

**SUSAN G. CONNELLY.** Born 1955.

**SUMMARY of OH 1657V**

This interview was recorded on April 30, 2010, for the Maria Rogers Oral History Program. The interviewer is Steven Smith. The interview also is available in video format, filmed by Liz McCutcheon.

**ABSTRACT:** Chautauqua has been a Boulder institution since 1898, when the auditorium and dining hall (still in use) were built, a tent city sprang up, and the first educational summer programs were held for Texas teachers and local residents. One of only three major Chautauquas still operating in the United States, the Boulder Chautauqua has survived and thrived as a year-round association with many educational and entertainment offerings, as well as having nearly one hundred historic cottages in a spectacular setting. Susan Connelly has been the Executive Director of the Colorado Chautauqua Association since 2003. In this interview, she outlines the history of the Chautauqua movement in general, and Boulder's Chautauqua specifically; she explains Chautauqua's designation as a National Historic Landmark District; and discusses Chautauqua programming and other services offered, the historic Chautauqua cottages, efforts to make Chautauqua environmentally sustainable; and plans for the future.

[A].

00:00

Introduction: Susan Connelly, Executive Director of Colorado Chautauqua Association

History of Chautauqua movement: first Chautauqua in Chautauqua, New York; spread to other places, 1874-1930s.

Religious, education, and entertainment focuses of various Chautauquas.

Founding of Boulder Chautauqua by Texas Board of Higher Education for teacher training.

Bond issue approved in 1898 to fund the Boulder Chautauqua.

04:56

Construction of Chautauqua auditorium and dining hall in six weeks for opening day, July 4, 1898.

Description of Chautauqua tent city in opening year.

Location on the Batchelder ranch, originally well south of city of Boulder boundaries.

Transportation to Chautauqua by train to downtown Boulder, then by horse and buggy, later by trolley, to Chautauqua. Location of original entrance

Programs open to community and also a draw for outside visitors

09:56

Chautauqua land owned by City of Boulder. City also owns the auditorium, dining hall and academic hall (Chautauqua Association office).

Disappearance of tents, building of cottages.

Chautauquas in existence now: remnants of at least thirteen. Three big ones left: Chautauqua Institution; Lakeside, Ohio; and Boulder Chautauqua. Names a few others.

Reasons for disappearance of many Chautauquas.

15:26

Reasons for survival of Boulder's Chautauqua.

Roots put down by families who return to Chautauqua year after year, generation after generation, in "the cottager community."

Location: 900 Baseline Road. Description of property and environs.

Chautauqua in the 1930s-1960s: survived due to interest of cottagers. 1970s: cottagers joined by Boulder residents to accomplish revival of Chautauqua.

20:36

Susan Connelly's background: geographically—Florida, Chicago; career—law, public sector planning.

Move to Boulder in 1999.

Executive director of Colorado Chautauqua Association since 2003.

History of the Colorado Chautauqua Association (CCA), founded in 1901.

23:24

Historic preservation of Chautauqua: listed on National Register of Historic Places; designated a National Historic Landmark District in 2006 (only 21 of these in Colorado; only one on the Front Range).

Discusses the historic significance of the Chautauqua district.

Recent grants from the National Park Service to create historic information signage and a bus/vehicle pull-out area.

Size of Historic District. Boundaries of three portions of this land, and jurisdiction for each.

29:11

Cottages: 99 total; 60 owned by CCA; 39 privately owned.

Private cottage owners: some year-round; some summer residents.

CCA cottages: 58 available for renting, year-round. Plans for cottage tours. Renovation of cottages.

32:50

Chautauqua programs:

Summer programs: Colorado Music Festival; silent films, with live musical accompaniment; popular concerts

Year-round programs: speakers and acoustic performances in Community House

36:00

Rocky Mountain Joe Sturtevant's photographs of Chautauqua

Discussion of plans for the future of Chautauqua

Requirement for approval from the City of Boulder Landmarks Board prior to making changes

39:23

Replacement of auditorium roof a few years ago: controversy about whether to use wood roofing shingles (historically accurate) vs. fire safety.

Dining room open year-round

Environmental sustainability plan for Chautauqua implemented over last few years, more to be done

Interpretive services plan

45:15

Need for more funds to implement more improvements and provide more programming

Financial aspects of running Chautauqua, including lodging operation as an income stream

Other uses of Chautauqua by the public, such as weddings, memorial services, retreats

More about environmental efficiency efforts

49:53

End of interview