

**Buried in the Attic:**  
**A Letter to All the Cranford Boys**  
(A Story about Walter Scholes)

While Mr. Ed Tasso was doing some remodeling on his house in Roselle Park, he made an unexpected discovery. Hidden beneath the floor boards of the attic, he found an old receipt book of the Union County Republican Party, two ninety-year old railroad tickets, one of which was French, and a letter written by an American Red Cross official to a man named Walter Scholes.

As the material had a Cranford connection, particularly the letter, Mr. Tasso got in touch with the Historical Society. He was then kind enough to personally deliver the papers to the Hanson House.

The letter is on stationery of the American Red Cross (Croix-Rouge Americaine), Place de la Concorde, Paris, and is dated October 29, 1917. It is addressed to Mr. Walter Scholes, Base Hospital, France, and the salutation is to "Dear Walter and all the Cranford boys." The letter read:

"Dr. Miel has just returned from his trip to your hospital and tells in such flowing terms of the fine time he had with you that it has fairly made me homesick. Miel says I should pack my grip and go down and visit you at once which I will certainly be glad to do if I were not so tied up with routine work in Paris. I shall look forward to doing so however sometime in the future as I shall certainly get around on a trip to the base hospitals sooner or later.

I am taking the liberty of sending you under separate cover all the Cranford Chronicle's I have received since I have been in Paris and I hope you will enjoy them as much as I have which is quite a good deal. These papers will give you more Cranford news than I can give you.

Please drop in and see us if you get to Paris and with kindest regards from Mr. Copp and myself.

Sincerely yours,"

The first name of the signature is illegible, but the last name is clearly Copp.

Who were these two Cranford residents, Scholes and Copp? A bit of hasty and very superficial research reveal the stories of three, not two, interesting persons caught up in the change and turmoil of "the war to end wars."

Mrs. Copp (newspapers, in the fashion of the day, never mention her first name) was the wife of Arthur W. Copp, manager of the American Can Company plant in Kenilworth. She appears to have been a rather typical suburban housewife. One of the founding members of the Neighborhood Social Club, a group that, according to the *Cranford Chronicle*, would spend the afternoon "sewing, and listening to Victrola and piano selections," she was also President of the Lincoln-Sherman Home and School League.

Her husband, Arthur, was 1904 West Point graduate, who had served as an officer in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry in the Philippines. Locally, he was chairman of both the Cranford Garden League and of the Mayor's Committee on Registration Day Celebration. An enthusiastic tennis player, he and a neighbor had installed their own tennis court.

When the U.S. declared war on Germany in April 1917, Arthur was appointed Captain of Company B of the Cranford Home Guards. He also applied to have his Army commission reinstated, and

then, in early June, he sailed for France with the Red Cross where he was to assist in setting up camps to receive U.S. soldiers.

In the meantime, it appears that Mrs. Copp was no longer content to sit and listen to her Victrola, so she did something not typical of a suburban housewife. She arranged to go to France with the Red Cross in order to be near her husband. At the end of July, she too sailed for Europe, where she served in a Red Cross cantonment near Paris until the end of the war.

Husband Arthur ultimately received his commission and ended the war a Lieutenant Colonel on the staff of the American Commander, General John J. Pershing. Both Copps arrived back in the U.S. in February 1919 on the steam ship *Lorraine*.

The story of Walter Scholes, the letter's recipient, is also interesting. Born in England, Scholes came to this country when quite young. He worked in the L. Lehman & Co. grocery store in Elizabeth for eight years, and when Lehman opened a store in Cranford in 1903, he was made the store manager. In 1911, he bought Lehman's Cranford store and continued the business.

In addition to operating the grocery store, Scholes dabbled in real estate, regularly buying and selling properties, including that on the south side of South Avenue between Walnut and Union, which he planned on developing as a business block. Probably because of his real estate activities, his own home address changed frequently. Between 1903 and 1922, he had at least six different home addresses in the town.



Walter Scholes, outside L. Lehman's grocery store (ca. 1910.)

Scholes' likeness is captured on two photographs of the Lehman Co. store that are in the Historical Society's archives. He is shown to be a good-looking, well-dressed man. An active member of a number of community organizations, Scholes belonged to the Royal Arcanum Lodge, the Azure Lodge F & AM, the Men's League, the Atateka Tennis Club and the First Methodist Church. A trustee of the newly formed Cranford Businessman's Association, he also served as a member of the Township Committee from 1912 to 1915, acting as Fire Commissioner all three years.

Scholes wife, Laura, died in 1916 after a lengthy illness. Walter sold his most recent home in late January 1917, and he became a Quartermaster Sergeant in the Home Guard. According to a newspaper account, he passed an examination at the New York Hospital for Red Cross Work and

was assigned for duty with the U.S. Army at the New York Hospital with the rank of Quartermaster Sergeant. It was further expected that he would be sent to France soon.

The paper was correct: Scholes was sent to France, where he had some contact with Mrs. Copp. But apparently he did not receive the rank of Q.M. Sgt. He seems to have been a corporal.

Scholes served throughout the war and was discharged in May 1919. Returning home, he took a position as head bookkeeper in the Engineer's Office at the Union County Courthouse, which he held until his retirement in 1941. He became Treasurer of Cranford's new American Legion post.

In 1930, Scholes left Cranford and moved to a new home in Roselle Park, where he lived until his death in 1947.

Who were "all the Cranford boys" that Mrs. Copp mentions in her letter? Perhaps some further research will turn up an answer. And perhaps it will also establish Mrs. Copp's first name.