

## **Cranford 100 Years Ago: as recorded in December 1917**

### **issue of “*The Cranford Chronicle*”**

*by Vic Bary*

The four Thursday December 1917 issues of “The Cranford Chronicle” painted a mixed picture of Cranford life. On one hand, the town was starved for news about the War in France, especially since US troops had only first entered the fighting in early November. Supporting the troops, through support of the American Red Cross, was also a priority.

But the paper was also full of advertisements, some for familiar home remedies and devices, and others providing suggestions for the ideal Christmas gift (most for companies or products which no longer exist today.). Finally, there were a few major national news items not directly related to the “War to End all War” or the holiday season.

So let’s see what Cranfordites were reading in their local newspaper 100 years ago this December.

#### Thursday December 6, 1917

- **“BIG RECEPTION FOR FIGHTING MEN”** announced a page 1 headline. One thousand citizens greeted soldiers and sailors arriving at the local train station on their way to a dinner at the Lincoln School. (The first American troops to engage in combat and suffer losses were the 16<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment of the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division on November 3.)
- **“WANTED: One Hundred Women To Help Mobilize Cranford For The American Red Cross”** announced the bottom half of page 1. (The text following the headline also sought 100 men and announced a goal of enrolling 3,000 Cranford families in the American Red Cross.)
- Douglass Fairbanks would be starring in “The Man from Painted Post” said a page 6 ad for the Cranford Theater
- “Overworked women must learn not to neglect their health” trumpeted a page 9 advert. for Lydia E. Pinkham’s Vegetable Compound.
- Newton A. Barnett of Elizabeth advertised (on page 10) “An Exceptional List of High Grade Used Cars”, including a 1917 Willy’s Knight for \$1,050, a 1917 Chalmers Sedan for \$1,250, and a 1917 Overland for \$650.

#### Thursday December 13, 1917

- **“Red Cross Service Flags”** was the page 1 headline. Families were asked to put a lighted candle in the window this holiday season with a translucent paper Red Cross service flag in front of it.

- **“We’ll be there when you need us’ – WON’T DO!”** announced page 1.”The State has asked Home Guards to declare themselves. The National Government is depending on Home Guard organizations for when the crisis comes. Fine as it is, the Cranford Home Guard is NOT up to maximum strength – are you IN or OUT?”
- **“You’ll’ come back –FREQUENTLY, every does”** said the page 4 advertisement for Hyashi Restaurant (which occupied the site of the current Cranford Post Office building). Sunday dinners were offered for \$1.00, while weekday dinners were only 85 cents.
- **“FRANKLIN, THE RECOGNIZED THRIFT CAR OF AMERICA”** trumpeted a page 4 advertisement for the Elizabeth Automobile Company.
- **‘THE BEST CHRISTMAS GIFT – A COLUMBIA GRAPHANOLA – a present not only for this Christmas, But for many Christmases to come”** claimed the Elizabeth Phonograph Shop in a page 9 advertisement.
- **“Carter’s Little Liver Pills. You cannot be constipated and happy.”** Announced a page 11 advertisement.

#### Thursday December 20, 1917

- **“Rev. Edgecumbe Dies In Pulpit”** screamed the page 1 headline. Long-time Trinity Church Reverend John Edgecumbe, who told friends and family that he wanted to “die in harness” rather than in retirement, succumbed at age 74 at the beginning of his Sunday service. He had just announced the Christmas festival and instructed parishioners “don’t forget the children”.
- Page 1 also announced that the Dartmouth University Jazz Band would entertain at a dance from 8 PM to 2 AM in the Miller Block (the SE end of Eastman Street) Thursday December 27. Tickets cost \$2.25 (including the war tax).
- **“Thirteen Negro Soldiers Hanged”** announced the headline for page a page 2 story. They were hanged at Fort Sam Houston for the August 23 mutiny and riot by members of the all-Black 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment which followed the pistol-whipping of a Black woman and a member of the Regiment. Forty-one other participants were given life sentences.
- **“Victrolas for Christmas –‘the one gift for all”** announced a page 9 advertisement by the Elizabeth Talking Machine Company.

#### Thursday December 27, 1917

- Page 1 **“From ‘Over There’ – All Cranford Boys Well”**. The mother of Sergeant First Class Chester C. Burley shared his first letter to her from France. SFC Burley wrote from Hospital No. 9 about the great Thanksgiving dinner he had in a mess hall decorated by the hospital nurses.
- **“3002”** also on page 1 reported the results of Cranford’s American Red Cross membership drive. A resounding success with 3,002 families enrolled.

- **“FREE BIBLE LECTURE – Are we at the End of the World and The Fall of Babylon”** – asked a page 1 advert for a free lecture at the Cranford Theater Sunday December 30 at 3 PM.
- Page 2 included a national news entry **“’Dry’ Amendment Passed”**. It reported that the House passed an amendment 282 to 128 and the Senate by 48 to 2, calling for Prohibition subject to ratification by a majority of States. (The 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment would be ratified and go into effect 1920, remaining in force for 13 years, when it was ended in 1933 by the 21<sup>st</sup> Amendment.)
- Page 9 announced coming attractions at the Cranford Theater. They included: William Desmond in “The Sudden Gentleman”, Sessue Hayakawa in “The Call of the East”, Claire McDowell in “The Ship of Doom”, Geraldine Farrar in “The Woman God Forgot”, and Montague Love and Dorothy Kelly in “The Awakening”.

And that’s what Cranfordites were reading about in their local newspaper 100 years ago this month.