



METHODIST RETREAT LOCATION AND DESIGN OF THE OPEN-AIR TEMPLE

The heart of Pacific Grove Methodist Retreat was located one block southeast, of what is today, the beach at Lovers' Point Park, in the area where now stands the Pacific Grove Public Library and city of Pacific Grove's Jewell Park. A newspaper article titled "*Down By The Sea. Shells From A Seaside Resort*" that appeared in the *Sacramento Daily Union* on June 17, 1878, provides a brief description of the retreat: *They cleared up all undergrowth, trimmed up the branches of the trees and converted the forest into a park, which, for sylvan beauty, would outrival the grandest old manor park in old England. In the shadiest place they erected an altar, a pulpit, and provided neat and comfortable sittings for 2,000 people.*¹

And there it stood, positioned within the center of this campground, nestled among a grove of tall Monterey pines, was the octagonal shaped outdoor amphitheater, consisting of a wooden pulpit surrounded by a 200-foot circle of wooden benches, with aisles varying from a width of four to twelve feet. Surrounding this seating area, in a ring like fashion, was located the tenting ground for campers.²

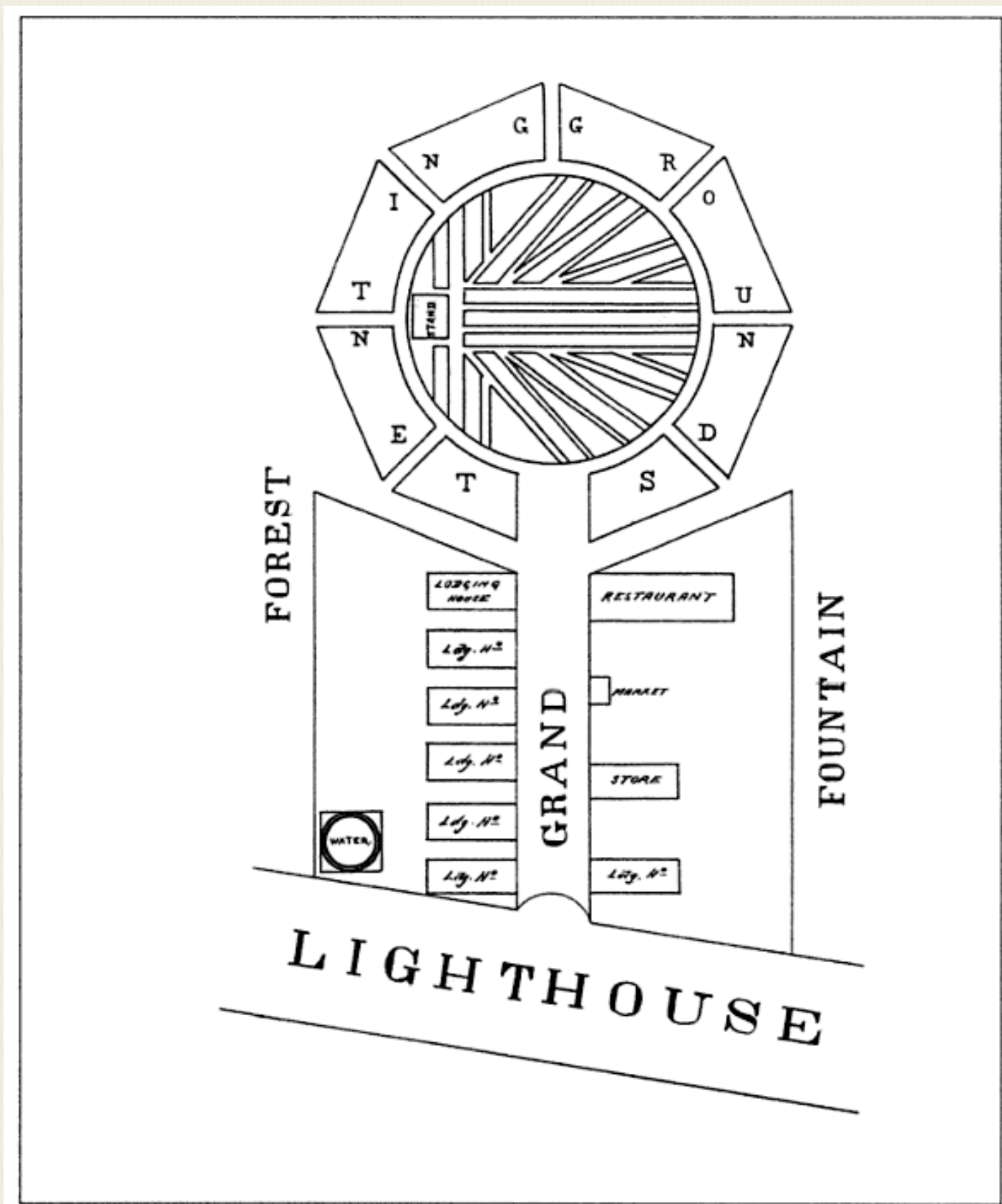
In November 1879, several months after participants of the California Sunday School Assembly had selected the Pacific Grove Methodist Retreat for the establishing of a daughter Chautauqua Assembly, Robert Louis Stevenson meandered into the empty meeting grounds: In Stevenson's writings "*The Old Pacific Capital: The Woods and the Pacific*" published in *The Eclectic Magazine of Foreign Literature, Science, and Art (1881)*, is a description of Pacific Grove Retreat as it appeared to RL Stevenson in the autumn of 1879:

One day - I shall never forget it - I had taken a trail that was new to me. After a while the woods began to open, the sea to sound near at hand. I came upon a road, and, to my surprise, a stile. A step or two farther, and, without leaving the woods, I found myself among trim houses. I walked through street after street, parallel and at right angles, paved with sward and dotted with trees, but still undeniable streets, and each with its name posted at the corner, as in a real town. Facing down the main thoroughfare - "Central Avenue," as it was ticketed - I saw an open-air temple, with benches and sounding board, as though for an orchestra. The houses were all tightly shuttered; there was no smoke, no sound but the waves, no moving thing. I have never been in any place that seemed so dreamlike.³

The aforementioned elaborate open-air amphitheater served as a vital part of the facilities for hosting the annual Pacific Coast Assembly and other functions associated with the Methodist Camp Retreat from 1875 through early 1887.



Outdoor amphitheater at the Methodist Retreat in Pacific Grove, California (circa 1875). Photographer: Romanzo E. Wood. Photograph courtesy of California State University, Chico. Meriam Library, Special Collections.



Pacific Grove Retreat, 1875. Surveyor St. John Cox prepared the above map of the Methodist campground for landowner David Jacks and the Pacific Grove Retreat Association, which would operate the facility. The speaking platform for the open-air amphitheater, as described by Robert Louis Stevenson is positioned in the upper left with the tent campgrounds surrounding.⁴ Photograph courtesy Monterey Public Library, California History Room.

In terms of positioning of the grounds, on the south and east corners of the retreat, the unpaved avenues conformed to the octagonal design of the camp with the inclusion of a 45-degree angle. This conformity to the octagonal camp design remains visible to this day, as one approaches the now paved intersection of Fountain and Central Avenues of Pacific Grove.⁵

The Pacific Grove Methodist Camp Retreat served as the Monterey peninsula's first "gated" community with security for the campground provided by fencing on three sides of the property as one approached the camp from Monterey, and a padlocked gate located at, what is now, the intersection of Lighthouse and Grand Avenues. With the fence in place, this gated camp retreat insured vacationers an adequate and secure separation from the vices associated with the nearby township of Monterey. The security of a gated community came to an abrupt end in 1886 when State Senator Benjamin J. Langford, having grown tired of walking to the office on Grand Avenue to retrieve the key to open the gate, used an axe to chop down the entry. From that day forward, the gate remained in a state of disrepair, with most of fence having all but disappeared from view by 1890.⁶



Hall in the Grove (or Chautauqua Hall) in Pacific Grove, California. c2014.

Photographer: Donald Kohrs.

HALL IN THE GROVE

In 1879, the Mother Chautauqua in upstate New York built a white wooden open aired structure modeled after the Athenian Parthenon and named it the "Hall in the Grove." This open sided structure was designed in such a way that allowed the participants to look beyond the sculptures of Goethe, Shakespeare, Plato, Socrates, Homer and Goethe which lined the building, to the wonder of the wooded setting.⁷

Later named the Chautauqua "Hall of Philosophy," this building served as the location for hosting the annual "Recognition Day" ceremony, when those students who completed the four-year CLSC reading program were formally recognized and given their diplomas. In the years to come, a Hall in the Grove (or Hall of Philosophy) became a common building structure associated with many of the daughter Chautauquas scattered throughout the nation.

In 1881, the Pacific Improvement Company constructed for the Pacific Grove Methodist Camp Retreat a "Hall in the Grove," which later became known as Chautauqua Hall. This simple wood-framed structure of no-frills design, built of a gabled roof and board-and-batten siding, for many years, served as the location for hosting the annual Chautauqua Recognition Day ceremonies, while servicing a variety of other needs for the Methodist camp retreat. During the summer months, the large open hall provided an audience room for lectures, and a venue for Sunday school services, while during the winter months the building served as a storage facility for the campground tents. In 1884, a Miss Carrie Lloyd opened a summer school for children in the rear of the Hall in the Grove. The following year the Pacific Grove School District was formed and classes continued to be held in the Hall for several more years.⁸

Designated as California Historical Landmark #839, this building remains positioned in its original location, the southwest corner of 16th Street and Central Avenue. In conjunction with the outdoor amphitheater, which was located just a stones throw away, the Hall in the Grove served as a primary meeting venue for the retreat for seven

years (1881-1888), until construction was completed of the auspicious Methodist Episcopal Church and Assembly Hall. Yet, even prior to the construction of the elaborate church and meeting hall would come a request for museum to hold a collection of objects of nature.



Pacific Grove Museum.

Photograph courtesy of Pacific Grove Natural History Museum

THE PACIFIC GROVE MUSEUM

From the very beginning of the Pacific Coast Branch of the CLSC, efforts would be direct toward organizing a collection of objects of natural history for use during the summer Chautauqua Assembly. Within the early announcements for the first two week session of the Pacific Coast Assembly of 1880 there is mentioned the opportunity for *...each teacher to carry home a small but well assorted collection of prepared specimens of the forms of marine life* “*It is hoped that extensive collections of material for museums may be made.*”⁹

It would be just one year following the first Pacific Coast Assembly of the CLSC that the organizers directed their efforts toward establishing a museum, as the instructors found the need to have a storeroom and exhibition site for the specimens of nature being collected. In 1881, this effort to establish a museum, was advanced when the Pacific Improvement Company erected the “Hall in the Grove” which, at the time, was comprised of a lecture hall, and two classrooms fitted with shelves and other arrangements for the natural history collections, including a herbarium for California and Pacific Coast flora.¹⁰

In the program announcement for the second Pacific Coast Assembly (1881), a request was solicited to members of the CLSC to “*contribute dried plants, minerals, or geological specimens, and illustrations in all departments of zoology as the Assembly wished to gather a full representation of the life of the Pacific coast for the natural history collection.*”¹¹ From this request, during the second summer of the Pacific Coast Assembly of the CLSC, the organizers began to receive donations to their museum. Soon the herbarium contained two hundred plants that had been named and classified. As gifts to the museum, Dr. JH Wythe donated several biological charts, Mr. MW Woodward provided a valuable historical chart, and the famous botanists John Gill Lemmon contributed a collection of Sierra cones. At the close of the second summer’s gathering, the founders of the Pacific Coast Assembly of the CLSC felt confident that from these beginnings would grow a grand museum.¹²

In an effort to make their vision of a magnificent museum a reality, the next step for the founders of the Pacific Coast Assembly was to request a structure be built specifically for the holding of a natural history collection. In 1883, a petition signed by Professor HB Norton, Dr. JH Wyeth, Dr. CL Anderson, Miss Lucy M. Washburn, Miss Mary EB Norton, and Professor Josiah Keep, was sent to Frank S. Douty, then secretary of the Pacific Improvement Company, requesting the firm build a small structure to house the Assembly's growing collection of objects of natural history.¹³ The Pacific Improvement Company responded to this request with the construction of a small wooden octagonal building, positioned along Grand Avenue, on a plot of land, where is located today, the city of Pacific Grove's Jewell Park.

The Pacific Coast Assembly's unwavering interest in collecting objects of natural history, common to the Pacific Slope, is demonstrated by the fact that, some five years after the initial request, the organizers continued to ask members for contributions to further advance the museum collection. The following request appeared within an article published in the *Pacific Rural Press* on June 5, 1886 and penned as follows: *Members of the C. L. S. C. who cannot be present at the summer meeting are earnestly solicited to contribute to the collection of dried plants, minerals, or geological specimens, collected in this State.*¹⁴ This organized collection of objects of nature, held within the octagonal museum, served to strengthen the Pacific Coast Assembly's ability to provide schoolteachers with one of the earliest opportunities to participate in a summer program directed toward the study of natural history within the state of California.

In addition to the octagonal museum provided by the Pacific Improvement Company, Miss Mary EB Norton, continued to be given space in Hall in the Grove (i.e. Chautauqua Hall), to instruct her course in general botany offered during the summer Assembly. A newspaper article published in the *San Francisco Call*, July 3, 1891 describes the happenings of the Chautauqua botany course: *The class in botany is presided over by Miss Mary E. B. Norton, sister of the late, Professor Norton, and contains fourteen pupils. Miss Norton also takes her pupils out on long walks, but seeks the woods instead of the beach, where specimens*

*of the flowers and ferns of the locality are gathered. The lady has a room fitted up in the old Assembly Hall where two sessions are held daily, mornings and afternoons. Much interest is taken in the study, and the results are noticeable.*¹⁵

In July of 1900, the Pacific Coast Assembly of the CLSC donated the octagonal museum building and 2100 objects of natural history to a new organization named the Pacific Grove Museum Association. This organization took up the opportunity to build upon the museum collection that had been gathered together by the Pacific Coast Assembly. In addition to advancing the collection of natural objects, the Pacific Grove Museum Association organized a reference and scientific library, a small botanical garden to preserve the native flora, and established a scientific lecture series during winter months.¹⁶ Among the notable scientific lectures that were delivered during this early period of the museum's history are described in the paragraphs that follow.

On the evening of March 17, 1900, two lectures were presented; the entomologist Professor Vernon L. Kellogg of Stanford University, discussed the life history and habit of the monarch butterfly and Professor John Henry Comstock of Cornell University discussed the process of cross-pollination as it occurs in flowering plants.¹⁷ Vernon L. Kellogg, and good friend to John Muir, succeeded David Starr Jordan as a director of the Sierra Club. Jordan, who held the director position from 1892 to 1903, and continued to serve the Sierra Club as an honorary vice-president from 1905 through 1931. According to William E. Colby, as director of the Sierra Club, *Dr. Kellogg gave liberally of this time and counsel to the advancement of the best interest of the club but he helped it to attain its goals in many other ways. Like Muir he consistently preached the gospel of "going home to the mountains" and encouraged his friends to follow his own example of taking pioneer trips into the High Sierras...*¹⁸

On the evening of April 15, 1900 Miss Alice Eastwood, herbarium curator of the San Francisco Academy of Sciences, delivered a lecture about the botanical history of Monterey County.¹⁹ Miss Alice Eastwood, who was also a close friend of John Muir's, was one of America's leading botanists and conservation advocates, whose efforts

spanned from the early 1890s into the 1940s.²⁰ Following Miss Eastwood's talk, Professor J. B. Hickman, a well-known Monterey botanist and school teacher from the Carneros district of Monterey County, spoke briefly of the scientific need for preserving the flora of Monterey.²¹

On the evening of November 9, 1901, David Starr Jordan, President Stanford University presented a lecture titled "*Beasts and Fishes of Monterey Bay.*" A newspaper article penned for the San Francisco Call (1901) briefly mentioned the following of the famed ichthyologists lecture: *Dr. Jordan, who is probably the most eminent authority on fish in the world to-day, said that nowhere was there a more important body of water, at least from the scientist's point of view, than Monterey Bay, both for the number of varieties of fish and other sea animals found here and from the fact that there are many kinds found here that have never appeared in any other part of the world. The chief object of the Museum Association is to preserve specimens of the animal and plant life that has made this region so famous throughout the scientific world, and Dr. Jordan's lecture was, therefore, of especial interest to the members of the association.*²²

These names represent just a few of the notable scientists who, over the many years, presented lectures at the Pacific Grove Museum. In 1902, through the influence of a Miss Kate Coffin, the Pacific Improvement Company gifted the Pacific Grove Museum Association several existing buildings and the land beneath. These buildings were later modified to form one single large building that exists to this day as part of the Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History, located at the corner of Central Avenue and Grand Avenue.²³



Methodist-Episcopal Church and Assembly Hall.

Photograph Courtesy of Pacific Grove Natural History Museum.

METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND ASSEMBLY HALL

In the summer of 1888, construction of the Methodist Episcopal Church and Assembly Hall was completed. Located on Lighthouse Avenue between 17th and 18th Street, the structural design - based on Lewis Miller's Akron Plan for Sunday Schools - was of a Victorian Gothic style, that boasted two towers of equal height with pointed arches.²⁴ Within the walls of this Methodist Episcopal Church were two chapels, one on each side of a central auditorium, complete with galleries, while in the rear of the structure was positioned an organ gallery. Each chapel was separated from the auditorium by movable glazed partitions, which allowed for the whole assembly hall to be opened into one large lecture hall. With a seating capacity of two thousand, the structure provided ample meeting space for larger educational and religious organizations wishing to host their conferences in Pacific Grove.²⁵

Within the first fifteen years of completion, beyond serving as the meeting space for the Pacific Coast Assembly of the CLSC and Methodist reform organizations, three sitting presidents of the United States would speak from the podium of the Methodist Episcopal Church; Benjamin Harrison in 1891, William McKinley in 1901 and Theodore Roosevelt in 1903. In addition to the sitting presidents, the prominent American civil rights leader Susan B. Anthony, who played a pivotal role in the nation's 19th century women's rights movement, spoke from the podium of the Assembly Hall during her participation in the Pacific Coast Assembly of 1896.²⁶



Pacific Grove train depot just a few short blocks from the Hall in the Grove.

Photograph courtesy of Pacific Grove Natural History Museum.