

# Colorado Chautauqua Still Inspires These Texans



The Chautauqua at Boulder, Colorado has a tradition with roots in the Texas spirit of adventure. The Colorado Chautauqua was initiated in 1898 by University of Texas professors who were looking for a retreat away from scorching Austin summers. From the joint endeavor of individuals from these two states was born the Colorado-Texas Chautauqua Association. The Chautauqua at Boulder continues its tradition of Summer Assemblies, now in its 103<sup>rd</sup> continuous year. Some of the cottages there are still owned by descendents of those first UT professors.

A report in the *Waxahachie Enterprise* on September 15, 1899 told of Waxahachie resident T. A. Ferris' visit to the Boulder Chautauqua during the period when efforts were being made to bring Chautauqua to Waxahachie. He said that he was "much pleased and benefited" by his attendance there. When asked if he thought Chautauqua had benefited Boulder, he said, "Undoubtedly, yes. Why you see it on the faces of the entire population of the town, from the bootblack to the banker."

The following article appeared in *Waxahachie Enterprise* on July 3, 1903:

## **THE COLORADO CHAUTAUQUA**

**The Colorado Chautauqua is an institution whose name has become known in every part of the South and West. Its grounds are located on the edge of Boulder. The sessions of the Chautauqua opens July 4<sup>th</sup> each year, and continue for six weeks. The greatest lecturers, educators, entertainers and musicians of America appear upon the platform.**

**The location of the Chautauqua is unsurpassed for beauty and healthfulness. Imagine a tableland covering 300 acres of the eastern side of a vast mountain chain, whose summits are tipped with everlasting snow. On the right, Nature has formed a mighty chasm, whose recesses are lost in the dome of the continent. On the left, a mile away and 500 feet**

**below, nestles the loveliest little city of America. In front is spread out a mighty plain extending away toward the boundless prairies. At the foot of the level mesa on which the surprised and delighted beholder stands, it is an enchanting valley, whose carpet of emerald extends as far as the eye can reach to the North, and from which arise the sounds of the farm, the gentle lowing of cattle, the faint bark of the dog or the distant rumble of a train of cars, slowly treading its way toward the limitless horizon. The scene is one of entrancing beauty. It lulls to restful meditation, and as the eye drinks in the infinite softness of the mountain and plain, and the physical senses absorb the balmy sweetness of the atmosphere, the spirit is involuntary lifted in adoration of the mighty power which created the surprising vision.**

Based on our three-day visit to the Chautauqua at Boulder in 1998, it seemed to us that this beauty and inspiration depicted 99 years ago still remains an appropriate description today. Located at the base of Boulder's Flatirons, the Chautauqua's 26 acres nestle against the mountains, making buildings and trees seem diminutive. Meals were delicious and the mountain view breathtaking from the second floor porch of the Victorian Dining Hall. The buildings include the historic open-air Auditorium (1898), Dining Hall (1898), Community House (1918), Academic Hall (1900), 99 cottages, two lodges and 10 other buildings. Gardens, parks, and hiking and nature trails complete the experience. On the Saturday night of our visit, a concert packed the Auditorium and left plenty of listeners standing around the outside of the open windows or sitting on blankets with small children and picnics.

Although there are cultural and educational programs taking place in various buildings on the Chautauqua grounds all year long, the summer is the time the hibernating Auditorium comes to life. Summer programs (June, July, August) include:

- Summer Festival - series of high-quality, challenging, and entertaining programs of music, dance, and theater.
- Silent Film Series – tradition that began with news films at the first Chautauqua in 1898
- Literary Society – in the spirit of the original Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circles
- Forum Series - discussion of local, national, and international topics

The Auditorium also hosts the international Colorado Music Festival of classical music. The year-round Colorado Chautauqua attracts more than a million visitors a year. For further info, see <http://www.chautauqua.com> or call 303-545-6924.

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