

The Burditt Newspaper Index: A Great Source of Cranford History

By Bill Curtis

Here at the Hanson House, and at our town library, there is a great source of Cranford history. It's called the Burditt Newspaper Index. It's a compilation of one-line headings on index cards of all the news stories appearing in:

- The *Cranford Chronicle* from its beginning November 29, 1893 to February 10, 1921
- The *Cranford Citizen* from March 5, 1898 to February 10, 1921
- The *Cranford Citizen and Chronicle*, from February 17, 1921 to May 26, 1949 (name changed to *Citizen and Chronicle* after May 13, 1937)

Articles which appeared in the *Cranford Chronicle* and the *Citizen and Chronicle* are designated by the date of the paper. Articles appearing in the *Cranford Citizen* are designated by a "Z" in front of the date. There are two groupings of cards: one comprised of person's names, and the other of places and subjects. Both are arranged alphabetically.

The Index was laboriously typed on 3X5 index cards by local businessman Arthur Burditt and his wife, Hazel. Each line on the card starts with the date of the newspaper that the story appeared in. The cards were donated to the Cranford Library, which later received a New Jersey State Library grant to copy them to microfilm in 1996. The microfilm was available at both the Library and at the Cranford Historical Society.

In 2012, Cranford Historical Society Trustee Judy Panagakos brought the Index into the Internet Age, creating a searchable people and subject index at cranfordhistory.org. On that site, simply click on Burditt Index on the "Pages" column on the right hand section of the landing page, and follow the instructions.

Here's an example of just one of my uses of the Index. In 1964, we bought our home on Blake Avenue. After I retired in 1992, I joined the Historical Society and learned about Burditt's Index. I looked at our microfilm file to see what was in it about Blake Ave. The first entry on the Blake Ave. card was "7/16/31-Few houses on Blake Ave. on north side of a mud street". When the undeveloped south side of street was later built up, a street would have to occupy that area. (See township committee ordinances card.)

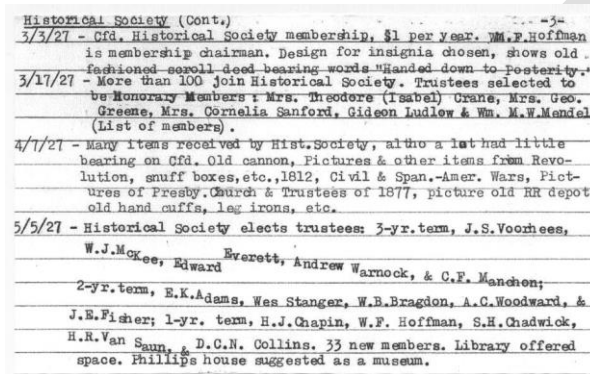
My house is on the South side of the street, and was built in 1959. I started looking at old maps at the Hanson House, and found the 1871 map made by the original owner and developer of the area. It showed the plot sizes of each plot. I compared my plot dimensions as shown on the tax maps in our Assessor's office to our builder's survey, and found that we were being taxed for 20 feet of the area occupied by the street. We'd been paying taxes on that 1,000 square feet of property we didn't own for 40 years. The end result was our land assessment was reduced by \$1,900.

Did we get back any money back or credit for overpaying for 40 years? No, No! But it was an interesting quest.

I used Burditt's Index extensively while researching Sergeant Curtis Culin's life, and also in researching Frank Hayashi, the famous Japanese operator of Hayashi's restaurant which stood on the present Post Office site.

While researching Frank Hayashi's life here in Cranford, I found that he had his first restaurant where the present day Breadsmith is located. He then bought Dr. Charles Mac Connell's home located on present Post Office site and built his new restaurant. (Note, the correct spelling of the doctor's name – Mac Connell. The Park on Eastman Street was incorrectly named by township officials as McConnell Park.)

I've included a photo of the Index card entitled "Historic Society card #3" as an example of what can be found in Burditt's Index. Note the annual dues, and the number of new members. If the 3/17/27 copy of the Chronicle was examined (the newspapers are searchable on the Library website or on microfilm at the Library), the names of the 100 new members would be there. Possibly someone reading this will find his or her parents or grandparents listed.



Historical Society (Cont.) -3-

3/3/27 - Cfd. Historical Society membership, \$1 per year. Wm. P. Hoffman is membership chairman. Design for insignia chosen, shows old fashioned scroll deed bearing words "Handed down to posterity."

3/17/27 - More than 100 join Historical Society. Trustees selected to be Honorary Members: Mrs. Theodore (Isabel) Crane, Mrs. Geo. Greene, Mrs. Cornelia Sanford, Gideon Ludlow & Wm. M. W. Mendel (List of members).

4/7/27 - many items received by Hist. Society, altho a list had little bearing on Cfd. Old cannon, Pictures & other items from Revolution, snuff boxes, etc., 1812, Civil & Span.-Amer. Wars, Pictures of Presby. Church & Trustees of 1877, picture old RR depot old hand cuffs, leg irons, etc.

5/5/27 - Historical Society elects trustees: 3-yr. term, J.S. Voorhees, W.J. Mace, Edward Everett, Andrew Warnock, & C.F. Menden;

2-yr. term, E.K. Adams, Wes Stanger, W.B. Bragdon, A.C. Woodward, & J.E. Fisher; 1-yr. term, H.J. Chapin, W.F. Hoffman, S.H. Chadwick, H.R. Van Sun, & D.C.N. Collins. 33 new members. Library offered space. Phillips house suggested as a museum.

Burditt's Newspaper Index can be a very valuable, interesting, sometimes comical historical asset that is easily used. Try it, you'll like it. Look at the cards for your street as a starter.