



CHAUTAUQUA

The most American thing in America
Theodore Roosevelt¹

Only one year after Professor Agassiz's summer school of science was held on Penikese Island, another summer school was established on the shores of Chautauqua Lake in Western New York, in 1874. This summer school gathering would serve as the first step toward the establishing of what became known as the Chautauqua Institution; a pioneer in the formation of a national four-year correspondence program, directed toward educating the masses, who had limited access, if any, to an education. The founding of this summer school on the shores of Chautauqua Lake was largely driven the efforts of two friends, Reverend John Heyl Vincent and Lewis Miller.²

John Heyl Vincent was born February 22, 1832, in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. When he was six years old, his parents moved to Chillisquaque, Pennsylvania, where he attended Milton and Lewisburg academies and devoured the volumes on his family's bookshelf, which included the works of Plutarch, Edward Gibbon, William Shakespeare and the blind Puritan poet, John Milton.³ It was said that when he was barely eighteen years old, he delivered his first sermon and began to develop his talent as a preacher. At the age of nineteen, he became a licensed minister. In 1863, Reverend Vincent was transferred to Illinois and successively held pastorates in Joliet, Mount Morris, Galena, Rockford, and in 1865, Chicago. At Galena, Ulysses S. Grant was among his parishioners. That was just before the end of the Civil War, and the friendship between the two men continued until General Grant's death. Also, in 1865, Vincent established a religious circular, the *Northwestern Sunday School Quarterly*. The following year, he launched the *Sunday School Journal for Teachers and Young People*, a Methodist

Episcopal circular that would soon have a national audience. These circulars, devoted solely to furthering the work of Sunday schools, established the direction for practically all of Vincent's subsequent work.⁴

Lewis Miller was born July 24, 1829, in a log cabin, on his father's farm in Greentown, Ohio. He became a teacher at the age of sixteen, but his skill for invention soon led him to other prospects. His Buckeye Mower and Reaper made him famous and sufficiently wealthy to pursue his humanitarian and philanthropic interests in education and religion. Another invention by Lewis Miller, in collaboration with Ohio architects Walter Blythe and Jacob Snyder, was the design of a popular religious building, known as the "Akron Plan Sunday School," in response to the nation's growing educational movement. The Akron Plan was named for the city of Akron, Ohio, where this design was first used in the construction of the city's First Methodist Episcopal Church in 1872. It provided for a central rotunda as a space for worship connected to Sunday school classrooms on either one or two levels. Unique to the Akron Plan was a movable wall system that enabled rooms to be thrown open to allow a school superintendent or minister to address every class from a central podium.⁵ This design also allowed for efficient movement by congregants between worship and Sunday school. Between 1872 and 1920, thousands of Akron Plan Sunday schools were built throughout the nation.⁶

During his time as superintendent of the Methodist Sunday School in Akron, Ohio, Lewis Miller established a close friendship with John Heyl Vincent. Both men, Mr. Lewis Miller and Reverend John H. Vincent, valued the schooling provided at Sunday schools, which in the late 19th century was often the only opportunity for the majority of the U.S. population to receive any level of an education.⁷ It was their shared value of Sunday school education that compelled the two men to establish what would be most commonly referred to simply as Chautauqua or the Chautauqua Institution.

The majority of the histories written of the Chautauqua Institution begin with the arrival of Reverend Vincent and his friend Lewis Miller at the Camp Meeting

Grounds at Fair Point, on Chautauqua Lake, in the summer of 1873. At the time, a Methodist Association owned Fair Point and had recently started holding annual camp meetings at this location. The two men, Vincent and Miller, were visiting the Fair Point to assess the meeting grounds as a possible location to hold a two-week summer school assembly program. The function of this summer school program, which Vincent and Miller wished to establish, was to give instruction, in all subjects of study, both secular and religious, to Sunday schoolteachers, thereby advancing the education of these instructors and their abilities to teach Sunday school to the masses.⁸

The location of Fair Point, New York on the shore of Chautauqua Lake fit well with Vincent's and Miller's belief that a Sunday school assembly should be held outdoors, in close association with nature. Lewis Miller was a strong believer in the beneficial influence of woods and nature; Miller's view of nature was one of a cathedral, a holy place where an individual could draw close to God.⁹ This idea, in step with a popular belief at the time, was that nature possessed curative, inspirational, and even spiritual powers. By vacationing at Chautauqua Lake, participants would be provided with an opportunity to experience the healing and divine powers that nature possessed and the chance to participate in the educational and religious programs that were offered.

The following statement by Reverend John H. Vincent aptly describes his view of the Chautauqua Program and the basis for its establishment. *The Chautauqua Assembly opened, in 1874, as a Sunday-school institute, a two weeks' session of lectures, normal lessons, sermons, devotional meetings, conferences, and illustrative exercises, with recreative features in concerts, fire-works, and one or two humorous lectures. It was called by some a 'camp-meeting.' But a 'camp-meeting' it was not, in any sense, except that the most of us lived in tents. There were few sermons preached, and no so-called 'evangelistic' services held. It was simply a Sunday-school Institute, a protracted institute held in the woods. We called it the first 'The Chautauqua Sunday-school Assembly.'* *The basis of the Chautauqua work was in the line of normal training, with the purpose of improving methods of biblical instruction in the Sunday school and the family.*¹⁰

Within just a few short years of establishing the first Sunday school assembly at the Fair Point Camp Meeting Grounds in 1874, Reverend Vincent put into motion an effort to extend the Chautauqua program to those who could not travel the long distance to the shores of Chautauqua Lake. As part of this effort, in the summer of 1877, John Heyl Vincent interviewed the founding father of American poetry, William Cullen Bryant, and talked in detail his idea of extending the program beyond the Chautauqua Lake of upstate New York.¹¹ After their discussion, Vincent sent along a letter to WC Bryant, which Reverend Vincent later described as follows: *I wrote him afterward a long letter, defining it more clearly, if possible; and through friends that were conversant with the scheme, that distinguished man became thoroughly acquainted with our aims and methods.*¹²

Less than a month before his death, William Cullen Bryant responded to Vincent's long correspondence with a handwritten letter of hearty approval for expanding Chautauqua and his wish to see the program advance during the short time he had remaining.¹³ Within the letter, William Cullen Bryant expressed particular support for Vincent's proposal to incorporate natural science into the program as Bryant, quoting Chautauquan historian and archivist Jon Schmitz, "*believed this would be the only way to prepare and protect Christian believers in a modern and changing world.*"¹⁴ Beyond the incorporation of natural sciences into the curriculum, an emphasis on the literary works, which had informed WC Bryant and his poetry - the likes of William Shakespeare, Edmund Spenser, John Milton, Alexander Pope, Robert Burns, Walter Scott, and William Wordsworth - would be extended to the Chautauqua syllabus.

Writing in the period in history when the lore of this nation was still being composed, during the first half of the nineteenth century, Bryant served as the translator and voice of Puritan ideals to the American people. Embracing the neo-Calvinistic theory of Jonathan Edwards, William Cullen Bryant's literary works served to extend the Calvinistic view of nature deep into the collective American psyche.¹⁵ As such, Bryant's poetic voice supported the myth of a chosen people selected to participate in a drama that found an element of its metaphor from a Puritan sermon titled *A Brief Recognition*

of *New-England's Errand into the Wilderness*.¹⁶ Together, the prose of WC Bryant and the transcendental philosophers of the nineteenth would serve as a cornerstone of the literary instruction of Reverend Vincent's soon to be extended Chautauqua program.

In 1878, Vincent established the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle (CLSC), a structured four-year correspondence program, which provided an individual the opportunity to earn a Chautauqua educational degree and an honorary diploma.¹⁷ The CLSC program was designed to provide higher education for the masses, through a national correspondence course, based on a literary and science curriculum. For a few weeks during the summer, individuals could vacation at a regional Chautauqua Assembly, with the opportunity to attend the lectures and classes that were offered. The remainder of the year, they could study on their own, or join with their local Chautauquan Circle, reading the books listed on the course outline, which had been delivered to Circle members through the mail.¹⁸

Thousands of CLSC reading circles were established throughout the United States, proving to be popular in both in rural and urban communities.¹⁹ It became a common practice for those individuals, who completed the four-year of course study, to attend their regional Chautauqua assembly and participate in an elaborate graduation ceremony and be awarded their diploma.²⁰ These regional assemblies were referred to as the daughter Chautauquas, thereby referencing the original assembly gathering on Chautauqua Lake as the mother Chautauqua. By the end of the 19th century, more than two hundred and fifty regional daughter Chautauquas, patterned after the mother Chautauqua, had been established throughout the nation.²¹ As was the case for the mother Chautauqua assembly, over twenty-two of these regional daughter Chautauquas chose to locate their assembly on the properties of previously established religious camp meeting grounds.²²

The selection of a small coastal Methodist campground, located two miles west of Monterey, California - named the Pacific Grove Retreat - as the location for a daughter Chautauqua for organizing an annual assembly, where the reading circles of California

could gather each summer, was the end result of a well-planned transcontinental train tour named the “Pacific Institution Excursion.”

THE PACIFIC INSTITUTE EXCURSION

In April of 1877, Reverend John Heyl Vincent attended the California State Sunday School Convention in Oakland, California, and proposed the idea of convening several Sunday School Assemblies for the State. The California Sabbath School Association embraced the idea and an organizing committee was appointed. In December 1877, the *Sunday School Journal for Teachers and Young People*, of which Vincent was the editor, published the following announcement:

*The "Yosemite" Bulletin is now ready, and persons who desire to see the outline programme of the great assembly in Yosemite Valley in 1879 will do well to drop a line to the Editor of the Sunday School Journal. The Executive Committee of the California State Sunday-School Convention is fully pledged to the scheme of a Sunday School Assembly in Yosemite Valley, and by the Pacific, down at Monterey, in June 1879. Arrangements are being made for the erection of a stone chapel in the Yosemite valley as a memorial of the Assembly, and as a reminder to all future tourists of the lively interest felt by all the Churches in the study of the word of God, and in the promotion of religious instruction among the young. Will you go to Yosemite in 1879? Will you contribute to the chapel fund? Let us hear from you.*²³

As the announcement mentions, these Sunday School Assemblies were to be hosted in the Yosemite Valley of the high Sierra Mountains and along the seashore of Monterey, California, two awe-inspiring locations where the beauty of nature has the ability, to this very day, to move one emotionally to a spiritual experience. With Reverend John Heyl Vincent as acting chairman, the organizing committee arranged for these assemblies, as part of a transcontinental railroad journey, named the "Pacific Institute Excursion."²⁴ The overarching purpose surrounding this train excursion was to support, and encourage, the advancement of Sunday school education in the West.²⁵

Several months before the Pacific Institute Excursion's arrival to California, the organizing committee began efforts to secure, as a speaker for the Yosemite Valley Sunday School Assembly, the eminent naturalists John Muir. On March 14, 1878, Rever-

end John Knox McLean of the First Congregational Church of Oakland, California wrote to John Muir, inquiring if he might consider presenting several talks during the Assembly. As it turns out, the Reverend was familiar with Muir, as several years earlier the eminent naturalist had presented a talk at the Oakland Congregational Church where JK McLean served as pastor.

Several weeks following Reverend JK McLean's letter, Muir wrote to his close friend Jeanne C. Carr, herself a seventh generation descendent of the Puritans of New England, mentioning his likely participation in the Yosemite Valley Assembly.

“...The Sunday Convention Manager offered me a hundred dollars for two lectures on the Yosemite rocks in June, I have not yet agreed to do so, though I probably shall, as I am not going into Colorado this summer. Excepting a day at San Jose with Allen, I have hardly been out of my room for weeks, pegging away with my quill accomplishing little. My last efforts were on the preservation of the Sierra forests, and the wild and trampled conditions of our flora from a bee’s point of view...”

Letter from John Muir to [Jeanne C.] Carr, 1879 Apr 9. ²⁷

GOD'S FIRST TEMPLES: HOW SHALL WE PRESERVE OUR FORESTS

In February of 1876, three years prior to the Yosemite Valley Assembly, John Muir reached out to the America's growing congregation of religious faiths, and the nation at large, in his editorial *God's First Temples: How Shall We Preserve Our Forests*, published in *The Sacramento Daily Record-Union*.²⁸ This outreach effort of Muir's was one of his earliest attempts to rally support for the protection of the California's forest, which at the time, were being severely damaged by fires set by "sheep men." Muir's chosen title *God's First Temples*, purposely referenced William Cullen Bryant's famous 1825 poem, *A Forest Hymn*, whose opening verse "*The groves were God's first temples*" had long served as an inspiring anthem for America's Protestant faiths; many of whose congregates had come to their religion attending a camp meeting held in a forested grove of trees. This first verse of Bryant's poem, a lyrical reference to those wilderness camp meetings, is evoked countless times in untold numbers of printed religious readers, circulars and periodicals of the nineteenth century.

The arrangement for John Muir's participation in the Yosemite Sunday School Assembly of 1879 provided convention participants with the opportunity to celebrate, with the assistance of California's most famous naturalists, their resounding belief in the sanctity of nature. As we will come to understand, it was not just Muir himself who identified the divine beauty of nature as an expression of God's handiwork, but a belief held by much of the Protestant faith during the nineteenth century. For both John Muir and the participants of the Pacific Institute Excursion, the Yosemite Valley and the wilderness of the Sierra Mountains were spiritual gateways equivalent to the great gothic cathedrals of Europe. With the convention plans in full order, including Muir's procurement as a guest speaker, the Pacific Institute Excursion left Chicago, Illinois on Tuesday, May 27, 1879, with a total of nine train cars carrying approximately 350 Christian Sunday school workers headed for California.²⁹

YOSEMITE

SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSEMBLY OF 1879

*We entered the Yosemite Valley at 2 P. M., on Friday, June 6, [1879] by way of "Inspiration Point."
The view from that point is simply indescribable. – John Heyl Vincent.³⁰*

The first California Assembly of the Pacific Institute Excursion was a nine-day program, scheduled for June 7-15, 1879, in the beautiful Yosemite Valley.³¹ As part of the Excursion, the organizers of the program announced that a chapel was to be built, and ready for use, in time for the Yosemite Valley Assembly.³¹ Though the first lumber for the chapel began arriving in the Valley three weeks before the event, the structure was rushed to completion within just hours of the Assembly's opening on June 7. This final push concluded with the arrival and installment of the chapel bell, just one half hour before the evening services; a gift provided through the generosity of H. W. Bacon of San Francisco.³²

And so it was that, on the evening of Saturday, June 7, 1879, within the new chapel built by the California Sunday school workers, the Chautauqua Vesper Service and the opening exercises of the long-awaited Yosemite Assembly took place. The final moments of that evening's vesper service was fittingly remembered by the Reverend John Heyl Vincent, who penned the following:

The "Hutchinson Family" (now in California) favored us with several songs. With grateful and enthusiastic hearts - the roar of Yosemite Falls in our ears - we joined at the close of this first service in singing the Yosemite Doxology, composed by Joseph Cook while riding over in the stage the other day: "The hills of God support the skies; To God let adoration rise; Let hills and skies and heavenly host, Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."³³

On the morning of June 8, 1879, the first Sunday school session was held in the new Yosemite Chapel. During the remainder of Yosemite Valley's week-long Sunday School Assembly, the group participated in various activities, including hikes to Glacier Point and to Yosemite, Vernal, and Nevada Falls. During their stay in the Valley, the California naturalist John Muir treated the Assembly participants to lectures of the following titles: "*Big Trees*," "*The Geological Records of Yosemite*," "*Mountain Sculpture*," and "*Sequoia*."²⁴ The lecture "*Mountain Sculpture*" delivered by John Muir at Glacier Point was briefly described by John A. Brewster's article "*Yosemite Sunday School Assembly*" which appeared in the circular *The Friend*, in August 1879:

Hence John Muir's loving rehearsal of the "testimony of the rocks," has been a prominent feature in the curriculum of the Assembly. He gave one open and upper air lecture on Glacier Point before 200 enthusiastic listeners, and filled the role of guide, philosopher and friend to any troupe of trampers having enough scientific zeal to scale Inspiration Point, and he says, and shows, "there's a good many of 'em." Muir is a hot adherent to the frigid theory. The glacier, he stoutly declares, made Yosemite. He totally dissents from Prof. Whitney's theory of "local subsidence," and contemptuously denies his assertion that Yosemite is an "exceptional creation," affirming that there are among the Sierras four similar "Great Gaps."³⁵

During the Assembly, the organizers presented sermons providing direction for one's proper discourse with God. The Reverend Thomas Guard of the First Methodist Church of Oakland preached the sermon "*Are ye not of more value than many sparrows?*" Reverend Joseph Cook, the famous Congregational preacher of Boston, Massachusetts, delivered the sermon "*The Omnipresence of God; or, God in Natural Law*." The Reverend John H. Vincent spoke to "*The Way of Salvation*." The Reverend Dr. Sheldon Jackson of Denver, Colorado, gave one lecture on the Aztecs and another on the opportunity of missionary efforts in Alaska.³⁶

Also presented during the Assembly were lectures on improving Sunday school instruction. Conversations were held regarding "*The Spiritual Power of the Sunday-school, and How to Increase It*" and "*The Preparatory Lessons of the Chautauqua Course*." A lecture by the Reverend Dr. Gregory Peltz was titled "*A Week of Sunday-school Work*." Finally, the Rever-

end Messrs. Allis and Kittredge, James M'Gee, Reverend Dr. SH Willey, and Dr. Gregory provided discourse during a meeting on "*Improvements Needed in our Sunday-schools.*"³⁷



Yosemite Valley Chapel.

Photograph courtesy of the Yosemite National Park Service.

PACIFIC GROVE RETREAT

“The Groves were God's first temples. Ere man learned”

A Forest Hymn by William Cullen Bryant ³⁸

For the organizers and participants of the Pacific Institute Excursion, the next Assembly on their program was a gathering scheduled for June 27 - July 4, 1879, at a Christian seaside resort named the “Pacific Grove Retreat” near Monterey, California. The Grove Retreat itself, and forty thousand acres of adjoining land, was then the property of a Methodist by the name of Mr. David Jacks, an intelligent, hard-working, liberal Scotsman, who lived in Monterey and had an interest in the development of the “Grove.” ³⁹ How it was that a select grove of pines on the southern tip of Monterey Bay came to serve as a location for a Methodist Camp Retreat, in the first place, is told as follows:

In 1873, a Methodist minister by the name of Ross and his wife, both being in feeble health, and having tried all the remedies that science could suggest, were advised to find some place where the temperature varied but little through the entire year, and where the fluctuations from heat to cold were merely nominal. After many months spent in research, it was at last decided that Monterey was the most likely place to supply those requirements. By the kindness of Mr. David Jacks, who at that time owned large tracts of land extending throughout what is now known as Pacific Grove and all the grounds acquired by purchase by the Pacific Improvement Company, they were induced to try a residence amongst the pines as being beneficial and conducive to the restoration of health.

After a short residence, the effects were so palpable that Mr. Ross went back to his former home and brought with him his brother and his brother's wife, who were also troubled with pulmonary complaints. They all lived out of doors, they slept in hammocks under the trees, and ignored for the time being all indoor comfort, living principally on fish and game. Their recovery seemed almost miraculous, for in a very few months they were perfectly restored to health.

In 1875, Bishop Peck, who was ever on the alert to do good, conceived the idea, after a brief visit, that this place so nearly resembled those health-giving retreats in the East, that negotiations were soon pending with Mr. Jacks for the purchase of a site that should at once form the nucleus around which could be built a retreat where spiritual and social comfort could be had without limit, and where the ever rolling, restless sea would sing a sweet lullaby to woo the drowsy god and produce that sweet, refreshing sleep which is acknowledged by all scientists to be the great restorer of human nature. Here in this lovely spot, breathing the pure aroma of the pines, and inhaling the pure ozone from the broad Pacific, with no one to trouble them or make them afraid, these people proved beyond all doubt that so far as they were concerned, this was to them the Mecca for which they had so long and so persistently searched.⁴⁰

To initiate the establishment of a Methodist camp retreat, on June 1, 1875, with Bishop JT Peck presiding, a number of ministers, and several members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, met in San Francisco at the Howard Street Methodist Episcopal Church to discuss the formation of a retreat association.⁴¹ Two weeks later, on June 15, 1875, David Jacks and representatives of the Methodist Episcopal Church implemented the articles of incorporation of the “Pacific Grove Retreat Association.” Among the purposes for which the corporation was formed, as stated in these articles, was the leasing or purchasing and improvement of lands in the county of Monterey, for a Christian seaside resort and for camp-meetings.⁴²

It was this Methodist campground that would serve as host of the Sunday School Assembly associated with John Heyl Vincent’s Pacific Institute Excursion of 1879.

PACIFIC GROVE

SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSEMBLY OF 1879

*Methodism is not asleep on the Pacific Coast. Its ministers are hard worked and faithful, true to the Gospel, and loyal to the Republic. – John Heyl Vincent.*⁴³

Those participants of the Pacific Institute Excursion who next traveled to the Pacific Grove Retreat for the week long Sunday School Assembly, listened to sermons and lectures presented by Dr. John Heyl Vincent, Reverend GS Abbott, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Oakland, Reverend Dr. EG Beckwith of San Francisco, Reverend Dr. MC Briggs of San Francisco, Reverend Joseph Cook of Boston, Massachusetts, Reverend AS Fisk, Vice Principal and Professor Henry Brace Norton of California State Normal School of San Jose, Reverend Dr. George A. Peltz of Jamestown, New York, Reverend HH Rice of Sacramento, Reverend Dr. CC Stratton, president of the University of the Pacific at Santa Clara, Reverend Dr. SH Willey of the Congregational church of Santa Cruz, and others. Scattered among the sermons and lectures were discussions of how to improve Sunday school methods.⁴⁴

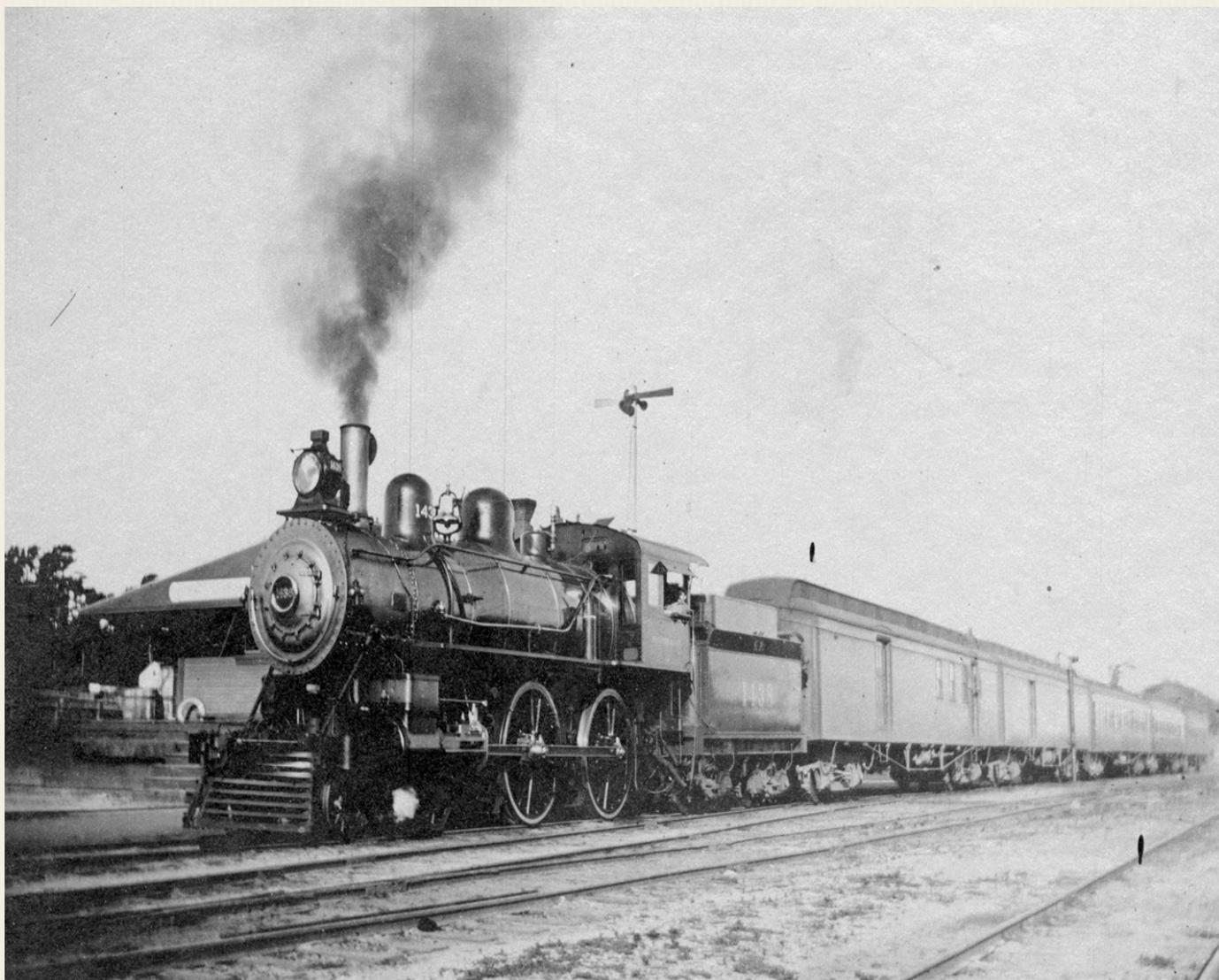
While the Pacific Grove Assembly of 1879 was in progress, Reverend HH Rice, secretary of the California Sabbath School Association and Reverend Dr. M. M. Gibson, president of the California Sabbath School Association, met with Reverend John H. Vincent and four instructors from the California State Normal School at San Jose, notably, Miss Mary EB Norton, Mrs. Myrtle Hudson Wagner, Miss Lucy M. Washburn, and Mrs. Arthur H. Washburn [then Miss Jessica Thompson], for a discussion around a campfire fueled by pine cones.⁴⁵ During the course of the fireside chat, the women of the group encouraged Reverend Vincent to establish in California, a Pacific Coast Branch of the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle. The final result of this informal fireside gathering, just five years after the mother Chautauqua was

founded in upstate New York on the shore of Chautauqua Lake, was the formation of a Pacific Coast Chautauqua Assembly, located on the southern tip of Monterey Bay.

With his interest and his money, Mr. David Jacks of Monterey helped support the establishing of the Pacific Coast Branch of the CLSC. Along with his financial contribution, Mr. Jacks proposed that Dr. CC Stratton, then president of the University of the Pacific, stand as the first president of this Pacific Coast Assembly. Reverend Dr. Joseph H. Wythe, M.D., D.D., LL. D., (M.D. Medical Doctor; D.D. Doctor of Divinity, LL.D. Doctor of Law), a prominent medical doctor and Professor of Microscopy and Histology at in the Medical College of the Pacific, San Francisco, was selected as vice-president and Miss Lucy M. Washburn, of the California State Normal School, as secretary. Soon thereafter, Jacks sold the land of the Pacific Grove Retreat to the Methodists as a permanent location for their annual summer assembly.⁴⁶

And that is the history of how the Pacific Coast Branch of the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle established, as its annual assembly location, a Methodist camp meeting grounds named the Pacific Grove Retreat, located two miles west of Monterey, California. The Pacific Coast Branch of the CLSC would be the second daughter Chautauqua established west of the Mississippi and the fourth in the nation.⁴⁷ The coming years saw over one hundred independent regional daughter Chautauquas established across the United States, each modeled after the original mother Chautauqua, located on the shores of Chautauqua Lake in Western New York.⁴⁸

With the arrival of the Southern Pacific Railroad to Monterey the following year (1880), participants wishing to attend the Pacific Coast Chautauqua Assembly were provided with an affordable, dependable and efficient form of transportation for their commute to and from the Pacific Grove Methodist Retreat.



Pictured above is hardworking engine #1438 of the Southern Pacific Railroad's Del Monte Express. Running south from San Francisco, the Express was described as a great pleasure route to the principal summer and winter resorts south of San Francisco. The train ran through one of the richest and most fruitful sections of California, and was at the time, the only line traversing the entire length of the Santa Clara Valley.

Photograph courtesy of the Pacific Grove Natural History Museum.



Front west view of Hotel Del Monte circa 1900

Photograph courtesy of Dudley Knox Library, Naval Postgraduate School

THE SOUTHERN PACIFIC AND CENTRAL RAILROAD, LIVERY TEAMS, ACCOMMODATIONS AND SUPPLIES

The Central Pacific railway bore on swiftest wings to this California paradise, from day to day, eager crowds of people. The grove, which is one of the finest natural situations, had been beautifully fitted up, and everything which could contribute to physical recreation had been provided.⁴⁹

On January 1, 1880, the first Southern Pacific Railroad passenger train arrived in Monterey. Six months later on June 10, 1880, the Pacific Improvement Company opened for business - the Hotel Del Monte - an upscale tourist resort, located a stone's throw away, and directly across from Monterey's new Southern Pacific train depot. These two events, the arrival of the first passenger train and the opening of the Hotel Del Monte, launched the promotion of the Monterey Peninsula, by the Southern Pacific Railroad and the Pacific Improvement Company, as an appealing summer tourist destination.⁵⁰ In an effort to attract vacationers to the Monterey Peninsula, the Railroad offered a reduced rate for special round-trip tickets, good from June 1 through September 30, and available for purchase at any train station of the California Pacific, Central Pacific, or Southern Pacific Railroads.⁵¹

Situated just two miles from Monterey, and the Southern Pacific depot, sat the charming Pacific Grove Methodist Retreat, nestled in a grove of Monterey pine trees, yet located close enough to the shore of the bay to hear the ocean waves. To reach the Chautauqua Assembly, participants were transported from the railroad depot to the Methodist campground by livery teams, then operated by Mr. J. O. Johnson, manager of the Pacific Grove Retreat.⁵² The organizers of the Pacific Coast Assembly encouraged those who could, to bring their own tents and camping gear, as the grounds were often crowded during the gathering and the available camping equipment was limited.⁵³ To this end, the Southern Pacific Railroad, in addition to their allowance of 100 pounds of baggage per ticket purchased, allowed passengers to carry, free of

charge, camping equipment of all kinds, including tents. To further accommodate vacationers, the campground maintained a convenient grocery store capable of supplying any necessary provisions that the campers might wish to purchase during their stay,⁵⁴ as well as a small restaurant.⁵⁵ Board at the restaurant was \$6.50 per week, or three meal tickets for \$1.25.⁵⁶ For those individuals who were unable or preferred not to bring their own camping equipment, the Pacific Improvement Company provided a variety of lodging options.⁵⁷ These options included furnished tents, ranging in size from 10' x 12' to 12' x 24' and priced from \$4.00 to \$9.50 per week, or lodging in cottages, priced at \$5.00 per week for one person or \$6.00 per week for two people lodging in one room.⁵⁸

Mary H. Field, in her book *Kate Thurston's Chautauqua Circles*, provides a detailed description of the tent accommodations and accompanying services available at the retreat: *The room was about fourteen by sixteen feet and contained two double beds and a cot, a little stove, a stand, and three chairs. At the rear was a canvas-covered kitchen with cooking stove, pine table, and a cupboard scantily supplied with dishes and cooking utensils. The beds looked neat and proved most comfortable, while bright colored chintz curtains surrounding each gave them, as Kate said, "a certain degree of seclusion."* *The whole arrangement would have been poverty-stricken enough anywhere else, but here it was ample for their needs, and the dusty travelers proceeded to unpack and arrange their limited personal effects, while Kate, capturing Fred for an escort, ran out, as she said, "to set the tide towards them" the tide of needful supplies milkman, baker, butcher, fish vender, and last but not least, the delicious cool soft water from Carmel River had to be turned on so as to reach their special pipe and faucet.*⁵⁹

Summer excursions, as an opportunity to spend time in communion with nature, were not unique to the Pacific Grove Retreat. Across America, beginning in the middle and into the late 19th century, with the advent of the railroads providing inexpensive travel, vacation time spent at Methodist camp meeting grounds became a popular form of leisure for congregations seeking nature and nurture.⁶⁰ As predecessors to establishment of a system of National Parks, many of which also became coupled with

railroad companies, these Methodist Retreats began to service the general public's growing desire to spend vacation time close to nature.

Like the Pacific Coast Assembly of the CLSC, virtually every independent daughter Chautauqua established across America associated itself with a railroad company. From the railroad companies' viewpoint, financing resort hotels and supporting the development of daughter Chautauquas was considered a good economic investment, as it opened the opportunity to increase the number of passengers traveling on their newly established train routes.⁶¹ The arrival of the Southern Pacific Railroad to the Monterey Peninsula, followed by the opening of the luxurious Hotel Del Monte, quickly lent to the advertising of the Pacific Grove Methodist Retreat as one of the safest and most popular summer destinations on the California coast for Christian families.



Pacific Grove Methodist Retreat.

Photograph courtesy of the Pacific Grove Natural History Museum.

THE PACIFIC COAST BRANCH OF THE CHAUTAUQUA LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC CIRCLE

*It was pleasant to meet so many teachers at the [Pacific Grove] assembly. Indeed, both the summer school and the regular home reading of the C. L. S. C. appeal especially to the scattered teachers of our State.*⁶²

The following notice, written by Professor HB Norton, Vice Principal of the California State Normal School at San Jose, and published in *The Pacific School Journal* (1879), is one of the earliest invitations to readers, for an opportunity to further their education by becoming members of the Pacific Coast Branch of the CLSC. In addition, the notice announces the organizing of a Chautauqua Assembly, to be held in Monterey (Pacific Grove's Methodist Retreat) in July 1880, with the allowance of the necessary conveniences to accommodate a course of study in Natural History.⁶³

CHAUTAUQUA LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC CIRCLE

Are there not many readers of the School and Home Journal who would like to pursue a systematic course of useful study at home, and win some recognition of their work in the form of a diploma? Thousands of men and women in California, especially those living in rural homes, feel discontented with life, on account of the small opportunity for culture, which it has brought to them thus far. They look back at an experience of hard work, incessant longing for more knowledge, for communion with cultured minds, and a wearisome succession of disappointments.

The Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle was organized for the especial benefit of this class. It proposes to furnish at a nominal expense, the means for an extended course of study at home, such as shall consume not more than forty-five minutes per day; to hold annual examinations; and, finally, to

grant honorary diplomas to all members found worthy. It is hoped that, in many neighborhoods of this State, local circles will be organized, the members frequently meeting to pursue their studies in concert.

The California branch of the Circle was organized at the session of the Monterey Sabbath-school Assembly last July [1879]. Some hundreds of persons have enrolled as members. It is proposed that a session of some weeks shall be held in Monterey next July [1880], at which time facilities will be furnished for a course of study in Natural History, with abundance of the living material at hand. I trust that such arrangements may be made, as shall enable each teacher to carry home a small but well assorted collection of prepared specimens of the forms of marine life. A scientific camp-meeting! Why should not California do such a thing, in her little way, as well as California in her grand way.

Communications and notes (If inquiry should be addressed to Miss L. M. Washburn, Secretary), San Jose. H. B. N. [Henry Brace Norton].⁶⁴

AN EMPHASIS ON THE STUDY OF NATURAL HISTORY

*The well-known facilities for studying Natural History at Pacific Grove have made that one of the important topics of study, and much enthusiasm has been aroused on the coast by the work of the C. L. S. C. in this department.*⁶⁵

Those who traveled to the Pacific Grove Methodist Retreat, to participate in the Chautauqua Assembly, arrived to find a summer haven for Christians, safely tucked away from the vices of the crowded cities, the dreariness of rural living and *a programme of work that included daily lectures upon Scientific, Literary and Biblical subjects, with special opportunities for the study of Natural History.*⁶⁶ This extended emphasis, by the Pacific Coast Assembly, directed toward the instruction of natural history, until now, has been relatively unexplored by historians and scholars. The question arises as to why, at this particular daughter Chautauqua, the second to be established west of the Mississippi, and the first established within the state of California, was there such an emphasis directed toward the study of nature?

One reason for the chosen emphasis on nature study was the influence of Louis Agassiz's teachings on several of the founders of the Pacific Coast Assembly. It would be these instructors who were responsible for, and devotedly committed to, the teaching of the Assembly program's core courses of natural history. Through the efforts of the following founding instructors of the Pacific Coast Assembly, Agassiz's aspiration of popularizing the study of natural history, was put into motion:

- HB Norton, Vice Principal and Professor at California State Normal School at San Jose;
- Mary EB Norton, Teacher at the California State Normal School at San Jose;
- Lucy M. Washburn, Teacher at the California State Normal School at San Jose;

- Dr. Joseph H. Wythe, Professor at the Cooper Medical College in San Francisco;
- Dr. Charles L. Anderson, a prominent medical doctor from Santa Cruz; and
- Josiah Keep, Professor of Natural Sciences in Mills College in Oakland California.

Agassiz's introduction of inquiry-based observation and "hands-on" approach to learning, having traveled to the shores of the Monterey Bay, was purposely utilized by these instructors of natural history to introduce to schoolteachers, and other participants of the Pacific Coast Assembly, the proper method of the study of nature. Beyond these six core instructors, were numerous distinguished naturalists and academic professors, several of them former Agassiz students, who contributed as instructors to the Assembly's summer school of science.

A second reason for the chosen emphasis on natural history at the Pacific Coast Assembly stemmed from the sheer abundance of nature that blessed the southern tip of Monterey Bay at this time. In the 1880s, the Monterey Peninsula remained relatively untouched, a virtual paradise for naturalists, in terms of its natural environment.⁶⁷ The organizers of the Pacific Coast Assembly recognized the richness that the peninsula's shoreline had to offer and communicated such in the earliest of Pacific Coast Assembly programs and announcements. The following sentence, presented in the Pacific Coast Assembly program of 1883, makes note of the natural bounty the grounds provided for instruction: *The unexampled facilities at Pacific Grove for studying the animal and vegetable life of the sea coast have determined Natural History as an important topic.*⁶⁸ With an abundant supply of "objects of nature" at their disposal, not only would the Pacific Coast Assembly of the CLSC be able to furnish teaching material for courses in natural history, but the schoolteachers and other participants could, as suggested by Professor HB Norton, be provided with the opportunity to collect and *"to carry home a small but well assorted collection of prepared specimens of the forms of marine life."*⁶⁹

With the loss of the sea otter to the central coast of California, a plethora of marine invertebrates (e.g. abalones, limpets, mussels, sea stars, sea urchins and sponges)

could easily be collected in abundance from the many tide pools scattered among Pacific Grove's rocky coastline. Beyond the marine invertebrates available for instruction, was an abundance of marine plants associated with the rocky intertidal and subtidal habitats of southern Monterey Bay. Thus, for those natural history instructors of the Assembly teaching a marine biology related course, an early morning visit to the rocky coastline at low tide provided both instructor and participants with an opportunity to examine and collect a variety of marine animals and plants.

For a course in terrestrial botany, a variety of plants were readily accessible, among the yet undisturbed sand dunes that lined the gentle sloping bluffs of the southern Monterey Bay, and within the large-old growth forest that dominated large portions of the peninsula, to the point of stretching all the way down to the water's edge.⁷⁰

A description as to what it was to stroll in the forest and collect plant specimens for the Assembly's terrestrial botany course was presented in a newspaper article that appeared in the *Sacramento Daily Union*, July 5, 1884: *At 3 p.m. a large party was formed for a botanical excursion, and we strolled through Forest avenue gathering ferns, vines and flowers until we almost forgot the distance in the enchantment of the hour. The piney fragrance, strengthened by the royal sunshine, and the peculiar soilness of the atmosphere, was delightful, and ought to be a sufficient cure for at least half the ills of humanity. Nature has donned both brightness and beauty this season for the visitors at the Grove, for there are many gardens blooming with a profusion of lovely flowers...*⁷¹

A third reason for the chosen emphasis on the instruction of natural history, at the Pacific Coast Assembly, was related to the spiritual reverence that Methodism associated with nature. This veneration for nature, encouraged within the religious ideals of Methodism itself, would be extended to the study of natural history, and the embracing of America's nature study movement; a movement that promised to reconcile the scientific understanding of the day with the personal and spiritual experiences one realized through an interaction with the natural world.⁷² How it is that the Methodist movement came to embrace as one of its principal ideals, this awakening toward a reverence for nature, can be found within the history of Methodism in America.