



Cranford's Carnival—Hail and Farewell

Years ago—way back in the early 80's—Santiago Porcella, the elder, chanced upon an idea which made Cranford carnival conscious for nearly half a century. "Sandy" lived on Holly St., near the river, and every pleasant summer evening he took his family for a boat ride. As his family was large, he required a large row boat, and it seemed to him a rather plain affair for the merry parties that he rowed down the winding stream, from his wharf to the dam near the railroad station and return. Sandy Junior, who was then a teething infant, gurgled when his father held a piece of bunting before his eyes; and then and there father determined that a bit of color was necessary for the full enjoyment of an evening at the oars. So he strung Chinese lanterns on a wire above his boat, cushioned the seats with bright colored fabrics to match the summer frocks his wife and children wore, placed them in the boat according to size and age—and away they went merrily down stream while scores of neighbors followed them with admiring eyes.

On the following night, other boats appeared in gay attire, and soon it was regarded in bad form—in fact, almost immodest—to be seen on the river in a boat that was not properly caparisoned. Novel embellishments, in making which there was considerable rivalry, were preferred. That summer floated by in a sea of colors and in the following spring the neighbors got together and formed the Cranford Canoe Club, out of which developed the Cranford Carnival. The first regatta was held July 18, 1889.

With that spectacular event, Cranford, which had been lying dormant by the river's brink since its separation from Westfield in 1871, suddenly sprang to life. Thousands of people lined the roads and banks while the procession floated by. Decorations covered

the waterfront; bands played, school children sang, crowds cheered. There were prizes to cover every type of craft, original designs in house and lawn decorations and historical floats, canoes resembling large birthday cakes with candles, row boats fashioned into floral palaces with all the royal trappings. No wonder the town was called "The Venice of America." There was a Venetian air about it, on these occasions at least.

Probably the best remembered of all carnivals was the Golden Jubilee Celebration and the Mardi Gras Parade of 1921. It required three days—from July 2nd to 4th—to complete the program of festivals, processions, boat races, concerts, and special church services (Sunday, the 3rd), and a regatta that topped them all for pageantry. Every town in the county was represented. The judges of the Mardi Gras were Mrs. Henry C. White of Plainfield; Mrs. Frank W. Smith of Westfield, and Mrs. Charles MacQuoid of Cranford, wife of a Westfield boy who was formerly Mayor of Roselle. To act as judges of the regatta, Westfield sent Mayor M. D. Littlefield; Rahway, Mayor D. H. Trembly; Roselle, Mayor W. J. Simpson; Roselle Park, Hon. Elliott C. Dill, president of the Borough Council; Cranford, Hon. Charles MacQuoid. Upwards of 20,000 attended.

The carnival continued to be an annual event through 1929, but its glory faded with the march of time and the changes in modes of travel. Actually, the automobiles (aided and abetted by the Board of Freeholders), were responsible for its demise. The river runs under three main arteries of travel, and in the early days, it was spanned by wooden bridges which could be elevated for floats and other decorated craft to pass through. But when the automobile came it was neces-