

A Pretty Good Glimpse

By Patrick O’Keeffe

The Lakeside Heritage Society has published a new book in celebration of Lakeside Association’s 150th anniversary titled *Lakeside Ohio, From Camp Meeting to Chautauqua*. It is a glossy 8-1/2 x 11 hard-cover coffee-table tome replete with photographs—historically well preserved, professionally chosen, and artfully presented—that depict Lakeside’s activities, events, and personalities from its earliest beginnings to the present. Accompanying text is written in an inviting style that seems to ask one to enjoy an adventure.

The organization started out in 1873 as a summer camp for religious retreats put together by local Methodists for the purpose of adult education. However, this book clearly illustrates that such a single, generally defined purpose rapidly overflowed onto much broader avenues of cultural and philosophical leanings through discussions, public presentations, and performances. And a large portion of the photos show how Lakeside, beginning in its early years, embraced the inclusion of children in its many pursuits. The combination of serving both adults and youth through its programs provided a perfect mixture for attracting families.

Part of that attraction is, of course, Lakeside’s location on the Danbury peninsula, tucked in right beside the village of Marblehead. The founders knew that a quaint waterfront community would be ideal for the summer camp they envisioned, fostering peace of mind to inhabitants and visitors as well as opportunities for the just-plain fun of vacationing or living beside a beautiful lakeshore. Its neighbor, Marblehead, being an industrial town with a working quarry, offered potential as a developed terminal for both shipping and railroading, thus making Lakeside a place travelers would be able to get to without much difficulty.

Through 150 years, each new generation of both residents and administrators engaged in its expansion. Over time, Lakeside has adopted, and become part of, the Chautauqua Movement, with its four pillars of religion, education, recreation, and the arts. The movement, out of Chautauqua Lake, NY, was founded by Methodist leaders, Lewis Miller and Rev. John H. Vincent. Both Miller and Vincent were guest speakers at Lakeside. Neither its Methodist origins nor the adoption of, and alignment with, the Chautauqua Movement ever served as nor perpetuated any sort of strict orthodoxy. In the spirit of the movement, Lakeside’s religious roots appear to have been the base from which new ideas could sprout. Right from the start, its greatest strength has been to welcome speakers, performers, and entertainers from

all directions.

For example, in the 1870s, Lakeside hosted performances by Amanda Berry Smith. A black woman singing before a white audience? Lakeside challenged popular conventions. She was one of the first of a multitude of entertainers from every background to appear before Lakeside audiences, a vast array of popular celebrities that still appears today. Reflecting the organization's religious beginnings, Billy Sunday, baseball player turned evangelist, was a frequent guest in the 1920s. And then, a decade later, as American culture experienced challenges to the notion that perhaps a woman should stay home and do the wash, aviator Amelia Earhart, and later, Eleanor Roosevelt appeared before packed audiences.

Not enough can be said about the book's presentation through photos of the sheer physical attraction of Lakeside, Ohio. Nature has provided a beautiful setting for the place to begin with, and what the organization has done is to expand that natural beauty through well-planned infrastructural development into what one can only call idyllic. From the original planning of the community 150 years ago to rebuilding after fires or storms, or dealing with edifices and conditions that had aged out, wise administrators appear to have ever been mindful of enhancing what they've been given by both nature and their forbears so that future inhabitants and visitors could go on enjoying the Lakeside tradition.

Paging through the book and reading the text, especially if one is not directly familiar with Lakeside, risks almost overwhelming the mind's eye with people from diverse origins and backgrounds emerged in a collage of common activities. This begs the question, what are all these people doing, anyway? So much energy just has to be the work of a spirit that defines its purpose for being. Lakeside's original purpose was to provide an environment for adult education. The editors of the book have chosen to leave it at that, resisting any tendency to redefine or elaborate. A wise choice. The spirit of Lakeside is not definable—a spirit is hard to catch, after all. Thanks to the publishers of *LAKESIDE OHIO, From Camp Meeting to Chautauqua*, we are given a pretty good glimpse, though.

The book is available for sale from the Lakeside Heritage Society, Lakeside, Ohio.

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