



VINELAND

Historical and Antiquarian Society

NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2017

The oldest local historical society in New Jersey, founded in 1864.

Scouts Restore Historic Baggage Cart

The 1870s baggage cart that stood on the grounds of the Vineland Historical and Antiquarian Society for many years recently underwent a face-lift thanks to the members of Boy Scout Troop #108. The project, spearheaded by Eagle Scout Jovany Rodriguez (seen below, at left in top photo), involved a lot of research and even more hands-on construction to restore the cart that had been donated to the Society more than twenty years ago by Dr. Frank DeMaio of Vineland.

"We are extremely grateful to the troop members, their leaders and their relatives and friends for all of their hard work on this project," said Patricia A. Martinelli, Society curator. "They cleaned it, repaired or replaced some of the parts and painted it in the original red and green colors."

Rodriguez first approached the Society last year about tackling the project in order to earn his status as an Eagle Scout. The Scouts are required to partner with a local agency to create a project that benefits their community in order to attain that level.

Once the project was approved by the Society's Board of Trustees, the cart was moved to an empty warehouse at Bradway Trucking, where the Scouts—working under adult supervision—proceeded with the restoration. They spent about six months completing the work.

A small presentation ceremony was held recently at the museum, where Rodriguez related the history of the baggage cart and its significance to the community. It reflects an era when much of Vineland's growth and development depended on the railroads that crisscrossed through the town.

To pay for supplies, the Scouts had raised close to \$1,000 from local residents and businesses. During the ceremony, Rodriguez presented the balance of almost \$300 of unused funds to the Society.

The Society plans to add a new platform to the grounds for the cart, which will better protect it from the elements. A new sign, which will acknowledge both the donor and the Scouts, will be added, once the cart is permanently positioned.

(Photos by John W. Carr)



From the Curator...

I first visited the Vineland Historical and Antiquarian Society museum about a million years ago, when I was in the third grade, because—like the police station and the library—it was someplace close for a school field trip. That same year, I had read “The Big Golden Book of World History” but was instantly enthralled to discover there was a place practically in my backyard that also held some wondrous treasures. It may not have been a pyramid but I felt like a real explorer when I walked through the big oak doors into a treasure trove of Vineland’s past. I sometimes think that visit was the real inspiration for my making a career out of history (something my father was never sure could be done), a journey that has been both frustrating and fascinating—occasionally at the same time. One of the reasons we like to share the museum collections, especially with our younger visitors, is to give them that sense of awe about Vineland’s past but also to inspire them to think in new ways about the direction their lives might take. There is a lot of emphasis in school on science and technology these days, which is important, but the arts and humanities play an equally important role.

Aside from working with our younger residents, one of the projects we are hoping to start later this year is a photographic record of the original one-square mile of Vineland that ran from East Avenue to West Avenue and Park Avenue to Chestnut Avenue. A lot of people don’t realize that Charles K. Landis’ plan for Vineland was considered so unique, it inspired the construction of new towns across America. In addition to Vineland, California, and Vineland, Florida, the community of New Harmony in Indiana and even the utopian village of Sinoloa in Mexico were modeled after our town. With any luck, we’ll be able to create a record that will help us gain new insight into the lives of early settlers and learn more about the contributions they made not just to Vineland but to the country, as well. One newly-discovered resident was Eliza Bisbee Duffy (or Duffey) who came to Vineland in 1872 and started a newspaper. Duffy, a suffragist and a writer, later moved on to New England where she established another publication, so it will be interesting to learn more about her life while she was here. Oh, that history...you just never know what you’re going to find...

Murder Mystery Scheduled for October at Museum

The Vineland Historical and Antiquarian Society wants to invite all “who dun it” fans to join us on Friday, October 13 at 7 p.m. or Sunday, October 15 at 2 p.m. for “Murder in the Roaring ‘20s,” an original play written and directed by Vineland resident Shirley Burke. Tickets are \$30 per person and will include light refreshments. However, seating is limited so don’t wait too long to call Nancy Steelman at 856-691-7362 to reserve your seats. To learn more about other upcoming events at the Society, please visit our Facebook page or stop by our new web site at www.discovervinelandhistory.org.



Hours & Information

The Museum Office is open Tuesdays through Saturdays from 1 to 4 p.m. by appointment. The Museum exhibits are open to the public every Saturday on tours that are offered at 1, 2 and 3 p.m. There is a \$1 per person admission charge for visitors over twelve years of age. Please remember: Assistance with library and research facilities is available by appointment only. Call the Museum at **856.691.1111**; e-mail: vinelandhistory@gmail.com; Group and school tours are welcomed and encouraged to visit.

We had a blast at our Open House!



Good fun, good friends and lots of good food were on hand for our annual Open House, held on August 5 on the grounds of the museum. In addition to free museum tours and a variety of games, local children could listen to a story or try their hand at crafting something in clay. Vendors offered an assortment of unique gift items and skilled craftspeople demonstrated traditional crafts such as flint knapping, the process used to make arrowheads, and quilting. Author Michael Gabriele was a special guest this year, speaking to an audience about the history of Diners in New Jersey. A drawing at the end of the day for a gas grill from LaTorre's Hardware and a gift certificate from Main's Meat Market was won by Vineland resident Ruth Shropshire.

New Exhibits Installed

The second floor exhibits have undergone more changes this year with the addition of an exhibit on the early European immigrants to Vineland and the discovery that a pottery factory, owned by the Kellogg family, once operated in town. We hope you'll stop by soon to check them out!



Tin Ceiling Undergoes Repair

Aliano Brothers of Vineland, a contractor that specializes in restoration work on historic buildings, has started repairs on the tin ceiling that graces the second floor of the museum's public galleries. Two damaged tiles were removed and will have to be replaced. Last year, Aliano's replaced the exterior cornice that had allowed rain water to seep into the ceiling, causing the problem. The Society is grateful to everyone who had previously donated to this project, which will probably be completed by the end of the year. Mike Aliano is seen here, at right, inspecting the damaged ceiling tiles.



Michigan Professor Visits

Dr. Peter Knupfer, an associate professor of history at Michigan State University in Lansing, visited the Society in August as part of his research on Marcius Willson (1813-1905), one of the first authors of standardized textbooks in the United States. Willson worked as a teacher and principal for many years before turning his attention to writing.

Willson moved to Vineland in 1865, after a successful career as the author of elementary school textbooks that were popular throughout the United States. He purchased a large tract of land on Landis Avenue, where he planned to establish a fruit farm. He soon became involved with all aspects of community life, including the newly-formed historical society. While living in Vineland, he continued to write books on a variety of subjects, including *The Wonderful Story of Old*, which related stories from the Bible. In addition, Willson also received patents for a drawing tablet (1874) and an educational chart exhibitor (1904).

After selling his property to the state for the construction of the Training School, the "professor" (as he was known) moved into the Grove House, a boarding house on Landis Avenue that was then-owned by his daughter Fanny. He reportedly continued to write every day until his death.