

Architect C. Godfrey Poggi: A Cranfordite Worth Knowing

By Vic Bary



The origin of this story was a request from a Poggi researcher for any information there might be in the CHS archives about this prominent Union County architect. A search of our archives produced – absolutely nothing. No People file and no photographs. After learning more about this late in life Cranford resident (although he did Cranford commissions here as early as the 1902 Masonic Temple), I decided CHS needed to rectify this omission in its archives.

Poggi in Elizabeth

C. Godfrey Poggi was born in Rutherford, New Jersey in 1875, and moved with his family to Elizabeth when he was age five. He would attend public and private schools there and would begin a career in Elizabeth as an architect in 1898. It was in Elizabeth that he would do a large portion of his work, although his designs appear throughout Union County. In 1899, C. Godfrey formed the architectural firm – Poggi Brothers & Company - in Elizabeth at 2 Julian Place.

Over the ensuing years, Poggi would do countless public, commercial, ecclesiastical and residential projects. For the Elizabeth Board of Education alone, he was responsible for the design of public schools Nos. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17; Battin High School; and Grover Cleveland Junior High School. He did further public school commissions for Hillside, Linden, Rahway and Springfield. Last, but not least, he was the architect for Cranford's High School completed in 1938.



Cranford High School

Other public commissions Poggi would do for or in Elizabeth included: the Carnegie Library and some of its branches, the Elizabeth Home for Aged Women, and the Tudor Revival style Warinanco Park Administration Building and the stadium.



Warinanco Park Admin. Building

Poggi's commercial commissions included: St. Elizabeth Hospital, the Elizabeth Daily Journal building, the Elizabeth YMCA, the Rahway Bank, the Quartz Ice Company plant, the Singer Recreation Building, the Young Women's Christian Association, and alterations to the Elk's Club and the Elizabethtown Chapter Red Cross headquarters at the Carteret Arms.

Poggi was also very active in church design and modifications. These included: a chapel for the English Lutheran Church (1900), the All Souls Unitarian Church (1908), the First Church, Christ the Scientist Cranford (1908), the Westminster Presbyterian Church (Poggi's own church) Hope Chapel (1909), and the St. Joseph's Church chapel (1916).

Given all the attention that Poggi gave to public, commercial and ecclesiastical commissions, one might have expected him to have absented himself from the residential market. But the Elizabeth Public Library *Elizabeth Daily Journal* archives abound with newspaper reports on his designing individual or multiple residential structures – many in the prestigious El Mora and Bayway sections of Elizabeth. Although the researcher who contacted CHS spoke of a definitive "Poggi style" of

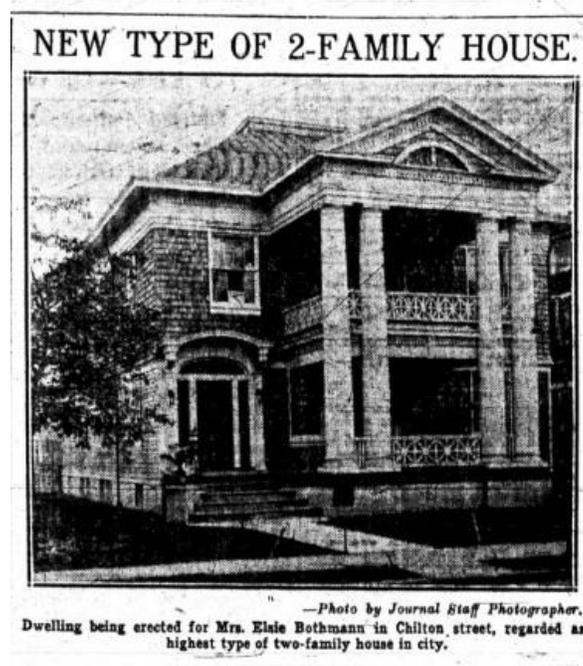
residence, I found them to be quite varied, reflecting Dutch Colonial, Colonial Revival, Classical Revival, Tudor Revival and Craftsman designs.

Poggi seemed particularly proud of his ability to design multiple residential housing commissions with structures that did not duplicate one another.



1913 eight house project with no duplication

Poggi also took pride in designing multiple family houses which gave the outward appearance of one-family dwellings.



1913 Classical Revival Two-Family House



Poggi-designed Runyan House - Westminster

Poggi in Cranford

According to his 1957 obituary, Poggi came to Cranford in 1943. Although we don't know exactly what factors led to this move, we do know that as early as 1916 he sold a residence he owned here, that he had a sister living in Cranford, and that he had done the Masonic Temple (1902), the Christian Science Church (1908), and the 1936 Cranford High School commissions here. He advertised his architectural services in Cranford City directories as early 1907.



C. GODFREY **POGGI**
ARCHITECT

2 Julian Place (Opp. C. R. R. Station) Telephone 1822 Elizabeth, N. J.

Ad from 1916 Cranford City Directory

Poggi formed a professional relationship with local architect and CHS founding member William B. Bragdon with whom he worked on the Cranford High School commission. He also formed a relationship with Joseph Herr, Jr. of Glen Rock with whom he would form C. Godfrey Poggi and Joseph Herr, Jr. Architects. In 1951, Poggi was honored by being named the first ever life member of the Union County Society of Architects. He also served eight years on the State Board of Architects by gubernatorial appointment, including one year as president.

Poggi and his wife, Clara Martin Poggi, resided at 24 Springfield Avenue, Apartment 12, from his arrival in Cranford in 1943 until the time of his death in 1957.

To call C. Godfrey Poggi a prolific architect would probably do him a disservice. His public, commercial, educational, ecclesiastical and residential works continue to beautify the Union County built environment.

Sources:

1. *Citizen and Chronicle, various.*
2. *Cranford Chronicle, various*
3. *Cranford Citizen and Chronicle, various*
4. *Elizabeth Daily Journal, various*
5. *Obit. Cranford Chronicle 2/21/1957*
6. *Obit. Elizabeth Daily Journal 2/19/1957*