

In telling this part of the Chautauqua story, the quotes, articles, and announcements presented herein are transcribed as found in sources from the era to preserve historical accuracy.

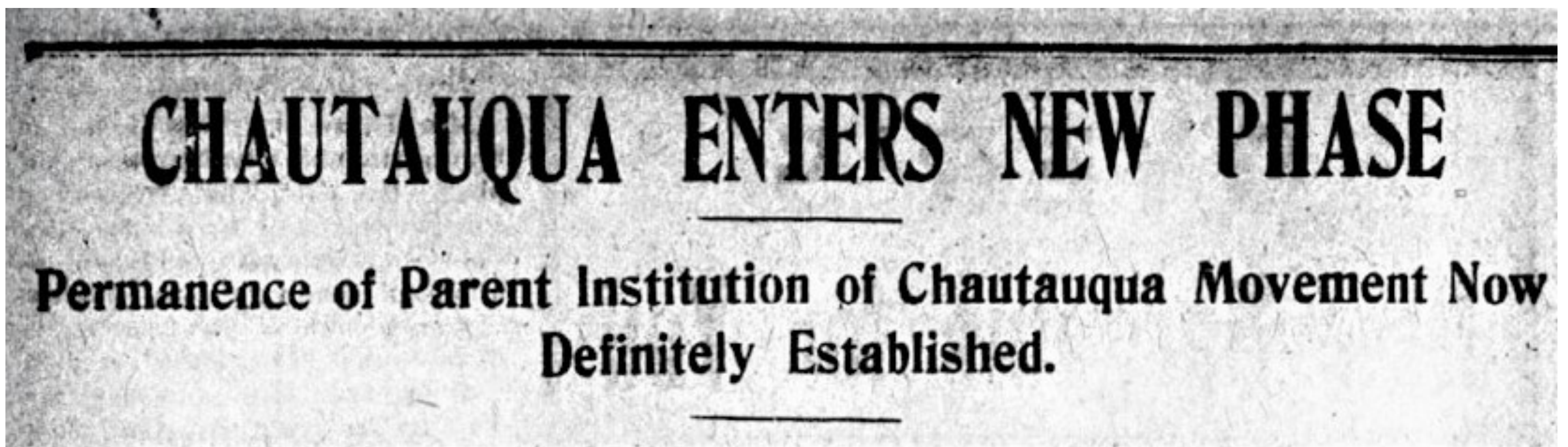
The images and accompanying quoted descriptions are reflective of the sentiments of the times, reminding us of our historical heritage.

African American groups and individuals are highlighted in bold.

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE AT CHAUTAUQUA

1900-1914

BUILDING & BEAUTIFICATION

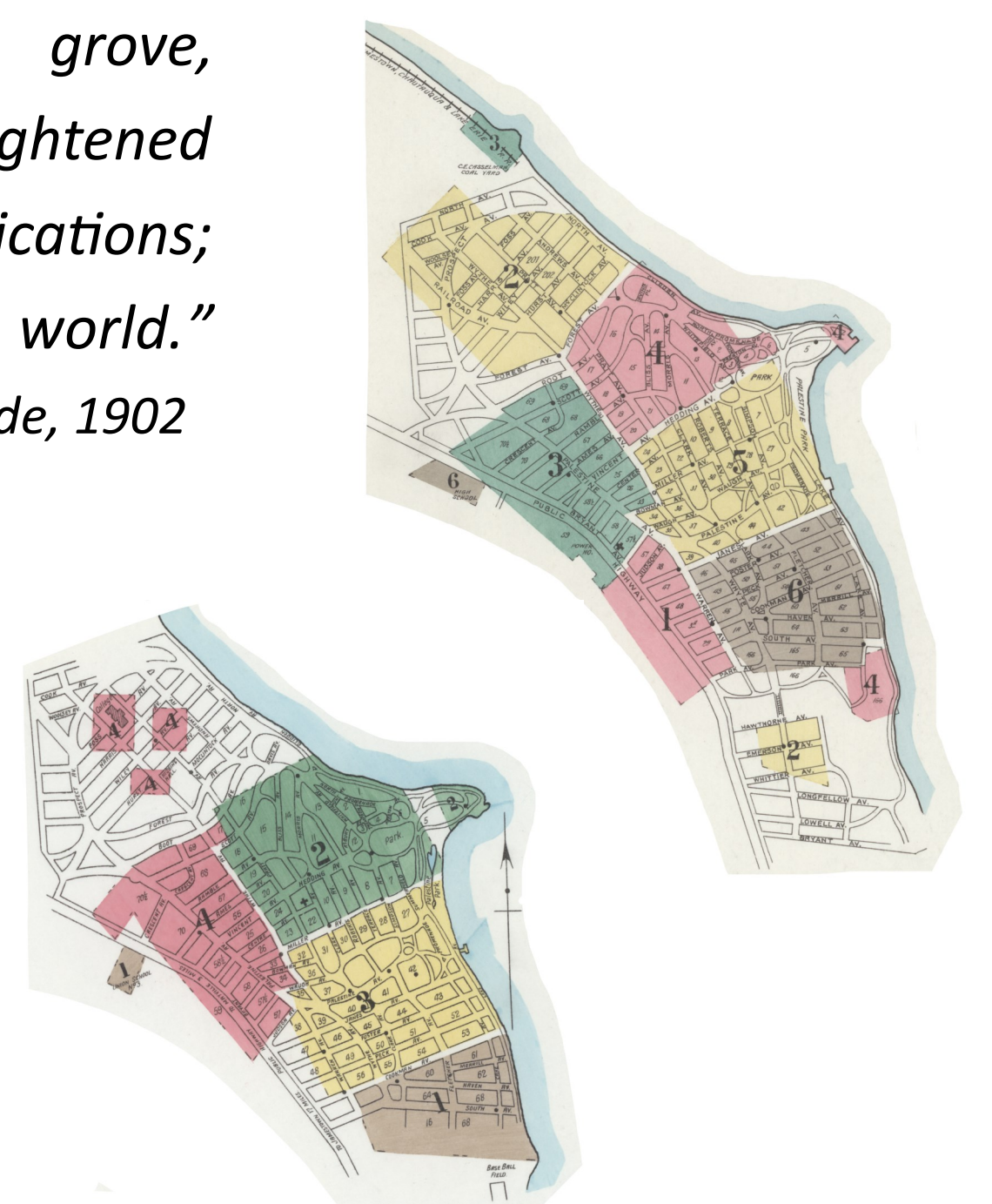


Springville Journal (Springville, NY)

“From the camp meeting ground with a few hemlock lodges and its auditorium in the grove, Chautauqua has grown into a municipality with its hundreds of cottages, its public buildings and its enlightened and progressive government; its university, its Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle, and its publications; its thousands of summer residents and visitors and its tens of thousands of students in all parts of the world.”

—Captain Frederick W. Hyde, 1902

A new century set in motion a “wholly new phase” at Chautauqua, as the “city of tents” quickly became a city of foundations. As the Chautauqua Movement continued to spread and attract growing audiences to the Assembly Grounds—including increasing numbers of African Americans, spurred by the advent of “negro Chautauquas” and the general dissemination of the Chautauqua Idea in African American publications—Chautauqua expanded its boundaries and responded to popular interest in civic improvement by remodeling existing cottages and facilities, redesigning roads and walkways, reorienting gates and entrances, planting trees and public gardens, improving sanitation, and constructing some of Chautauqua’s most iconic public structures.

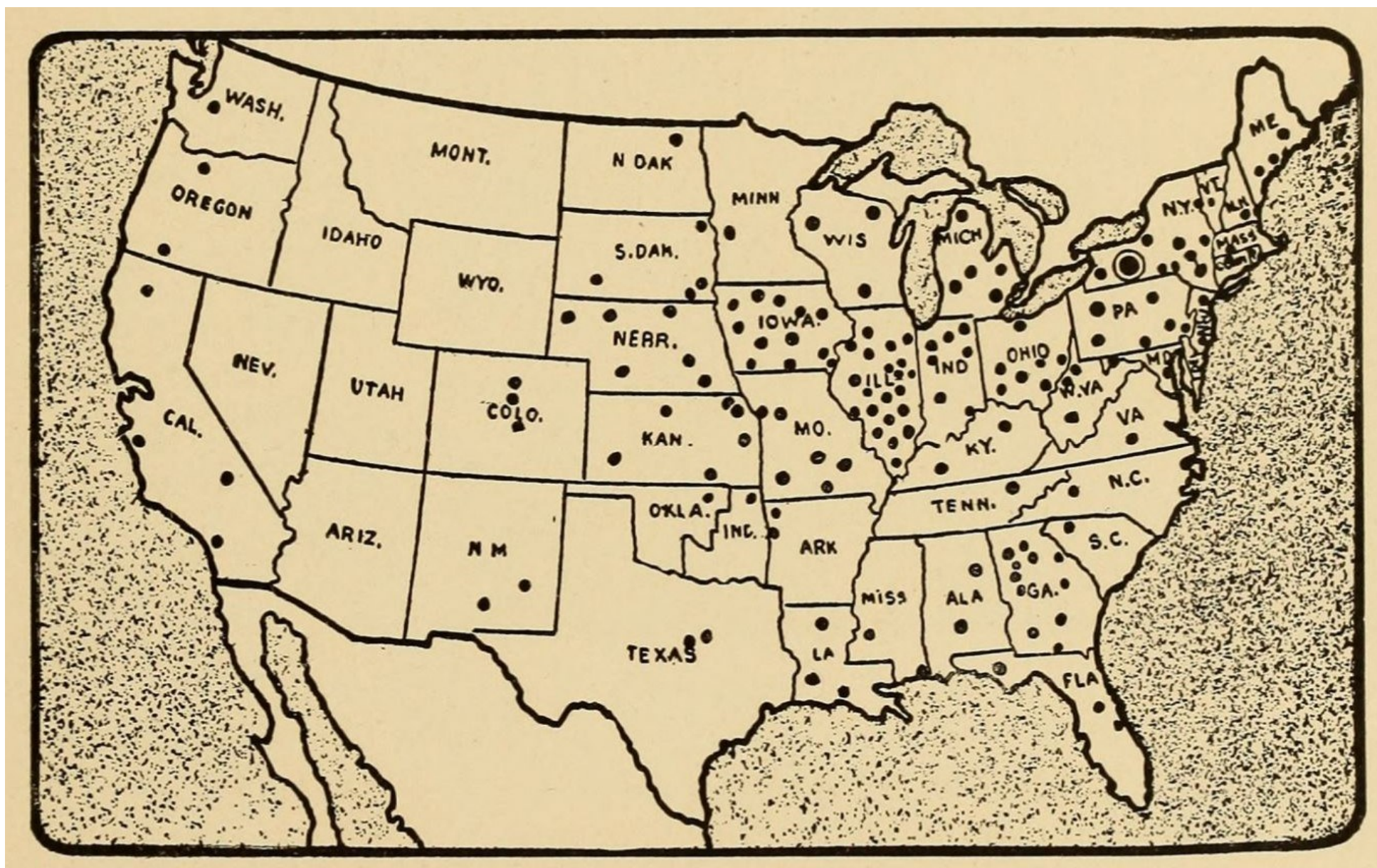


Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps showing the growth of the Assembly Grounds from 1902 (left) to 1912 (right).

The historical context of Chautauqua is the historical context of the African American experience at Chautauqua. This is the historical context of the years 1900–1914.

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE AT CHAUTAUQUA 1900-1914

SPREADING & SHIFTING SENTIMENT



Sketch Map Showing Spread of Chautauqua Assemblies, 1905.

"...the Chautauquan idea is becoming epidemic... The south is awakening to the call of the 'mater,' and the presence of an ever increasing southern representation speaks strongly for the future of Chautauqua in 'Dixie.' There is no northern summer colony which can boast so many residents from that part of the United States."

—S.M. Cooper, 1904

At the turn of the century, the bulk of the Chautauqua Assembly's summer attendance could be traced to the central portion of the United States, but, as the era progressed and the Chautauqua Idea spread across the country, the movement's "Mother Chautauqua" began attracting new audiences—including an "ever increasing southern representation"—who brought with them a range of sentiments which gradually influenced the Chautauqua platform and population.

"From the South the attendance is very largely increased. Alabama, Arkansas and Missouri have sent two-thirds more than last year. Florida, Maryland and Tennessee are represented by three times as many, and Texas leads them all with five times the number registered last year."

—The Chautauqua Assembly Herald, 1901

The spring of 1906 brought several "notable changes and improvements" to the Athenaeum, among which was a refurbishment of the hotel's white façade. Painted a "rich brown" at the advice of leading architectural experts, it was hoped the exterior's alteration would "generally be acknowledged to be pleasing and artistic," but this was not the case for one "supersensitive" southerner who "objected" to the Hotel because it was "colored."



Hotel Athenaeum, ca. 1906. Chautauqua Institution Archives.

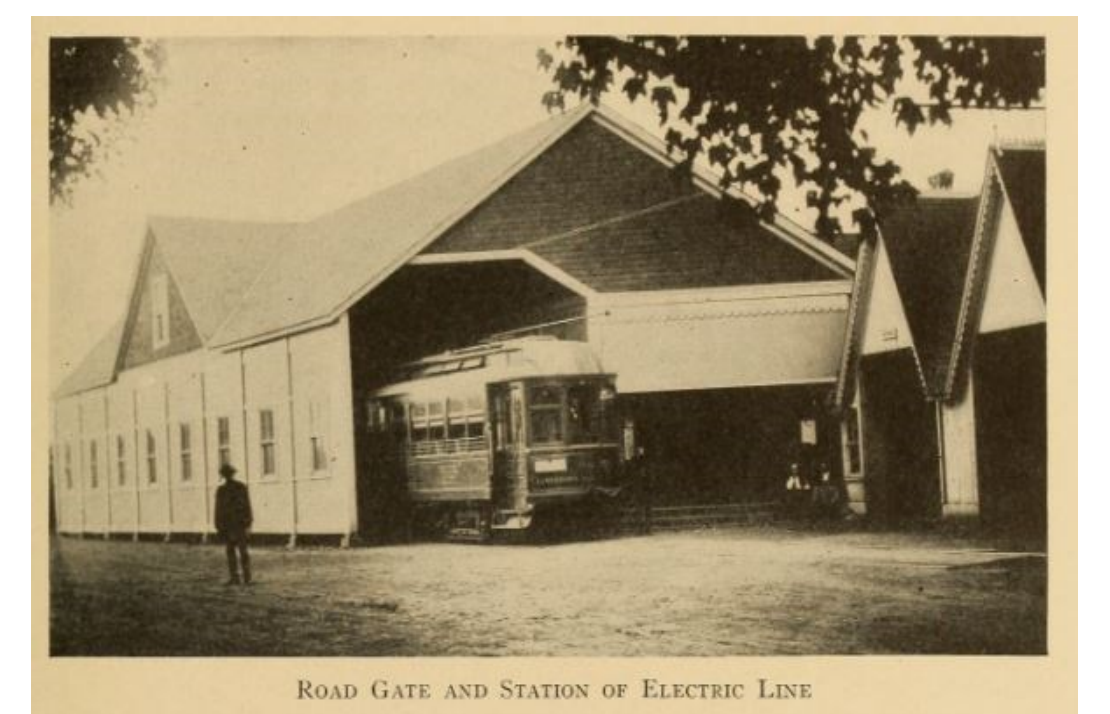
¶Supersensitive—The Southerner who objected to the Hotel this season because it is "colored."

The Chautauquan Daily, 1906.

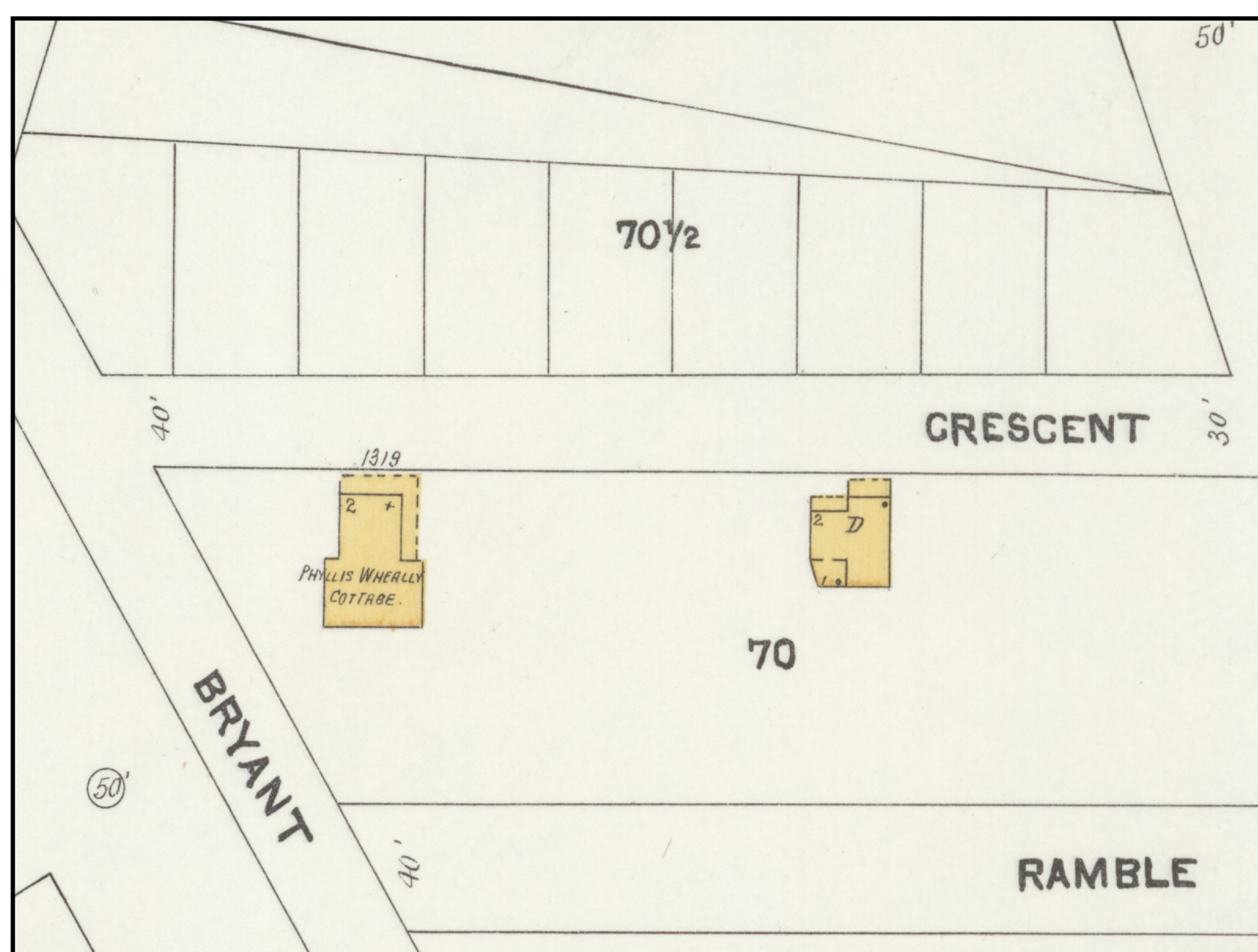
THE AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE AT CHAUTAUQUA 1900-1914

CREATION OF THE PHYLLIS WHEATLEY

Among its many beautification efforts, at the turn of the century, Chautauqua made plans to convert its “backyard into a front yard” by improving the appearance of its property along the public highway with the removal of a number of structures in anticipation of an “electric railway,” which, by 1904, ushered passengers to the Road Gate—today’s Main Gate—Chautauqua’s new “front door.”



“Until 1905 nearly all visitors approached Chautauqua on the lake side... Since the building of the trolley line, however, the road gate has become the front door instead of the back door.”
—The Chautauquan, October 1913



The Phyllis Wheatley Cottage appearing as the “Phyllis Wheally Cottage,” Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1906.

One of the buildings which was relocated to allow for the construction of the rail line was a “small and dilapidated affair” which was moved to 23 Crescent Avenue—one of the “many fine building plots” created as a result of the highway improvements—where it was converted into a two-story frame cottage named the Phyllis Wheatley. During a period when outward appearances and first impressions were of utmost

importance and priority, Chautauqua established the cottage—spelled “Phyllis Wheatley” by the Institution and sometimes called the Colored Boarding House—in plain sight of the public highway along the ground’s new “front yard.” Furnished by the Institution as optional housing for a limited number of African American domestic workers not lodging with their employers, the Phyllis Wheatley Cottage was named for Phillis Wheatley, an African American poet who lived most of her life in enslavement before being freed in 1775. Having died nearly a century before the creation of the Assembly Grounds, Wheatley held no association with Chautauqua beyond the cottage which, like other buildings and clubs during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, adopted her name.

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE AT CHAUTAUQUA 1900-1914

ACCOMMODATIONS

As Chautauqua's property and program expanded during the early twentieth century, accommodations flourished across the grounds, with new and enlarged cottages, boarding houses, and hotels—many privately owned and operated by proprietors who set their own rules and rates—receiving leisure and employment-seeking visitors, as well as platform headliners like the **South African Boy Choir**, who, upon their return to Chautauqua following their appearance in 1899, stayed at The Albion on Terrace Avenue in 1900 and 1901.



South African Boy Choir, ca. 1900. Chautauqua Institution Archives.

"The departure of the South African choir for West Virginia was the occasion of an ovation to the little fellows. Groups of people from cottages adjoining the Albion, where they were entertained, gathered to bid them good-by..."

—The Chautauqua Assembly Herald, 1901



Nellie Taborn. Provided by the Marshall family.

While some people attended the summer assembly in distinct capacities of business or leisure, many enjoyed a combined experience—as was possibly the case for **Nellie E. (Marshall) Taborn**, a single mother from Ohio, who, in 1910, visited Chautauqua with her children, **Goldie Taborn** and **Leon Taborn**. Taborn may have attended Chautauqua to work as a housekeeper for a private family, but, if so, she did not stay with her employer, rather the family of three

found lodgings together on Waugh Avenue. Though not the experience of Taborn if she did, in fact, work during her time at Chautauqua, many African American domestics lodged with their employers; however, for those who did not—whether by necessity or choice—accommodations were available throughout and beyond the grounds, with lodgings on the property not limited to the Phyllis Wheatley Cottage, which provided a finite number of rooms to a limited number of occupants.

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE AT CHAUTAUQUA 1900-1914

EMPLOYMENT



Flower Girls on Recognition Day, 1908. Chautauqua Institution Archives.



Agricultural School Dining Tent, 1913. Chautauqua Institution Archives.



Errand Boys at the Colonnade, 1909–1913. Chautauqua Institution Archives.



Widrig Cottage, ca. 1907. Chautauqua Institution Archives.



The Empire Cottage, ca. 1908. Chautauqua Institution Archives.

As they had during the first twenty-five years of Chautauqua's existence, African Americans continued to find work on the Assembly Grounds at the beginning of the twentieth century, with individuals from across the country advertising for employment and those like **Mary A. Williams**, **Mary E. Haggins**, **Priscilla Moore**, **Alex Parker**, **Thomas B. Jones**, and **Mabell Currie** securing positions as domestic servants—serving as chefs, waiters, waitresses, porters, nannies, nurses, ladies' maids, chamber maids, housekeepers, personal cooks, clerks, and errand boys at boarding houses, rooming cottages, hotels, stores, the homes of private families, as well as for the Institution.

NURSE—Colored, wishes position with children for summer. "C. M. B." Gen. Del., Chautauqua, N. Y.

The Chautauquan Daily, 1909.

WANTED.—Position as ladies' maid by mulatto girl, holds diploma in hair dressing, manicuring, facial massage, chiropody. References. E. J., P. O. box 500.

The Chautauquan Daily, 1910.

INTELLIGENT YOUNG COLORED WOMAN—teacher and graduate of Southern Industrial School, desires place for the summer as household assistant or mother's helper. Address B, care Chautauquan Weekly.

The Chautauquan Weekly, 1911.

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE AT CHAUTAUQUA

1900-1914

WHY ARE NEGROES INVITED?

After visiting Chautauqua in July 1902, a teacher from the Second Ward Colored School of Augusta, Georgia, named **Amelia W. Sullivan**, recounted her experience to a newspaper editor in Buffalo, New York:

STORY OF HER TRIALS.

She went to Chautauqua. She has written for The Courier a statement of how she was received:

"To the Editor of The Courier:

"I have been asked to write a few lines telling of my trip to Chautauqua. "I left New York City, Friday, July 25th, and reached Chautauqua Saturday at noon. Upon reaching Chautauqua I reported at Administration building, and inquired (of a young man) for a place of board and lodging, stating that I had just arrived, and that I knew no one in the place. He said that he could give me no information whatever, but that there was a young lady who could, and she was out, and it would be an hour before she would return. I did not feel like standing up there one hour, so decided to look up a place for myself. I was very tired, too, having traveled all night and a half day. After I had gone a little distance, I noticed a cottage with the sign 'Rooms To Rent.' I applied there, the lady showed a room and told her price, and I had decided to take it, when a minute later she returned to tell me that she could not accommodate me, making some excuse about her husband, etc. I again took my luggage, and after going a short distance, saw another sign, 'Rooms To Rent.' I applied there. A lady met me with a very pleasant smile. I told her that I would like to get lodging, and board if possible. She very kindly took me up to a very small room (too small for my trunk), with a bed and a chair. After telling her price, I decided to take it, at least, for a while. I paid her the price and had just taken off my hat, when I heard someone call to her from the next room. She stood and they whispered together for some time, then she returned, saying that she was sorry, but that she would be compelled to return the money, as she could not accommodate me, that she had some (white) ladies there from the South, and for that cause she could not.

FINDS AN ATTIC AT LAST.

"I applied at many different places and received the same 'No.' I did, however, get a place at the extreme south side of the grounds; a small attic room.

"The next thought was of board. I had lunch enough along to keep up on for a little while. On Monday I started out to look for a boarding place. I was directed to a place where they were sure I could get board. I applied, only to hear that same 'No,' that I had so often heard before. After looking for a long while one lady accommodated me to whatever her tables afforded. I am spending the time as pleasantly as I can under circumstances.

"The time is now, that we have many negro women and men all over this country who are accustomed to comfortable quarters, and as pleasant accommodation as any other people. Our much honored and distinguished Booker T. Washington visited Chautauqua during the month of July. He was received cordially and entertained royally, of which we all feel happy to know. But, all of us cannot be great like Mr. Washington, and could not expect to be received as he was, and yet, when we are invited to any place, we do expect to be treated with common courtesy at least.

WHY ARE NEGROES INVITED?

"If the men in authority at Chautauqua do not want the negro among them, and have no place for him, why invite him? I think it would be better to be silent on the subject than invite him, and then discriminate against him when he comes. It is not pleasant to a negro to embarrass anyone, neither is it pleasant to him to be embarrassed. There is nothing wrong in being a negro, though very inconvenient for him in some places. Chautauqua is a wonderful place, and affords an opportunity to many people that probably could not be enjoyed at any other place in this country. This being true, why not reach down and help a struggling brother rise, 'while the days are going by?'

"Respectfully,

"AMELIA W. SULLIVAN,

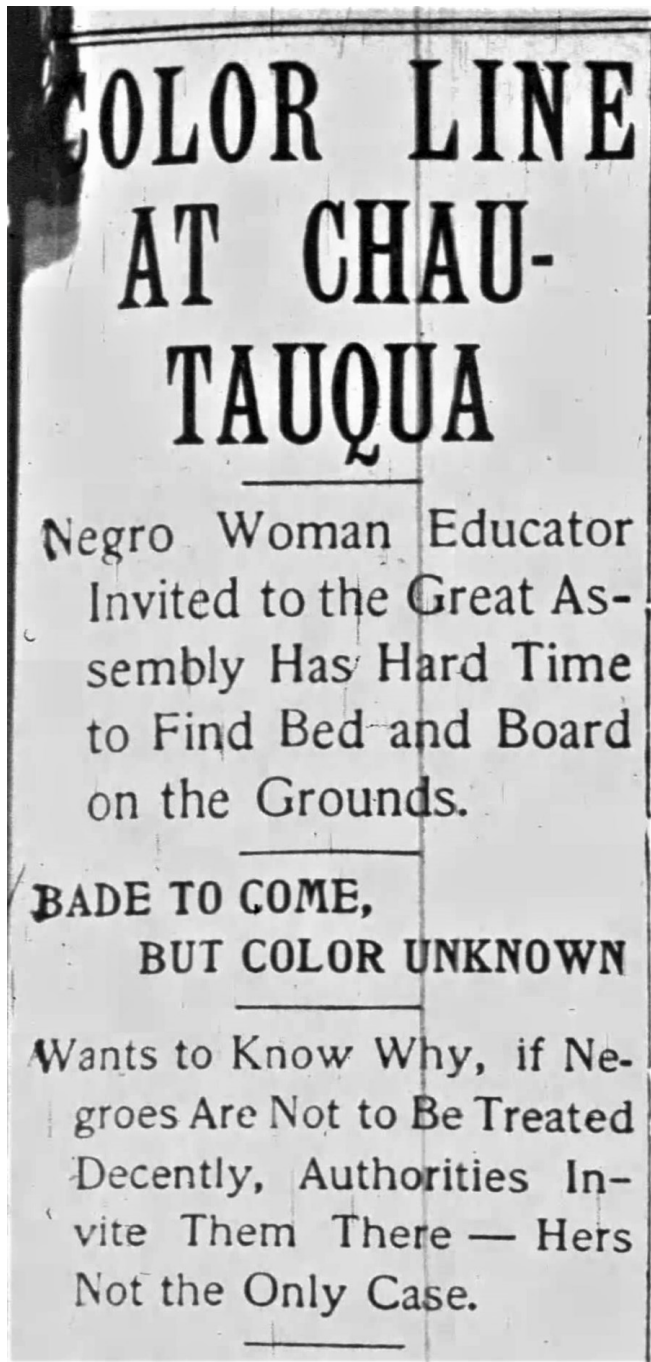
"No. 1442 Pine Street, Augusta, Ga.

"Aug. 4, 1902."

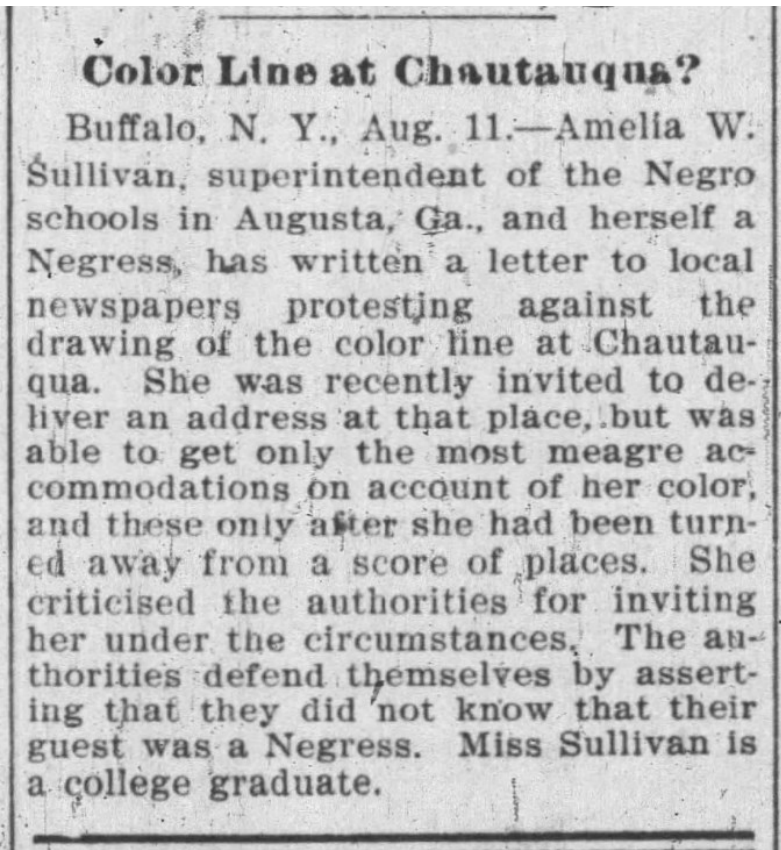
THE AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE AT CHAUTAUQUA 1900-1914

COLOR LINE AT CHAUTAUQUA?

In the days and weeks that followed, Sullivan’s account spread across the country—generating an range of commentary as newspapers from New York, New England, Washington, D.C., North Carolina, Tennessee, Kansas, and California recirculated the story under an array of headlines.



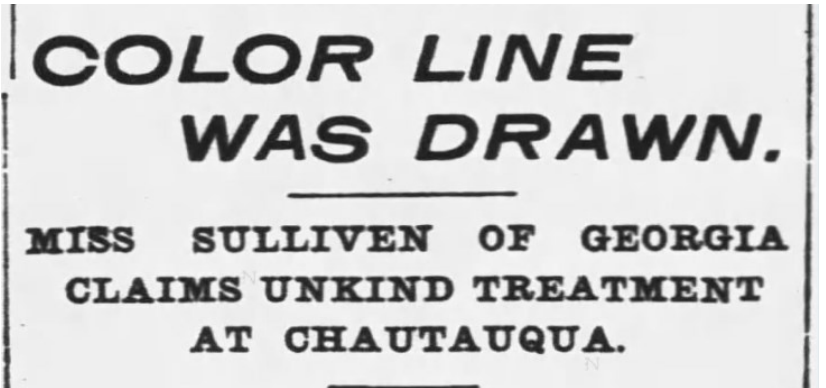
Buffalo Courier (Buffalo, NY)



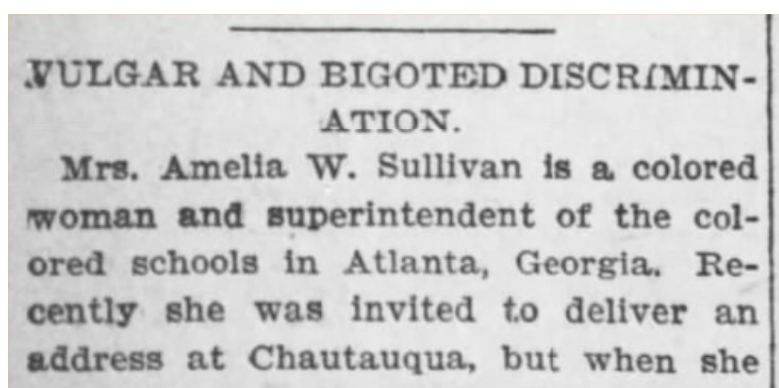
The Berkshire Eagle (Pittsfield, MA)



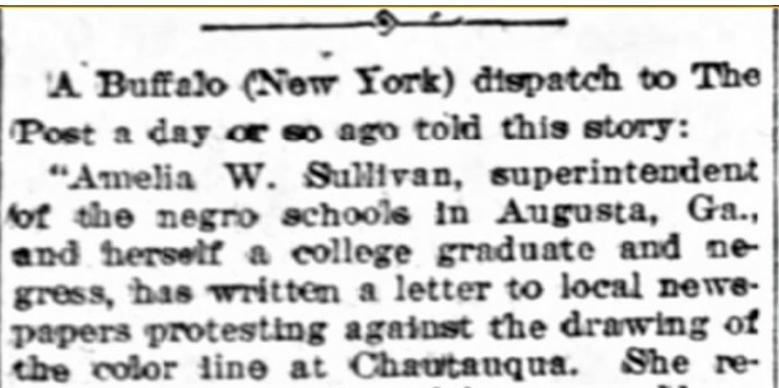
The Evening Times (Washington, DC)



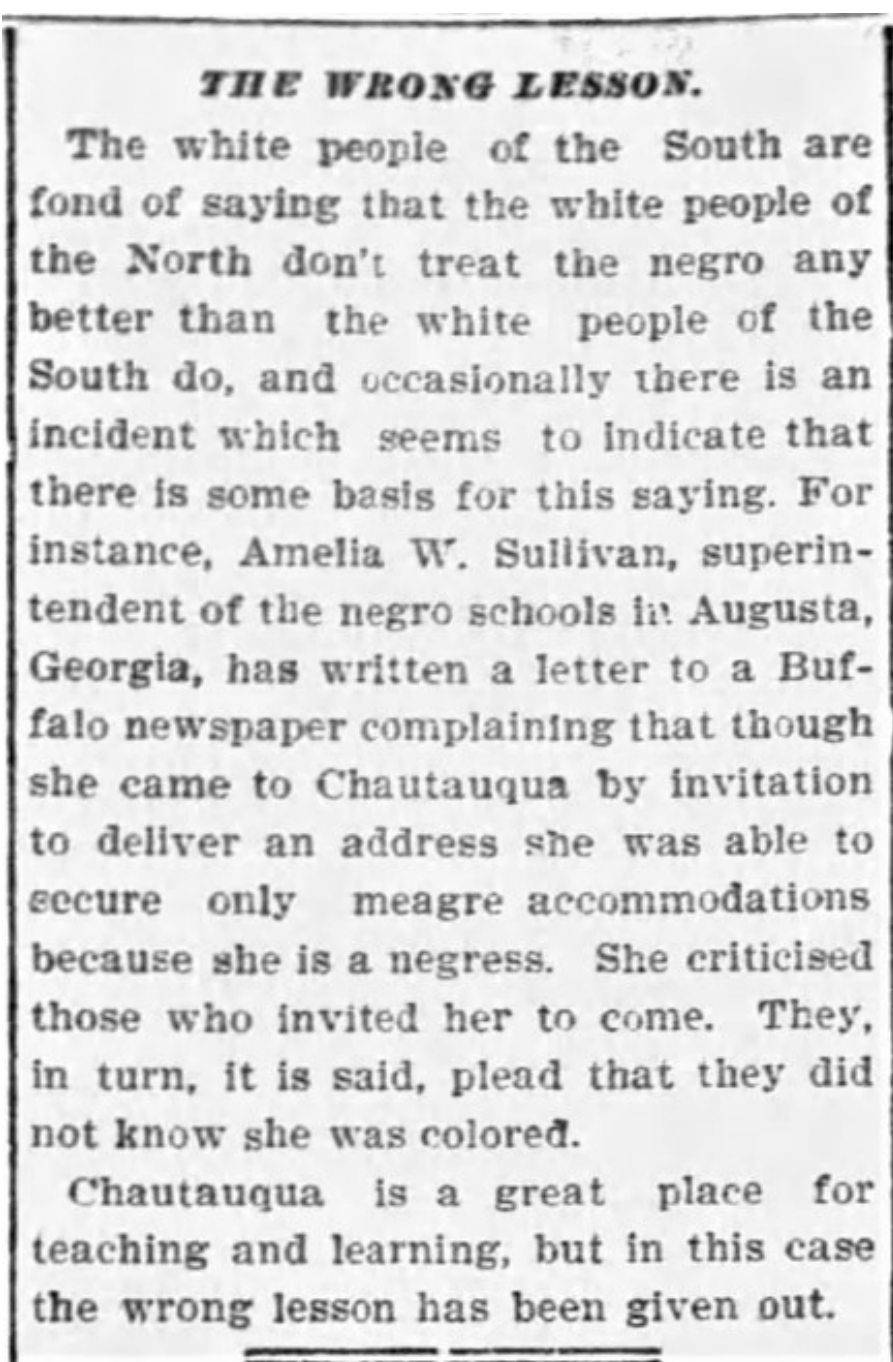
The Buffalo Enquirer (Buffalo, NY)



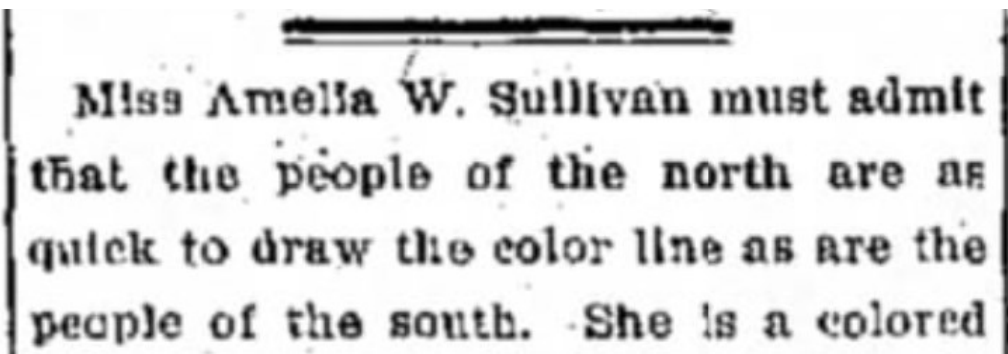
The Leavenworth Weekly Times (Leavenworth, KS)



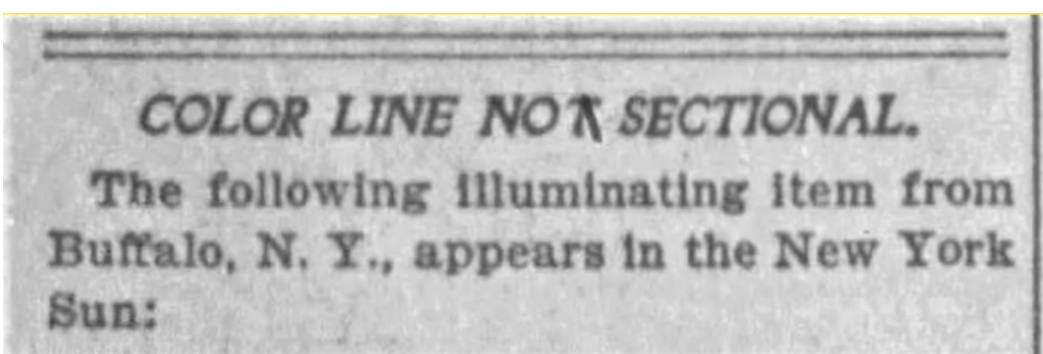
The Morning Post (Raleigh, NC)



The Morning Journal-Courier (New Haven, CT)



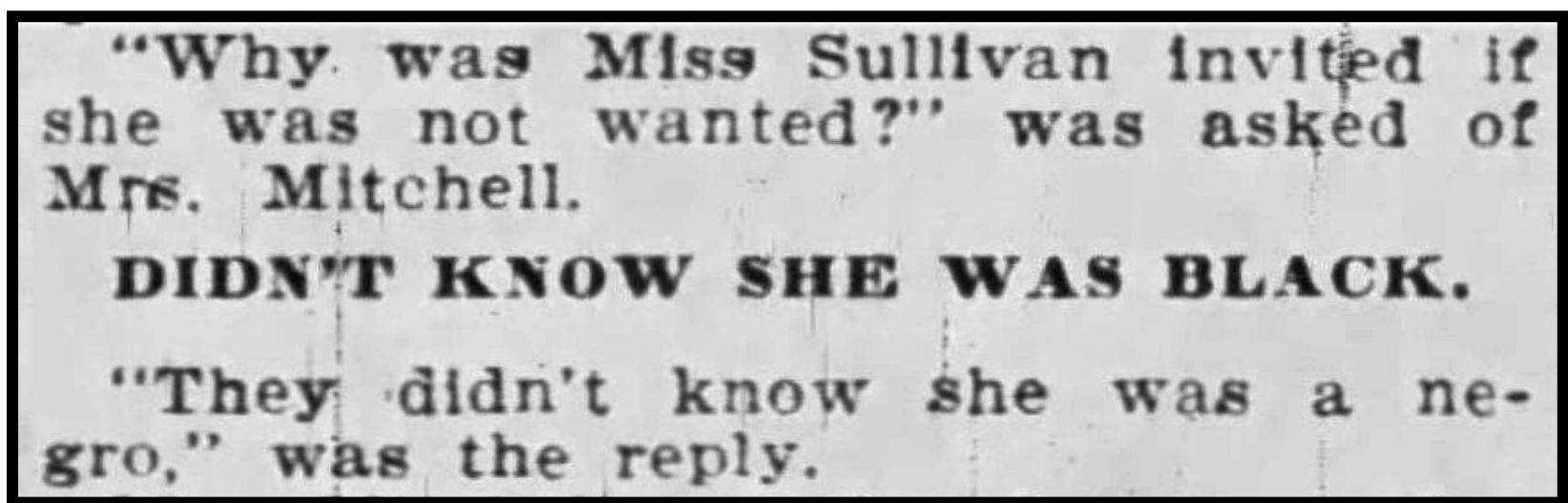
Woodland Daily Democrat (Woodland, CA)



The Tennessean (Nashville, TN)

In relaying the contents of the article to their readers, many newspapers delineated from the *Buffalo Courier* by reporting that Chautauqua authorities defended themselves with claims that they did not know Sullivan was Black. In reality, any such explanation originated with Belle Mitchell, a “prominent clubwoman” from Chicago who was familiar with Sullivan’s work and staying in Buffalo at the time of Sullivan’s visit to Chautauqua.

When interviewed for the article, Mitchell surmised, “They didn’t know she was a negro”—a speculation which subsequently circulated with mistaken attribution, as if it were the statement of Chautauqua officials.



Buffalo Courier (Buffalo, NY), August 11, 1902.

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE AT CHAUTAUQUA 1900-1914

POLICIES & ARRANGEMENTS

African Americans encountered varying degrees of hospitality at Chautauqua throughout its history—with some individuals extending kindness and others prejudice—and yet, whatever the biases and behaviors of its guests and residents, the Institution itself never held policies of forced segregation within its facilities or public spaces.



366 Keystone Cottages, Chautauqua, N.Y.
Keystone Cottages, ca. 1909. Chautauqua Institution Archives.

While the Phyllis Wheatley Cottage served as a housing option for a select number of employees—inherently separating the lodgings of some individuals from that of their employers—all housing on the Assembly Grounds was optional, not mandatory. African Americans could, and did, find accommodations on the grounds, but, in the event that they could not secure suitable lodging or dining, or, for those who preferred to reside elsewhere, arrangements were made beyond the gate.

It is often assumed that everyone invited to speak, teach, or perform at Chautauqua was automatically provided with room and board, but this was not the case. If not arranged for in advance, no guest of the Institution—not even some of the era’s biggest names—could safely assume they would be supplied with meals, lodging, tickets for entertainment, or even a day’s gate pass. To secure amenities, whether as an employee, private guest, or platform speaker, one needed to make plans accordingly as the Institution did not customarily procure them for visitors—regardless of race or social status—without an agreement.

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE AT CHAUTAUQUA 1900-1914

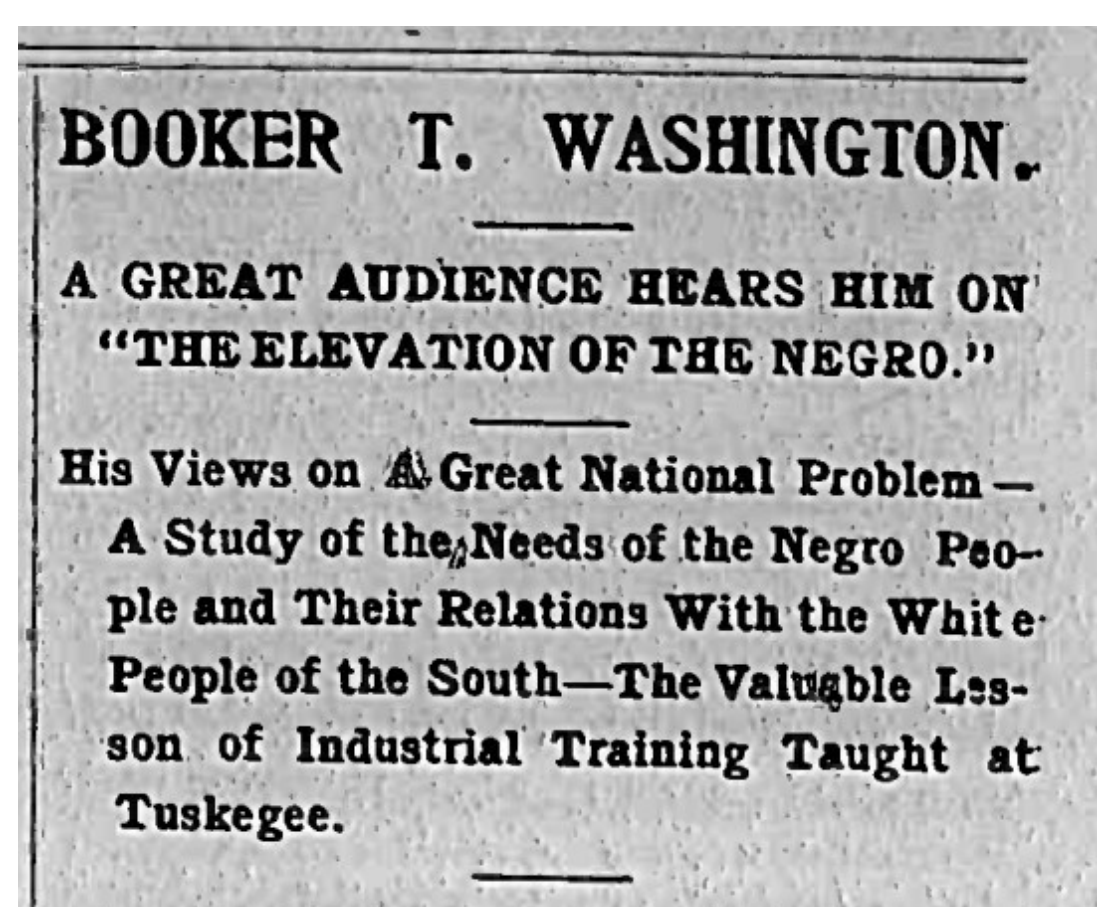
A POPULAR LECTURER

"Principal Washington is a frequent figure on northern platforms, and he is always welcome because he always has something to say that is worth listening to." —The Chautauquan Weekly, 1909

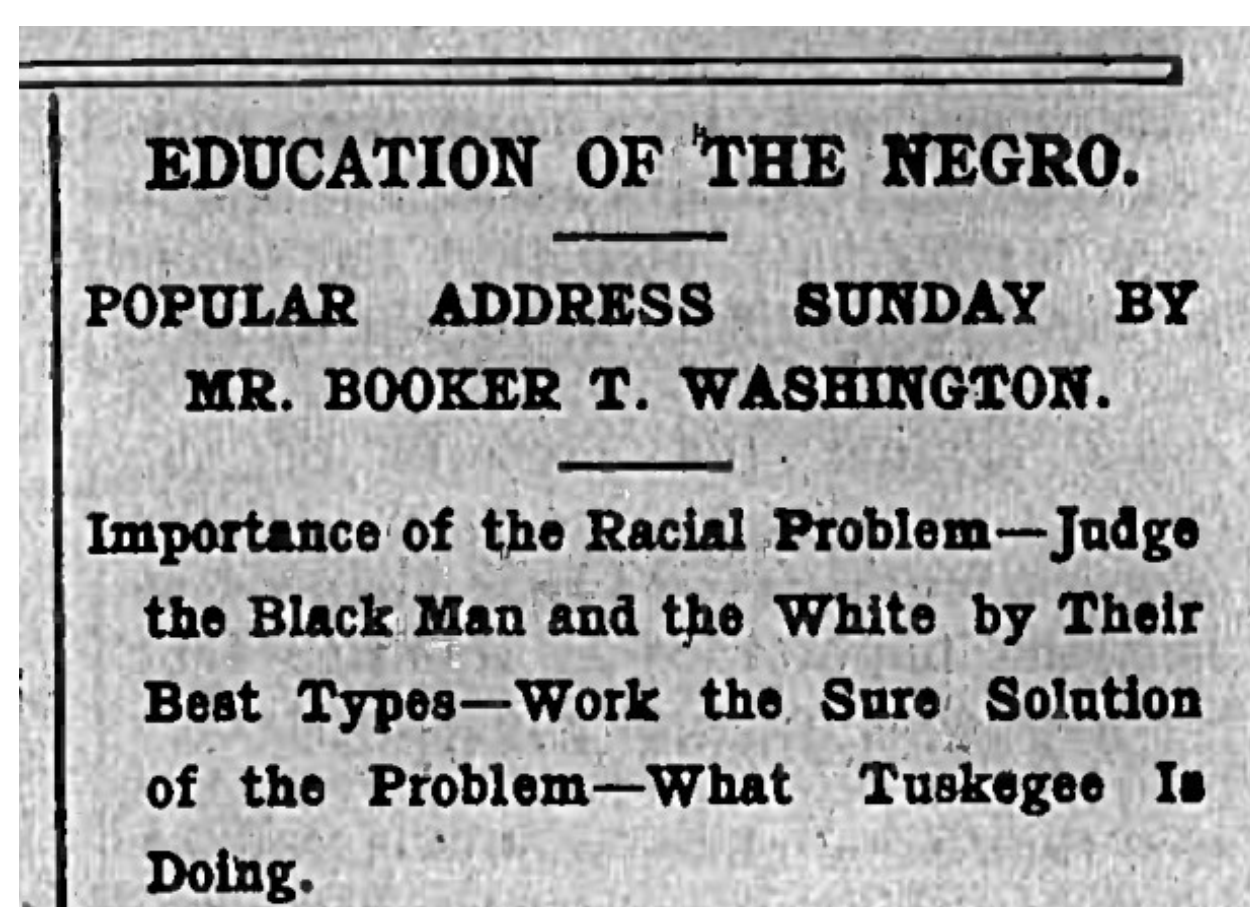
After his first appearance in 1896, **Booker T. Washington** returned to lecture at Chautauqua on three further occasions, delivering addresses on the subjects of the "elevation of the negro," the "education of the negro," and the "linked fate" of the black and white races before large audiences in the Amphitheater in 1902, 1906, and 1909.



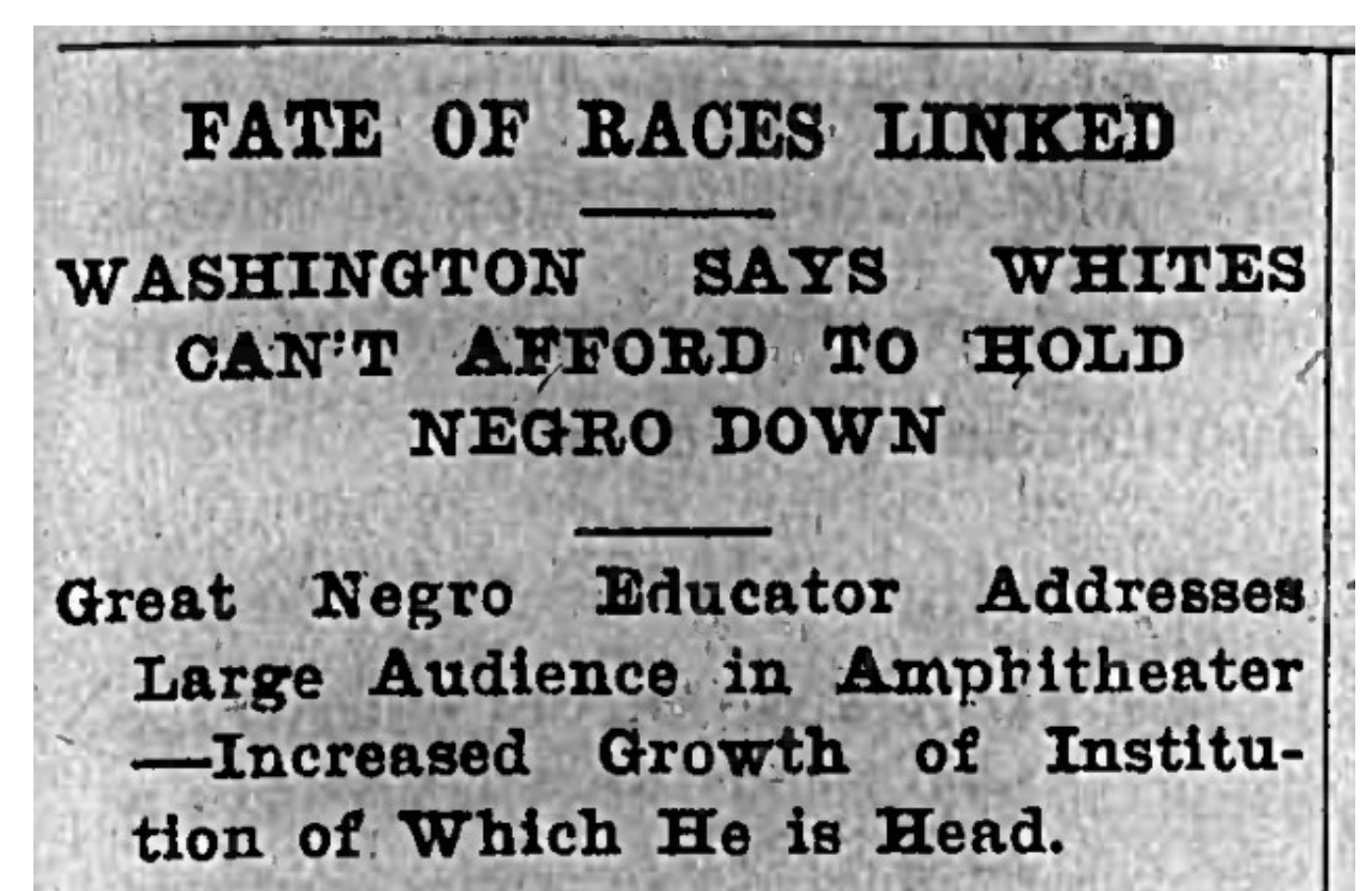
Booker T. Washington. Library of Congress.



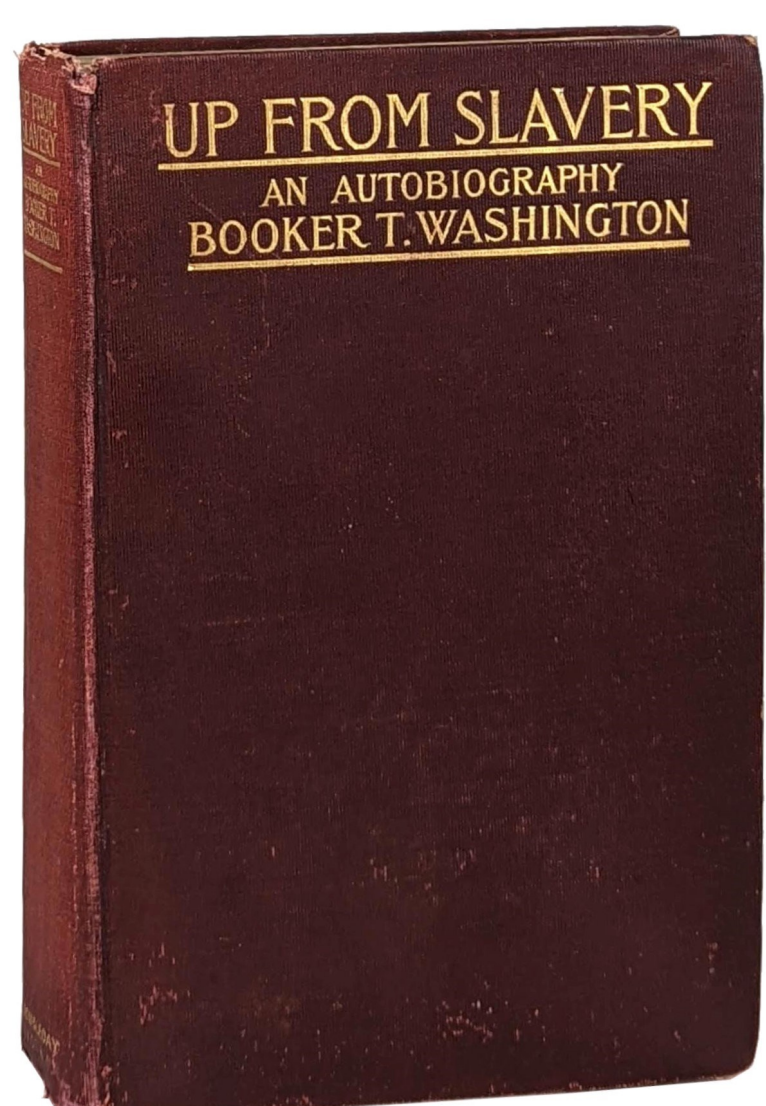
The Chautauqua Assembly Herald, 1902.



The Chautauquan Daily, 1906.



The Chautauquan Daily, 1909.



Recommended by the C.L.S.C. for use within local reading circles after being named to the C.L.S.C. Round Table's "Best Books of the Year" list in 1902, Washington's 1901 autobiography, *Up from Slavery*, was promoted and sold by the Chautauqua Bookstore, along with his subsequent works, *Character Building* (1902), *Working with the Hands* (1904), *Putting the Most into Life* (1906), *Frederick Douglass* (1907), and *The Man Farthest Down* (1912).

"If there is any one at Chautauqua who has not read Booker T. Washington's Up from Slavery let him go to the Book Store forthwith and procure a copy."
—The Chautauquan Weekly, 1909

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE AT CHAUTAUQUA 1900-1914

EDUCATORS



Emma L. Hubert, 1910. Tennessee State Library and Archives.

Originally organized in 1898 as the Superintendents' and Principals' Council, after the turn of the century, the Chautauqua Educational Council—a “forum for the discussion of topics of educational interest”—expanded its membership to include “all persons who are interested in educational progress,” therein attracting a greater range of educators, including **Susan “Susie” E. Edwards Palmer** of Tuskegee, Alabama, **Regina E. Crawford** of Austin, Texas, and **Emma L. Hubert** of Nashville, Tennessee.

While not all of the Educational Council's membership attended the group's annual program on the grounds, Tuskegee Institute English teacher **Susie E. Palmer**—the wife of Tuskegee Institute registrar John H. Palmer—frequented Chautauqua to attend summer courses, make reports to the Women's Club, and is believed to have been present at the summer session of the Educational Council in 1912, when she and fellow educators, Hubert and Crawford, enrolled as members.

Beyond her participation in the Educational Council, **Regina E. Crawford**—a voice culture and singing teacher at Tillotson College in Austin, Texas, and the first African American woman to attend the University of California, Berkeley—spent her summer vacation at Chautauqua in 1914, when she spoke at the Home Missionary Rally in the Hall of Philosophy on the afternoon of August 18, as described by *The Chautauquan Daily*:

CHAUTAUQUA, NEW YORK, TUESDAY, AUGUST 18, 1914.	
OFFICIAL PROGRAM TUESDAY, AUGUST 18	
3:30	HOME MISSIONARY RALLY. “The Negroes of the Southland.” Mrs. F. W. Wilcox, Miss A. B. Howland, Miss Regina Crawford. Hall.
4:00-6:00	Reception to Home Mission Workers. Baptist House.

The Chautauquan Daily, 1914.

Crawford put herself forward as an example of what the American Missionary Association has done for the negro, telling of her own struggle for education, and of her own determination to aid her race in whatever way she is able. At the close she sang a plaintive negro spiritual beginning “Oh, I know the Lord, Oh, I know the Lord.”

The Chautauquan Daily, 1914.

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE AT CHAUTAUQUA 1900-1914

INSPIRED BY THE C.L.S.C.

On Wednesday, August 15, 1906, **Frances Boyce** marked her graduation from the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle (C.L.S.C.) by passing through the Golden Gate on Recognition Day with fellow members of the John Ruskin Class. The following year, Boyce's local C.L.S.C. circle—the Phyllis Wheatley Circle of Jacksonville, Florida—held a vesper service to honor its 13th anniversary, drawing the attention of the C.L.S.C. Round Table, which sought the following words from Boyce, the circle's president:

"I had the good fortune to go to Chautauqua last summer, the first of our Circle to finish the four years course. You can imagine that I brought back enough enthusiasm to contribute some to the Circle. One of our members who had to make a new home in Pensacola has started a C.L.S.C. there, and the vesper service to which you allude was so much appreciated that I think we may venture next time to hold it in a church."

—Frances Boyce, 1907



Frances Boyce, ca. 1930.



Henrietta Curtis Porter. Alabama State University Levi Watkins Learning Center.

After learning about the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle from 1892 Columbia Class graduate Ariel S. Bowen, **Henrietta Curtis Porter** became a student of the four-year reading correspondence course, through which she completed three years of curriculum before unexpected circumstances prevented her continuation:

"I had the honor and pleasure of being a pupil. I pursued the course for three full years, and eagerly looked forward to the work of the fourth and to graduation time at the Lake, and had hoped to pass through the [Golden] Gate while those who had finished in other years tossed roses at our line. An ambition for me, and a pleasure for all. But my plans miscarried. I have never regretted, however, the time and love I spent on that wonderful course."

—Henrietta Curtis Porter, ca. 1934

Though unable to finish her final year of coursework, and therefore never graduating or attending Recognition Day on the grounds as she had intended, in 1913, Porter helped organize an all-female, C.L.S.C.-inspired study club called the "Chautauqua Circle"—modeled after the ideals of Chautauqua and adapted to appeal to middle and upper-class African American women living in Atlanta, Georgia.