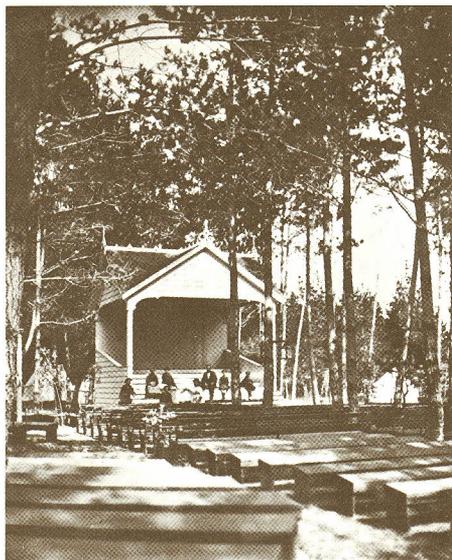


NOTICIAS del PUERTO de MONTEREY

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*The Ministers' Stand,
Pacific Grove, about 1879
(Pat Hathaway collection)*

CHAUTAUQUA-BY-THE-SEA

by Evelyn M. Butner

One hundred years ago a proper Bostonian scanning a Southern Pacific Railroad tourist guide, might have observed a headline reading, "Cultural Center of the West." "A cultural center on the wild, western frontier?" he would have snorted. "UNBELIEVABLE!" But the guidebook persevered:

On the westerly shore of the beautiful Bay of Monterey, in a grove of pines, quietly nestled beside the restless, surging sea, musical with the swaying of the wide-branching trees and the songs of the woodland warblers, lies the pleasant watering place known as the Pacific Grove Retreat. This is where the Chautauqua Literary Society of California meets annually and religious meetings are encouraged.

"Chautauqua" was the magic word. For, indeed, the Chautauqua idea of popular education and culture had been carried across the continent to Pacific Grove in 1879 by its

founder, the remarkable Methodist minister Dr. John Heyle Vincent. A leader in the growing Sunday school movement in the United States, Dr. Vincent, with his co-worker Lewis Miller, inventor and successful businessman, had established a Sunday school teachers' summer training program in 1874 on the shores of Lake Chautauqua in southwestern New York State. Nationwide attention was drawn to the Sunday School Teachers' Assembly when President Ulysses S. Grant attended the following year. Gradually the program was extended to include scientific demonstrations, history, literature, music, classical languages, even physical education. And for diversion there were walks in the woods and chalk talks by Frank Beard, the Civil War cartoonist. Temperance, capital and labor, moral corruption of children, child labor laws, woman suffrage, and all the other concerns of the times had their day on the Chautauqua Assembly platform, and were thoroughly discussed. There were even friendly debates on evolution.

But Dr. Vincent's crowning achievement was the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle (CLSC). The CLSC was a home reading and discussion course in nature, art, science, and literature. After passing a final examination at the close of the four year reading and study program, the graduates were invited to Chautauqua, New York, to receive their diplomas on Recognition Day. The CLSC was so enthusiastically received there were 8,400 persons enrolled during its first year, 1878-1879. Twenty years later there were 10,000 circles across the country. By 1900 it was estimated that at least one member of every midwestern family was a member of the CLSC.

In 1879 Dr. Vincent and members of his teaching staff accepted an invitation from the California Sunday School Conference to participate in its first annual teacher-training conference in Pacific Grove during the week of June 27 to July 4. Henry C. Benson, editor of *The California Christian Advocate*, gave complete coverage of the meeting that would have an important effect on Pacific Grove as a summer cultural center. With about 150 other passengers Benson boarded the paddle wheeler, *Senator*, at Broadway Wharf, San Francisco, on June 26. There were the usual high seas as the paddle wheeler passed through the Golden Gate, causing most of the passengers to scurry to the staterooms; but along the coast the sea was calm and all was well. After the daylong journey, the *Senator* reached the Monterey wharf at 7 p.m. Carriages took the passengers to Pacific Grove where they found a large number of visitors "quietly and happily rusticating." Nearly all accommodations were taken, and by the next day all available space of 160 tents, 10 cottages, and 3 large dormitories was occupied, requiring the town of Monterey to provide additional rooms.

On June 27 Dr. Vincent opened the conference with the traditional Chautauqua Vesper Service No. 1 at the ministers' stand in the amphitheater beneath the grove of pines.¹ As was his custom he called upon others seated on the platform to say a few words. Among them were Henry C. Benson, David Jacks, and the Rev. A.C. McDougall, the year-round custodian of the campgrounds who, with his wife, a few months later would greet Robert Louis Stevenson in their cottage at the western edge of the Pacific Grove Retreat.²

During the teacher-training program, Dr. Vincent had suggested the organization of a California Literary and Scientific Circle on the plan of the Chautauqua Assembly in New York. The idea was readily accepted, but there was some question concerning how the reading program might be organized far from New York. It was agreed to establish a book distribution center in San Jose with the future Recognition Days to be held in Pacific Grove. Dr. C.C. Stratton, president of the University of the Pacific, was elected president, and Miss Lucy Washburn of San Jose State Normal School was elected secretary of this, one of the earliest of the Independent Chautauqua Assemblies which, by the turn of the century, would number more than 250 scattered across the country.

So great was the interest of leading California scholars and scientists in establishing a noteworthy summer school of letters and science in the state, they responded readily to invitations to lecture and teach at the first annual session of the Pacific Grove Assembly held the first two weeks of July, 1880. All agreed to serve without remuneration. The assembly program announced that it was hoped that a large building would soon be provided to make lectures and classes more comfortable. In 1881 the Pacific Improvement Company built a hall on 16th Street; for the next seven years it was called the Chapel since, in addition to the Chautauqua lectures, it was used for both Methodist and Episcopal church services. The building, known today as Chautauqua Hall, became a State of California Historical Landmark in 1970.

Lecturers in literature and history during the decade 1880 to 1890 included distinguished scholars: Dr. Homer Sprague, president of Mills College; Dr. I.H. Dwinelle, Methodist minister and member of the Board of Regents of the University of California; Dr. Thomas H. Sinex, president *emeritus* of the University of the Pacific and classical scholar; and Miss Sara Dix Hamlin, M.A., founder and head mistress of the Hamlin School in San Francisco. Other lecturers in the humanities were Edward Berwick and Dr. Frank French Jewell, both of Pacific Grove, and Dr. M.C. Briggs, Judge M.M. Myrick, and General C.C. Howard, all of San Francisco.

Demonstration kindergarten classes were given by Kate Douglas Wiggin who lectured on the developing kindergarten movement. She had organized the first public kindergarten on the west coast in San Francisco in 1878. Mrs. Wiggin is remembered today for such children's classics as *The Birds' Christmas Carol* and *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*.

On several occasions Dr. Joseph LeConte, brilliant geologist and naturalist of the University of California, gave his popular lecture on "The Relation of Evolution to Materialism." One of his great admirers, Dr. David Starr Jordan of Stanford University, later said of LeConte that, while he was an evolutionist of the highest order, he, nevertheless, was conciliatory rather than disparaging toward opposing thought, and that his lecture tended to reconcile science and religion, one toward the other.

But the most enthusiastic lecturers and teachers in the Pacific Grove Chautauqua Assembly were the naturalists who led their eager students year after year along the shore and into the woods surrounding Lake Majella to discover and classify specimens.³ Professor Josiah Keep, conchologist of Mills College, taught in 1878; he returned in 1880 and became a permanent member of the Chautauqua science facility. His colleagues were Dr. L.C. Anderson, marine biologist of Santa Cruz; Miss Mary E.B. Norton, instructor in biology at San Jose State Normal School; her father, Professor H.B. Norton of San Jose, and Dr. J.H. Wythe of Oakland, both biologists.

In 1881 the naturalists organized the Chautauqua Natural History Museum. In 1883 they moved their collection from the Chapel to the octagonal structure that had been built for them on the Grove Path (now Central Avenue) between Grand and Forest Avenues.⁴ By the turn of the century it was renamed "Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History."

Eventually Miss Mary Norton became full-time curator. Her father was a staunch advocate of the CLSC home reading program adopted in California in 1879. He perceived it to be a means of bringing wholesome and uplifting diversion to the small farm communities and the isolated mountain towns. With missionary zeal he traveled throughout the state to promote the Chautauqua reading program and discussion circles. His work was fruitful. There were forty graduates of the four year program in 1883. They had passed the stan-

dard Chautauqua final examination and had collected native plants, minerals, and prepared zoological illustrations to help fulfill the goal of the California CLSC to gather a full representation of wildlife on the Pacific Coast. Highly motivated, they came to the first annual Recognition Day on Friday, July 13, 1883, from all parts of the state — Yuba City in the north to Riverside in the south — by stagecoach, riverboat, ferryboat, coastal steamer, and/or the railroad, then by trolley from Monterey to Pacific Grove. On Recognition Day, the “Academic Procession” of faculty, graduates, and other members of the CLSC gathered at the Parlor on Grand Avenue. The parade moved along the Grove Path under three garlanded arches (symbolizing the arts, literature, and science) to the Chapel which was lavishly decorated for the occasion. When President Stratton presented the diplomas he emphasized that the diplomas did not confer degrees “but something better, for they represent mature study, fixed thought, and lifelong intellectual growth.”

In 1889 John Heyle Vincent, now International Bishop of the Methodist Church, came to Pacific Grove to dedicate the recently completed Methodist Church Assembly Hall on Lighthouse Avenue at 17th Street. A few years later, the energetic Dr. Thomas Filben, Methodist minister of San Francisco, became Superintendent of instruction, and through his efforts highly acclaimed musical concerts were presented, and renowned American lecturers came to speak at the Chautauqua sessions held in the Assembly Hall.

Secular music had been brought to Pacific Grove Chautauqua fairly early by Prof. A.M. Benham of Mills College, and by 1898 there was a school of music for adults as well as the popular Children’s Chorus directed by Prof. Milton L. Lawrence.

Prof. John Ivey, British artist, took up permanent residence in Pacific Grove, opened a studio at 170 Grand Avenue, lectured, and became a member of the teaching staff of the Chautauqua Assembly.

Dr. David Starr Jordan, who had come from the University of Indiana to become the first president of Stanford University, was a regular lecturer in Pacific Grove during the 1890s. Susan B. Anthony appeared on Women’s Day in 1898.

On the crest of the great surge of patriotism that swept across America in 1899, Major General William B. Shafter, “Hero of Santiago,” spoke on the American victory in Cuba the previous year. On Santiago Day, a large representation of G.A.R. veterans from Monterey, Watsonville, Hollister, and Pacific Grove greeted the Major General with band music and patriotic songs. There was a symposium on “expansion,” and Dr. Eli McLish, president of the College of the Pacific, gave an address on “Our Heroes of the Past.”

The natural sciences continued to be major subjects in the Chautauqua Assembly classwork, but the curriculum had expanded to include child study, photography, cooking, and voice culture and expression (elocution).

But the CLSC home reading program had begun to falter. The network of railroads in California was bringing “the isolated farm and mountain towns” closer to the centers of culture. A good system of public secondary education was developing. The two great Universities, vying for academic excellence, had succeeded in raising the quality of college preparatory subjects in the high schools, and the teachers who had encouraged the development of the reading program and had provided leadership for the discussion circles were studying for University degrees to retain their credentials.

Nevertheless, the well-planned programs of the Chautauqua Assembly brought thought provoking lectures on subjects of interest in the early 20th Century: the Russo-Japanese War, China in transition, prison reform, employers’ liability, the student military training program, and the completion of the Panama Canal and the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco. In 1916, the Polish patriot, Col. John Sobrienski, spoke at the

Pacific Grove Assembly on "The Great War Problems in Europe." He predicted that by the next year no monarchies would remain in Europe and that every nation would have adopted a republican form of government, perhaps, even a "United States of Europe" with the federal capitol in Rome.

So much for prophecy. By the next year, the United State was involved in the world conflict, and the Pacific Grove Chautauqua Assembly came to an abrupt halt.

After World War I the Circuit Chautauqua came briefly to Pacific Grove. A tent show of somewhat better than average quality, the Circuit was a commercial venture which capitalized on the highly regarded name of "Chautauqua" but was unrelated to the non-profit Assemblies. The last Circuit appeared in Pacific Grove in 1926.

But the California CLSC Assembly which had so carefully emulated the New York "Mother Chautauqua" for thirty-seven years, never returned to the retreat on the shore of Monterey Bay.⁶

NOTES

¹Today Jewell Park occupies a portion of the amphitheater.

²The house still stands at 142 Pacific Avenue. Built in 1874, it is the oldest one in Pacific Grove.

³The Del Monte Property Company's sand plant later stood on the location of the lake.

⁴The Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History stands there today.

⁵The Parlor was located on the site of the present addition of The Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History.

⁶The New York Chautauqua Institution is still a noted center for the performing arts, education and recreation, having a summer season of nine weeks.

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Jimeno House and Convent, front view
(California State Library archives)

SAINT CATHERINE'S CONVENT OF MONTEREY

by Amelie Elkinton (*concluded*)

The year of 1853 brought another great change in the lives of the three companions who had come west in 1850. The Holy See notified Bishop Alemany that a Metropolitan Province had been erected for California, and he was to be the Archbishop of San Francisco. At San Francisco he was to serve for almost thirty years before retiring to Spain in 1884. He died in Valencia April 14, 1888. When the transfer of Bishop Alemany was made, both Mother Goemare and Father Vilarrasa felt it would be better for them also to locate in the bay area near a larger population. Benicia had become the capital of California. The Fathers under Father Vilarrasa moved to Benicia on March 4, 1854, where quarters had been found for them. Mother Goemare arranged to purchase several lots in Benicia on which there were some frame houses that could serve for both school and convent.

The arrangements were made for the move. On August 2, 1854, the schooner *Ada* under Captain Edward S. Joselyn was chartered at a cost of \$500 to transport sisters, boarders, students and equipment to Benicia. They embarked from Monterey August 16th, 1854. According to an interview with Harry Downie, they left behind some furniture hoping to return some day when the school had expanded. On board the schooner were seven professed sisters: Mother Mary Goemare, Sister M. Frances Stafford, Sister M. Alousia O'Neill, Sister M. Dominica Arguello, Sister M. Rose Castro, Sister M. Catalina Ocaranza and Sister M. Agnes Rementaris; also three novices: Sister M. Margarita Gomes, Sister M. Imelda Gallagher, and Sister M. Hyacintha Luna. The boarders numbered fifty. They were at San Francisco on August 19th and the following day saw them safely anchored at Benicia.

The property on Larkin Street that had been occupied by Father Vilarrasa and his seminarians was sold the following year by Archbishop Alemany of San Francisco to Thadeus Amat, the new Bishop of Monterey. The purchase price when acquired by Bishop Alemany had been \$1,000, and he sold it for a token one dollar. After the school and convent left Monterey in 1854, the Rev. Sorrentini, parish priest of the San Carlos church of Monterey, had the lower floor made into a chapel and the large dormitory in the upper floor was turned into a banquet hall. Many oldtime fiestas were held in this

room, such as the celebration of baptisms and marriages. For many years other rooms were reserved as guest rooms for the Bishop and visiting priests. Later the building was rented to private parties and rapidly took on evidence of decay, finally degenerating into an ill-kept tenement, a shelter for California Indians. A few years afterward the building was wrecked by order of the then-parish priest, Father Casanova. The adobe was used to level some of the streets of Monterey.

A slightly different version of the decline of the convent is found in a booklet written about the old adobes of Monterey by pupils of the public school in 1896. An article states that after the sisters moved, the building was occupied by the priests of the mission until Father Casanova came to Monterey; he, seeing how near decay it was, had a parsonage built near San Carlos church. And when the priests of San Carlos moved next to their church, the building was used as a skating rink, also in part as storeroom and bandroom. In 1887 it was torn down and the timbers were sent to San Antonio to repair the old mission church there. The adobe was used to fill the streets of Monterey. By the time of the 1896 booklet all that remained of the convent was a small portion of the foundation. The young pupil who wrote the article was slightly in error as to 1887 being the date of demolition, for we found the following article in the *Monterey Argus* newspaper of October 24, 1885:

An Old Landmark Going: Monday last workmen commenced tearing down the wall composed of adobe and sandstone of the old convent building on Main Street . . . The building was erected in 1852 [sic] for the Sisters of Charity, and used by them as a school for about six years. In 1858, not having proved self-supporting, it was abandoned, the sisters going to Benicia. Since that time it has been used but little and gradually gone to ruin. Large seams appeared in the sides, and many of the inside timbers of hewn pine were badly rotted away, so that at last it became a menacing nuisance and determined its owners upon its removal. Some time since the roof was torn off and the inside gutted, and this week witnessed partly the demolition of its walls. The debris is used in filling in lots in the lower part of town.

Today all traces of the convent building and of the Jimeno home adjoining it are covered by the huge new hotel next to the Steinbeck Conference Center. But we do have tangible reminders of Saint Catherine's. The Santa Catalina School on Mark Thomas Drive in Monterey is directed by the same order of Dominican Sisters, and there the students receive a fine education, as did those under Mother Goemare and her sisters. Also, in the museum of the Mission of San Carlos in Carmel there is a small bit of beautiful embroidery made for a scapular by Concepcion Arguello after she became Sister Dominica. She gave the piece of her handwork to a daughter of her sister Isabel, wife of Jose Mariano Estrada, Commandant of the Presidio of Monterey under the Spanish flag. Down through the family generations it was cherished and protected. Not too many years ago we had the privilege of taking it to Harry Downie, Curator of the Mission, as a gift from Ethel Wolter Hyde, native daughter of Monterey and great-grand-niece of the first California nun.



Concepcion's scapular
(courtesy Carmel Mission)

Errata from Part I:

1. Page 2, paragraph 3, to read: "Concepcion . . . met Rezanov . . . in 1806" (*not* 1805).
2. Page 6, paragraph 2, to read:
"a hotel by . . . Toomes and Robert Hasty Thomes . . ." (*not* Thomas).

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