

THE CHAUTAUQUA & DEDICATION

1920



WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

A huge celebration was planned for the summer of 1920 at the new park. Not only would there be a dedication ceremony, but a three-week-long Chautauqua program, the first at the park, was planned.*

The Chautauqua would start on June 17 and run through July 18. Highlights of the program would be the appearances of William Jennings Bryan on June 17 and former President William Howard Taft on June 28, with the park dedication ceremony on July 4. Joseph M. Devine, an early settler of the county and

former governor of North Dakota, would also give an address. The annual Pioneer Picnic was scheduled for July 13, and the county School Picnic would be held on July 15. The talent secured for this Chautauqua was comparable to that in other larger towns, such as the Valley City, Devils Lake and Minot Chautauqua programs.

Also on the program were The Davies Light Opera Company, Buchner's Famous Dixie Jubilee Concert Company, the Kulm Band, numerous speakers, drills by the American Legion, and the Hadley Concert Company who would perform "a repertoire of oratorio, opera, quartets with instrumental accompaniment, solo numbers, and ensemble numbers." Numerous ball games would be played. A county-wide committee of men guaranteed the cost of the program. They wanted it to be a county-wide affair and, if successful, an annual event.

In a letter written by Marie Holen on June 18, 1920, she describes the activities at the park. "The day was simply grand...Arthur Parker has charge of the park & he surely has worked wonders in fixing it up...He and other men were on the spot waving the cars & telling them where to park. They backed against the fence making almost a circle in that open place around the b.b. diamond. When that ring was made they made another ring farther inside so the cars were facing each other with a lane or street between. There were 3 such rings...there was the biggest crowd of cars imaginable...Bryan spoke...There was a covered platform with small rooms at the back for the performers.

And there are benches down in front for the audience. They are going to build a big auditorium sometime in the future..."

Rainy weather forced one major change in plans. The July 8 headline in *The LaMoure County Chronicle* read, "Dedication Postponed—Rainy Weather Spoils Plans For Formal Dedication of Memorial Park." The dedication "was twice postponed because of rain. However, appropriate dedicatory exercises will be held at the first possible suitable date—probably in combination with some of the several big Chautauqua and picnic days to come. In the meantime the park is being just naturally and spontaneously dedicated by the large crowds which have thronged the grounds and just begun to fully realize what an ideal and beautiful park we really have." Laura B. Sanderson, in her book *In the Valley of the Jim*, states that the dedication would eventually take place on September 20, 1920, but no confirmation of this date can be found.

The activities at the park that summer were considered an unqualified success, as evidenced by the headline "Chautauqua Closes in Blaze of Glory."

"The purchase of Memorial Park, its dedication to the memory of the soldier-heroes of the county, and the inauguration of a county Chautauqua—these in the opinion of *The Chronicle*, are the outstanding items in the scale of social progress in LaMoure county since the close of the Great War."

FINE CHAUTAUQUA PROGRAM ARRANGED

To Be Given This Summer at
Soldier Memorial Park
Near Grand Rapids

Bryan on June 17, and Taft on
June 28—Several Other
Fine Attractions

A Chautauqua Program of unusual character is assured through the recent signature of about two score of LaMoure county guarantors for a LaMoure County Chautauqua.

The entire program will be held in the LaMoure County Memorial Park, just north of Grand Rapids. William Jennings Bryan and the Honorable William Howard Taft who appear on the above dates, are international figures and need no recommendation. The other numbers which appear as follows, are of the very highest class:

William Howard Taft



Hear the only living ex-President at Memorial Park near Grand Rapids, on Monday, June 28th, at 2 o'clock p. m. His subject is timely and of immense public interest.

THE CHAUTAUQUA PROGRAM

JUNE 28th.

2:00 p. m.Honorable William Howard Taft. Subject: "The Soviet as Related to American Industry and Capital."

*Chautauqua was an adult education and social movement in the United States, highly popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Chautauqua assemblies expanded and spread throughout rural America until the mid-1920s. The Chautauqua brought entertainment and culture for the whole community, with speakers, teachers, musicians, showmen, preachers and specialists of the day.