

# Los Angeles Times CALENDAR weekend

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WITH THE KIDS

## Learning? It's only natural

Chautauqua Movement keeps alive a long tradition of teaching in the great outdoors.

By Brenda Rees  
Special to The Times

Before the Internet, Google, UCLA Extension courses and the Discovery Channel, curious folks who wished to quench their thirst for knowledge would gather in bucolic locations and rustle up renowned speakers from scientific and artistic worlds for a mind-expanding good time.

Founded by forward-thinking Methodist leaders in the late 1800s, the Chautauqua Movement was just that, an out-of-school, educational vacation endeavor that drew thousands upon thousands.

Springing up throughout the East Coast, the Chautauqua ideal eventually spread to Southern California. Participants — including women and families — often set up tents for summer-long lessons in the art, politics, science and thought of the day.

Now organizers at Temescal Gateway Park — the location of one of the last major centers for the movement — have been inspired to bring the chautauqua experience to enlightenment-seeking citizens of the 21st century.

The monthly chautauqua series — now in its second year — features a wide range of speakers and topics, including literature and science, usually with an environmental theme.

A program commemorating the life of poet Robert Burns, "Scottish Hearts Moved by Nature," will celebrate the famed Scotsman on Tuesday with pipes and drums as well as a presentation of haggis, the traditional Scottish dish, followed by a recitation of Burns' "Address to a Haggis" — probably the only known poem to sing the praises of sheep guts.

In addition to Burns, other Scots such as John Muir and Enos Mills will be discussed for their role in helping to preserve America's natural places.

Other programs this year include talks on California tile and the butterflies of the Santa Monica Mountains, and concerts by the Palisades Symphony.

The chautauqua lectures take place in the park's historic dining hall, one of a few remaining buildings that were constructed for the original Chautauqua community that had its heyday in the 1920s and '30s.

"Thousands enriched their lives with the courses that were taught there," says Pacific Palisades historian Betty Lou Young, who added that the original Temescal chautauqua had a reputation for its excellent staff. "In fact, when UCLA started, many of the chautauqua instructors went there to teach as professors," she says.

Overall, the original chautauqua was also a place for people to enjoy the beauty of the outdoor world.

"These folks really appreciated nature, and there were hiking trails and encampments everywhere," Young says. "It was a very happy, busy place."

*Brenda Rees may be reached at [weekend@latimes.com](mailto:weekend@latimes.com).*

*Chautauqua series*

**What:** "Scottish Hearts Moved by Nature"

**Where:** *Temescal Gateway Park, 15601 Sunset Blvd., Pacific Palisades*

**When:** *7:30 p.m. Tuesday*

**Price:** *Free*

**Phone:** *(310) 454-1395, Ext. 152*