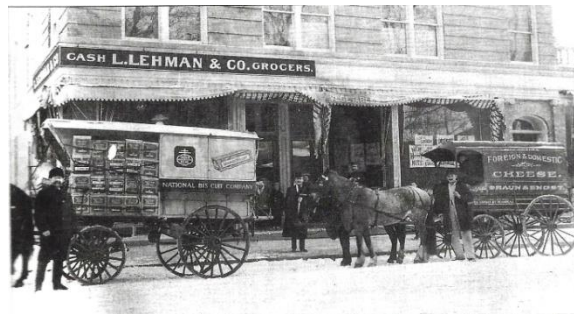


## Using CHS and Online Resources to Solve a Historic Question

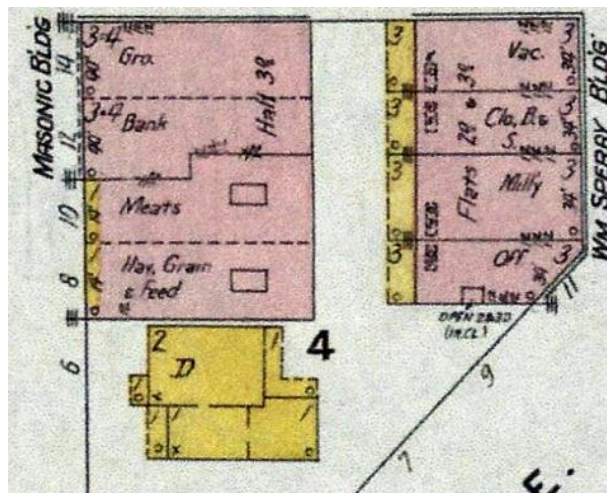
*By Vic Bary*

The hunt began in response to a request made to CHS for an historical photo of the Masonic Building taken between 1904 and 1912. Office Administrator Teri Kandel complied by sending this 1910 photo from our files (also found on page 57 of the Fridlington and Fuhro book Images of America: Cranford). A curved top stone entryway to stairs to the upper floors is just visible on the right above the second wagon. The photo does not make clear that the Masonic Building has a one story extension on the right.



L. L. Leman Grocers – 1910

The requester got back to Teri and identified himself as a national banks banknote collector with a specific interest in the Cranford National Bank, which existed during the time period he identified (1904-1912), and which he understood to be in the Masonic Building, most likely the bank identified in this 1908 Sanborn Fire Map which he provided. Could she provide a photo of the bank? Why wasn't it visible in the 1910 photo she sent?



1908 Sanborn Fire Map

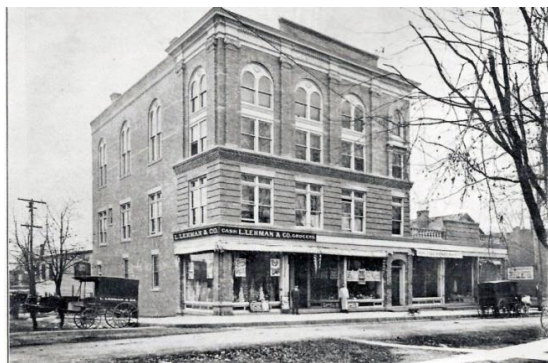
A search of CHS files and other resources produced no photos of the Cranford National Bank. Photos found on an on-line posting about the Cranford National Bank turned out to actually be photos of its successor bank, the Cranford Trust Company, which was in the building of the same

name, built by Thomas A. Sperry to replace the Opera House block, which he owned and which burned to the ground February 3, 1912. No postcards of the bank could be found.

Review of a souvenir booklet entitled “Cranford Illustrated” (a copy of which is in the CHS collections), which appears to have been designed to promote Cranford’s many advantages as a place to live, contained a photo of the entire Masonic Building and described its immediate history. The booklet had no publication date or author, but a January 19, 1904 *Cranford Chronicle* article was found which said that the booklet would go on sale for 50 cents at a number of local outlets later that same week.

The “Cranford Illustrated” article said the Masonic Building was erected by the new Cranford Masonic Azure Lodge which was formed in March, 1902. Association officers were identified as T. A. Sperry, president, M. O. Doering, VP; and W. M. Sperry was identified as one of the association directors. The article further identified the building’s current tenants as L. Lehman & Company, grocers; Charles Schwartz, butcher; Breitbucher’s fruit and vegetable market; and the Cranford Fruit and Confectionary Store. It said that Cranford Township offices, and the office of Dr. Wakefield, dentist, could be found on the second floor.

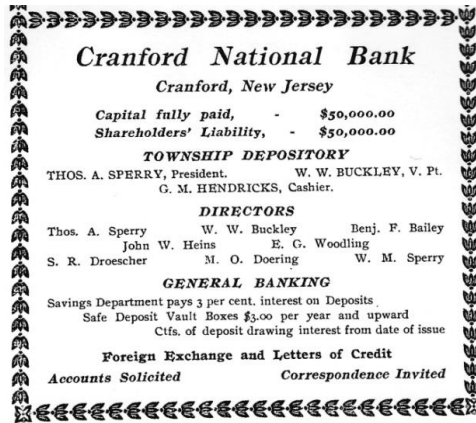
The accompanying photo of the full Masonic Building showed L. Lehman & Company - grocers, but no bank. Not surprising since the bank wasn’t opened until March, 1904, several months after the release of “Cranford Illustrated”. The building is also shown to have a one story extension to the right.



**Masonic Building (1903) - “Cranford Illustrated”**

And so the hunt began to determine where in the Masonic Building the Cranford National Bank was located, and if possible, to find a photo in which the bank was visible. A search of local newspapers conducted on the Cranford Public Library’s archives website produced no photos of the bank and no references to its location.

An on-line search of the Cranford Public Library archives collection of Cranford City Directories (first published in 1901), however, offered useful information. The first page of the 1904 Directory (and a number of later Directories) featured an advertisement for the Cranford National Bank. While no address was offered, it did identify bank officers and directors, which included all those identified as Azure Lodge officers and directors in the “Cranford Illustrated” article about the Masonic Building. Lodge and bank management overlapped significantly.



**Cranford National Bank Ad – 1904**

A review of the Residential Street listings and the Business listings in the 1904 City Directory located the Cranford National Bank, L. Lehman & Company, and Charles Schwartz - butcher in the “Masonic Bldg”. By the 1907-1908 Directory, the listings were more specific. L. Lehman was listed at “4 Bank Bldg”, Cranford National Bank at “3 Bank Bldg”, Charles Schwartz Butcher/Fish Market at “2 Bank Bldg”, and L. G. Bowers Flour, Feed, Grain at “1 Bank Bldg”.

Look again closely at the 1908 Sanborn Map and you will see the notation “3-4” associated with both L. Lehman and the Cranford National Bank. (The “3-4” means the building is 3 to 4 stories high. We know the building had Lodge rooms on the third floor and a banquet hall on the fourth floor.)

The “40” on the street facing edge of the grocery and bank indicates that the building is 40’ high. The “14” on the street facing edge of the meats store and the hay, grain & feed store indicate that the building is 14’ high and the two rectangles represent skylights. They are in the one story extension of the Masonic Building on the right, visible in the “Cranford Illustrated” photo of the Masonic Building found on the prior page, but not visible in the 1910 photo of L. Lehman’s.

If the “Cranford Illustrated” photo is blown up, the name “Schwartz” can be detected on the banner on the left hand side of the one story extension, confirming that it is the location of Charles Schwartz, butcher right where the 1908 Sanborn map places the “Meats” market.

So where in the Masonic Building was the Cranford National Bank located? In the absence of any confirming or disconfirming photographic or documentary evidence, I think we can safely conclude that the Cranford National Bank was on the second floor of the Masonic Building, directly above L. Lehman, which took up the entire ground floor of the four story section of the Masonic Building.

Our inquirer was kind enough to share this image of a proof sheet of Cranford National Bank banknotes, which will become part of the CHS collections. These are quite rare, as the bank issued only \$138,300 of banknotes during its brief nine-year career.

[www.antiquemoney/national-bank-notes/new-jersey/old-money-from-the-cranford-national-bank-of-cranford-7171/](http://www.antiquemoney/national-bank-notes/new-jersey/old-money-from-the-cranford-national-bank-of-cranford-7171/).

