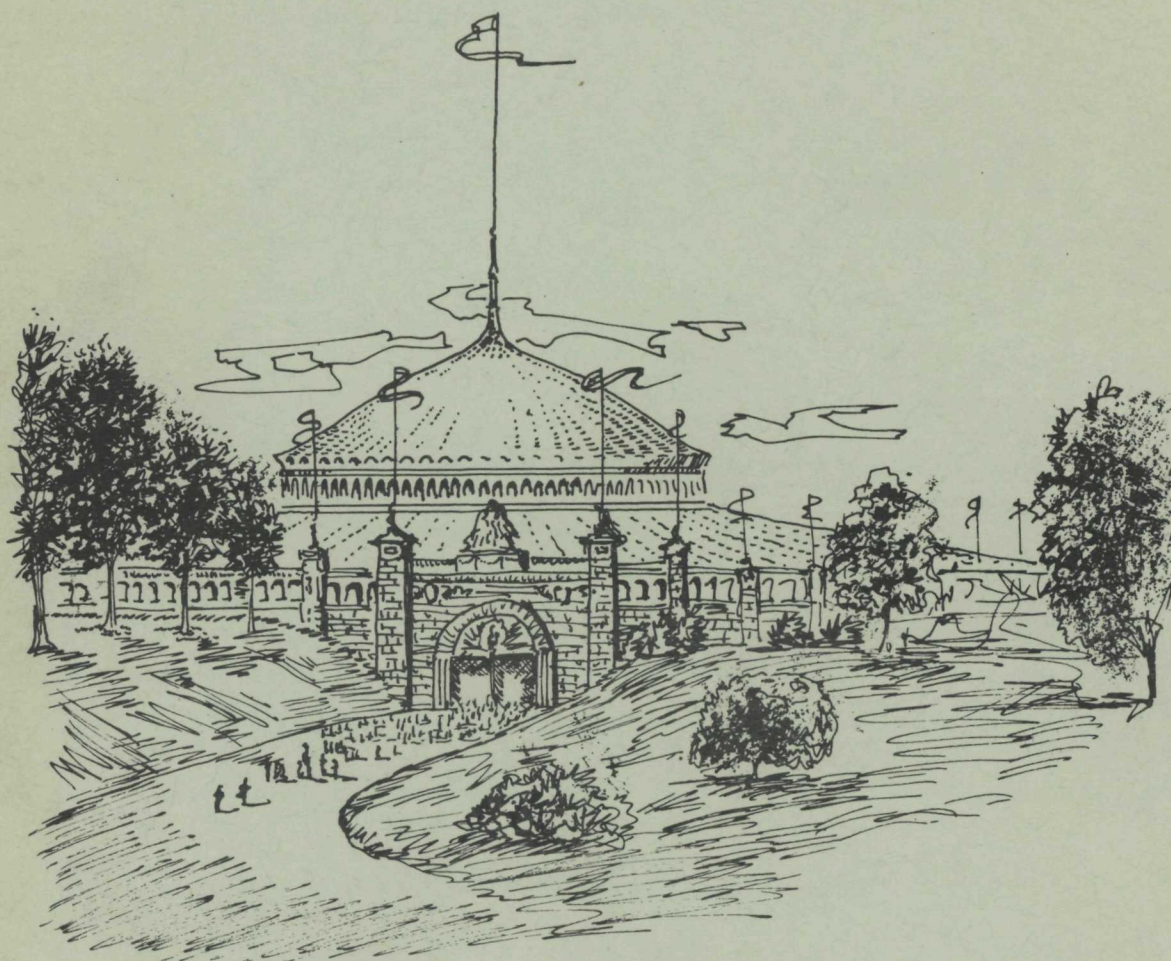


Glen Echo Chautauqua On The Potomac



June 15, 1967

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By BENJAMIN LEVY

**Division of History
June 15, 1967**

National Park Service

U.S. Dept. of Interior

FOREWORD

The Town of Glen Echo takes pride in publishing this second edition of Mr. Benjamin Levy's historical monograph "Glen Echo Chautauqua on the Potomac."

Mr. Levy tells the vivid, absorbing story of the ambitious but ill-starred Chautauqua venture -- a dream that fell just short of fulfillment in Glen Echo 77 years ago.

Now, through the intensive efforts of such farsighted public officials as Senator Daniel B. Brewster, Congressman Gilbert Gude, National Park Service Director George B. Hartzog, Jr., Montgomery Councilwoman Idamae Garrott, Montgomery County Councilman Richmond M. Keeney and John P. Hewitt, Director of Parks for the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission, the dream of a Chautauqua-like facility at Glen Echo has been revived.

Through an outstanding plan, developed by John P. Hewitt and his staff, the spirit of Chautauqua has been translated into modern terms responsive to the cultural and recreational needs of present-day Montgomery County citizens.

By making Chautauqua days live again, Mr. Levy has contributed materially to creating a public awareness of the great historical and recreational potential of the Glen Echo Amusement Park tract -- site of the National Chautauqua.

The Chautauqua story, begun over three-quarters of a century ago, deserves a happy ending. Your interest and support are essential to bring this about. You can best show this support by enthusiastic endorsement of the Montgomery County Council's plan for redevelopment of the Glen Echo Amusement Park tract.

The Town of Glen Echo is grateful to the National Park Service under whose auspices Mr. Levy's study was originally published for its authorization to reprint "Glen Echo Chautauqua on the Potomac" in its entirety.

The Mayor and Town Council

Town of Glen Echo

Glen Echo, Maryland

January 1, 1968

Table of Contents

	Page
List of Illustrations	i
Introduction	1
The Baltzley Enterprise	3
Glen Echo Cafe	5
The National Chautauqua	7
Vaudeville Days	18
Amusement Park Days	19
Summary	22
Historical Resources	23

List of Illustrations

Following page 25.

1. Edwin Baltzley's Home on Glen Echo Heights.
2. Entrance to Glen Echo Cafe and Porte Cochere, 1891.
3. Plaza, Dining Hall and Band Stand at Glen Echo Cafe, 1891.
4. Loft overlooking the Potomac at Glen Echo, 1891.
5. Loft and Dining Hall at Glen Echo, 1891.
6. Hall of Philosophy at Glen Echo Chautauqua.
7. Amphitheater Interior; organ in background, 1891.
8. Grottoes beneath the Chautauqua Amphitheater.
9. Midway at Glen Echo Amusement Park. Formerly the Amphitheater.
10. Glen Echo Chautauqua as it appeared about 1900.
11. Glen Echo Chautauqua showing entrance (left center) and Hall of Philosophy (right center). Photo probably taken in 1891.
12. Plan of Glen Echo Chautauqua, 1891.

Introduction: The Beginning of a Dream

The sights and sounds of an amusement park are neither solemn nor cultivated. The rapid fire clatter of a plummeting roller-coaster; the waves of heat undulating up from a sorrowfully littered parking lot; the gaudy lights of marquee and midway; the brazen laughter of gigantic puppets--none of these conjures up the image of antique gentility and cultured refinement we associate with the turn of the century.

Yet at Glen Echo Amusement Park, Glen Echo, Maryland, this garrish facade of sight and sound is a saddening postlude to an ambitious and fleeting educational venture--the attempt to build the nation's greatest center of general culture.

The attempt was an outgrowth of the intellectual ferment of the late nineteenth century. This intellectual climate was being conditioned by the struggle raging between the camps of science and religion--a quarrel stimulated by the emergence of Darwinism which brought into question the physical origin of man. Another, but complimentary, force was Marxian thought which brought into question the social origins of man. Both of these forces made deep inroads into the categories of Christian thinking. Resistance to them took many forms, and one of them was the Chautauqua Assembly.

The first "Chautauqua" was organized by Lewis Miller, an Ohio manufacturer and Sunday-school teacher, and John H. Vincent, a minister and later Bishop of the Methodist-Episcopal church. Their objectives were manifold, but fundamentally they sought to unify the factionalism within Protestantism through the means of secularized assemblies offering "culture" within a religious framework. They rejected the "old-fashioned" camp meeting with its austere fundamentalism and insisted upon the democratization of learning--bringing the culture of the well-to-do- to all classes.¹

The first Assembly met in 1874 on the shores of Lake Chautauqua New York, and is still active today. By 1891 fifty-two assemblies were recorded, and by the following year more than 100,000 members belonged to the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle, an adjunct of the society that dispersed a 4-year education by correspondence.² These fifty-two assemblies were modest imitations of the original with activity within tents for a summer season of two weeks. But the "National Chautauqua of Glen Echo" was to be a permanent seat of culture, grander even than the mother assembly.³

1. Jesse Lyman Hurlbut, The Story of Chautauqua (New York, 1921), pp. 33-37. Also, Merle Curti, The Growth of American Thought (New York, 1943), pp. 594-98.

2. Ibid. Also Woman's Executive Committee, The National Chautauqua of Glen Echo (Washington, D. C., c. 1891), p. 2. Library of Congress.

3. Woman's Executive Committee, pp. 11-14.

The Chautauqua idea had already penetrated the social circles of the District of Columbia. By 1891 several groups in the vicinity formed a Chautauqua Union and set their plans for winter activities.⁴

The Baltzley Enterprise

At the same time, Edwin Baltzley, a Philadelphia real estate promoter, was undertaking a vast project--a grandiose dream of developing the Potomac into another Rhineland with both a permanent community and a summer resort.

By 1889, the Baltzley brothers, Edwin and Edward, had obtained land along the Potomac River in Maryland from Cabin John Creek east to the Walhonding Road area overlooking Sycamore Island.⁵ This entire property was to be known as Glen Echo-on-the-Potomac. The initial step to this ultimate goal was the development of the heights above Sycamore Island as a permanent community of stone houses much like the one Edwin Baltzley built for himself (Illustration No. 1). The brothers encouraged stone construction by opening five quarries in the vicinity to provide granite of "color and grade varying from blue-gray of the State Department to white and pink

4. The Chautauquan, 12 (1890-91), pp. 410 and 548.

5. This is a rough description based on the location of property actually occupied by the Baltzley developments--the Glen Echo Cafe, the Chautauqua (Illustration No. 12), and the stone homes on the heights (Illustration No. 1).

and ochre like that of the Church of the Covenant."⁶ The stone was provided for only the cost of quarrying.⁷ Electric lighting, quite an innovation, would be provided to all who wished it.⁸

As a young man, George Freeman Pollock was made timekeeper for the Baltzley enterprise. He recalled that the project created great excitement. People began investing heavily in property as surveyors and architects planned roads, buildings, and improvements. Over a million dollars worth of lots may have been sold. Three hundred masons and six hundred laborers were on the payroll working on projects as far-flung as five miles apart.⁹

Besides the hopes of selling numerous homesites, the Baltzleys planned to erect a gigantic stone fortress-like hotel, "the Monican."¹⁰ The plan was never achieved. Transportation to Glen Echo was to be provided by a steam to electrical system centered in a fireproof granite powerhouse.¹¹ The rail system was finally installed, and part of the car barn still stands on Walhonding Road just off McArthur Boulevard.

6. Glen Echo-on-the-Potomac, The Washington Rhine, p. 36, no author, date, or publisher; probably printed 1891. Washingtoniana Collection, District of Columbia Public Library.

7. Ibid., p. 37.

8. Ibid., p. 38.

9. George Freeman Pollock, Skyland (Chesapeake Book Co., 1960), pp. 41-42.

10. Glen Echo-on-the-Potomac, p. 36.

11. Ibid., p. 34.

Glen Echo Cafe

Palatial stone mansions were only part of the vision. By 1890 a grand cafe of vast proportions and intricate design was actually completed. It was a rustic resort constructed of thirty thousand unhewn cedar logs--a scramble of rooms, alcoves, and bridges in a crazy-quilt pattern designed to titillate the Victorian fancies of its patrons (Illustrations Nos. 2, 3, 4, and 5).

The Glen Echo Cafe was dubbed "Paw-taw-o-meck" in keeping with its woodland character. Customers were introduced to a host of quaint names from both nature and antiquity. Through an archway they entered onto a macadamized plaza encircled with rough-hewn cedar rails (Illustration No. 2). Then passing through a semi-circular porte-cochere (Illustration No. 3) one would walk along "Wa-pe-nam Way" (path of the morning sun) to the main dining hall.

The dining room was immense. Cedar lambrequins around the windows, and a mantelpiece of cedar adorned with "rustic mosaics" graced one end of the room. Above the dining room was a music loft reached by stairs balustraded by cedar. From the loft a patron could look out over the Potomac.

A private dining room, "Wish-ton-wish," was supplied with electric fans and incandescent lamps. Other halls were attached, such as "Minnehaha," "Sleepy Hollow," "Po-ka-hun-tas," and the "Wigwam," the latter overlooking Walhonding Creek. For open-air concerts there was the Choral Balcony and, for private get-togethers,

exposed lofts like the "Cruso," so named because it resembled Robinson Crusoe's umbrella.

Rambles meandered about the grounds to river overlooks and sheltered turnouts. One could cross Walhonding Bridge to Monican Rock or Kingfisher's Watch. From the Watch guests could climb a tower of three stories each with an evocative name--Council Fire, Jung Frau, and Canon Eyrie.¹²

The wildly imaginative construction of the cafe was matched page after page by the sales brochure, which even called up primitive mythology to make a very Victorian point. Even the Glen Echo boat song was included. To modern eyes the plan seems ludicrous and grotesque. But the Baltzleys seem to have been genuinely interested in building a scenic and diverting resort area to which people of means could escape from the congestion, noise, and summer heat of the District.

As for the Cafe, it was not given a chance to succeed. It was destroyed by fire on November 29, 1890. Edwin Baltzley and his family barely escaped with their lives. Not yet six months old, "Paw-taw-o-meck" lay in ruins. The only things remaining were the porte-cochere and stove chimney--\$85,000 up in smoke.¹³

12. Ibid., pp. 8-15.

13. Washington Evening Star (November 29, 1890), p. 6.

The National Chautauqua

How the Chautauqua idea merged with the Baltzley enterprise is not known. Whether Edwin Baltzley had the dream of an assembly at Glen Echo from the first, or whether members of the recently formed Chautauqua Union expressed it to him is a moot question. Regardless of its source, Edwin Baltzley was determined to make Chautauqua the vital third element in his undertaking. Here he would build a citadel of culture on the banks of the Potomac to complement the restful and entertaining resort.¹⁴

The first step was taken with the deeding of eighty acres of land on March 24, 1891, by the Baltzley brothers and their wives to the "National Chautauqua of Glen Echo," incorporated in West Virginia. The deed stipulated that the property could be devoted only to education; any other use invalidated the deed.¹⁵ A second deed modified this stipulation, requiring that the land be developed according to a map of the subdivision plan by Henry B. Looker (Illustration No. 12). Only the "reservation for railroad," which paralleled the C & O Canal, was specifically exempted from the

14. Glen Echo on the Potomac, p. 41.

15. Montgomery County (Md.) Land Records, Liber J. A. 25, folio 179, referred to by Steven H. Lewis, Clara Barton House, Glen Echo, Maryland (National Park Service, 1964), p. 11.

transfer.¹⁶

Forty-three men joined hands in incorporating the National Chautauqua. The most notable was John Wesley Powell. Representatives of the established families of Washington were included--George Peters, Hattersly W. Talbott, and Arthur B. Cropley. Of course, Edwin and Edward Baltzley were on the list. The board of trustees was drawn from the group of incorporators and consisted of Edwin Baltzley, President, William T. Harris, U. S. Commissioner of Education, A. H. Gillet, Field Secretary of the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle, A. S. Pratt, president of the board of trustees at the Homeopathic Hospital, and James B. Henderson, a well-known Rockville attorney. Dr. Gillet was named chancellor.¹⁷

The Assembly could then announce to the public that "The work of planting an institution of this kind within sight of the dome of the National Capital and on the shores of the historic Potomac is now going on. The site is Glen Echo's magnificent river front. Buildings adapted to the different phases of Chautauqua

16. Ibid., folio 253. Whether the land was sold or donated is not clear. Lewis, Clara Barton House, indicates the deeds imply a sale but National Chautauqua of Glen Echo, p. 15, states that the land was donated by the Baltzleys with a further gift of \$1000.

17. Woman's Executive Committee, pp. 2-3. A somewhat different account is given in William B. Webb, et al, Centennial History of the City of Washington, D. C. (Dayton, 1892), pp. 515-16.

Assembly work are in the course of erection." The Charter declared its purpose:

to promote liberal and practical education, especially among the masses of the people; to teach the sciences, arts, languages, and literature; to prepare its patrons for their several pursuits and professions in life, and to fit them for the duties which devolve upon them as members of society.¹⁸

The plan called for many structures arranged within a carefully organized campus subdivided by lots and streets named after universities (Illustration No. 12). Initially, construction began with three buildings situated in Glen Vincent--the Amphitheater (Illustration No. 12), Hall of Philosophy (Illustration No. 6), and Academy of Fine Arts. These buildings formed the working campus on which the curriculum could be pursued. The plan was indeed ambitious. It called for the following:

1. Amphitheater lectures and entertainment.
2. A school of Bible studies for teachers, readers, and Y.M.C.A. secretaries.
3. Classes in New Testament, Greek, and Hebrew.
4. Sunday school.
5. Studies in vocal and instrumental music.
6. Physical education and sports activity.
7. School of educational methods for secular teachers.
8. University extension courses in American history and poetry and English literature.
9. The Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle.
10. A woman's department.

18. Glen Echo on the Potomac, p. 41. Woman's Executive Committee, p. 2.

The woman's department was organized for the "advancement of woman, improving and enlarging her scope of usefulness." A woman's executive committee was appointed to guide its work. The founder of the American Red Cross, Clara Barton, was made president and was assisted by a number of well-known ladies, such as Mrs. Leland Stanford and Mrs. John Wesley Powell.¹⁹

The organizers engaged many of the finest platform performers and lecturers of the day. They signed contracts with religious orators such as Bishop Vincent, T. DeWitt Talmage and Lyman Abbott, lecturers such as the scientist John B. DeMotte of De Pauw University and Egyptologist Lysander Dickerman. Maurice Thompson of Century and Scribners was expected to give readings and lectures as were many other authors and poets of the day.²⁰

On May 20, 1891, the cornerstone to the Amphitheater entrance archway was laid, and a week later the Chautauqua Association closed a contract with the McShane bell foundry of Baltimore for a large chime of bells to be placed in the main tower at the entrance to the amphitheater.²¹

19. Woman's Executive Committee, pp. 4-6.

20. Ibid., pp. 6-7.

21. Centennial History, p. 516. Star (May 27, 1891), p. 8.

June 16, 1891, was opening day. None of the three buildings originally planned were completed. A building designed to house a business school was the only finished structure. Rather than disappoint the public, the ceremonies were not delayed. The amphitheater was far enough along to take the dedication crowd. It was an enormous structure with a seating capacity of 8,000 and a dome the inside diameter of which was 250 feet (Illustration No. 7). The stage could seat 500 people. There were a gallery and dressing rooms behind the stage and a number of committee rooms as well. Sound from the speaker stand was distributed by an early speaker system called an air trumpet powered by water flow beneath the auditorium. Spectators arriving for the dedication were greeted by the din of building tools and the bustle of construction activity.²² Even though the project was not finished, Edwin Baltzley had not wasted time. Hardly six months had elapsed since the demise of his wondrous lodge, "Paw-taw-o-meck," and this new monument was rising from the ground.

About a thousand spectators braved the heat, dust, and frustration of an incomplete rail line to witness the ceremonies. Reverend T. DeWitt Talmage delivered the major address. He saw the assembly as an ecumenical device for harmonizing conflicting Protestant factions. He gave a humorous recipe for a proper camp meeting:

22. Star (June 17, 1891), p. 8. Also (June 16, 1891), p. 8. Woman's Executive Committee, diagram on back cover.

...a mixture of Presbyterian catechism,
the Episcopal prayer book, the Methodist
love feast, the Congregational liberalism
and enough Baptist water to mix it well...
and one drop...will kill a bigot deader than
a door nail.

Dr. Gillet gave a brief address, laid across the lectern a small American flag presented to him by Bishop Vincent, and said, "I dedicate this hall and platform to Chautauqua work and may the blessing of the Lord be upon it." The Chautauqua chorus and band played, and the season was off to an auspicious beginning.²³

The Chautauqua assembly was a serious matter, and more than curiosity seekers and casual visitors arrived on the scene. A considerable number of seasonal residents showed up with tents and household goods piled high on wagons. By evening, one report stated, "Among the trees and along the slopes of the new village are hundreds of white tents nestling cozily in the green verdure and inspiring pleasant thoughts of camping out."²⁴ Despite the unfortunate rain and mud of the first few days, at least three to four hundred people had settled down to a summer stay at the Glen Echo grounds.²⁵

Culture and religion were to be served up in an atmosphere of recreation. Beneath the giant amphitheater, two stories of stone grottoes and passageways, rustic bridges and retreats were

23. Star (June 18, 1891), p. 8.

24. Star (June 17, 1891), p. 8.

25. Star (June 18, 1891), p. 8.

constructed (Illustration No. 8). These galleries were lit by electricity and provided a cool and intriguing diversion from the sweltering activities on ground level. These passes paralleled Minnehaha Creek, which was channeled beneath the building to power the speaker system.²⁶ Plans called for the installation of rambling walks and seating along the river and streams nearby. Work was already progressing on boating, canoeing, and swimming facilities around Sycamore Island. Picnicking was popular, and lunches were purchased in the "great hotel tent or cafe."²⁷ Baseball lent excitement to the glen with the formation of a regular team, which went down to stunning defeat its first time on the field. Its record improved through the season.²⁸ Bicycling, tennis, and other sports rounded out the agenda for physical education.²⁹ Patrons organized corn roasts and candy pulls and the children enjoyed scampering through Minnehaha Creek or swinging on the enormous swing up on Faculty Hill.³⁰

Most people undoubtedly entertained themselves by simply being a part of the milling, gregarious community, conversing and being

26. Woman's Executive Committee, back cover.

27. Star (June 6, 1891), p. 8.

28. Star (July 11, 1891), p. 6.

29. Star (July 16, 1891), p. 3. Also (July 18, 1891), p. 6.

30. Star (July 22, 1891), p. 3. Also (July 23, p. 2) and (July 25, p. 6), same year.

conspicuous. They lived in tents but were not about to "rough it." They brought along their household furnishings rather than simple camping gear. Edwin Baltzley's canvas abode sported "artistic rockers, fur rugs and pretty drapery" giving it "an air of elegance and comfort."³¹

The prescription of piety and culture by no means eliminated romance as a summer pastime. One honest observer recounted the feminine charms of the many young ladies about the grounds and urged his readers to come out and see for themselves.³² Chancellor Gillet imposed a 10:00 p.m. curfew to curb nighttime frivolity and romantic trysts. Nevertheless even Dr. Gillet's young daughter was reported to have violated it on several occasions.³³

Many high-spirited evenings were punctuated with spontaneous "ghost dances." A group of revelers would throw sheets over themselves and "whoop it up," usually crowning the festivity with a presentation of a souvenir to some Chautauqua notable.³⁴

The excitement of July 4th was unsurpassed. The GAR made the arrangements and persuaded the Secretary of War to send six guns out to Glen Echo. A committee met them at the gate and marched with the unit to a knoll overlooking the Potomac. At noon

31. Star (July 4, 1891), p. 3.

32. Star (June 22, 1891), p. 8.

33. Star (July 7, 1891), p. 6.

34. Star (July 13, 1891), p. 3.

the guns blasted out a 21-gun salute. For all of that, the revelry really began the night before. At midnight, a boisterous group awakened the sleeping camp to a serenade of pots and pans, horns and pistols. The outraged campers doused them in return with buckets of water.³⁵ To insure that such high spirits did not spill over into riot, decorum was enforced by 32 polite yet stern policemen.³⁶

The programs ran throughout the week from mid-morning until about 8:30 p.m. The weekday programs were secular in nature except that certain presentations, especially in anthropology and archeology, involved religious problems raised by theories of evolution and views on the role of science.

Typical of the weekday schedule of events was that of Monday, June 22, 1891:

- 10:00 a.m. Maj. J. W. Powell---"From the Hunter to the Inventor Stage"
- 11:00 a.m. Dr. John J. Lafferty---"Lack of Luck with Lee"
- 2:00 p.m. Musical Prelude: Violin Solo, Giuseppe Vitale
- 2:30 p.m. Thomas Nelson Page: Reading from his own writings, "Edinburg's Droundin"
- 4:00 p.m. Leonard H. Vincent: "George Eliot"

35. Star (July 4, 1891), p. 3.

36. Star (July 19, 1891), p. 3.

8:00 p.m. Constantin Steinberg: "What is Music?"
Illustrated by selections on the piano.³⁷

Initially, the Sunday schedule called exclusively for devotional gatherings--Sunday school, Bible study classes, sermons, and the vesper service. As the season progressed, however, even the Sabbath program grew more secular, and the Chautauqua chorus and band stood ready with interludes to keep the day bright. The music was as mixed as the rest of the program. The band might perform the brassy "A Trip to Coney Island," followed by solemn renditions of "In Heavenly Love Abiding" and "Gloria," accompanying the chorus.

In order to make their messages more palatable to a vacationing audience, the lecturers often delivered their talks by lively, colorful, and even humorous means. Peter von Finkelstein Mamreov's presentation, "City Life in Jerusalem," was given in "authentic" costume by a troupe of performers. They ostensibly demonstrated typical street fights of the Middle East, harems, marriages, and a variety of oriental customs. An intriguing topic, "The Uses of Ugliness," was offered by Jahu De Witt Miller, who admitted to being a lively illustration of his topic. He also expounded on "Love, Courtship and Marriage," regarding himself well qualified to speak on these matters since he had no personal experience with any of the three subjects. The humorous Mr. Miller kept his audience "hilarious throughout."³⁸

37. Star (June 20, 1891), p. 3.

38. Star (June 27, 1891), p. 3.

All this variety of entertainment and instruction could be had easily and inexpensively, so the sponsors asserted. A notice of coming events in the Washington Evening Star of June 15, 1891, informed the public that travel to Glen Echo was simple by the Tennallytown electric cars, which charged only 35 cents for a round-trip. Forty cents bought a daily ticket and four dollars a season's pass.

The first year for the National Chautauqua had all the signs of success. The press carried daily accounts and reviews of the program. Attendance was so good that the season, originally scheduled to end on July 4, was extended to August 1.³⁹ The Assembly was preparing to publish a weekly newspaper, The Glen Echo Chautauqua.⁴⁰ The crowds were large and exuberant, and many people planned to spend an entire season. Land sales within and around the project were brisk.

But the papers of the next summer carry no mention of the Chautauqua Assembly. As might be expected, the Amphitheater was employed for a July 4th celebration, but apparently nothing else.⁴¹ The nationwide calendar carried in the Chautauquan magazine contained no indication of an assembly for 1892. For 1893, only a one-day meet,

39. Star (July 6, 1891), p. 8. Also (July 30, 1891), p. 2.

40. Star (July 8, 1891), p. 8.

41. Star (June 30, 1892), p. 8. Also (July 2 and 5, 1892), p. 8.

June 22, was called for.⁴²

What happened? The same type of natural calamity that befell the Glen Echo Cafe. This time it was not fire, but rather malarial fever. This time the structures were not destroyed but left deserted for several years to come. George Freeman Pollock recalled the time, probably, just prior to the 1892 season. While work was progressing to enlarge the project, employees began coming down with fever. Finally, the well-known Professor Henry Spencer, President of the Spencerian Business College in Washington, succumbed to the disease. This episode stopped the sale of lots and tainted the area.⁴³ Without a cash flow and with only a trickle of patronage, the sizable undertaking was doomed.

Vaudeville Days

From 1893 to 1897 the newspapers continue to carry only sparse reports on the use of the Glen Echo property. Occasionally the amphitheater would be hired out to organizations for fund raising benefits. At other times it seems to have been leased for short periods to individual entrepreneurs.⁴⁴ At first the presentations were described as concerts and recitals. But by 1897 the quality of the entertainment presented at the amphitheater had changed.

42. Chautauquan, 14 (1892-93), pp. 377 and 500-12.

43. Pollock, Skyland, pp. 42-43.

44. Star (July 25, 1895), p. 8.

An announcement of that year read:

The list of new attractions for the amphitheater at Glen Echo includes the following high class vaudeville artists direct from Keith's New York and Philadelphia theaters: Van Leer and Barton, the kings of black face comedy; the Brownings in a refined sketch;...Caswell⁴⁵ and Arnold, the electric acrobatic duo....

Clearly, pious instruction and refined culture were no longer the objects at the Glen Echo development.

No doubt the Chautauqua association had a sizable investment in the grounds and improvements. The leases were not paying expenses and the association was driven to borrow about \$20,000 initially and \$17,000 on a second note to make ends meet. By 1903 they were deeply in debt with two liens against the property which finally fell into the hands of a building association holding the first trust.⁴⁶

Amusement Park Days

After this the Glen Echo property was owned by the Washington Railway and Electric Co., ultimately absorbed by Capital Transit Co. of Washington, D. C. Alonzo P. Shaw leased and converted it into an amusement park. The park may have changed hands several times by 1911, when it was taken over by Leonard B. Schloss, who was made vice-president and general manager of the enterprise.

45. Star (July 24, 1897), p. 8.

46. The Sunday Star (June 20, 1937), prt. 4.

Schloss must be credited with insuring the long-term success of the Glen Echo Amusement Park. He made it an attractive spot to thousands by investing, over the years, nearly one million dollars in improvements and by adhering to a policy of adding a major amusement every year.⁴⁷

By the 1930's, Glen Echo Park sported the "Crystal Pool," accommodating 3,000 people and circulating 1 1/2 million gallons of water daily. Schloss also installed the "Spanish Garden" Ballroom with 7,500 square feet of floor space accommodating 1,800 people.⁴⁸ The amphitheater was converted into a large midway (Illustration No. 9). Beauty contests became regular features. It had the many rides commonly associated with amusement parks--roller coaster and carousels, dodgem, skeeball alleys and shooting galleries, a penny arcade, the "pretzel," the "whip," and "flying scooter."

The Glen Echo Amusement Park was long considered a family playground with wholesome attractions. It was not a tent show of belly dancers and rows of lurid flip-card peep-shows. A guide book of 1927 had this to say about the park:

With the birth of the present Glen Echo Park in 1911, there sprang into existence a wave of reform in summer amusements, expelling the irresponsible and loosely conducted so-called out-door resorts in the vicinity of the National Capital...Each and every one of

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.

the varied amusements is entirely devoid of objectionable features and strict compliance with the rules of good conduct is at all times demanded of patrons.⁴⁹

The war years, 1941-45, caused shortages of popcorn, soda pop, and peanuts. The motor boats were taken out of operation because of gasoline rationing. Ammunition was short at the shooting galleries. Nevertheless, business was still good and crowds were there waiting in line to take a swipe at Hitler's face with a bean bag or baseball.⁵⁰ A wartime weekend could still boast 30,000 visitors.⁵¹

By mid-century excitement in amusement parks began to wane. They were no longer considered high class entertainment, and operating costs were pushing prices beyond what patrons would pay. No longer was there the desire to install new attractions, and those already there began to deteriorate. At Glen Echo matters were further aggravated by a stockholder's proxy battle over control of Capital Transit, which owned the amusement park, and subsequent sale first to Continental Enterprises and then to Rekab, Inc. of New Jersey. The latter organization was headed by Abram Baker and his brothers Samuel and Manuel. (The Baker Brothers are still the owners of the Park.)⁵² The Bakers had interests in Palisades and Olympic Parks in New Jersey and applied their experience to the

49. Book of Washington, 1927. Extract in Washingtoniana Collection, District of Columbia Public Library.

50. Star (April 11, 1943).

51. The Washington Post (June 22, 1947).

52. Post (July 12, 1955); Star (June 19, 1955).

the management of Glen Echo.

Today the summer months at Glen Echo Park have been called "hot and mirthless"...a place where the "grass [grows] high and [wilts] back to the macadam of the great and empty parking lot." Some people have called for the resurrection of those finer moments of amusement and culture and have proposed a Tivoli-like park in conjunction with developments to recapture the vision of the National Chautauqua which Clara Barton believed would be "a mighty influence in the land."⁵³

Summary

The history of Glen Echo-on-the-Potomac is a story with a number of chapters. First, it is the story of a vision--an endeavor to build a citadel of learning and cultured piety on the banks of the Potomac in view of the nation's capital. It was, perhaps, the most ambitious attempt to extend the frontiers of the Chautauqua movement, a great wave of democratized education which swept across the country during the late nineteenth century.

Second, the Glen-Echo development was an early attempt at a planned community with substantial homes, recreation and cultural facilities, organized street plan and public transportation all in a scenic resort atmosphere.

53. Morris Fradin, "Washington's Rhine?," American Forests (May, 1967), pp. 22-25 and 40-41.

Third, it reveals a significant chapter in the social history of the nation--how it amused and entertained itself. From vaudeville to amusement parks, from fancy dining to fancy dancing, the story is there to be told.

Historical Resources

1. Glen Echo Heights Homes: Four of these early stone residences remain today--the two Baltzley homes and two others. There does not appear to be any others of stone, but some older frame houses may stem from the period of early development.
2. Glen Echo Cafe: Although this structure was devastated by fire, a search on the ground may yet reveal structural remains.
3. National Chautauqua: Casual observation reveals only the stone belfry and part of an attached masonry wall which is part of the entrance to the present park (Illustrations Nos. 10 & 11). The mid-way which was formed from the amphitheater became termite-ridden, was condemned, and burned down by the Glen Echo fire department in 1950.⁵⁴ The stone walls were caved in and the present parking lot constructed over the site. Whether the grottoes were filled in is not certain. In that year portions of the Hall of Philosophy still remained. Careful examination might still reveal sections of this structure. The rail bed for

54. Sunday Star (April 30, 1950).

the electric railway is still visible, although the tracks have been taken up. There may be frame residences on the original Chautauqua property which date to the early period.

4. Red Cross Building: The accounts of 1891 considered this structure as part of the Chautauqua Assembly. It is very likely that this building and the present Clara Barton House are one and the same. Certainly the land on which the house stands at Oxford Road and DePauw Place was encompassed by the original Chautauqua plan (Illustration No. 12). And the land was sold to Clara Barton on July 31, 1891 by the National Chautauqua of Glen Echo.⁵⁵

Construction of the Red Cross headquarters began even before Miss Barton purchased the land. A news account of July 11, 1891 had this to say:

The unsightly scaffolding has been removed from the front of the Red Cross building and the great red brick cross deep set in the gray stone facade can be seen as far as the building itself. Miss Clara Barton is mistress of the pleasant home and succeeds in making all the borders comfortable and happy. The interior consists of a wide hall draped in the flags of all nations which have been presented to Miss Barton in acknowledgment of her services with the Red Cross Society. Flanking this hall are the large airy bedrooms and pleasant sitting rooms through which there is a constant cool breeze.⁵⁶

55. Lewis, Clara Barton House, p. 11.

56. Star (July 11, 1891), p. 6.

This description fits the appearance of the Clara Barton House today except for the reference to the stone facade. The explanation for this is given by Miss Barton's cousin, William E. Barton, in his book *The Life of Clara Barton*. He states that the stone front was removed because of the "prison-like chill" it gave to the interior.⁵⁷

57. Barton, p. 307.



1. Edwin Baltzley's Home on Glen Echo Heights.



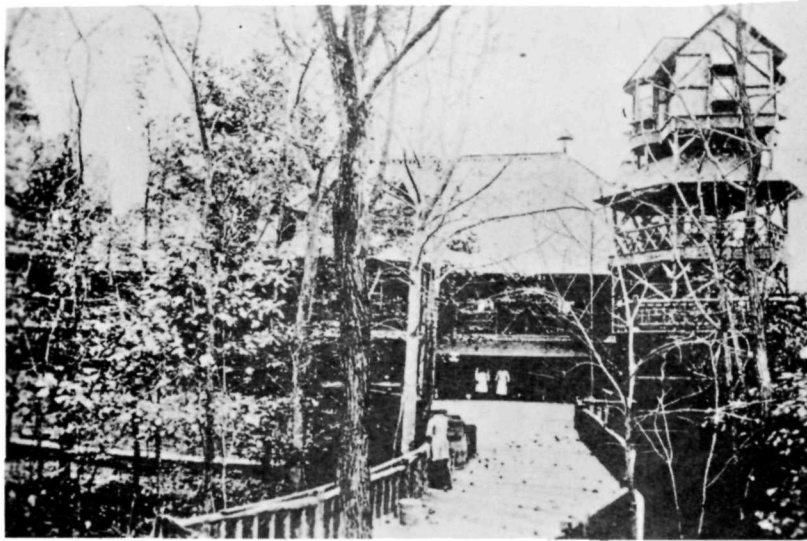
2. Entrance to Glen Echo Cafe and Porte Cochere, 1891.



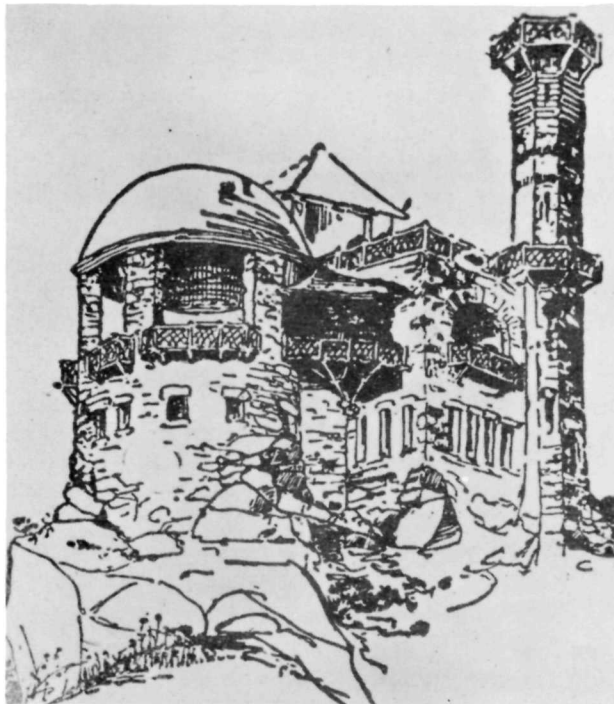
3. Plaza, Dining Hall and Band Stand at Glen Echo Cafe, 1891.



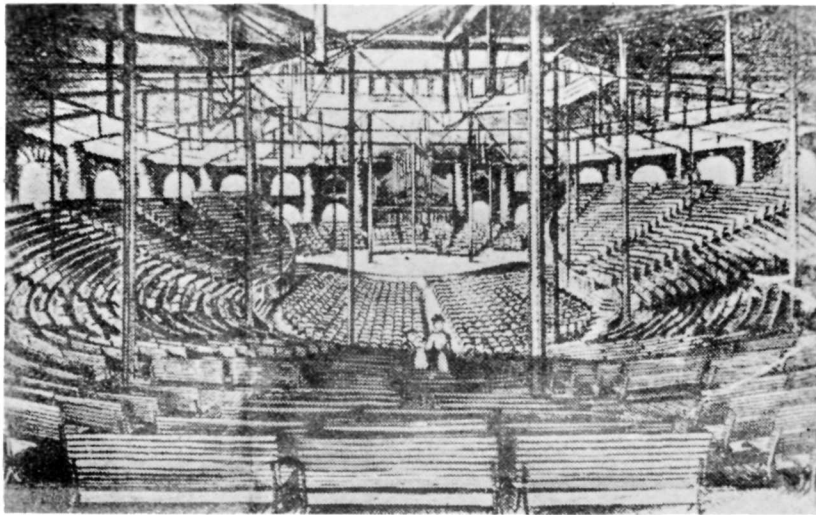
4. Loft overlooking the Potomac at Glen Echo, 1891.



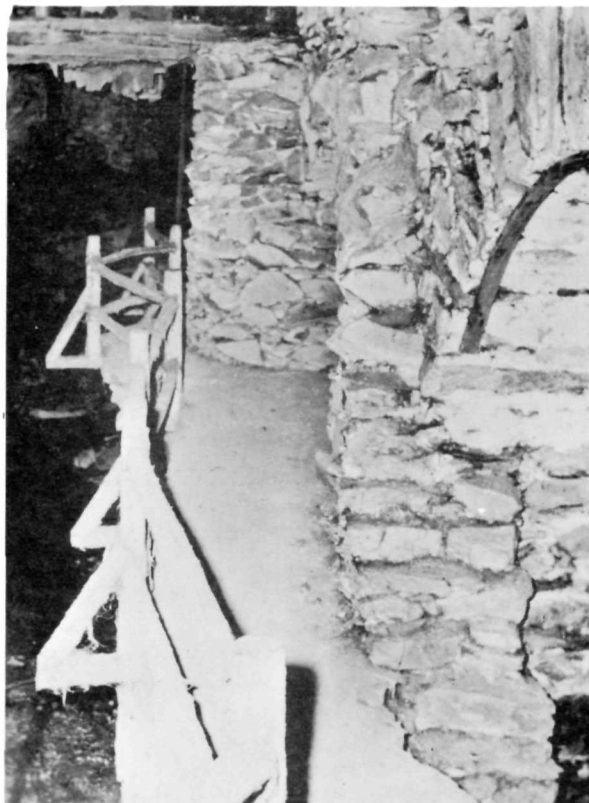
5. Loft and Dining Hall at Glen Echo, 1891.



6. Hall of Philosophy at Glen Echo Chautauqua.



7. Amphitheater Interior; organ in background, 1891.



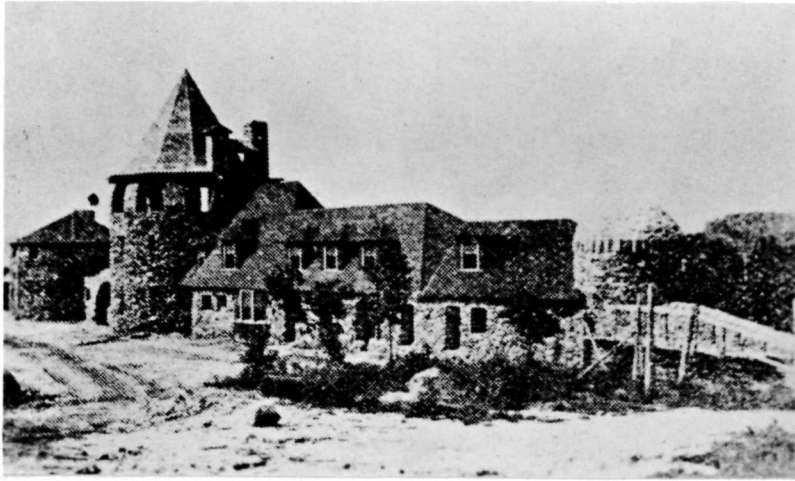
8. Grottoes beneath the Chautauqua Amphitheater.



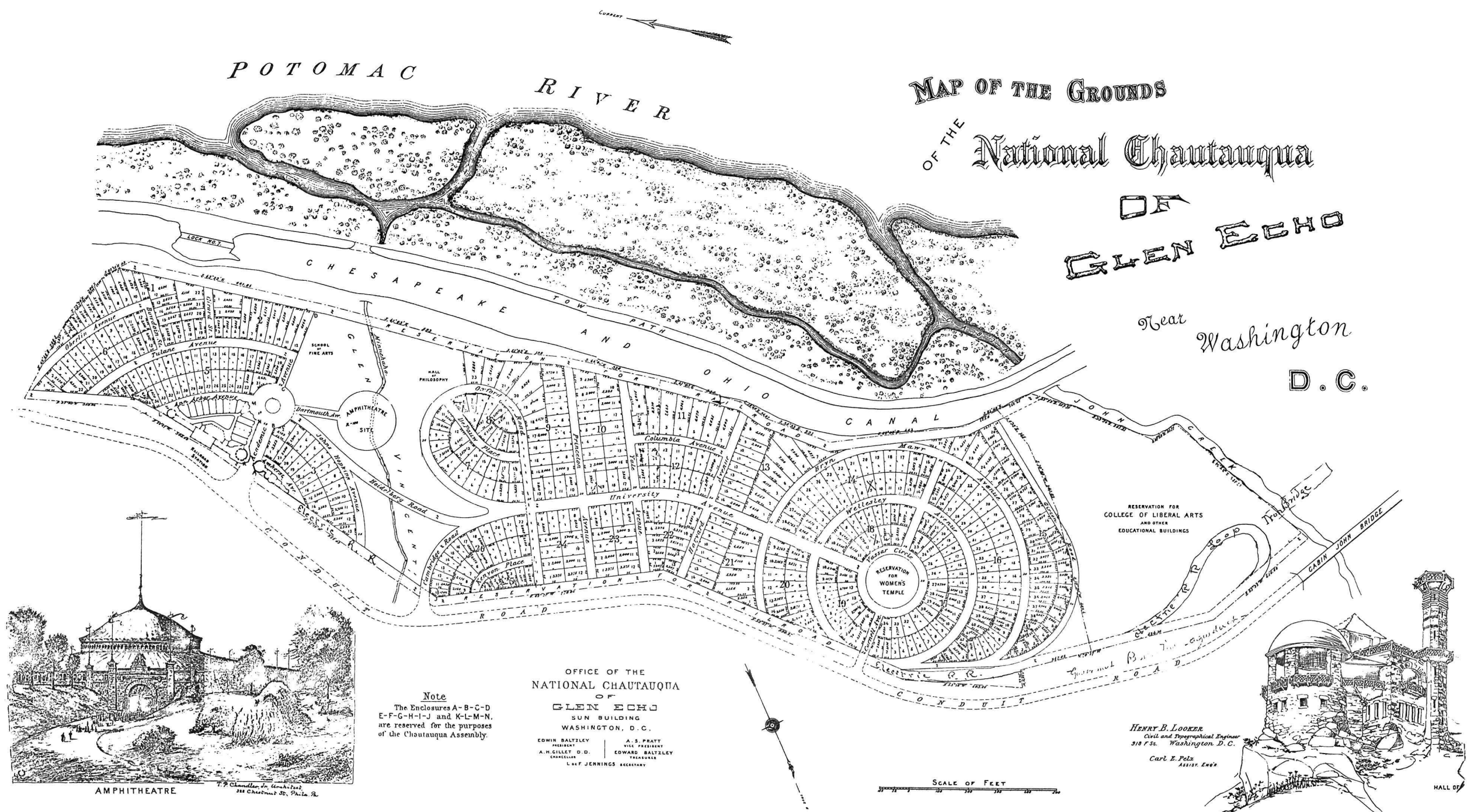
9. Midway at Glen Echo Amusement Park. Formerly the Amphitheater.



10. Glen Echo Chautauqua as it appeared about 1900.



11. Glen Echo Chautauqua showing entrance (left center) and Hall of Philosophy (right center). Photo probably taken in 1891.



12. Plan of Glen Echo Chautauqua, 1891.

