

March 2008

Falls City and Hastings will host 2008 Chautauqua

The Nebraska Humanities Council will present the 2008 Chautauqua in Falls City from June 25-29 at Stanton Lake Park and in Hastings July 2-6 at the Chautauqua Pavilion at Chautauqua Park.

The theme will be “Bright Dreams, Hard Times: America in the Thirties.” Scholars will portray Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882-1945), Huey Long (1893-1935), Aimee Semple McPherson (1890-1944), Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960), and Will Rogers (1879-1935).

Economic depression, a devastating environmental disaster—the Dust Bowl on the Great Plains—and signs of worldwide political unrest characterized the 1930s. In the midst of these difficulties, most Americans had an underlying optimism.

Patrick E. McGinnis will portray Franklin D. Roosevelt, the president of the United States from 1932-1945 and the leader of the New Deal to help Americans in their time of need. McGinnis holds a Ph.D. from Tulane University and for the last four years has been emeritus professor of history at the University of Central Oklahoma.

Fred Krebs will portray Huey Long, the Louisiana senator who, unlike Roosevelt, used force and totalitarian tactics to attempt to bring aid to his constituents and Americans. A professor of history at Johnson County Community College in Overland Park, Kan., Krebs is an active Chautauqua speaker, participating in 16 states with some 15 different historical characterizations.

Tonia Compton will portray Aimee Semple McPherson, who provided relief to impoverished families in Los Angeles and who was a pioneer evangelist and pastor. Compton is a history doctoral candidate at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and holds a master’s degree from Texas A&M.

Wanda Schell portrays Zora Neale Hurston. Schell is an accomplished actress and writer who holds degrees in Liberal Arts and Theatre from the Community College of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College and has pursued graduate work at Trinity Repertoire Conservatory (Providence, Rhode Island). In addition to a variety of stage roles and first-person portrayals, including Jazz vocalist Billie Holliday, Schell has used her theatrical skills to conduct youth outreach programs across the country.

Doug Watson will portray Will Rogers, American humorist, radio and film star, and essayist who commented on American culture and politics. As moderator for each performance, Will Rogers will bring audiences into the Thirties using his authentic American voice. Watson holds a Ph.D. from Texas Tech University and teaches English at Oklahoma Baptist University.

The Chautauqua runs Wednesday through Sunday, with a different scholar portraying his or her character each evening. Each gives a 40-minute, first-person presentation as the historical character, then answers questions. Workshops for children and adults are held during the day.