

# FRIENDS OF HISTORIC VINELAND



## *A Founder Named Charles*

Many think that Landis was an unusual man because of his great achievements of founding Vineland, Sea Isle City, Landisville, Hammonton, and surrounding areas. But to me, the great fascination is in the workings of his mind and how he accomplished so many of the things that he did.

One of his interesting attributes was the fact that he traveled a lot—traveled all over the world. This especially included Italy. It was his travels in Italy that convinced him that Italians were desirable as immigrants and settlers in his Vineland tract. What he had to say in his diary gives us some insight into his thinking. For example, he visited the island of Capri (all Americans go there, right?) and said the following: “The sea coast here is very rocky and we had from it a fine view of the island of Ischia.... On the piazza I noticed a nice looking young woman to

whom I had given sundry money as I met her on the highway with a heavy load upon her head. Today being Sunday she was dressed up in a peasant’s costume and looked far better than many others.”

“Four young girls were at work carrying dirt and stone to fill a wharf. It must not be thought that the girls in this work are dirty looking. To the contrary, they are clean and dressed in the brightest colors of Italy and almost all of them are pretty and are said to be just as severely virtuous as they are poor and pretty.... Strange to say these girls are laughing and cheerful.... One of the prettiest told me that they would dance the tarantella some time for me for nothing.”

“One half at least of the men of Capri, married and single, have gone to the Argentine Republic of South American and continue to go. That Government does all it can to encourage Italian emigration. They consider it among the best from Europe, and so it is.”

“After dinner Mr. Flecher brought a Mr. Dingley of Maine to see me. He has been sent here by Mr. Blaine to inquire about Italian emigration. I gave the Italian a first rate character as I am bound to do from what I have seen of them both in Italy and Vineland. This morning I wrote

to Umberto, King of Italy....”

Mr. Landis also visited the town of Agrigentum in Sicily. This town has the largest number of Greek ruins in the world. As “everyone knows” Sicily was once one of the most important locations of Greek civilization in the ancient world. There, the word was passed along about the wonderful opportunities that could be found for Italian immigrants in Vineland. A certain Mr. Sinatra, it is said, made his way to America because of that. On his way to America, he stopped to visit a sister in Hoboken New Jersey and never got to Vineland. He later had a son that he named Frank who became a singer!



## *A Singer Named Frank*



*The Palace Depression project is alive and well. The Site is being worked on and the walls are beginning to take shape. Here are a couple of pictures of what it looks like.*



# *Continuation of: The History of Landisville*

## *By F. Renzulli (of Landisville of course!!)*

Many of the immigrants that arrived in Ellis Island were young brides, some barely teenagers, married not for love but by parental agreement. Most came, not knowing what to expect but hopeful for a better future. The loneliness, the sadness, the unknown future that lay ahead caused many tears to be shed and each left a tear on the 'Isle of Tears'.

Most of the immigrants had barely enough money to take care of themselves for more than a few days. All knew that if they were to succeed they would have to find work. My father's first job in this country was helping to dig the basement of the Catholic Church in Landisville. This was on the second or third day after he arrived in Landisville. Later he and his brother worked in a sand stone quarry in the Cedar Lake area. They took any kind of work they could find to support themselves and their families and, if at all possible, save a little money to send to their families back home. Often I have thought that there should be a special day "Immigrants Day" to celebrate and honor our forbears. It took a lot of nerve for them to come here, practically a wilderness, to start a new life and build a new future and for all they have contributed to building this country to what it is today. What ever we are we owe it all to them. And lest we forget, except for the American Indian, we are a nation founded by immigrants.

Those who came to America were not members or children of the wealthy class of Europe but the poor, those who saw no future in their homelands. As the inscription on the Statue of Liberty says: "Give me your tired, your poor; your huddled masses..." These were our forbearers; those we should honor.

How did the children and their parents of that era entertain themselves? Wireless communication that preceded the radio was still in its infancy. Television was unknown. Phonographs, more commonly known as 'Victrolas' (called Victrolas, a trade name, because they were manufactured by the Victor Talking Machine Company of Camden, N. J.), were just becoming affordable and more popular. In the evening after supper and by the light of a kerosene lamp the family sat around to listen to the music and songs. The mechanism that operated the phonograph consisted of a hand wound spring. One winding could play several records We would argue as to who would wind the Victrola. Our parents would divide the task among the children and thereby kept peace in the family.

As the phonograph was becoming popular the player piano began to appear on the market. In appearance it resembled an upright piano. It consisted of two foot pedals and a roll of music. The paper music roll had holes of different sizes and shapes punched in it. Working the

pedals up and down activated mechanism inside the piano, the roll "unrolled" onto a roller and while doing so music sounded. The piano keys worked as though some one was actually hitting the keys. Words of the song were printed on the roll as the family or friends or perhaps some one with a good voice sang to the melody. These pianos were expensive and few families could afford them, very few were sold. With the improvement of radios and phonographs player pianos gradually disappeared. Player pianos were a very interesting and entertaining instrument.

Children, with all their pep and vigor needed more to keep them going. Girls, as tradition dictated, stayed home and helped their mammas; played with their dolls, played "jacks", hop scotch and learned to sew little dresses and in general learned those lessons that would make them become good housewives and mothers.

There was no 'women's movement'. The only movement involved preparation for married life and raising a big family. Women were granted the right to vote in 1919. Life did change considerably for women after that and change continues and rightfully so. If a mother of that era were to come back today and see the changes that have come about she would be flabbergasted and find it hard to believe. Changes in hair styles, dresses; mini skirts? No



*New York Central Railroad Train Station  
of Landisville, Across From The Church  
On The Railroad Blvd.*

way! Women driving cars, running businesses, piloting planes even doing jobs once only men worked at, all were not for women of that era. The women's movement has taken a monumental giant step forward especially beginning with World War II and Rosie the Riveter. And our town kept up with the changes as our women entered the professions, took office jobs and worked side by side with men.

Two of the games boys played are no longer known. One was a game that consisted of rolling a hoop. The boy who could roll a hoop the greatest distance, without the hoop falling to the ground, won the game. The hoop was the metal rim of a wheel without the spokes and generally about 15 inches in to about 24 inches in diameter. Usually the hoops were from abandoned baby carriage wheels. During that era hoops were in good supply. A handle made of heavy gauge wire propelled the hoop. The wire was about 3 feet long. One end was bent down vertically about 4 inches, bent

again outwardly about 2 inches then bent upward again about 4 inches. The bent end fit around the hoop and kept it from falling. We had to move at a trotting pace in order to keep the hoop upright. If we slowed down the hoop would fall. Another game played was called 'putzy'. This required a 6 or 7 inch piece of rounded wood such as a broom handle pointed at both ends and a bat about 3 feet long usually from a broom handle. The short piece was the 'putzy.' it was placed on a wedge with one end touching the ground the other end about 6 inches above the ground. The object was to hit the raised end of the 'putzy' with a downward stroke of the bat and as the 'putzy' rose upward strike it with the bat and see how far you could drive the 'putzy'. The one who drove it the farthest won the game. We could not play "putzy" or hoops during school hours for fear of hurting other children. If we could get 6 boys together we played a game called ins and outs. It might be described as a 'shortened' type of baseball. To play this game we needed a catcher, a pitcher, a first baseman, a fielder and 2 batters. The object was for the batter to hit the ball and get to first base safely or possibly hit a home run and get back to home plate safely. If the batter got to first base the second batter tried to hit him home safely. If one of the batters was tagged out he became the fielder. The catcher became the batter, pitcher became the

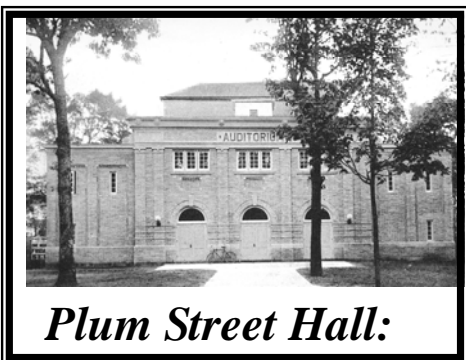
catcher, first baseman moved to the fielder's position and first baseman became the pitcher. Confusing? Not to those boys of summer! It was almost impossible to get 18 boys together for a regular game. Marbles became the game of choice in the early spring of the year. There were many variations to this game too. The ball used for playing baseball was home made. It consisted of a small rubber ball for the center and wrapped by yards and yards of string wound as tightly as possible then covered by tarred tape. A regular baseball was a rarity and only purchased by the rich kids. (There weren't too many of them.)

Schools too offered various forms of entertainment. These were generally to show the progress the children were making in school. Each school held an annual Christmas play. Now those offerings are not permitted. However at that period the community consisted of just about 100% Christians. During my entire grammar school days there was only one time when a non-Christian, a Jewish boy, entered one of our classes and his family moved from our town before the school year ended. There were also annual school plays in which children from various grades participated. One in particular stands out in my mind. My brother participated in it. It was a musical and it was held in the Red Men's Hall in Minotola. It was held there because it was used as a classroom....

*Do not despair, there is MUCH more to come. Same time, same place, but in the next issue of our "News Letter"*

**The Calendar for 2006** will have glass as it's theme and will honor a number of local individuals that have been prominent in the filed of glass. It will highlight Mr. Joseph Luisi, one of the most incredible glass blowers in the 5,000 year history of the production of glass. His work must be seen to appreciate it. Nothing like it was possible in the "old days" due to the lack of a blow torch that allows one to give pin prick heat to a small area of glass, and the other was the lack of pyrex glass that would not shatter when such heat is applied.

**This is the last call** for any that want to put an Ad in the calendar and help us honor the past of Vineland and a great and talented guy like Joe!!



**Plum Street Hall:**

Yes, Vineland did have a large auditorium for public meetings. It was called the Plum Street Hall or the Auditorium. It was "built under the auspices of the Friends of Progress."

born into a Dutch family in New York State in 1797. She became free at the age of 30 at which time she "became a new person" and changed her name to Sojourner Truth.

She came on the scene when other reformers were actively promoting the rights of women. She had an audience with President Abraham Lincoln at the White House in 1864 and with President Grant in 1870.

gress."

The building burned down in 1900 but until then, it had a lively history. One of the memorable meetings was one attended by Sojourner Truth, a former black slave who was traveling the East at that time. Sojourner had been given the name of "Isabella" when

She appeared in person at the Plum Street Hall in 1866 (the Civil War was over in 1865) at the same time that Landis reported on his extended trip to Europe. One thousand one hundred and twenty people packed into the hall, and others were turned away due to lack of available seats..

***And now let's talk about money, we sure can use some. Sending out these letters costs money and that money comes from your donations. We can't send them if we don't get help. If you want to help, send us some of that hard earned money of yours and we promise to make every effort to put it to good historical use!!!. Thanks so much!! (All of us in the "Friends")***

**DO YOU WANT TO JOIN??**  
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 The Friends have no connections with the Vineland  
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