

A CARNIVAL IN CRANFORD

The following article was published in the New York Times, August 3, 1886. The article paints a flattering portrait of the village of Cranford and provides a good description of Cranford's first regatta. In just a few short years, the regattas became major events, attracting competitors from throughout New Jersey, although they never achieved the fame, then or now, that was and is associated with the river carnivals.

The last paragraph of the article touches on the origin of the river carnivals ("something on the Venetian order"), which have become a legendary chapter of Cranford's past.

Boating on the Rahway River—The Opening

Cranford, N.J., Aug 2. —By the recent erection of a dam across the Rahway River at this place a large part of that pretty stream has been turned into a clear, smooth lake, shaded on both sides by old forest trees and with sufficient depth to afford fine boating and fishing. The residents of the town have discovered that they have a better Summer pleasure ground at their own doors than they can find in a day's travel, and they are making the most of it. Where there were formerly only three or four boats on the river there are now somewhere between fifty and a hundred, rustic piers and bridges have been built, and every afternoon and evening the river is by all means the liveliest part of the town. Cranford is one of the prettiest of the small New-Jersey towns within easy reach of New-York, where almost every male resident is in business in the city, where the road, smooth streets are well lined with shade trees, and where every householder takes a pride in having his lawn and his flower beds look at least as well as his neighbors. A few weeks ago a number of the young gentlemen of the place organized the Cranford River Improvement Association, and selected for Commodore the most imposing and dignified gentleman who comes out over the Central Road every evening, Mr. Charles Leo Abry. Mr. H.I. Latimer was chosen Secretary and Mr. L. Madden, Treasurer. For members of the Executive Committee they chose Mr. E. Bookhout, Jr., (of the firm of Bookhout Brothers,) Mr. H. C. Burnett, Mr. S.C. Madden, (one of the magnates of the Erie Railroad,) Mr. S. Porcella, (of Vincini & Co.,) and Mr. L. Saphar. These gentlemen made arrangements for an opening regatta, and last Saturday afternoon fully half the town turned out to see the races.

It was an unfortunate thing that Commordore Abry was the first man in Cranford to lose a race, being ingloriously defeated in the opening single scull race by Mr. G.H. Miller, (of Mitchell, Vance & Co.) The misses' double scull race was won by Virgie and Gracie Marcus in very neat style. Then followed a double scull race for gentlemen, in which the competitors were H.C. Burnett and George H. Krause in one boat and J.A. Hibson and S. Porcella in the other. The latter gentlemen won easily by about three lengths. There was a swimming race for boys, in which Master Johnny Close took all the honors and the silver medal, and a canoe race between L.A. Madden (also of the Erie Railroad) and Henry W. Lockett. Young Mr. Lockett, who was thought to have hardly any chance against so experienced and muscular an opponent, won very neatly, and showed great skill in handling the paddle. The prettiest and closest race of the day was the double scull race for ladies, with Misses Nina and Anita Munoz in one boat, and Misses Addie Jarvis and Sophie Beder in the other. All of these young ladies have had considerable experience in boating, and they pulled fully

as well as any of the gentlemen. At the finish there was hardly more than three feet difference between the boats, but the Misses Munoz were ahead. Another double scull race was won by H.G. and A.E. Madden, (Maddens are thick in Cranford, and all are interested in boating,) a tub race was won by Stephen Cox, Jr., and a swimming race by Mr. John C. Denman (of Luckemeyer, Shefer & Co.) All the winners were decorated with medals.

But the association conceived a better idea even than that of the regatta. They made arrangements for a grand evening carnival, something on the Venetian order, which is to be held in Cranford next Saturday evening. A few weeks ago they tried this on a smaller scale, and it made such a beautiful sight that when they opened a subscription to pay the expenses of a big one everybody contributed. On Saturday evening nearly a hundred boats will be gayly decorated with Chinese lanterns, the river banks will be illuminated with colored lights, the bridges will be lit up, there will be bands of music, and a display of fireworks. Visitors from the neighboring towns are to be cordially welcomed, and they will be likely to see as pretty and brilliant a sight as anyone could desire.