

Record-setting Chautauqua in 1925

Fifty local guarantors met July 20, 1925 in Mifflinburg to plan for that year's Chautauqua event. Chautauqua was a nationwide education movement that originated in Chautauqua Lake, New York in 1874. Meetings offering lectures, drama and music for adults and children, were held in the summer in Lewisburg and Mifflinburg from 1912 to about 1931. Local citizens funded the programs.

Officers of the 1925 Chautauqua were M.C. Sterling, president; Oren Sterling, secretary; David L. Glover, treasurer; Harry A. Gast, chairman of the ticket committee; Harry Strunk, chairman of advertising; and Luther Bogenreif, chairman of the grounds committee. The Shively lot on Walnut Street, between Third and Fourth was chosen as the site for the event, the same as the year before, as it was centrally located. Admission for the full 5 day program was set at two dollars for adults and one dollar for children, a reduction of the prior year's fees, in order to put the price within everyone's reach and then have better attendance.

Chautauqua: "A Great Program for Everybody" August 19 – 23, 1925

The Sorority Singers opened the program followed by comedic entertainment by Charles Ross Taggart, "The Man from Vermont," who sang, played violin and piano, and told stories about rural New England. Junior Chautauquas were held each morning. Children could attend for 25 cents per day if they did not have a "season ticket" for the whole week. College students studying drama taught youngsters, who gave an afternoon performance on the last day for their parents and friends.

J. Coates Lockhart and his Scotch (sic) Lassie gave an afternoon and evening concert the second day, and Walter J. Millard lectured on "Effective Voting and Effective Government."

On the third day, The Davis Sisters sang in the afternoon and evening. Tom Skeyhill presented "A Young Man Looks at His World." Skeyhill was blinded while serving in the Anzac Army in WWI, then miraculously recovered his sight. He became the leader of the Youth Movement and spoke in every state in the US and every province in Canada.

"As Others See Us" by Margaret Story, editor of dress hints for a large newspaper syndicate, sales instructor for Pittsburgh department stores, and expert on how to dress was the lecture on the fourth afternoon. That evening featured "The Next Best Man," a prized comedy-drama with special scenery directed by Kirk Munroe.

The Chautauqua concluded with an afternoon and evening performance by the Dunbar Bell Ringers, with 150 handbells, the largest of which weighed 25 pounds and was 16 in diameter.

Circuit Director of the Swathmore Chautauqua, Dr. Wm E. Bohn, commended the Mifflinburg event as the best ticket-selling organization he had seen. The 1925 program was one of the most popular ever given on the circuit. The local population responded: a record number 1500 people attended the Chautauqua August 19 to 23, 1925.



The “Union County Chautauqua Circle,” held a party at a member's home. This undated photo shows (not left to right) members Calvin Stahl, Carrie Hoffa, John Ruhl, Katie Grove, George Frederick, Francis Brown, James Dunkle, Maizie Stahl, Harry Stahl, Regina Hoffa, Katie Hoffa, Elsworth Kling, Maizie Hoffa, Matthew Brown, Vice President Maud Miller, Martain Dunkle, Mary Shraek, Lizzie Stahl, and Frank Stahl; and non-members Katie Dunkle, Edith Slifer, William Merkell, and Grant Nagle. Note: this photo is in the 2015 calendar published by the Union County Historical Calendar.



Chautauquas came to Mifflinburg and Lewisburg from 1912 to 1931. This cultural, religious and recreational movement presented educational lecturers and entertaining performances under tents in the summertime. The speakers and performers travelled throughout the country. This photo is from the early 1900s, judging by attires, and may be outside Lewisburg or Mifflinburg.