

Ladies Auxiliary History - Written by Amelia Romano in June 1988



As I remember it, in the summer of 1933, Mrs. Julia Iannucci approached me about starting a womens club, namely, the Maria SS. Dell'Assunta Auxiliary. Her husband, Alfonso Iannucci was President of the Society and they had almost completed building the hall on Maple Avenue.

The Italian men of Westbury had organized the Maria SS. Dell'Assunta Society in 1911 to honor the Blessed Mother and to help one another in any way they could. Remember in the early 1900's the immigrants had very little and worked very hard for little pay. There was no welfare or food stamps, so the community banded together to help one another. They held their meetings in members' cellars, Church basements or back rooms of small bars. Their first President was Nicola Piscitelli.

How the name of the Society was agreed upon by the men is quite an interesting story. In 1911, many members were from different parts of Italy, namely Durazzano, Nola and Saviano. Each member wanted to use the name of the Patron Saint of their home town. The President, Nicola Piscitelli, wiser than all went to the Pastor of St. Brigids Church. Father McGinnis suggested that in order to maintain unity, they should settle on a Saint with whom they could all identify like the Blessed Mother. That's how the Society was named after the Feast of the Assumption, The Maria SS. Dell'Assunta Society.

In late 1933, the men had almost completed the hall on Maple Avenue and were in need of some help financially and what is known as the "women's touch". So, a number of women and young ladies were called to attend our first meeting on November 14, 1933. Those in attendance, known as the "Charter Members", were Josephine Abbatiello, Philomena Abbatiello Zaino, Antonette Catapano DeLucia, Mary Cavaluzzi, Josephine Foglia, Julia Iannucci, Catherine DiAngelo, Rose Esposito Spina, Carmella Parillo, Mamie Piscitelli, Frances Palmese, Amelia Romano and Theresa Vitucci.

The purpose of our club or auxiliary, as we were known, was to help the men's Society mutually, spiritually and in any way we could. Our members had to be between 17 and 55 years of age and had to be Roman Catholic, but also a wife, mother, daughter or sister of an active member of the Society.

We were new at this type of work but with everyones input, we were able to meet at the hall and organize it into a very active group. Our first President was Mrs. Josephine Foglia, the wife of a new Doctor who had recently moved to Westbury.

The men did the hard labor in the building and the women did the decorating. One of our first projects was to buy material and make drapes for the windows of the hall. Also, we bought furniture for the ladies' room and pots, pans, dishes and linens for the kitchen and any other items that were needed. The "womens' touch" really helped and was gratefully appreciated by the men.

Some of our means of raising money for the Society was having card parties, parties, and working at the Feast of the Assumption. In the late 1930's and early 40's we had formal dances, the ladies wore gowns and the men dark suits. We booked named bands and Broadway floor shows. Our own Jennie Mastrianni went to New York City to book the acts. At one our our dances the nephew of our first President, Mrs Foglia, sang for us. You would know him as Vic Damone.

In the fall of 1936, the Society, with the help of the Auxiliary, held a carnival on the lots opposite the Hall (east side) to raise money for a wing at Mercy Hospital in Rockville Center. We were able to make a donation of \$1,200.

One of the highlights of the carnival was a contest called the "Queen of the Carnival". The votes were a penny a piece and the lady with the most votes would be queen of the carnival. Our queen was Jennie Mastroianni.

We also helped the men by working at the Feast on August 15th. We helped to collect money by canvassing different towns. We took part in the procession and Mass of the day of the Feast, and we dressed in our uniform of white dresses, shoes and gloves with a blue sash and a small skull cap. In those days' ladies had to cover their head to go into Church.

The Feasts in the days before the war in the 1930's and 40's were really big affairs. People came in buses from all over the Island, New York City and Brooklyn. The Society had fireworks each year in a large area in Breezy Hill. After the war and the "building boom" things changed. It was harder to get a large area to hold the Feast and fireworks were banned in some residential areas.

The Italian men and women of the early years did a good job helping one another and were a credit to the Village of Westbury. When the call came for help, be it our Church, the hospitals or the poor, the men and women worked together and provided money, labor or whatever was needed.

The torch has now been passed to the next generation and I can truly say that we are very proud of the job they are doing. Keep up the good work!

Respectfully Submitted By

Amelia Romano
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