

A Walk Through Cranford History

Winter skating parties at the Cranford Casino

[reprinted from *Cranford Downtowner* 12/10/91]



Cranford residents spent many a night under the stars ice-skating in the brisk cold December air on the Rahway River in front of the Cranford Casino, the center of social events at the turn of the century.

Inside, other visitors enjoyed weekly card parties before a roaring fire. Located on Riverside Drive at the bend of the river above the dam on North Union Avenue, the Casino was built to provide a social organization for the town.

The Casino was leased to the Cranford Country Club, and was well-known as one of the finest clubhouses in New Jersey. Membership rolls read like a “Who’s Who in Cranford.” The club’s popularity stemmed from the fact that it was managed upon strictly business principles. It was a select organization and many residents found it advantageous to join. Because it did not serve liquor, it was considered a socially acceptable place for women, and membership privileges were extended to wives and daughters.

It burned down in 1897, and was rebuilt later the same year. The floor plan shows four bowling alleys, a room for bicycling members, an auditorium filled with stage and dressing room, shuffleboard, billiard room, library, committee rooms, smoking room and two tennis courts directly behind the clubhouse. The Casino was the site of many dance parties, cotillions, and river festivals.

The interior decorations of the clubhouse were very elaborate and artistic, and the rooms were brilliantly lit with electric lights. Outside, the Casino cast its warm and illustrious shadow on the river, setting the ice aglow with light. Just right...for a night of skating.

The Casino was razed in 1969, after serving as the home for Cranford Post 212 of the American Legion for approximately 20 years. It was replaced by condominiums.