VINELAND
Historical and Antiquarian Society

NEWSLETTER   **Winter 2021**

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

The Race is Over

Although the threat of COVID-19 dampened participation in A Race Through Time during this past July and August, about 100 people from as far away as New York City signed up for the event. The free program was designed to raise awareness about Cumberland County's rich, culturally-diverse past in an educational but entertaining way.

Fortescue resident Kim Centrone was the grand prize winner in last summer's A Race Through Time.

In September 2020, prizes were awarded at the Society's museum to the following area residents who participated in the Race: Darwin Cooper, Jr., of Vineland won second place, Ruth Henry of Bridgeton won first place and Kim Centrone of Fortescue was the grand prize winner. Her gift basket included souvenirs from many of the participating sites, as well as gift cards and a Fit-Bit. Kim is an avid student of history and is currently pursuing her bachelor's degree in the field.

Among the Cumberland County sites included in this year's program were the Bayshore Center at Bivalve, Cumberland County Historical Society, Cumberland County Pre-History Museum, Kathleen B. and Henry R. Hansen Boy Scout Museum, Maurice River Historical Society, Mauricetown Historical Society, Millville Army Air Field Museum, Millville Historical Society, Baracha Dunn House, Nail House Museum, Old Broad Street Presbyterian Church and Cemetery, Palace of Depression, Port Norris Historical Society, Seabrook Educational and Cultural Center, Siloam Cemetery and the Vineland Historical and Antiquarian Society. The Race was sponsored in part by a grant from the New Jersey Historical Commission, administered by the Cumberland County Cultural and Heritage Commission and a grant from the New Jersey Historic Trust.

Work Completed on Museum Roof

Our friends at Ganter Construction were able to complete the repairs to the museum roof this past summer so that we had nothing to worry about once the rains and bad weather set in. We are extremely grateful to them for all of their hard work. Hopefully, much-needed work on the museum will continue to move forward this coming year. There is still a lot of repair and renovation that needs to be performed, ranging from cracks in the plaster to rebuilding the foundation but we are optimistic that we will see progress in those areas before to long. If you are interested in making a donation to the building restoration fund, please contact us at 856-691-1111 or vinelandhistory@gmail.com.
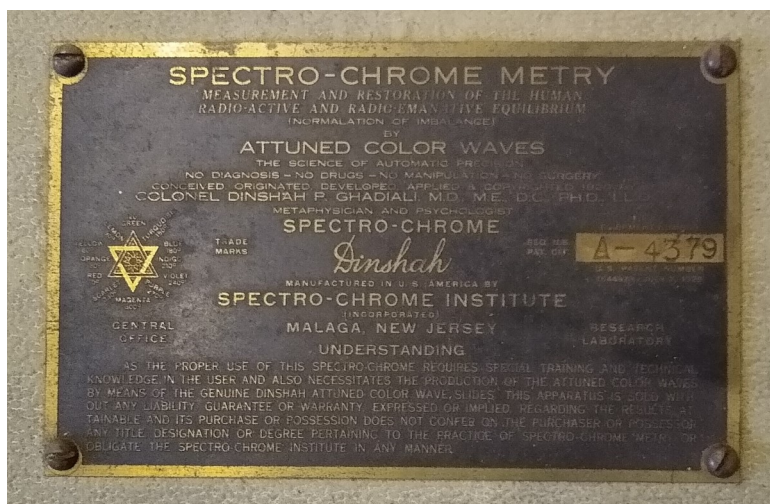
From the Curator…

The history of medicine is filled with tales of unusual treatments and bizarre diagnoses that today seem positively cringe-worthy. One of the more unique stories that is related directly to South Jersey is the that of the Spectro-Chrome device created by Dr. Dinshah P. Ghadiali (1873-1966). While derided by the mainstream medical community after it initially appeared, the legacy of the Spectro-Chrome device seems to be alive and well as western medicine has begun to explore the principles of chromotherapy in recent years.

In September of this year, the Society received a Spectro-Chrome machine as a donation from former Vineland resident Michael Morello, who also donated a number of operating manuals to accompany the device. This prompted us to explore its controversial history and to ask if the doctor was a man ahead of his time or yet another huckster—like many promoters of patent medicine—just attempting to make a quick buck.

Who was Dr. Dinshah P. Ghadiali? In the 1930s, the immigrant from India was living in neighboring Malaga, where he created the Spectro-Chrome device. He claimed that it could cure just about any illness without the use of drugs or surgery. The machine consisted of an aluminum box on a pedestal, which contained a 1,000-watt light bulb whose light was shown through small colored panels at the front. By arranging the panels in a specific order, the patient could safely effect a cure by allowing the light to shine on the affected part of the body.

Green light was a pituitary stimulant, a muscle tissue builder and a germicide while red energized the liver. The other color combinations included turquoise, violet, magenta, scarlet, purple, yellow and lemon, which all affected different areas—both internally and externally—of the body. Like Walter Shaw, a Vineland man who reportedly invented equipment that led to the creation of cell phones, the doctor is another colorful figure whose life story has been difficult to document. While Dinshah claimed that he began studying medicine by age 14, he discontinued his studies after discovering the value of light treatment. **(Continued on page 4)**

The Spectro-Chrome Metry device was invented in Malage by Dr. Dinshah P. Ghadiali, who believed light had healing properties.

Summer Scenes Gone By…

PARKING AT PAVILION, RAINBOW LAKE, VINELAND, N. J.

VINELAND FAIR & CARNIVAL Aug. 29-Sept. 4

VHAS plans exhibit honoring Vineland's 160th anniversary

On August 8, 1861, Charles K. Landis officially founded Vineland, a community that would ultimately become home to a mix of farmers, business owners, artists and freethinkers. In 2021, the Society will celebrate the 160th anniversary of that event with an exhibit in the museum's Great Room that focuses on the town's different celebrations over the years. The exhibit will feature artifacts beginning with the first anniversary and include a copy of an elegant Art Deco poster announcing the celebration of Vineland's 60th anniversary in 1921. The exhibit will include artifacts from Vineland's 100th birthday, which was celebrated in style in 1961. They include certificates, buttons and bumper stickers from the Centennial Belles and the "Brotherhood of the Brush." The Society plans to install a smaller version of the exhibit at City Hall and the Vineland Library if those buildings are reopened to the public in 2021. As always, the museum will be closed in January 2021 but re-open to visitors on February 1 of that year. The Vineland Historical and Antiquarian Society, founded in 1864, is the oldest local historical society in New Jersey, headquartered in the oldest purpose-built museum in the state. It is open to the public from Wednesdays through Fridays but appointment only and for Saturday tours at 1, 2 and 3 p.m. For further information, please call 856-691-1111 or e-mail vinelandhistory@gmail.com.

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He reportedly became interested in healing with color after using it to cure a patient afflicted with colitis. He later opened the Electro-Medical Hall in Surat, India, where he started to refine the process of color healing.

In 1911, Dinshah emigrated to America, where he continued to study the effects of color on human illness. His Spectro-Chrome device, which came with its own treatment guide, was very well-received by the public. It seemed that many people appreciated his contempt for the mainstream medical community and approved of a treatment that was comprehensive and non-invasive. His slogan for the product was "No diagnosis, no drugs, no surgery."

However, not everyone was impressed by the machine. The doctor was arraigned in 1931 on charges of second-degree grand larceny, after a former student complained to authorities that the device was a fraud. Since the prosecution was unable to prove to the court's satisfaction that fraud had been committed, Dinshah was found not guilty. He continued to sell the Spectro-Chrome device and by 1940 had reportedly made $1 million.

Unfortunately for Dinshah, the FDA charged him with the interstate trafficking of a misbranded product in 1945. This time, the doctor was fined, his device and all related materials were seized and he was given five years' probation. Immediately after his probation ended, Dinshah founded the Visible Spectrum Research Institute and began selling the lamps once again, only this time they were labeled as having no therapeutic value. In 1958, the government slapped him with a permanent injunction against selling the device across state lines, although he did continue to promote them throughout New Jersey.

After Dinshah died in 1966, his family created the Dinshah Health Society of Malaga, a non-profit that is still in existence and sells a variety of products related to the Spectro-Chrome device. Interestingly enough, both NASA and the U.S. Navy have been experimenting in recent years with the use of color to help speed the healing process. The National Institute of Health has also reported that there has been some success with the use of chromotherapy to treat different types of cancer.

So, was Dr. Dinshah P. Ghadiali actually a pioneer in the field with the creation of his Spectro-Chrome device or was he another "medicine man" out to bilk the public? For many people, it appears that he may have been simply a man who was ahead of his time.

Volunteers needed!

If you find yourself with a couple of spare hours a month, consider becoming a volunteer at the Society's museum. You don't have to have an extensive knowledge of history, just an interest in helping to preserve the collections. Volunteers are needed in just about every area, ranging from general office work to museum maintenance, special events and more. If you enjoy working with children, consider volunteering as a guide for our annual fourth grade school tour program. Working as a volunteer is a great way to learn more about the history of your community while helping to maintain the oldest purpose-built museum in the state of New Jersey. To learn more, just call us at 856-691-1111 or e-mail vinelandhistory@gmail.com.

January closing

Don't forget: The museum will be closed to the public for the month of January 2021 to once again allow the staff and volunteers to work on some projects that require our attention. In addition to installing the 160th anniversary tribute to Vineland, some existing exhibits will be cleaned and others will be refreshed with new material. Although we have removed our "please touch" tables as a health precaution for our visitors, there will be plenty of unique items to see and enjoy after we reopen in February. We appreciate your patience and support!