

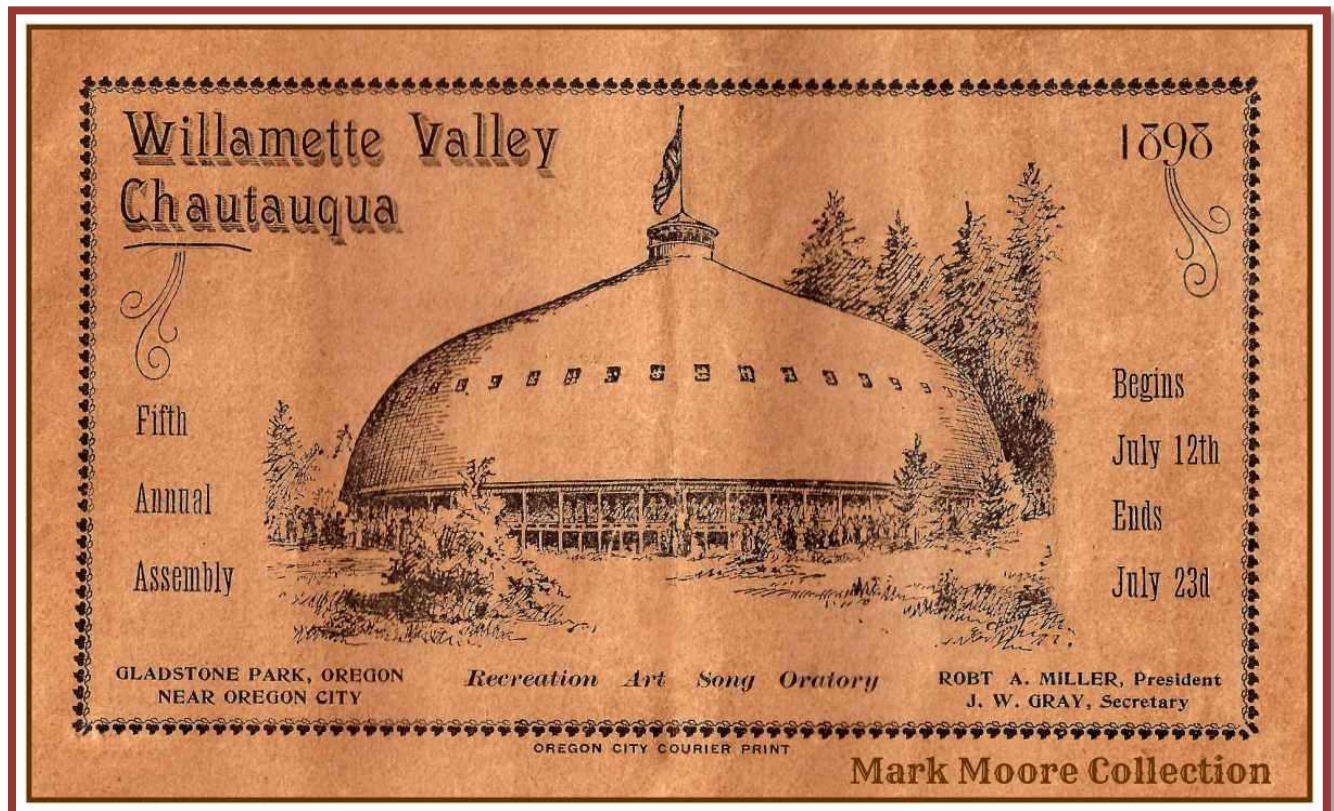


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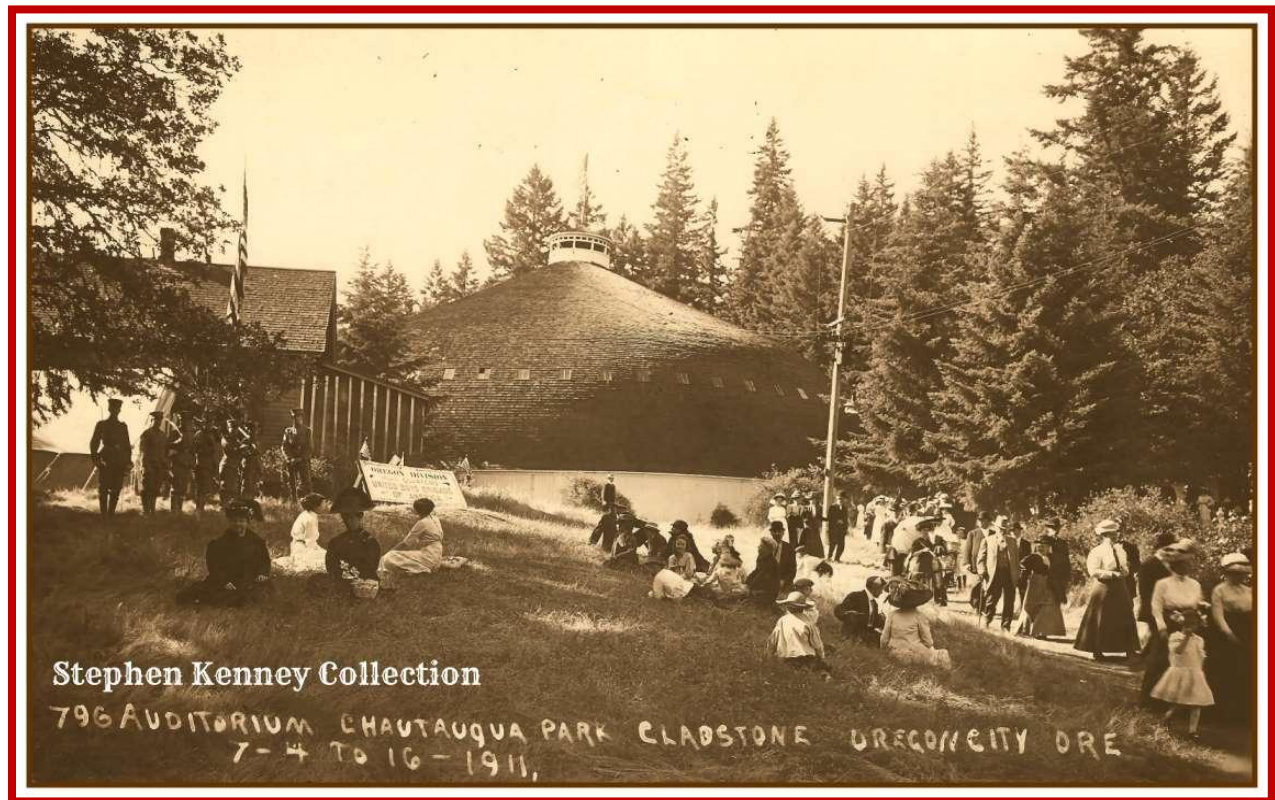
MARCH 2024

REMEMBERING THE WILLAMETTE VALLEY CHAUTAUQUA AT GLADSTONE PARK

BY MARK MOORE



Cover of the program for the Fifth Annual Assembly of the Willamette Valley Chautauqua in 1898 at Gladstone Park.



Real photo postcard of the Chautauqua Auditorium at Gladstone Park when meetings were held July 4-16, 1911.

“Chautauqua” is an Iroquois Indian word with multiple meanings, including “a bag tied in the middle” or “two moccasins tied together.” The word describes the shape of Chautauqua Lake, located in southwest New York, which was the setting for the Chautauqua Institution, the first educational assembly in what became a significant movement at the turn of the 20th Century.

Chautauqua is an adult education and social movement in the United States that peaked in popularity in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Chautauqua assemblies expanded and spread throughout rural America until the mid-1920s. The Chautauqua assemblies provided entertainment and culture for the whole community, with speakers, teachers, musicians, showmen, preachers, and specialists of the day. After visiting the Chautauqua Institution, President Theodore Roosevelt, is often quoted as saying that Chautauqua is “a source of positive strength and refreshment of mind and body to come to meet a typical American gathering like this—a gathering that is typically American in that it is typical of America at its best.”

In 1874, John Heyl Vincent and Lewis Miller rented a Methodist camp meeting site in New York to use as a summer school for Sunday school teachers. The camp became known as the Chautauqua Institution and reflected a nation-wide interest in the professionalization of teaching.

The
Willamette
Valley
Chautauqua
Assembly

The Willamette Valley Chautauqua Assembly was born of inspiration; inspiration to bring the best and brightest not only of our own state, but of all the states to Oregon homes and firesides. Since the brief, bright beginning in 1894, hundreds of artists in song and oratory have crossed our platform, bringing a breath of every land, an awakening, a renaissance. Behind this enterprise a few patient executive heads have planned

and pushed; the people, the cultured few and the masses at large, have nobly responded until Gladstone Park has become a synonym for elevating entertainment. The colleges of the state have lent their presence and their aid, classwork conducted by their professors attracts teachers, students, clerks, fathers, mothers, children, all of whom find here rest, recreation and mental stimulus that brings them back in greater numbers each succeeding year. California, Washington, Idaho, Utah, also, have contributed illustrious instructors to our corps. The greatest divines of almost every denomination here have thrilled assembled thousands, famous women have shone like stars, statesmen have swelled our gate receipts, college presidents have kindled young and old, scientists have widened our vision, travelers have painted every land, patriots have caused the heart to swell and humorists have chased away the tear. Tears, song, laughter, ennobled lives, uplifted purposes and fuller information; these have consecrated the Willamette Valley Assembly.

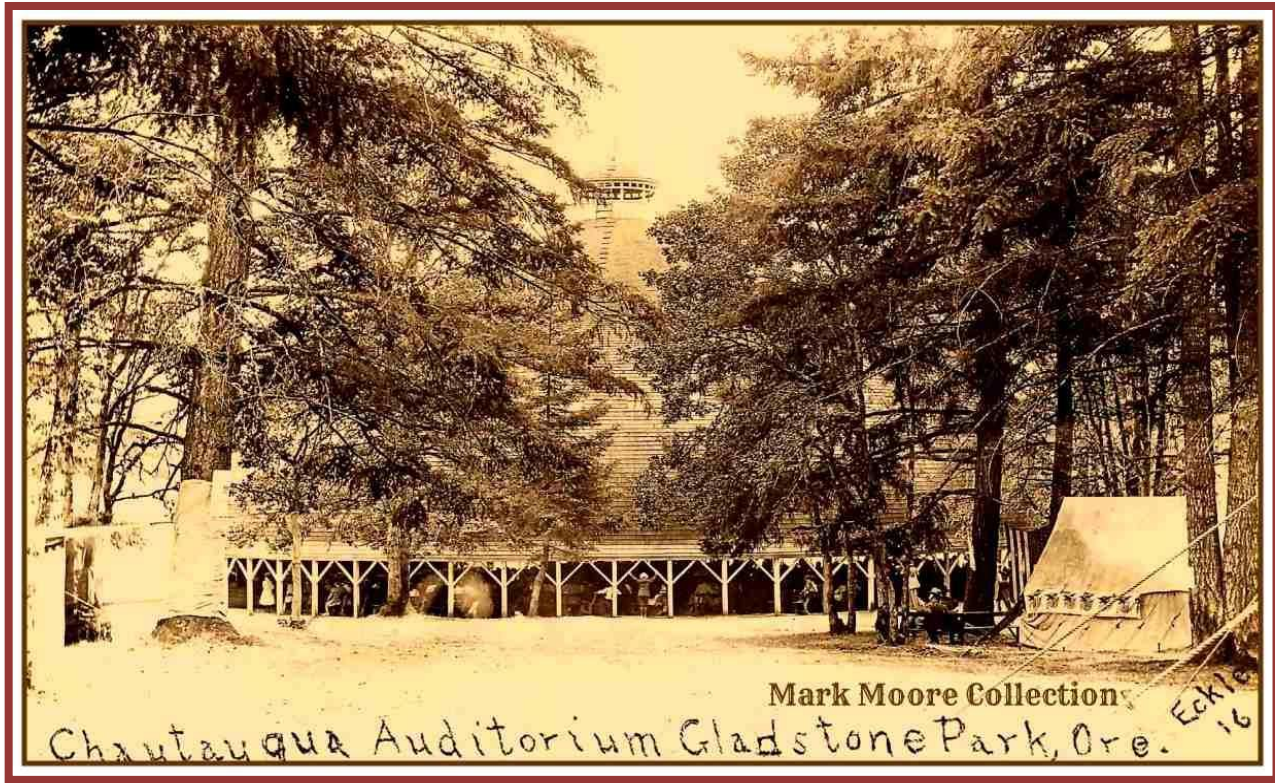
Mark Moore Collection

Page from the program for the Fifth Annual Assembly of the Willamette Valley Chautauqua in 1898 at Gladstone Park.



Mark Moore Collection

Real photo postcard showing the Women's Christian Temperance Union Tent at the Chautauqua Assembly at Gladstone Park circa 1911. Postally unused.



Real photo postcard by Eckler showing the Chautauqua Auditorium at Gladstone Park circa 1911. Postally unused.



Real photo postcard showing the Oregon Naval Militia Band at the Chautauqua Assembly at Gladstone Park circa 1911.



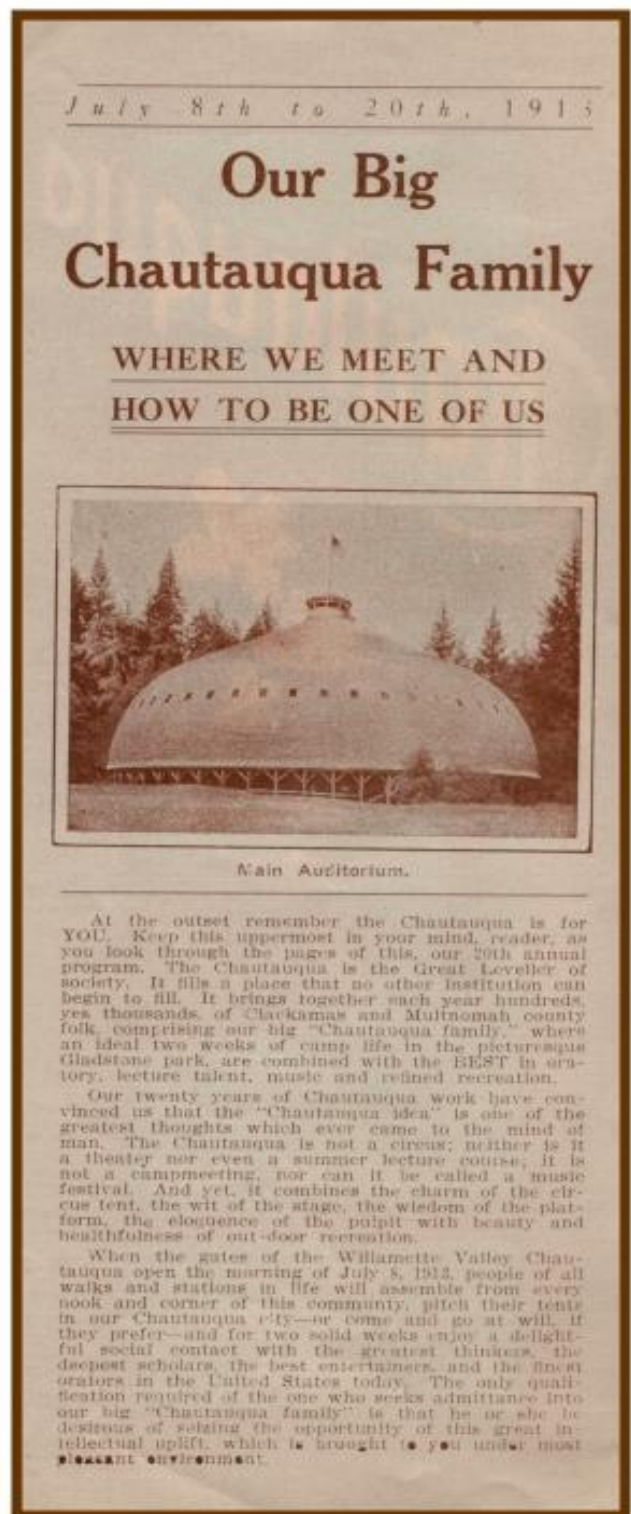
Real photo postcard showing Civil War Musicians at the Chautauqua Assembly at Gladstone Park. It is dated July 4, 1911. Postally unused.

While the Chautauqua in Canby was held only one year, in 1885, several Oregon towns flirted with the movement. The rural towns of Albany, Ashland, Dallas, Gearhart, La Grande, Lebanon, Monmouth, Oregon City, and Silverton all held Chautauqua camp meetings. Chautauquas in Oregon City and Ashland, both established in 1893, had the longest life and, arguably, the largest impact. The two towns benefited from an articulate, persuasive booster who led and fostered the encampments. Eva Emery Dye organized and served tirelessly as the secretary and fund-raiser for the Gladstone Chautauqua, and G.F. Billings played a similar role in Ashland, serving as president for most of the organization's existence in Oregon.

In 1893, the Chautauqua movement made its way to Gladstone. Judge Cross established a fifty-year lease at Gladstone Park for this event after he was convinced by Oregon City author Eva Emery Dye that doing so would be a boon to the city and its people. The newly formed Willamette Valley Chautauqua Association held an annual summer assembly that offered performances, lectures, and concerts.

At the Willamette Valley Chautauqua Association in Gladstone Park, a convenient eight miles from Portland, a few thousand people assembled inside a beehive-shaped wooden dome to participate in music programs and listen to prominent speakers such as three-time presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan, geologist Thomas Condon, college president and future congressman Willis Hawley, and Oregon poet Joaquin Miller.

Outside, baseball and football games were played and exercise classes conducted. People pitched tents, brought from home or rented on site, to camp in the nearby park woods. Admission prices were kept as low as possible to encourage families to attend.



Cover and inner page from the program for the Twentieth Annual Assembly of the Willamette Valley Chautauqua in 1913 at Gladstone Park.

The newly formed Willamette Valley Chautauqua Association held an annual summer assembly that offered performances, lectures, and concerts. This event would recur annually, until Gladstone's Chautauqua Park grew to be the third-largest permanent Chautauqua assembly park in the United States.

20th Annual Assembly July 8th to 20th, 1913

**Opening
Number
1913
Assembly**

❁

**Premier
Quartet
of the
West**



**Three
Big
Progr'ms**

❁

**July 8th
2 P. M.**

**July 9th
2 P. M.**

**July 9th
8 P. M**

The Sierra Quartet, which organization will appear at the opening number, as one of the big musical features, has the unique distinction of being the first organization of its kind in the musical history of the West. Of course there have been local amateur quartets, but reference is made to an organization of eminent artists having established reputations as soloists of the first rank. Their repertoire includes operatic works, gems from the comic operas, as well as more popular selections, including old-time songs,

and so on. This is the big opening program of our Chautauqua.

This quartette consists of four distinguished singers of the west. They are:
 Silpha Ruggles, Soprano,
 Carl Edwin Anderson, Tenor,
 Ruth Waterman, Anderson, Contralto,
 Lowell Moore Redfield, Baritone,
 Mabel Hill Redfield, Pianist and Accompanist.

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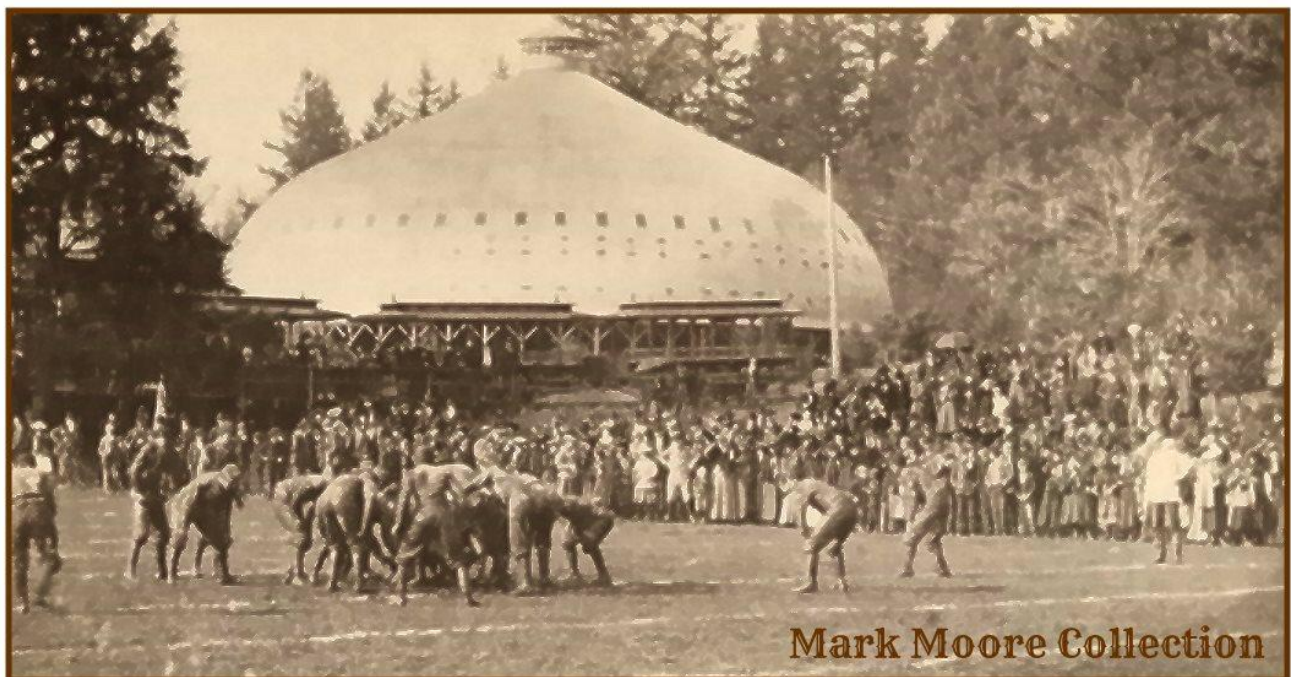
Center page from the program for the Twentieth Annual Assembly of the Willamette Valley Chautauqua in 1913 at Gladstone Park.

In 1896, William Jennings Bryan drew a crowd of 6,000 to Gladstone's then 78-acre Chautauqua Park to hear him give his popular lecture "The Prince of Peace," which stressed that Christian theology, through both individual and group morality, was a solid foundation for peace and equality.



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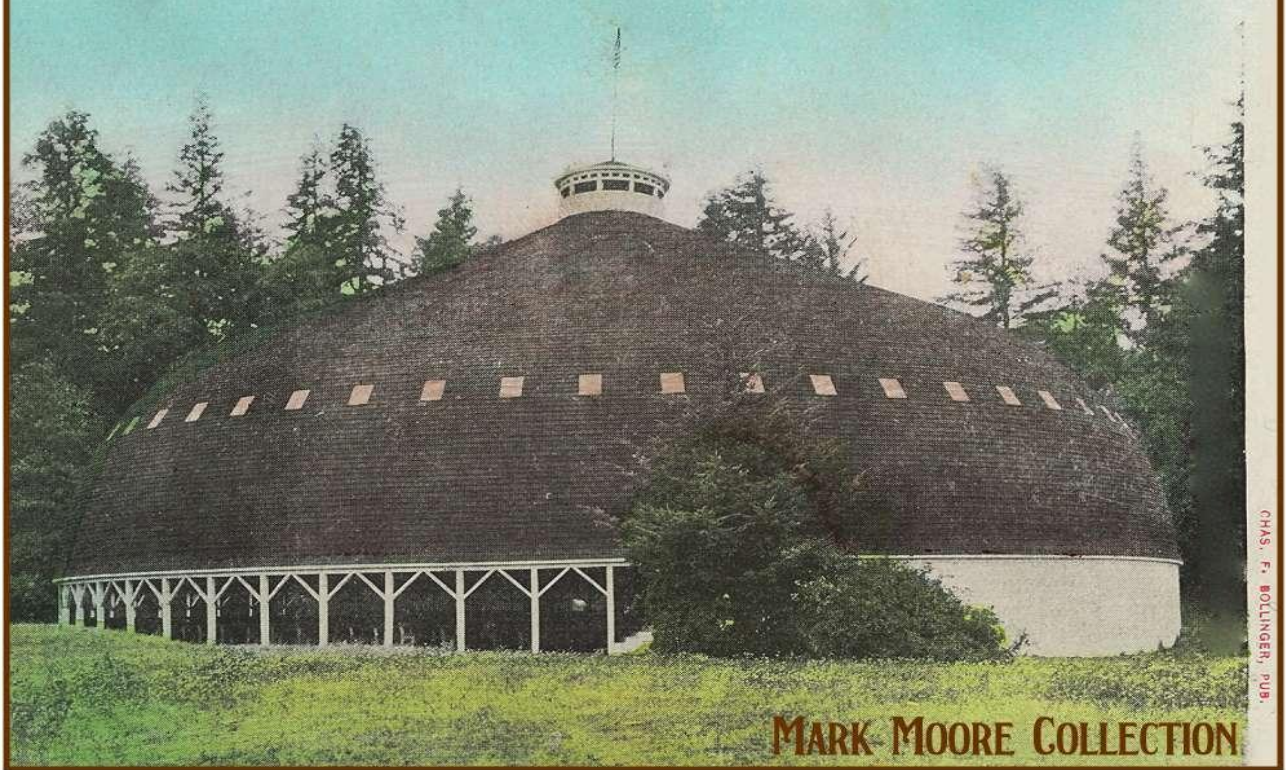
Real photo postcard showing campers at the Chautauqua Assembly at Gladstone Park circa 1911.



Mark Moore Collection

Photo from a program for the Willamette Valley Chautauqua Assembly at Gladstone Park showing a football game, circa 1898. In the background, streetcars can be seen on the one-half-mile branch line from downtown Gladstone to Chautauqua Park. The route was discontinued in 1901, as the Portland City & Oregon Railway struggled to control expenses. Baseball games and fireworks for the Fourth of July were also popular at Chautauqua gatherings.

AUDITORIUM, CHAUTAUQUA, GLADSTONE PARK, OREGON CITY, ORE.



Lithographed postcard of the Chautauqua Auditorium at Gladstone Park published by Chas. F. Bollinger. Postmarked July 20, 1906 in Park Place, Oregon.



Lithographed postcard of Celeron Park at Chautauqua Lake, New York by Hugh C. Leighton Company, Portland Maine, circa 1907. Postally unused.

With the advent of radio, improved transportation and the appearance of traveling vaudeville acts in Portland, attendance at the Gladstone Chautauqua began to dwindle. In 1927, the Willamette Valley Chautauqua Association went bankrupt. Judge Cross died on August 7, 1927, and shortly thereafter, Gladstone Park, including its buildings and Chautauqua Lake, were sold to the Western Oregon Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Several Chautauqua assemblies continue to gather to this day, including the original Chautauqua Institution in Chautauqua, New York. Today, nearly every faith group in the United States has a chapel or building on the grounds of the New York Chautauqua.

Sources:

Wikipedia,
Oregon Encyclopedia,
Portland's Interurban Railways by Richard Thompson
Colorado Chautauqua Association

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