

Old Waxahachie Chautauqua Celebrated Shakespeare

The *Waxahachie Enterprise's* accounts of the Chautauqua Assemblies of the early 1900s show that Shakespeare was a favorite topic for lectures and programs.

During the 1905 Assembly, the Chautauqua Auditorium was “jammed with humanity” to greet Frederick Warde, the eminent actor and speaker, and to hear his lecture Shakespeare and His Plays. “A cultured, refined, and appreciative audience” gave undivided attention for a little more than one hour to his discussion and his “artistic readings” of Shakespeare. (*Waxahachie Enterprise*, 7/28/1905)



Frederick Warde

Later, at the 1908 Chautauqua Assembly, “Dr. F. Hyatt Smith delighted a large audience at the auditorium” with his lecture Shakespeare and His Times. “The lecture was heard with much pleasure by many members of the Waxahachie Shakespeare Club. Dr. Smith is one of the foremost lecturers on literature in this country. His diction is pure and he treats his subject in a popular fashion. No one can listen to him without being benefited.”

Part of Dr. Smith’s lecture was recounted as follows: “Untraveled, Shakespeare travels the world; unread, he is read by all mankind; untaught, he teaches all. His works are the best English history and the finest biblical commentary. Customs change, habits alter, traditions die, but he remains. His characters do not resemble life, they are life itself. Hamlet is the tragedy of the will; Othello is the tragedy of jealousy; Macbeth is the tragedy of retribution; Julius Caesar is the tragedy of politics; Lear is the tragedy of ingratitude; The Tempest is the colossal picture of the supernatural world.” (*Waxahachie Enterprise*, 7/17/1908)