



VINELAND

Historical and Antiquarian Society

NEWSLETTER

Winter 2020

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

Scarpa Foundation Donates to Roof Repair

John Scarpa may not live full-time in Vineland anymore but he believes in supporting his hometown. Over the years, he has made generous donations to a variety of local organizations and has just added another name to that list.

Scarpa recently donated \$25,000 to the Vineland Historical and Antiquarian Society, which will allow the non-profit to successfully finish repairs to the museum's roof. An appeal for public support went out in October 2019 after leaks from the roof caused extensive damage to the museum's walls and second floor ceiling.

"We are extremely grateful to Mr. Scarpa for his generosity," said Kellie Haines, president of the Society's board of trustees. "We have already received a lot of support from the community but we hope even more people will be inspired by his gift because we still have a lot of work to do to restore the museum."

The long-overdue roof repairs will help stabilize the museum's environment, allowing the artifacts and records to be better protected from the elements. The work is being completed by Robert Ganter Contractors, Inc., a South Jersey roofing company established in 1978 that has experience in working with historic structures.

"This was vitally important work and, once this part of the project is completed, we will then move forward with plans to finish other needed repairs," Haines added.

In 2018, local structural engineer Nicholas Marino donated his services to determine that the museum needs extensive repairs to its foundation, as well as its doors, windows and brickwork. The museum is the oldest purpose-built museum in New Jersey, designed by noted Philadelphia architect George E. Savage and constructed in 1910 by local contractor James D. Pasquale.

Volunteers Sandra Hearing and Sharon Garrison are currently working on an application to have the museum placed on the New Jersey Register of Historic Places, which will then allow it to be considered for the National Register. Once the museum is listed, it will then be eligible to pursue grants for further construction projects.

The Vineland Historical and Antiquarian Society museum at 108 S. Seventh Street in Vineland is the oldest purpose-built museum in New Jersey. It houses a variety of collections, ranging from Native American artifacts to 19th century artwork, photographs and Civil War memorabilia.



Happy 100th Anniversary to the 19th Amendment!

In 1920, the 19th amendment to the United States Constitution was passed, allowing women the right to vote. Although the struggle had been ongoing for generations, it finally came to fruition under the leadership of a woman named Alice Paul, who was originally from Mount Laurel. While most people are aware of these facts, many still don't know that it was actually a Vineland woman named Portia Gage who brought together 172 Vineland women to stage the country's largest suffrage protest in 1868. Although she had initially been reluctant to move from Chicago, Portia soon became a community leader with her husband, John. Inspired by the first state convention for universal suffrage, which had been held the preceding year in Vineland, the women gathered at the Union Hall to vote in the first president election held after the Civil War. While their votes did not officially count, their protest inspired women throughout America to continue fighting for their rights. While the Society hosted its tribute to them in 2018 with a year-long celebration of women, the anniversary of the passage of the 19th amendment will not go unrecognized this year. Our ongoing effort to honor the contributions of local suffragists actually began in November, with the installation of a headstone marking Portia's gravesite at Siloam Cemetery. The project was a team effort between the cemetery, the Society and the Thrivent Community of the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, coordinated by Ed Morvay of the cemetery's board of trustees. The new stone was dedicated during a brief ceremony at Siloam.



In 1868, Vineland resident Portia Gage (top photo) organized 172 local women into the largest suffrage demonstration that the country had ever seen.



We liked to tease Marlene that she never had a hair out of place, no matter what she was doing!

From the Curator...

I scrapped the column I had originally planned for this issue of the newsletter, choosing instead to pay my respects to Marlene Vasilotti, a Vineland native who died in November 2019, after serving as a VHAS volunteer for only about a year. Marlene and I had first met many, many years ago when I was fresh out of college and working in the municipal court clerk's office. She ran the police department's record room with quiet efficiency and humor. Since both departments were located in the police station, we came into fairly regular contact. However, it wasn't until she came to serve as a Society volunteer in 2018 that I really got to know more about her. Her intelligence and wit shone through every conversation, whether we were discussing local history or the state of politics. She willingly tackled every assignment, whether it was organizing the museum's photograph files or cleaning the grounds at the former Training School's abandoned cemetery. Marlene may have been 82 but she had the energy of a woman half her age. Everyone here who worked with her enjoyed spending time in her company. Thank you, Marlene, for caring enough to become part of our VHAS family. You will be missed by everyone here.

Community Awareness Day Fun!



We made a lot of new friends at our first Community Awareness Day in September. About two dozen groups, including Gilda's Club, the Cumberland County Library, local Scout troops and more were on hand to share information about their organizations with our visitors. The museum was open for tours and Samantha Tai, a librarian from the Vineland Public Library, was on hand to read to the kids. The Vineland Fire Department brought one of their trucks, which was a hit with visitors of all ages.

Society Hosts "Members Only" Holiday Reception



On December 7, the Society welcomed about thirty VHAS members at a holiday reception, held as a token of appreciation for their continued support. In addition to a variety of refreshments, the members received some gifts and enjoyed live music provided by volunteer Greg Henderson.

2020 VHAS Calendar of Events

February 22:	“Wade in the Water”—Spirituals, gospel music and more with Dr. Virginia Perry and Midge Perry Spencer
March 21:	“America’s First Ladies” —Arlene Baker will offer insight into the lives of the women who occupy the White House
April 18:	“Sci-Fi Double Feature”—Fans of classic (bad) science fiction films will enjoy these early films; admission is \$10 per person and includes refreshments
May 16:	“Teacher Appreciation Day”—A free reception honoring Vineland’s teachers for their contributions to education
June 15-August 15:	“A Race Through Time”—Free county-wide event that allows participants to learn more about local history and win prizes
July 18:	“Genealogy for Beginners”—Learn how to research family history with veteran genealogists Sharon Garrison and Joseph Cooper; admission is \$10 per person
September 12:	“Community Awareness Day”—A free event that offers an introduction to community services throughout Cumberland County
October 24:	“Trunk or Treat”—Children of all ages are welcome to come and gather treats at the Society’s museum during this free event
December 12:	“Members’ Holiday Reception”—Join us for an afternoon of music, holiday memories and more; free to members

Unless otherwise noted, admission for all events is \$5 per person. For further information, contact the Society at 856-691-1111 or vinelandhistory@gmail.com.

VHAS Opens On-Line Store

If you haven’t visited our web site lately, at www.discovervinelandhistory.org, you’ll find we’ve added a museum store. Now, you can shop for Vineland and local history-related keepsakes on-line, which will help support the work we do here at the Society. Some of the items that we will have for sale include VHAS t-shirts (in lilac or grey), VHAS mugs and hats, Vineland magnet sets, glassware, Vineland postcards and other souvenirs. We will also offer a selection of publications like the Society’s *Vineland* books, Vince Farinaccio’s *Before the Wind*, a biography of Charles K. Landis, and *Seeking Redemption*, the story of Skee-Ball and its inventor, Vineland resident Joseph Fourestier Simpson, by Thaddeus Cooper and Kevin Kreitman. If the store proves successful, new merchandise will be placed periodically for sale. If you’re a history buff or know one, consider making a purchase through our web site. Don’t forget, you can also apply for membership in the Society—another great gift!—by downloading an application at the web site.

