

## The "Doomed" Houses of Holly Street

*by Vic Bary*

This photo taken 1904 or earlier shows the houses at 203-207-209 Holly Street, built for and owned by Santiago Porcella. They are the view out my front window.



Imagine my surprise when I saw photos of them, as well as the houses at 211, 215 and 109, 111, and 115 Holly Street in a photo file at the Cranford Historical Society entitled "Doomed Houses of Holly Street". The photos were taken October 31, 1966 by Joseph Cuscaino. No information about why the houses were considered "doomed" was found in the file

A review of the "Cranford Chronicle" newspaper archives on-line at the Cranford Library provided the missing information. The Board of Education had proposed leveling them in order to build a new primary school on the 5 acres to replace the Cleveland and Sherman Schools. The proposal was made without any prior notice at a November, 1966 Board meeting. The proposal was vigorously opposed the following week by the quickly-formed Homeowner's Protective Association, not surprisingly chaired by the owner of 203 Holly Street, Dr. Thomas Dooley.

The Board proposal was part of a much wider \$5.3 MM school budget which Cranford voters would twice reject, with every school district voting against the budget in the second vote. In the vote for new School Board members in early 1967, Dr. Dooley would be one of three (out of seven candidates) named to the Board.

Whether the budget vote, Dr. Dooley's appointment to the Board, or some other factor spared these lovely homes, I was unable to determine. But I sure am glad they survive to this day,

lovingly cared for by their current owners. And just as important, Cranford did not build a primary school smack dab in the middle of a known flood zone.

Sources:

1. "Litwick Says Holly St. Site 'Best We Could Find in Area'", *Cranford Chronicle*, 11/3/66, pp 1;8.
2. "Residents Criticize School Plans During Four-Hour Board Session, *Cranford Chronicle*, 11/3/66, p1.
3. "Holly St. Group to Present Alternate School Proposals", *Cranford Chronicle*, 11/10/66, p. 1.