


Lyceum Movement in Batavia

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Years	Lecture / Entertainment	Sponsor	Location / Notes / Sources
1867	Public Exercises	Batavia Library Association	Institute Hall (Batavia Institute) Friday, 3 May 1867 Source: Program [Collection of Batavia Public Library]
			1868–1869 Season ... Batavia Lecture Association
1869	Joseph Haven, D.D., professor of systematic theology, Chicago Theological Seminary	Batavia Lecture Association	Location unknown 15 January 1869 Source: "From Batavia." (Dateline Batavia, Ill., 11 Jan 1869.) Aurora Beacon, Thu, 14 Jan 1869, p. 2:— <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The Batavia Lecture Association were disappointed in securing Gen. Howard for the present, but have engaged Prof. Haven of the Chicago Theological Seminary to deliver the first lecture of the course on the 15th inst.—subject, "Recollections of Italy." The Prof. is a fine speaker and is said to have a splendid lecture.</i></p> Biographical Sketch:— <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Joseph Haven, an American clergyman, born in Dennis, Mass., in 1816, died in Chicago, May 23, 1874. He graduated at Amherst college in 1835, studied in the Union theological seminary in New York, and graduated at the theological seminary at Andover in 1839. He was pastor of Congregational churches in Ashland and Brookline, Mass., in 1850 became professor of mental and moral philosophy in Amherst college, and in 1858 of systematic theology in the Chicago theological seminary. In 1870 he resigned his professorship on account of enfeebled health, and visited Germany, Palestine, and Egypt. In 1874 he was appointed professor of mental and</i></p>

			<p><i>moral philosophy in the university of Chicago. Dr. Haven has published “Mental Philosophy” (Boston, 1857), “Moral Philosophy” (1859), both extensively used as school text books, and “Studies in Philosophy and Theology” (Andover, 1869).</i></p> <p>Source: The American Cyclopaedia, by George Ripley and Charles A. Dana; found at http://chestofbooks.com/reference/American-Cyclopaedia-14/Joseph-Haven-Joseph-Holt.html</p>
1869	Samuel L. Clemens [or] “Mark Twain”	Batavia Lecture Association	<p>Location unknown</p> <p>Tuesday, 26 January 1869</p> <p>Source: “From Batavia.” (Dateline Batavia, Ill., 2 Feb 1869.) Aurora Beacon, Thu, 4 Feb 1869, p. 1:—</p> <p><i>“Mark Twain” lectured here last Tuesday evening to a crowded house. Our lectures so far have proved a success pecuniarily and otherwise.</i></p> <p>[Letter from Twain to fiancée]</p>
			<p>From “Books Between Bites” (19 April 2007):—</p> <p><i>It is commonly believed that the Laconian Literary Society sponsored a lecture by Batavia’s most famous literary visitor. Samuel L. Clemens, alias Mark Twain, who was then 33 years old, gave an evening lecture on 26 January 1869 before a large audience in a downtown hall. In fact, during the 1868–1869 season, it was an organization called the Batavia Lecture Association that sponsored the lecture course that included Mark Twain, who was then anticipating the publication of The Innocents Abroad in July 1869. That fall (1869), the Batavia Lecture Association gave way to the Laconian Literary Society and faded into history.</i></p>
1869	Frederick Douglass	probably Batavia Lecture Association	<p>Location unknown</p> <p>Friday, 5 March 1869</p> <p>Source: “Hash.” Aurora Beacon, Thu, 4 Mar 1869, p. 4</p>

			1869–1870 Season ... Laconian Literary Society
			<p>In 1869, the Laconian Literary Society resolved to engage a course of lectures to be delivered in Batavia during the season of 1869–1870, and to apply for membership in the Association of Western Literary Societies, which was a cooperative association of western lyceums that helped lecturers arrange their schedules. This series of eight public lectures was a very important contribution to the welfare, entertainment, and instruction of Bataviaites, as residents were then called by the local newspapers.</p> <p>The Lecture Committee reported that the lectures were successful financially and, with one or two exceptions, well-received, and none of them were entirely without interest.</p>
	Anna E. Dickinson	Laconian Literary Society	1869–1870 season
	John Wesley Powell	Laconian Literary Society	1869–1870 season
	Elizabeth Cady Stanton	Laconian Literary Society	1869–1870 season
	Susan B. Anthony	Laconian Literary Society	1869–1870 season
	D. B. Locke / Nashy	Laconian Literary Society	1869–1870 season
	Joseph Haven, D.D., professor of systematic theology, Chicago Theological Seminary	Laconian Literary Society	1869–1870 season See Biographical Sketch (above)
	Edwin Percy Whipple	Laconian Literary Society	1869–1870 season
	J. E. Forrester	Laconian Literary Society	1869–1870 season
1880			<p>Music Hall / Opera House:—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... Music Hall, 1880–March 1910 (fire); theater and public hall, then printing plant ... Rebuilt, probably as a music hall (1910); probably called Batavia Opera House ... Named Vanity Theater (date unknown) ... Renamed Capitol Theater, 1936–1952

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... Closed, August 1952–June 1955 ... Reopened and renamed Batavia Theater, June 1955–1957 ... [various businesses], 1957—
			<p>Note: The name “Music Hall” appears on early fire insurance maps (1885, 1891). According to <i>Historic Batavia</i>, 3rd ed., the Music Hall was built in 1880 (p. 71) and operated as a movie theater from 1914 to the 1950s. In the late 1910s and early 1920s it was still called the Batavia Opera House in the <i>Batavia Herald</i> and the <i>Aurora Beacon-News</i>. During this time period, per the articles and advertisements in the newspapers, the Batavia Opera House presented both live entertainment and movies.</p>
			<p>Further Reading:—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... Batavia Herald 16 June 1955, pp. 1, 10–11: Opening of Batavia Theater ... The Batavia Historian [Batavia Historical Society], 30:2 (March 1989) ... The Batavia Historian [Batavia Historical Society], 30:5 (March [sic] 1989; probably November 1989) ... The Batavia Historian [Batavia Historical Society], 49:4 (October 2008)
1914		Batavia Lincoln Chautauqua	

Possible downtown sites for theaters, public halls, &c:—

- ... Revere House—references in Aurora Beacon to events in 1869, such as the “Masonic festival at the Revere House” (March 1869; 80 couples) and the “Washington birth-day ball” (February 1869; 78 couples)
- ... Assembly Room in the West Side School (“the imposing pile”), 1867–1885

A new building—called “the imposing pile” in an 1878 history—was completed in 1867. “It was one of the best school buildings on the river at that time. A few taxpayers grumbled because so much space was used for halls and stairways.”

West Side School—also called Central School—contained four school rooms and an assembly room on the third floor. In 1885, the assembly room was divided and used for classrooms, and an addition was built on the back in 1898. This building was later used as a high school from 1902–1915. West Side School was renamed the McWayne School in 1927 in honor of Grace McWayne, its principal, and her older sister, Ellen. It was razed in 1950; classes were moved to the new McWayne School on West Wilson Street.

(Neighbors of Batavia, July / August 2011)

- ... Roller Rink (see fire insurance maps): Music Hall was used as one of Batavia’s three roller rinks
- ... New Batavia High School (1915)
- ... Other? [fraternal organizations, &c.]

Aurora Daily Beacon, 1 Oct 1909, p. 13:—

Fairyland Is No More.

The Fairyland theater ended its two years of precarious existence last evening and is closed forever today. E. L. Robinson, the latest of a list of owners and managers of the East Wilson street house, yesterday sold to Mrs. Mary Jacobs of Somonauk. She will open a new motion picture theater in the down-river town.

Aurora Daily Beacon, 12 Nov 1909, p. 13:—

May Re-open Fairyland.

Edward Allen of this city, former operator at the Fairyland theater in the Doty building in East Main street, plans to re-open the amusement place if he can secure sufficient backing. It is understood that Aurora parties are promising to back the venture if Mr. Allen can secure a lease from Andrew Lange, the Aurora man who holds a long term lease on the property.

Mr. Lange, when seen today, knew nothing of the deal to date, but stated that he was willing to let the property for theater purposes if Aurora or Batavia parties desired it.