernacle with its sides rolled up, the sense of freedom and enjoyment of being at such a place and appreciating the artists and their talents in per-

son. I know what you less romantic ones are thinking, and, no, the mosquitoes were not so bad because the tabernacle was away from the stagnant waters where those little pests breed. That was one of the selling points for this location. So go on dreaming about the soft summer night and the music wafting through the air undisturbed by radios or TV's.

Back to the origins --- the Assembly ground was purchased from M.G. Gould who received ownership from his father-in-law, Elder Foote, a Baptist preacher. Later some of the land was platted by J.O. Ferrier and streets cut through which were given Cuban or Spanish names. Mr. Ferrier was the owner of this town addition of 89 lots, which bore his name. The addition was rapidly settled and accepted by the town board.

Even though the Christian Church laymen controlled the institution, its programs and accommodations were non-sectarian. Actually the Assembly was known as a refined summer resort and offered not only the best talent in lecturers, readers, singers and musical organizations, but also a summer school with classes in history, theology, literature, public speaking and physical cultures.

The "Sabbath" however was not misplaced, as they had morning worship, sermons, plays by the Dramatic Company, sacred concerts and Bible School with T.J. Legg as superintendent.

A peek into the 1905 schedule was enough to convince the most skeptical of the Assembly's ambitious programs under the direction of Mr. H.G. Hill, general manager.

- Prof. Reno B. Welborn, "Wizzard of electricity"
- Hon. Frank Regan, chalk talker and cartoonist
- The Barnard and Harrington orchestras,  
on the grounds most of the summer
- Jubilee singers, group of seven
- Gibson-Trotter-Wagner, trio of young women artists
- Dr. Samuel Sellers, moving pictures "said to have one of the best outfits and to be one of the best operators in his line."
- The Indianapolis Lyric Orchestra, lengthy engagement
- Hon. James Watson, "reputed and acknowledged the most eloquent member of congress"
- The Trio Concert
- Rev. S.W. Summer, lecturer
- Prof. S.I. Conner, reader
- E.J. Sias, monologist (one who utters a monologue-Webster's)
- Bible Conference, Dr. Jabez Hall
- Prohibition address, Aaron Worth
- Conner Dramatic Company
- Sermon Rev. Frank Powers
- Prof. Lough and wife, singer and speakers

On the day Congressman James E. Watson delivered a patriotic address, the Culver Naval School cadets staged a mock naval battle, and also a naval demonstration. In the evening the department commander of the G.A.R. from Indianapolis, Dr. D.B. Lucas, spoke. His program was followed by a water carnival with a parade by lanterned boats and fireworks.

The W.C.T.U. Day included the Temperance Pledge, Sunday Schools, with speakers on such subjects as non-alcoholic medication, household economics and the pure food law.

There were singing and W.C.T.U. contests as well as orchestras playing.

"Queen Esther" was doubtless the outstanding feature of the Assembly program for this especially successful session of Chautauqua, that of 1905. "This beautiful and wonderful oratorio, unequalled and never to be surpassed musical productions will be given in Culver, Sept. 15th, in the Assembly Auditorium under the direction of Prof. Eli Miller of South Bend." There were sixty or more musicians and the entire company had beautiful costumes representing the magnificent court of King Ahasuerus (Xerexes). Miss Mertie Medbourn, pianist, played the cantata four times. Miss Ethel Caroline Streeter sang the part of Queen Esther. Chester Zechiel took the part of Mordecai, the Jew. Mrs. C.D. Behmer sang "Zerish." This production was so anticipated that a lecture of Queen Esther and King Ahasuerus was given at the Methodist Church on the preceding Sunday evening and everyone was encouraged to read the book of Esther in their Bible.

A contemporary was quoted as saying, "A Chautauqua assembly without Queen Esther would be Richard the Third with Richard left out." It was one of the most outstanding and oft remembered events of the Assembly.

One other outstanding offering was played out at that Chautauqua; the "Passion Week in Jerusalem." "It was given complete and with all the circumstances that fully developed this great construction, such as fine scenery, brilliant costumes, calcium light in various colors, and with the best histrionic and musical talent." Miss Ethel C. Streeter presented the character of Procla, and also of Mary Magdala. The Virgin Mother was "personated" by Mrs. C.D. Behmer. Miss Millie Shilling strongly characterized Mary of Cleopas while Misses Mertie Medbourn, Jennie Keen and Clara Wiseman appeared as the angels. Mr. Chester Zechiel effected the character of Joseph of Arimathea. Pontius Pilate was played by Dr. B.W.S. Wiseman and Caiphas by Mr. Henry Stahl, Edwin Zechiel, Levi Osborn, Harry Medborn, Clyde Wiseman and Harry Menser dramatized the Romans. Mr. Frank C. Baker ably worked out the character of the Jewish priest.

1905 was a year of great success for The Chautauqua Assembly in Culver. The news on the seventh of December, then, must have been a great surprise and at the very least, a disappointment to the community. It was reported that, "James V. Combs has filed a suit for foreclosure of a mortgage on the Maxinkuckee Assembly grounds." Thus ended an era of lanterns gently glowing in the evening twilight, voices and music wafting on the lake breezes, and memories of genteel summers which lasted through the long Indiana winters with the hope of spring and Chautauqua soon to follow.

References: Microsoft Encharta Encyclopedia  
One Township's Yesterdays  
United States Department of Interior,  
National Parks Service

*Our thanks to Susie Wurster for researching and writing this article. The references she used are the Mircosoft Encharta encyclopedia, One Township's Yesterdays, and the United States Department of Interior, National Parks Service.*

**LIKE ADVENTURE?**  
**Try Following**  
**These Directions!**

From Sheppard Butler's

# "Automobiles & Motorcycles"

## Chicago Sunday Tribune

August 19, 1917

### Down Indiana Way Makes Nice Drive Off Beaten Path

By John De Long.

**W**HEN planning a week end tour a majority of Chicago motorists are in the habit of holding to the old routes that follow the beaten paths and which are choked with the usual Saturday and Sunday outpourings of machines. Probably they do this on account of unfamiliarity with road conditions off the main lines of travel.

This week's tour suggestion has about everything to recommend it. It is to Culver and Lake Maxinkuckee, Ind., and offers exceptional advantages in the way of good roads, distance, and scenic attractions, to say nothing of the excellent accommodations to be found along the way. Culver is famed as the home of the Culver Military academy, which is located on the shores of Lake Maxinkuckee. The lake is the second largest in Indiana and is one of the prettiest in this section of the country. The water is as clear as crystal and the beaches are fine, while the heavily wooded shores make an added attraction that leads motorists to visit the place again and again.

Another advantage of this route is that it follows the best roads between Chicago and Fort Wayne, a route popular with tourists this season. Culver and Lake Maxinkuckee are 112 miles from Chicago, while Fort Wayne is located eighty-five miles farther east, or 197 miles from this city. Most of the tourists who travel the Lincoln highway are in the habit of either following the transcontinental trail through South Bend or taking the so-called cut-off via Valparaiso and Plymouth.

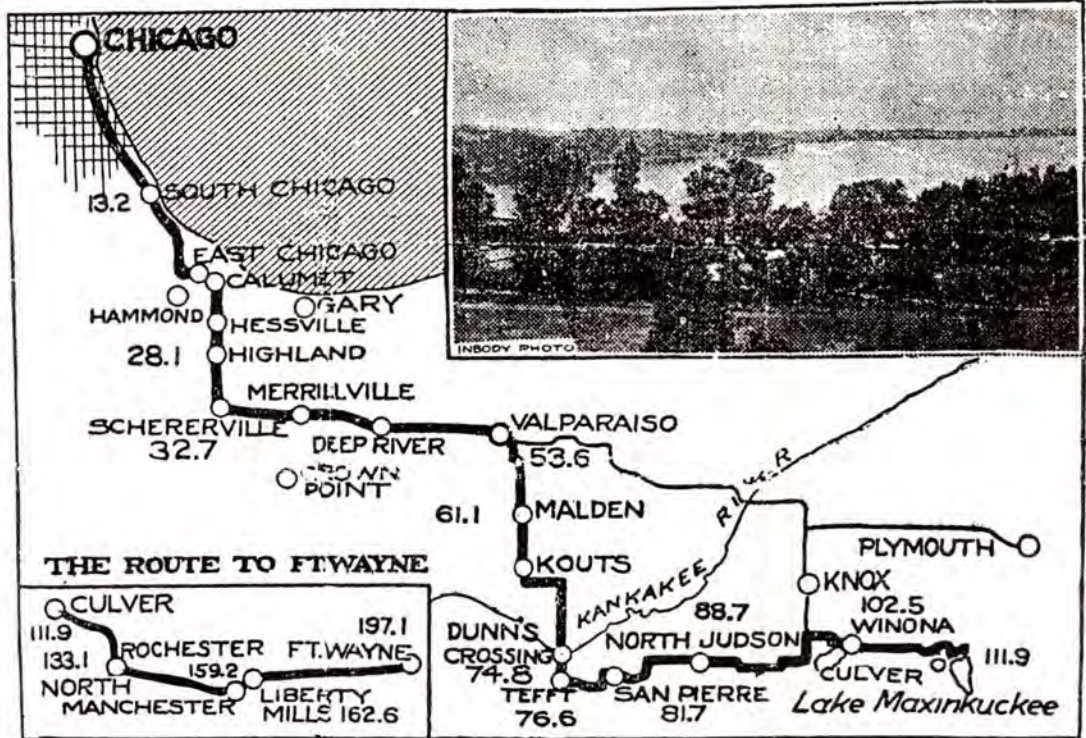
The Lincoln highway route, while fair, is not nearly so good as the one here described, while the Plymouth road is positively bad, especially through the Kankakee river bottoms. The route outlined in this tour suggestion follows all hard roads and may be driven in all kinds of weather. Leaving Chicago one may follow any of the exits leading from the city to the south. Through an error the route leading to the Lincoln highway was marked wrong between the loop and Jackson park, but this will be rectified within a few days. The regular way is to follow Michigan boulevard, Garfield boulevard and the drives through Washington and Jackson parks.

It is easy to get through the south Licks and to Eighty-third street, where signs reading "To Lincoln Way" will be found on the telephone poles and continuing through South Chicago, the extreme edge of Hammond, East Chicago, Calumet, Grassell, Hessville and Highland to Schererville, where the Lincoln highway proper is picked up and followed through Merrillville and Deep River to Valparaiso. In this way the inexperienced tourist is given over fifty-three miles of Lincoln highway feeder and main route.

From Valparaiso the Culver-Fort Wayne route drops south over some fine and picturesque Indiana roads through Malden, Dun's Crossing, Tefft,

## TO LAKE MAXINKUCKEE.

It's a Delightful Trip Over Fine Indiana Roads, with an Optional Extension to Fort Wayne.



San Pierre, North Judson and Winona, where is located Bass lake, a favorite resort for fishermen and summer cottagers. Then the route runs on to Culver and Lake Maxinkuckee, which will be found just outside the town. If the tourist has time to spare he may find much pleasant diversion by visiting other nearby lakes, many of which abound in the district. To the north of Culver will be found Plymouth, near which are Twin and Petty lakes. A few miles farther on is Linkville, where is located Lake o' the Woods.

If Fort Wayne is the tourist's objective point, he should continue on through Culver, Richland Center, Rochester, Athens, Akron, North Manchester and Liberty Mills to his destination.

### Tour Directions

- 0.0 Michigan and Jackson boulevards. South in Michigan to Garfield boulevard, east in Garfield through Washington park, the Midway, and Jackson park, and follow South Shore drive to Eighty-third street. Pick up and follow signs "To Lincoln Way." Left one block and pick up trolley line, following same in Burley and Buffalo avenues to Ninety-second street in
- 13.2 SOUTH CHICAGO. Left and right across river and follow Ewing avenue to
- 14.6 Indianapolis avenue. Left to
- 16.8 Prominent five corners. Right. Keep straight south with trolley and at fork, where trolley leaves to right, bear left across Lake George. First

- corner beyond [Gostlin or One Hundred and Forty-fifth street], left. At Forsyth avenue turn right, crossing railway. Left in Chicago avenue to Calumet. At large bank on left turn right. End of road for left and right past Grassell station. Continue straight through Hessville to
- 28.1 HIGHLAND. Straight through to
- 32.7 SCHERERVILLE. Now on Lincoln highway. Follow red, white, and blue markings through Merrillville and Deep River to
- 53.6 VALPARAISO. Main and Franklin streets. East in Main and right in Garfield. Five corners bear left. Curve right and left around cemetery. At road one mile beyond, just after passing second cemetery, turn right. End of road, turn left. Crossroads half mile beyond, left and straight south on stone road. Cross railroad at
- 61.1 MALDEN. At road two and one-half miles beyond town, turn sharp left. Crossroads beyond bridge, turn left. Cross railroad. Crossroads nearly one mile beyond, turn right, and cross two railroad lines. Go through
- 73.8 DUNN'S CROSSING. Cross long bridge over Kankakee river and curve left and right beyond. Cross railroad at
- 76.6 TEFFT. Crossroads with wooden bridge ahead, turn left on macadam. Road 3.2 miles beyond, turn left and cross railway. Follow main travel through
- 81.7 SAN PIERRE. Straight ahead across railway. Straight through crossroads beyond. Cross railway. Crossroads two and one-half miles beyond, turn left. Cross railway. Crossroads nearly one-half mile beyond, turn right. Cross railroad at

- 88.7 NORTH JUDSON. Straight through, passing large, yellow brick building. Cross railway. Crossroads, right around wooden schoolhouse. Crossroads three-tenths mile beyond, turn left. End of road turn left. Curve right across iron bridge. Crossroads two miles beyond, turn right. End of road at brick school, to right. Crossroads one-half mile beyond left around schoolhouse. End of road at Bass Lake, turn left into
  - 102.5 WINONA. Turn right along shore lake. Curve right at fork. Curve left at fork. End of road turn left. 0.8 miles and turn left across bridge. End of road left down road. Go two-tenths of a mile and turn right. Next road turn right. Continue to
  - 111.9 CULVER and LAKE MAXINKUCKEE.
- TO FORT WAYNE.**
- Follow route to
  - 111.9 CULVER. Straight through. Turn right upgrade past station. Next road turn right and cross railroad. At entrance to Culver Military academy, turn left. Curve right around mess hall. End of road, right around academy buildings. Ascend grade along shore of Lake Maxinkuckee. Follow main travel through Richland Center to
  - 133.1 ROCHESTER. Follow main travel through Athens and Akron to
  - 159.2 NORTH MANCHESTER. Main and Mill streets. Left on Mill. Right on Seventh. Left on Wayne. Right on College. End of road, left around college buildings. Follow main travel through
  - 193.6 LINCOLN.

June, 2000  
NEWSLETTER

Antiquarian and Historical Society  
P.O. Box 125  
Culver, Indiana 46511-0125

## Who in the world is Dusty Rogue?

My first visit to a website was to check out Small Town, USA by Dusty Rogue. The current column is entitled The Singer, the flood, and the Gate, a story about the 1913 flood during which Academy cadets were transported, with their boats, to Logansport to help rescue people stranded by the rising waters. We all know that story but probably don't know about the famous opera singer who was performing at the Academy when the flooding occurred and why she was there. Dusty Rogue will tell you.

Other topics in his archives are Play Ball, a description of a meeting between Dusty and Buck Weaver, a member of the Chicago Black Sox who was banned from the game because of a gambling scandal, Valentines & Brickbats, and about ten other topics.

You can reach Small Town, USA on the Internet at [www.small-town.net](http://www.small-town.net). There you will find that Dusty Rogue is our old friend Harvey Firari who wrote the Small Town USA column in the Culver Citizen for quite a while. There are some revealing pictures of Harvey on his website (revealing of his character, that is) but the picture I would like to see is that of Harvey handing over a check for membership in the Antiquarian Society. While we're waiting, go to Small Town USA on the Internet and enjoy the historical and philosophical musings of a talented writer.

## Season Opener, June 24

Our annual meeting will be held on June 24 at a location still to be determined. Pete Trone will discuss the Robert Rust papers, which will be on display, and will talk about some of the methods used to preserve and store old papers for museums and archives. We will be voting for the Board of Directors and hope to see you all there. The membership as usual will be notified of the location.

## NEWS FLASH – Action on Library

Library Board member Jim Moore reports that final steps in negotiation before signing contract to purchase the NorCen Insurance building are underway. The board has also selected an architectural firm skilled in renovating and adding to Carnegie Libraries.

A preliminary meeting has taken place with the firm of Morrison, Kattman & Menze, Inc. It is anticipated that rapid progress will be made over the next two months.

## Robert Rust Papers given to Society

Robert Rust was a teacher in the Culver schools, principal of West Township High School, Director of Public Relations at the Academy and owner and editor of the Culver Citizen in the 1950's. He was a photographer, journalist, teacher and philosopher but most important to us, he was a careful collector of historical papers, maps, old newspaper articles and his own concise notes.

Mr. Rust died in 1986 and his widow, Bertha May Rust, a former music teacher, died on March 18 of this year, leaving her husband's papers to their daughter Barbara (Mrs. James) Watters, of Midlothian, Va. Mrs. Watters has graciously donated some of these papers to the Antiquarian Society archives. They are a valuable addition to our collection and will be displayed at our next meeting on June 24.

## YEARLY DUES STILL \$10.00

If you haven't already sent your check for 2000 family dues, please do it soon. Send dues to The Antiquarian and Historical Society, P.O. Box 125, Culver, IN 46511-0125.