



# Port Norris

# Be a Part of History Today

## HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Port Norris Historical Society is dedicated to preserving the history of our unique village, located in Commercial Township in Cumberland County, NJ.



### Current Happenings:

**PNHS Next meeting: March 8, 2016 • 7:00 pm • 1723 Main Street**

### Next Storytelling Session: **A Stroll Along Village Streets**

**Saturday, March 12th, 2016, 2-4:00** • Location: Bayshore Center at Bivalve • 2800 High Street, Port Norris, NJ

Along the east and west shores of the Maurice River and up the Bay to Greenwich, towns along the Bayshore still retain much of their historic character with impressive inventories of old houses and hints of businesses and industries of the past.

Remember strolling down the street in any of the villages around the Bayshore back in the day? What buildings, businesses and houses do you remember? Who did you remember walking past? What were the sights and sounds as you went about your day in your town?

The Bayshore Center and the Port Norris Historical Society invite community members to share a memory from their lifetime, a family anecdote or recollection or just come to listen and learn about these streets.

In addition to stories, the public is invited to bring photographs, documents or news articles to share. The program will be recorded and the information collected will be used in future exhibits, online, research or educational purposes as part of the Delaware Bay Museum & Folklife Center and the Port Norris Historical Society. As always, the program is free and refreshments will be served. Visit [historicportnorris.org](http://historicportnorris.org)



High Street . Arthur Rothstein, FSA Collection - circ.1963

## Compobosso, Italy to Philadelphia, PA to Port Norris, NJ

By Joyce Massey

My grandfather, Antonio DelRossi, was born in Compobosso, Italy in 1868. He immigrated to America in 1880 at the age of 11 1/2. I don't know who traveled with him to America, but I do remember as a child that he had a sister who used to visit him in Port Norris. She died in Philadelphia in 1959. I do know that some of her family moved to York, PA because years ago I visited a few of my cousins there.

Antonio worked as a laborer and also sold fruit and vegetables from a cart on the streets of Philadelphia. He became an American citizen in 1891. He married 3

times. His first wife, Domenica, was my father's mother. She bore 6 children, only 2 of which ever reached adulthood: that was my father and his older sister Frances. Domenica died from pneumonia after giving birth to her sixth child who also died from pneumonia a month later.

Although my father was always known as Andrew all his adult life, he was actually named Carmine at birth. I think Andrew may have been his middle name and he apparently liked that name better because that was the name he used.

Sometime after marrying his second wife in 1901, my grandfather moved from Philadelphia to Strawberry Avenue in Port Norris, NJ, where he resided until his death in June of 1954. He rented the land at first, but eventually purchased 89 acres for farming. His second wife died while living in Port Norris in 1910. There were two daughters from that marriage: Maime and Mary.

He married his third wife, also named Domenica, in 1911. She was the grandmother that I knew as I grew up. She bore 3 children: Rose, Angelina and Carmen. They grew up on Strawberry Avenue and attended public schools in Port Norris. Rose, Carmen and my father lived their entire lives in Port Norris. My dad was only 4 years old when my grandfather moved there. My aunts Frances and Angelina both married and moved away from the area.

Strawberry Avenue, for quite some time, was referred to as "Little Italy" because of all the Italian families that lived on that road. They all were farmers at one time.

My grandfather was instrumental, along with other Catholic men in the area, in acquiring land and building the first and only Catholic Church in Port Norris in 1913. He was also one of the first trustees of the church. Mass is still celebrated in that church to this day. St. Anthony's Roman Catholic Church

As a child, I remember my grandfather raising hogs for food. I also remember being very afraid of them. They were huge! Their pen was next to the barn. I can't remember what other animals were on the farm then. I do remember a man-made pond in the back yard filled with big goldfish. They always fascinated me. My mother was always warning us not to get too close to the edge for fear that we might fall into the pond. Fortunately, it was not very deep. My older brother Bob fell in twice that I can remember!

In his later years my grandfather rented out the farm land to other local farmers when he was no longer able to farm it himself. He was 85 at the time of his death. The farm was finally sold about 5 or 6 years ago.

## Pickings of the Month

### Feb 22, 1888

At the request of a large number of citizens Thomas A. Hand Sr., will again be a candidate for Freeholder this spring. Mr. Hand has been a faithful and efficient member of the board for a number of years and has done a great deal for the township.

### Feb 7, 1890

On Tuesday many friends of John Trout, Sr., assembled at his home on Main Street, taking him completely by surprise. They immediately repaired to the kitchen where they soon had a table spread to suit the meat fastidious. After being seated the blessing was asked by Rev. E. Sharp, of Haleyville, after which Mr. F. Fagan proceeded to make an onslaught on the turkey. Among those present were: Rev. E. Sharp and wife, Benjamin Berry, Sr., and wife, Gilbert Stites and wife, Edward Cole and wife, F. Fagan and wife, Alonzo Chester and wife, Miss Jane Blizzard, Miss Matilda Berry, Elmer Trout, Master Hearl Blizzard, Master Willie Trout and others. See More Pickings at [historicportnorris.org/pickings.htm](http://historicportnorris.org/pickings.htm)



## Membership and Renewal for 2016

We would love to add your name to our growing list of members. Please give some thought to joining the PNHS. Membership fees are for Individual - \$10, Family - \$15, Benefactor - \$50 and over, and Student - \$1 (no voting privileges) and entitles you to discounts on our merchandise. Click here to renew or join, [historicportnorris.org/membership.htm](http://historicportnorris.org/membership.htm).

Or mail your check to: Port Norris Historical Society, PO Box 187, Port Norris, NJ 08349.

Thank you for your support. Membership is key to applying for grants as well as your dollars help us continue with all of our endeavours.

### See us on Facebook and our website [historicportnorris.org](http://historicportnorris.org)

If you are getting this email from a friend and would like to be added to our list, please [click here](#) and we will add you. If we received your email at one of our events and you do not wish to receive this newsletter, click here [web@historicportnorris.org](mailto:web@historicportnorris.org), we will remove you from the list. We do not sell or share your email with anyone!

**Moment in History:**

In 1902 the Interstate Telephone Company was granted permission to place its poles and equipment for telephone and telegraph purposes in Port Norris.

In this photograph, Left to right top to bottom, Man and Dog dog Unknown, Dan Adams, Sam Cobb, Unknown, Harry Cobb, and Unknown.

Harry Cobb worked as a line foreman with the Interstate Telephone Company from 1909-1911.

It is documented in his time records that they would leave Millville on a Monday morning with a crew of 10-12 men and 2 horse-drawn wagons loaded with supplies, including poles, and return on Friday night. During the week, they stayed at boarding houses. The work was divided up in order to stay on schedule. A couple of men first went ahead to dig holes ( by hand ) for the poles. Then Harry, who was quite strong, would lift the pole by himself and position it in the hole while the others would fill it in with dirt. The wires had to be run from pole to pole and since Sam didn't mind heights, it was also his job.

Their job entailed setting telephone poles throughout southern New Jersey and the poles you see today along #553 from Port Norris to Dividing Creek were put there by Harry and his team.



Photo Courtesy of Carol Robbins

If you can help identify anyone else in this image, please let us know.



**NORRIS ASKS**

**HOW MANY TELEPHONE POLES ARE IN A MILE?**

Answer: Best guess is that in a straight line, poles can be about 50-60 m apart. That works out to be approximately 10 poles per quarter mile. *Source: Yahoo Answers.* The distance between Port Norris and Dividing Creek is 4 miles. Just for fun, who wants to take an actual count of those poles? Let us know!



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