



VINELAND

Historical and Antiquarian Society

NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2018

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



Landis Bust Returns Home

After gracing the second floor foyer of Vineland City Hall for more than forty years, the alabaster bust of Charles K. Landis has returned to the Vineland Historical and Antiquarian Society's museum. The bust was sculpted in the late 19th century in the classical style by noted artist Giovanni Turini of New York. It had been loaned to the city when the new city hall was opened in 1977 at Seventh and Wood Streets.

Turini (1841-1899) was a sculptor born in Verona, Italy, who emigrated to the United States in the late 1860s. His sculptures of prominent historical figures can be found in museums and different public venues, including Washington Square Park in New York. Mr. Landis appears to have been a fan of Turini's work because a number of the artist's pieces are part of the museum collections. In addition to a smaller bust of a woman, there is also a plaster relief portrait of noted Italian hero, Garibaldi, who was credited with creating the modern country of Italy. The bust of Mr. Landis is on exhibit in the museum's Great Room.

Ceiling Tiles Restored at VHAS Museum

Thanks to the generous support of some local residents and the skilled craftsmen employed by Aliano Brothers of Vineland, the Society is pleased to report that the damaged tiles on the second floor ceiling of the museum have been replaced and repairs have been completed. The ceiling project, which started in 2014, was postponed when the Board of Trustees decided to add a ramp to the museum and address damage to the building's exterior that included the cornice and chimneys. Aliano Brothers, who specialize in the restoration of historic buildings, undertook the exterior work after the Society was provided with a grant from the city of Vineland. Pleased with the quality of their work, the trustees once again contacted Aliano's when it was time to address the ceiling. A substantial part of the ceiling repair was paid for through donations from local residents and businesses, including Michael Stern, Barbara Jones of ServPro, Shirley Burke, Warren Crescenzo and John Casadia. The Society is grateful for the contributions of everyone involved with this project.



We appreciate the hard work of Jesse Pettit of Aliano's, who recently finished the work on the museum's tin ceiling.

From the Curator...

I recently received a beautiful Award of Recognition from the New Jersey Historical Commission for the work I do here at the Society's museum. The presentation was made at the Commission's annual conference that was hosted this November at Rowan University at Burlington and focused on "New Jersey and the Great War."

Looking around the room (after my knees stopped shaking), it warmed my heart to see all of the people who have dedicated their lives to preserving the Garden State's past and who make that past relevant to our lives today. Because it is relevant; don't ever believe otherwise. While financial constraints often keep history from being preserved, an even larger problem seems to be that we don't easily learn from the past. If we did, I firmly believe that we'd see a lot more positive progress in both our lives, our town and our country. As Dr. Martin Luther King noted: *"We are not makers of history. We are made by history."*

Our visitors are often amazed when they find out that Vineland was a nationally-known community in the 19th century, where important activists such as Victoria Woodhull, Frederick Douglass, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton were welcomed. And that Vineland was once home to many thriving businesses, ranging from barrel- and hat-making to glass and shoe manufacturing, as well as serving as the "Egg Capital of the East Coast." Artists, writers, scientists and inventors also called Vineland home, creating works of beauty and practicality that still have an impact on American society as a whole.

Sadly, history—for most people today—is not something that they consider part of their daily lives. Having only been taught a list of famous names and endless dates in school, it is usually dismissed as non-essential when they are out in the "real world." People often seem to forget that history is not a stagnant pool of information. It's more like a flowing stream that constantly washes new material, which adds to the existing truths, to the surface. All you have to do is look. The stories of who we were can inform where we are going—or where we shouldn't go—which is why it is important for all of us to understand history and value what it brings to our lives.

Museum to close for January 2018

The museum will once again be closed to the public for the month of January. The Society staff and volunteers will use the time to work on the collections and finish several new exhibits that were added during 2017. One of the main goals this coming January will be to reorganize the Society's massive photograph collection to make it more accessible to both researchers and the public. In addition, some unique equipment will be added to the firefighting exhibit located on the second floor of the museum. However, the Little Free Library, located next to the front steps of the museum, will remain open for public use. The museum will reopen to the public by appointment on February 1. Tours of the museum will begin again on February 3 at 1, 2 and 3 p.m.



Hours & Information

The Museum Office is open Tuesdays through Saturdays from 1 to 4 p.m. from February through December by appointment. The Museum exhibits are open to the public every Saturday during those months; tours are offered at 1, 2 and 3 p.m. There is a \$1 admission charge for visitors over 12 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.

Veterans Memorial Students Sweep Contest Awards

Students from Susan Cicchini's classes at Veterans Memorial School captured the grand prize, first place and second place honors in this year's writing/video contest for Vineland middle school students. The Vineland Historical and Antiquarian Society is pleased to announce the winners of this year's contest: Grand prize winners were Emily Feltes and Eleonora Chernenko for their Powerpoint presentation on Holocaust survivor Esther Raabe. First prize went to Nicole Rodriguez for her essay on Dorothy Burke, a vice principal at Veterans Memorial Middle School, while second prize went to N'jayla Winchester, who wrote about noted American poet Maya Angelou.

"We received about fifty entries and, once again, were very impressed by the caliber of the work presented by the students," said Patricia A. Martinelli, Society curator.

While last year's contest focused on fiction, this year's theme was "A Celebration of Women." Students were asked to create a short essay or video presentation about women who inspired them. Feltes' and Chernenko's presentation on Raabe was especially impressive because it showed how one woman's struggle to escape from Nazi oppression later had an impact on so many lives. Raabe and her husband, Irving, moved to Vineland in 1950, where they established a successful kosher poultry business. Before her death in 2015, Raabe shared her story with enthralled audiences throughout the United States.

Rodriguez's essay on Burke relayed how a single teacher shapes the lives of her students, while Winchester's essay on Angelou delved into events that affected the poet's life and how those lessons could be applied to others. All of the entries reflected substantial effort on the part of the students. According to Martinelli, the Powerpoint presentation and the essays will be included in the 2018 issue of the Vineland Historical Magazine, which will be dedicated to "A Celebration of Women."



From left: Eleonora Chernenko, Emily Feltes, Nicole Rodriguez and N'jayla Winchester, winners of the middle school writing contest.

Audience Enjoys "Murder" at the Museum

In October, local residents enjoyed two performances of "Murder in the Roaring '20s," an original play written and directed by Vineland resident Shirley Burke. The play was set in South Philadelphia's "Little Italy" in the 1920s, a time when mobsters fought each other and society at large over bootleg alcohol. The production starred Sue Sauro as Rose Medina, Kimberly Gagliardi as Teresa Amato, Linda Foster as Ida O'Toole and Peter Otton as Frank Capelli. The role of Zio Ignazio was played by Frank Ferrari, with Pamela Burke as Maria Regineri, Renee Rasinger as Nonna Rita and Macleod Carre as Michael Flaherty, and members of the audience who filled minor roles during the Charleston contest and Temperance protest.

Lights, camera! The audience enjoyed a rousing murder mystery at the Society's museum in October, written and directed by Vineland resident Shirley Burke.



Fithian Letters go home to Greenwich

Philip Vickers Fithian, born in Greenwich in 1747, was one of the most significant South Jersey residents who lived through the Revolutionary War. He documented many of his experiences in correspondence that was later donated to the Vineland Historical and Antiquarian Society. The Society's board of trustees recently decided that the correspondence with his wife, Elizabeth, and other family members would be more appropriately housed at the Cumberland County Historical Society, which is headquartered in Greenwich. The donation was made at the start of the county organization's annual meeting, held in early November at the First Presbyterian Church in that town.

Fithian, who had experienced a religious conversion in 1766, graduated from the College of New Jersey in Princeton in 1772. Although he planned to become a Presbyterian minister, Fithian spent several years working as a tutor at a Virginia plantation. His diary provides significant insight into the plantation system that existed at that time. Later ordained, Fithian joined a New Jersey state militia regiment in 1775 and served as its chaplain. He witnessed the Battle of Long Island and the Battle of Harlem Heights before he died on October 8, 1776.

In November, Society curator Patricia A. Martinelli (at left) presented the Philip Vickers Fithian letters to Joseph DeLuca, president of the Cumberland County Historical Society, at that organization's annual meeting. Fithian, a Greenwich native, served during the Revolutionary War and documented his experiences in his letters.



Society to offer discount memberships to seniors and students

Beginning in 2018, the Vineland Historical and Antiquarian Society is inviting local residents who are at least 62 years old and students under 22 years old to apply for a discount membership to the organization. The reduced rate of \$20 will be good for a one-year membership.

"We want to encourage everyone to get involved with the Society but we realized that we needed to give some people an extra incentive," said Sandra Hearing, the Society Trustee who serves as membership coordinator. "Although our individual memberships are only \$30 a year, we thought it would help both older residents and students if we cut the cost down for them."

Membership in the Society offers a variety of benefits including a free copy of the Society's annual magazine, which has been documenting local history for more than 100 years. In addition, members receive a quarterly newsletter, may use the research library free of charge and receive invitations to programs and events that are held throughout the year.

"We also encourage our members to consider volunteering at the Society's museum," Hearing said. "Right now, we need tour guides to assist with the school tours that visit annually and also to help with a number of different projects behind the scenes."

A one-year membership to the Society makes a great present for a history buff since the Society's museum is filled with 19th century artwork, glassware, and records. In addition, there is a Native American collection and a room of artifacts from the Landis family homes in Vineland and Sea Isle City.

The Vineland Historical and Antiquarian Society is the oldest local historical society in New Jersey, headquartered in the oldest purpose-built museum in the state. For further information on becoming a member, please contact the Society at 856-691-1111 or vinelandhistory@gmail.com.