

Narrator Notes: CHAUTAUQUA.....Westward Ho!

The idea of traveling Chautauquas, also known as "Circuit- and Tent- Chautauquas originated in 1904 when Keith Vawter of Chicago, Illinois conceived a plan whereby Rural America might be exposed to Culture beyond local horizons. The intent was to service people who for one reason or another were unable to participate in the various Institutional Chautauquas scattered around the nation ordinarily in proximity to Urban settings. This of course was in the time period predating Radio and Television.

Vawter himself was Midwest Manager with the Redpath Lyceum Bureau headquartered in Boston, Massachusetts. The idea he developed was thus more akin to the so-called Lyceum Movement than it was to the Chautauqua-scheme of things insofar as there were few if any connections with organized Religion.

The original Lyceum-concept was spawned at Millbury, Massachusetts, circa. 1826. It began as a sort of local Club whereby young men of the community would gather

periodically to socialize and share ideas.

As more and more communities followed the Millbury example, there was eventually demand for presenters from beyond local borders. By the late 1860's therefore Lyceums had outgrown their "roots" and were more apt to hire "outside talent". Agencies typified by the Redpath Lyceum Bureau thus appeared to recruit and provide speakers as well as Entertainers to whatever groups were willing to "pay the necessary fees.

Vawter's plan was thus to assemble entire Lyceum-type programs and rent them out to sponsors wherever they might be found. The only real connection with Chautauqua lay in the nature of these ensembles as being Moral and Uplifting.

In time these programs became similar to Circuses in that the organizers set up specific Routes or Circuits with Advance-men whose principal responsibility was to recruit sponsors in communities along a given route.

Generally these "routes" followed rail-lines though occasionally the sole means of reaching out-of-the-way communities was by means of motorized vehicles. These

appearances were usually non-scheduled due to emergency cancellations or special arrangement. For the most part tent-chautauquas were convened under large brown-colored canvas tents though infrequently Grange Halls and similar sites were used to accommodate performers and quests.

### Scene 1:

RALPH WALDO EMERSON is best remembered as the "Father" of Transcendentalism in America and Essayist. Many of his Essays began as Lyceum lectures.

BRONSON ALCOTT is best remembered as the father of novelist Louisa May Alcott. As a self-proclaimed pioneer in early childhood education he specialized in conducting "Conversations". These were generally small-group discussions employing the concept of inductive reasoning to discover Truth. He may have viewed himself as a latter-day Socrates monitoring Dialogs. In any case his career as a Lyceum speaker was in no way as