



Port Norris

The Past for the Future

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: January 9, 2018 7:00 pm • 1723 Main Street

2017 Legends Awards Review

On November 12, 2017 we honored eight Legends this year. You will find their life stories on our web site at historicportnorris.org/legends-2017.htm.

Here are a few selections of those honored this year:

20THCENTURY

Louis P. Dagastine

August 1, 1904 - July 22, 1992



Louis P. Dagastine was born on August 1, 1904 in a large apartment house on Little Italy Road (now known as Strawberry Avenue) across from the Old Galiyano Farm. He was the third of ten children born to Pasquale (Jimmy Big Head) and Maria (Mary) Siciliano Dagastine. We have been told there were sixteen children born to the family, but only ten survived. Lou had five brothers: Tony, Les, Sam, John, and Joe and four sisters: Helen (Phil), Elizabeth (Liv), Frances and Angelina (Lena)

Anyone who knew Lou personally can remember Lou having the knack of being a great story teller. If he were here today, he would enjoy telling his life's story, so I think it only appropriate to share in his words parts of what Uncle Lou wrote to us in his memoirs of our family history.

After four children (Phil, Lou, Elizabeth and Frances) were born, the family moved to a home built on the family farm about a half mile northwest of Parsons Lane. I can remember the day we moved. I was told in later years that I was over two years old, would be three the next August. But I remember very well the doings of the moving day. The day before we moved, my sister Elizabeth who was fourteen months younger than I we were in the side yard playing when we were frightened by a large monster coming down the road. It was strange looking and making a funny noise. There were several people sitting and standing on it. Elizabeth started screaming.

Mother stuck her head out the window trying to comfort us as this huge monster went down the road by our house. It was (learned later) an automobile, the very first one that had ever been in the area. Brothers Les, Sam, John and Joe were born at the house on Parsons Lane. That would be our house until April 1916. That is when the family moved to a larger home back on Little Italy Road which became the Dagastine homestead. My sister Lena was born at the house we now call home.

I should note that at some point, Lou changed the name of Little Italy Road to Strawberry Avenue.

Now before we go any further there is something I am leaving out. That is how the name D'Ausgotino became the present name Dagastine. When I started to school, I was the only little Italian boy in the school. Well little Italian boys at that time were not so popular. So as I went to school a year or so, and learned to write, I started the changing of the name. I took out the apostrophe and changed the U to an A. Later I took the O off the end and put in an E, then later changed the O to an A and that completed the change to Dagastine.

In 1924 we built a can house across the street from the homestead. We canned tomatoes, string beans and kieffer pears. We shipped our first railroad carload of canned tomatoes in August 1925, to Alfred Lowery & Bro. in Philadelphia. They were canned under the Montco Label.

In 1926 we got a telephone line run up to the homestead, so then we had telephone, but no electric yet. Then in 1928 after a lot of trouble we had the electric company run an electric line up to the can house.

In 1926 we opened up a movie house opposite the bank building, it was known as the NUJOY Theatre. We showed silent pictures from 1926 thru 1929, then sound pictures came. We then had what we called Talkies. Then in 1932 the depression came, things went bad. In 1933 the banks closed, most business houses went out of business. Dad passed away May 10, 1935. In 1936 we closed up the Theatre and in 1937 we closed the can house. [Read more and see great photos here.](#)

Presented by Mary Linda Lacotte

John Bradway

September 21, 1906 - January 1980



John Woolard Bradway was born September 21, 1906 in a modest farmhouse in Port Norris, NJ. Throughout the years, virtually every time we drove by that farmhouse, he would say proudly, "There's the house where I was born." His parents were Edward and Mary Bradway. Brothers were William, Frank, Joseph and Edward. Sisters included Ella, Laura and Virginia.

He grew up on the family farm in Port Norris. The family was very poor. When I was a child, I remember John (my father) frequently telling stories about helping his mother make Christmas wreaths every winter. The family's entire Christmas was provided only by the profit from the homemade wreaths. Some years everyone just got an apple for Christmas.

John dropped out of High School in 10th grade to help the family out by working on the farm. Soon he moved on to working on oyster boats with his brother Joe. A little while later, the two brothers went to work for Atlantic City Electric Company, reading meters. John was living in Bridgeton, NJ at that time. He also supplemented his income selling Sanitizer Vacuum Cleaners.

John also made another crucial decision during his young adult years which became central to the way he lived his life. At a tent meeting led by a travelling evangelist, he had a conversion experience, leading him to focus his life on his faith and personal practice of Christianity.

He married Eveiyn Shull on June 6, 1932. Their son, John Jr., was born February 23, 1933. Sadly, Evelyn died February 26, 1933 due to a post partum infection. The family has preserved a letter written by John a few days after Evelyn's death, showing simply and clearly how he had loved her and grieved for her.

Although there was a time when he would have found it hard to believe, John did soon find happiness again with a young school teacher, Marguerite Doughty. During the courtship period, she recalled praying for God to not let her love him because she didn't think it was possible he would be interested in her. He was praying at the same time for God to make her love him, John was not above helping God out a little. He also told of hiding behind trees near her house and waiting til she came out to begin walking to church. Then he would appear and say something like, "Oh what a coincidence! I just happened to be coming along at the same time you came out. May I walk you to church.?" John married Marguerite on June 20, 1934. John and Marguerite had a son, Joseph, born on July 5, 1935.

John was shortly promoted by Atlantic City Electric Company to office manager in Tuckerton, NJ. This was considered an excellent job, as he made over \$20 per week throughout

the rest of the Great Depression. The family was still living in Tuckerton when daughter Sharon was born on April 21, 1947.

In 1950, the family moved to Port Norris so John could manage Port Norris Oyster Company, which had been purchased by his brother Joe. Shortly after John began running the oyster company, the entire oyster business in the area, including Port Norris Oyster Company, was challenged by the MSX epidemic, which killed off as many as 95% of the area's oysters by the time it was characterized in 1957.

[Read more and see great photos here.](#)

Tribute by his son Joe.

Rose Davis O'Brien & Jane O'Brien Robbins

I do not know if Rose and Jane were the first but I do know they must be one of the first female entrepreneurs in Port Norris.

Because Grandmom's husband died suddenly she had a seafood market that she knew would be too much for her. She had to have a way to earn a living. My mother had helped her and Grandpop so it was a way for my Mother to earn a living also. When I was

a year and a half my Mother became a single Mom. I could be with her in the store.

They each had one day off. Grandmom had Tuesdays and Mother had Mondays. Grandmom did the books every night and Mom closed each night.

I know there were 2 books kept for accounts charged. Most people were paid bi-monthly or once a month. When folks came in to pay their account some paid from what was titled half account and those folks paid cost.

[Read more and see great photos here.](#)

Presented by daughter and grand daughter Rose Ranier.

LIVING LEGENDS
Clyde A. Phillips
December 11, 1933



Clyde was born on December 11, 1933 in the little old brick hospital in Bridgeton. His working life started in Millville at one of the Bond Stores for 50 cents an hour. His first real money making job was in his Junior year in High School when he borrowed \$26,000 to buy three oyster grounds and a forty five foot oyster boat. He sent it up the bay for seed oysters in May and June with a hired captain. In the two month season the business was paid off and some of the money was banked. After graduation he went in business with his father, Capt. Clyde A. Phillips.

From there, and after his marriage to his college sweetheart, Mary Giles from Deep Step, GA, he joined the Regular Army and was stationed in the Bavarian Alps of Germany. He served three years on active duty as a medical laboratory technician, three years in a reserve unit in Ohio, and another year on extended duty, inactive, during the Cuban missile crisis.

He was then working for Stowman Shipyard where he worked as a workboat carpenter and chief of the scrapping and scrubbing crew on newly hauled boats. He became the tugboat captain, delivery captain, a mill hand, and boat planker, and then he moved into the Newporter crew that built forty foot sailboats. He soon was running the plywood shop where he made large sheets out of small sheets, the biggest was ten feet wide by one hundred feet long. He also built the masts, booms and bowsprits and much of the framing. He soon became the rigger. This job required the making of all the rope and cable rigging, attaching the rigging to the masts, then stepping the masts and tuning the rigging, bending on the sails, then taking the boat for a trial sail.

He also was for over 13 years the research vessel captain at Rutgers University's Oyster Research Lab, where he also was a marine biologist basically studying the oysters in the Bay. His big scientific goal is to photograph a few Wilson's Petrels-little sea birds that winter offshore of New Jersey during our summer (they nest on the southern end of South America during our winter). No scientific study records the ability of this specie to walk on the water, but he and his father (separately) have witnessed the feat. [Read more and see great photos here.](#)

*Presented by Rev. Dr. Lewis Hiserote
of First Methodist Church of Millville*

Dominick Capaldi
June 1, 1941

Dominick Capaldi was born on June 1, 1941. His parents were Philip and Victoria. He has a sister Mary and three daughters Deanna, Karen and Debbie, and one grandson Luca, his girls and grandson all live in Colorado.

Dom is a partner in Capaldi Farms, and Capaldi Machine Products, during the Seventys and Eightys was an oysterman, and captain of the "Ollie I Collie".

In 2014 the New Jersey Agricultural Society presented Capaldi Farms with the "Centery Farm of the year" award. Capaldi Farms Century Farm Award

Dom serves on the Cumberland County board of Agriculture Executive Committee, and for many years served on the Farmers Home Administration County Committee, he is a Chamber by the Bay member, a member of the Port Norris Rotary, is also a past president of the Port Norris Historical Society. After Phils passing in 2004 Dom and his sister Mary started a Memorial Scholarship in his name to any Cumberland County high school senior who wishes to continue there education in Agriculture or related field, This Scholarship is presented by the Cumberland County Board of Agriculture. [Read more and see great photos here.](#) Presented by Sam Ricci

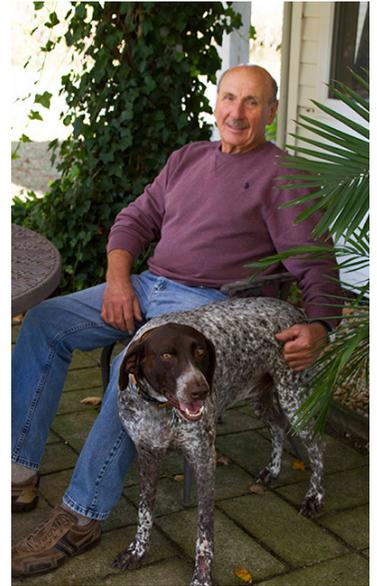
We also honored
EARLY 20TH CENTURY
Emily Fowler Rigg



The family of Emily Fowler Rigg.

[Read more and see great photos here.](#)
Presented by her daughter Joan Harper

We thank everyone for the hard work in putting this event together. To all who attended, from near or far, we appreciate the support and sharing your loved ones with us.



Port Norris Pickings

December 12, 1889

Our liveryman, Warrington L. Hand, has just received a very pretty new hack with the name "Maurice River Coach Line" which he will run to any part of the town to transport passengers. We will venture to say it is one of the prettiest in South Jersey.

December 11, 1890

H. H. Nicholson has his store so full that it is all most impossible to go in without buying something. Wilson L. Shropshire is out again.



On December 9 the PNHS provided a Soup and Sandwich dinner during the Mauricetown Candlelight House Tour and Craft Fair held at the Firehall. It could not have happened without our very dedicated members. We thank everyone who cooked on Friday, served on Saturday and CLEANED UP after! It was a team effort. THANK YOU ALL!



NORRIS ASKS

Norris is on holiday this month. The PNHS wishes everyone a great holiday season and a Happy New Year. We wish much health and happiness to all. Thank you to everyone for the support in 2017. We will have a year in review newsletter soon. It was a grand year. See you in 2018!

Please Note: Meeting dates and times are posted on the website each month along with the approved minutes from the last meeting. Everyone is always welcome. [Click here to view.](#)

Membership and Renew for 2018

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.

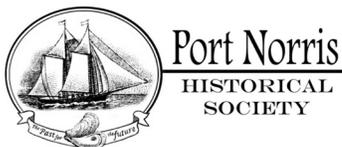
Click here to renew or join, historicportnorris.org/membership.htm

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

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, we will remove you from the list. We do not sell or share your email with anyone!



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