

# Celebrating the Memories

A Hoover potato digger discovered in the weeds near the maintenance building on the grounds of the Chautauqua Community of Lakeside, Ohio turned out to be an artifact in search of a story...

The date was the summer of 2007. The Lakeside Heritage Society, Inc. discovered that the manufacturer of the potato digger was Mr. Isaac Hoover, father of Mr. A.L. Hoover, who had been Lakeside's General Manager from 1926 - 1946. Mr. Isaac Hoover had sold the patent rights for his various farm machines to the Deere Plow Company (now known as the John Deere Company) in 1926.

The date was the summer of 1929. Dedication of Central Auditorium, the dream and vision of Arthur L. Hoover of Milan, Ohio and General Manager of Lakeside was coming to fruition but not without crisis. A sagging economy leading up to the Great Depression, a disastrous fire, and a collapsing roof structure saw the completion of the construction of the new auditorium in peril. The Hoover Family gave the Lakeside Association \$100,000 to complete construction of the building. The sale of a potato digger saved Hoover Auditorium (re-dedicated and named in honor and memory of A.L. Hoover in 1949). Behind the grand façade of Hoover Auditorium famed artists performed and renowned speakers lectured throughout the following years.

The date was the summer of 2008. The Lakeside Heritage Society initiated the restoration and exhibit of the potato digger near the auditorium as a tribute to the generosity of the Hoover family and for the preservation and display of an important invention to Ohio and world-wide. The artifact was soda blasted to remove rust and a volunteer painted it in near-authentic colors. Through this project and with a commitment to preserve history and to educate the public, the Heritage Society spoke to the importance of the dedication of individual families to the community and paused to remember the humble beginnings from which it grew. True to all good stories, another scenario appeared with perfect timing. The Werden Family, who summered in Lakeside for many years, was looking for a project to honor the memory of their wife and mother. They agreed to build a pavilion in which to display the potato digger as their memorial.

The date was the summer of 2009. In conjunction with the Lakeside Association, the Heritage Society planned and hosted a program and dedication ceremony on July 5, 2009. Following a lecture by Lisa Yako (Historical Research Partners in Huron, Ohio) citing the history of the Hoover Family, its involvement in developing Lakeside, and the importance of the potato digger in that process - attendees and guests adjourned to the display site where a moving dedication ceremony in *celebration of the memories* was conducted. Isaac Hoover's great-granddaughter, Helen Arthur March, along with her daughter and two grandchildren, traveled from Chicago for the event and represented three generations of the Hoover family. Kevin Sibbring, President and CEO of The Lakeside Association; Clayton Werden Jr. and family members; and Carol Morgan, President of The Lakeside Heritage Society spoke and a narrative plaque was presented for both the pavilion and the potato digger and its story.

The date was the summer of 1934... Lowell Thomas spoke at Hoover Auditorium to a record-breaking audience numbering over 4200. The date was the summer of 1940... Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of Franklin D. Roosevelt and renowned First Lady, was the featured speaker at Hoover Auditorium. The date was the summer of 2009... Audiences fill the seats and applause erupts within the edifice that continues to stand as Hoover Auditorium, a legacy to generations and a tribute to a simple potato digger from the historic Ohio farmlands and soils.