

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

November 1, 1950

The Chautauqua Assembly

Victor A. Mossop of Monterey has loaned to this Diary a booklet entitled "Chautauqua Assembly, a Summer School of Science under the direction of the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle (Pacific Coast branch), Pacific Grove, Monterey, California. Session of 1888, July 5th to July 15th."

On the first page, inside the cover, in very elaborate type is printed: Pacific Grove, the Martha's Vineyard of the Pacific Coast, a World-Renowned Seaside Resort – the Summer Assembly Ground of the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle.

The first paragraph is worth repeating: "Much as has been said and written of Monterey Bay, there is no danger of exhausting the subject of its attractions: - 'Time doth not wither them nor custom stale their infinite variety'. In this sheltered bay the Pacific Ocean takes on a still more peaceful character. Here are no wild storms or tidal waves. The quiet skies are mirrored in as quiet seas, and the murmur of the ocean can scarcely be distinguished from the murmur of the pine forest which, at Pacific Grove, leans to the water's edge, and adds a thousand fold to the charm of the place by its cool shadows, its sylvan haunts, and its balsamic odors. The rapid growth and wide popularity of Pacific Grove seems marvelous until one visits the spot. Then the only wonder is that these have not been still more phenomenal, for here is an earthly paradise where sea and shore are alike beyond criticism. The cool winds and fogs of summer sometimes awaken a slight breeze of discontent among temporary visitors, but warm and suitable clothing is sure preventive of discomfort."

El Carmelo Inn in Pacific Grove was the chosen home of the summer assembly of Chautauqua Lake, New York, the mother of all the summer schools of Science, Art, Philosophy, and Literature which sprang up all over the United States in those early years. For nine successive years previous to this 1888 catalogue's printing, the members of the Pacific Coast Branch of this 'Great People's University' with their friends and relatives, great and small, has gathered among the pines of Pacific Grove for this holiday school, and to them, therefore, this was classic ground, a modern Academy.

The Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle was a great reading circle with a thorough organization, a carefully selected curriculum, and a well arranged system of examinations according to their catalogue.

The departments were: Natural History, Botany, structural and systematic; Marine Botany, Conchology and Sunday School Normal Work. Miss M.E.B. Norton, for ten years previous to 1888 a teacher of botany in the State Normal School at San Jose, was in charge of the General Botany course. Mrs. Jennie Hughes of Auburn, was the instructor, Dr. C.L. Anderson of Santa Cruz was announced as the guide philosopher and friend of those who wish to study the Flora of the sea."

Announcing the course in Conchology, the catalogue reads: "The Coast of Monterey Bay is strewn with wrecks, not of ships which man fashions, but of 'ships of pearl' which we call sea shells. Countless in number, marvelous in beauty, they attract the eye, and one becomes almost unawares, a shell collector." Professor Josiah Keep, of Mills College, was announced as the admirably qualified head of this interesting department.

Sunday School Normal work is explained as follows: "A Chautauqua Assembly without a well-equipped and vigorous Sunday School department would be essentially incomplete. The Chautauqua idea was developed at a Sunday School Convention, and Sunday School work should be the central thought of the true Assembly. This department at Monterey was under the supervision of Rev. H.H. Rice of Oakland and Miss Lucy Washburn and Miss Myrtle Hudson of San Jose.

Music of the Assembly was under the direction of Professor F. Loui King, principal of the San Jose Conservatory of Music. The local music was directed by Professor H.B. Pasmore of San Francisco, who also was director of the choral society of the College of the Pacific at San Jose.

Miss Emma Wetherell, "a delightful young elocutionist of Oakland, will give daily readings and recitations in connection with lectures, thus adding interest and variety to the program."

This "most attractive" program was offered to the public in 1888 for the price of two dollars for a season ticket – ten days of programs – mornings, afternoons and evenings. Members of classes were charged the small fee of one dollar each for the entire course of instruction.

(More Tomorrow)