

“Get A Horse!”

By Vic Bary

This invective, hurled by riders of a single horse or a horse-drawn carriage at the beginning of the 20th Century towards drivers of that loud, smelly, smoke-belching vehicle known as the AUTOMOBILE, spoke of a battle whose outcome we all know. Central to this contest of wills was a tradesman now almost forgotten - the BLACKSMITH. It was he (and I use that pronoun because the upper body strength required resulted in there being no female blacksmiths in Cranford) who pursued his trade initially in support of the horse camp, then slowly had to shift his efforts towards the automobilist camp. So how did this transition unfold?

The cooperation between man and horse began 5,500 years ago. Perfecting this cooperation between man and beast required restraining materials and protective materials made of leather and of iron for the horse. And the latter was the purview of the blacksmith.

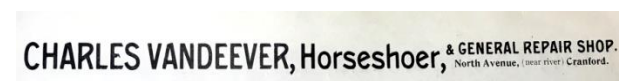
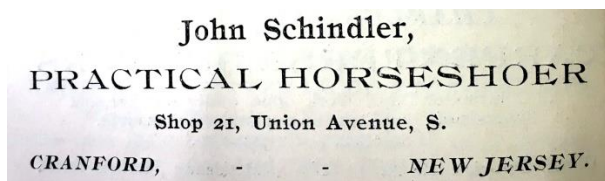
The Blacksmith

Blacksmithing began in the Middle East about 1,500 BCE and came into its own in Europe during the Middle Ages. Blacksmiths worked with iron and steel to make all manner of tools, devices, and armor and weapons, as well as to repair these same objects. In time, as some of the demand for these products began to be met by mass production, blacksmiths took to augmenting their incomes by taking on work shoeing horses – a trade known in England as a “farrier”. Cranford’s blacksmiths at the turn of the 20th century should probably have called themselves farriers.

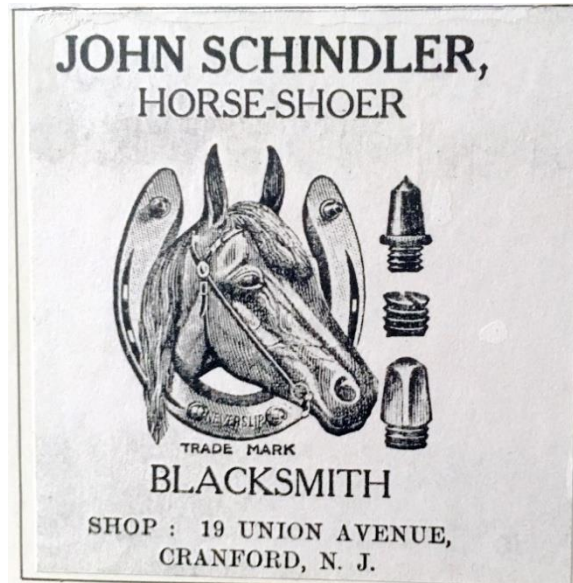
Cranford’s Blacksmiths

We know from retrospective articles in local newspapers that Jonathan Dayton Winans ran a blacksmith shop at the intersection of Lincoln Avenue and Centennial Avenue (neither so named at the time) in the mid-1800s. As early as May 6, 1899 the *Cranford Citizen* carried an advertisement for John Schindler’s blacksmith business.

Cranford’s first City Directory was published in 1901, and in it were found the following two advertisements for local blacksmiths who clearly focused their business on the care of horses.



John Schindler would continue his blacksmith business through 1917. US Census data records him owning his shop, as well as a mortgaged home at 19 Union Avenue and living with his wife, Ella, and their children Hartley (or Wilbur), John Clifford, and Dorothy.



Undated Schindler Ad

Charles Vandever is shown as owning his North Union Avenue shop, as well as a mortgaged home at 712 Orange Avenue. He and his wife, Victoria, lived there with their children C. Moxo and Augusta. Charles Vandever was Cranford's only known African-American blacksmith. (As an historical side note, the August 12, 1908 *Cranford Chronicle* congratulated Charles for placing second in the Westfield 10-mile bicycle race for which he was awarded two racing tires.)

Over the next decade, the ranks of Cranford blacksmiths would swell to include: Isaac Balmforth (1902 – “Blacksmith and Horse Shoer – Jobbing Properly Done”), Charles Donnelly (1903 - who would sell his business the following year to N.A.Barnett), Herman Redrup (1904 – whose advertisement appears below, and who would sell his business in August 1908 to the Atlantic Auto Company), August N. Barnett (1905 – who had purchased Charles Donnelly's blacksmith business in 1904), Isaac Winans (1906, son of Jonathan Winans), Edward Grau (1913-14) and John Lang (1915).

Herman Redrup Practical Horse-Shoer

HORSE CLIPPING BY ELECTRIC POWER.

Clipping . . . \$2.00	Manes taken off .50
Clipping with alcohol bath . 2.50	Tails trimmed .50
Clipping kicker at owner's risk . . . 3.00 to 5.00	Clipping legs to body . . . 1.00
Manes drawn 1.00	Clipping legs to knees75
Manes roached 1.00	Clipping fetlocks50

Horses' Teeth Filed.

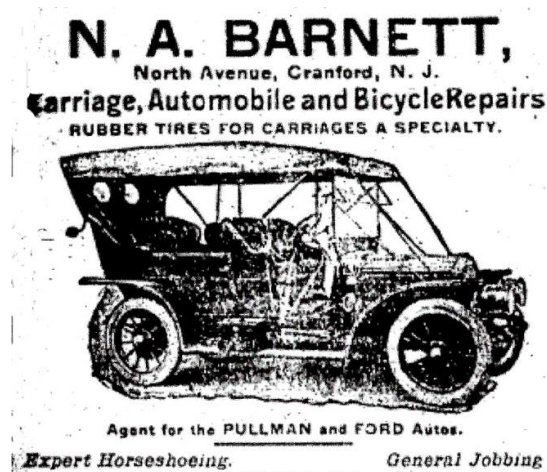
North Avenue, near Depot,

Herman Redrup Ad 1907-08 Cranford Directory

Change Comes in a Puff of Oily Smoke

The growth in the number of Cranford blacksmiths seems to have peaked in about 1910, and that peak is explained by an event occurring in faraway Detroit, Michigan. Near the end of 1908, Henry Ford introduced the Model T, his first mass-produced automobile. Within a few days of its announcement, Ford had 15,000 orders in hand (more than his entire 1909 production of 10,666). By 1913 Ford was producing 170,000 Model Ts a year; by 1916 - 500,000 a year - priced at \$345 (\$7,943 in today's dollar). For that price you got TWENTY horsepower, and they didn't need to be daily fed and groomed, or shod. The handwriting was on the wall (and the handwringing no doubt was taking place in the stall, and in the forge).

Even before Henry Ford launched the Model T, one Cranford blacksmith, August Barnett (or N. A. Barnett as he called himself) seems to have been attuned to the ground shifting beneath him. His 1906 *Cranford Citizen* advertisement emphasized carriage and automobile repairs, listing horseshoeing in smaller letters at the bottom of the advertisement. By 1909 he had gone almost completely over to the dark side, selling Ford and Pullman automobiles in addition to his horseshoeing and bicycle, carriage and automobile repair work.



N. A. Barnett Ad - *The Cranford Citizen* 1909

August N. Barnett was listed in the 1910 US Census as a “garage owner”, not as a blacksmith. In 1913 he sold his Cranford blacksmithing business to Edward Grau and bought a garage in Asbury Park. (In fact, many blacksmiths would recast themselves as their community’s first automobile mechanics.)

How quickly the ground had shifted is revealed by the Business Directory section of the 1922 Cranford City Directory. While only one blacksmith was listed (B. J. Eichinger), the following automobile-associated businesses were listed:

- 9 Automobile sales places or salesmen.
- 6 Automobile repair places or garages (including former blacksmith Edward Grau)
- 3 Automobile sundries stores
- 2 Automobile painters

B. Eichinger – Cranford’s Last Blacksmith

Page 61 of Fridlington and Fuhro’s Images of America: Cranford Vol. I contains this 1928 photograph of Balthazar J. Eichinger, describing him as “one of Cranford’s last blacksmiths”.



Balthazar J. Eichinger – 1928

Actually, he was THE last blacksmith in Cranford.

Eichinger purchased his Cranford blacksmith business in 1921. He appears in the 1930 US Census as a blacksmith residing at 38 High Street with his wife, Mathilda, and his children: Margoret – 14, Hans – 12, and Helen -7. Eichinger would continue to practice his trade there until 1958, but would be forced to shift his focus from horses, first to sharpening ice skates, lawn mowers and shears, then to installing and repairing bumpers and springs for all makes and models of automobiles. Ultimately, he transitioned to ornamental iron work.

In 1943, Eichinger would be the model for a Public Service Corporation advertisement for “Free Enterprise” accompanied by an illustration of him in his shop by local artist Leslie Crump. The advertisement was published in the *Citizen and Chronicle* and other weekly newspapers



1943 Public Service (Eichinger) Ad

Eichinger sold his old blacksmith shop at the corner of High and Chestnut Streets to the local congregation of Jehovah’s Witnesses in 1958. It was renovated and reopened in January 1961 as “Kingdom Hall”. The *Citizen and Chronicle* headline for the 1958 closing of Eichinger’s blacksmith practice read “*Horse and Buggy Days Pass as Village Smith Sells Shop*”.

To paraphrase Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, by the 1930s, other than for Balthazar Eichinger:

‘UNDER, the spreading chestnut tree, no village smithy stood’.

Sources:

1. *Citizen and Chronicle*, various.
2. *Cranford Chronicle*, various.
3. *Cranford Chronicle and Citizen*, various.
4. *Cranford Citizen and Chronicle*, various.
5. *Cranford City Directories 1901 - 1935*.
6. [En.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blacksmith](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blacksmith).
7. [En.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domestication_of_the_Horse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domestication_of_the_Horse).
8. [En.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ford_Model_T](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ford_Model_T).
9. Fridlington, R. & Fuhro, L. *Images of America: Cranford Vol. I*, Arcadia, Dover, NH, 1995.
10. *U. S. Census 1880 – 1940*.