

## **Worth remembering ...**

### **Richard E. Clement**

*By: Barbara Walker, CHS Newsletter Editor*

Part of an Oral History tape which you may hear at the Museum in February is a vivid description of the early school days of Roderick W. Smith, our "Mr. Cranford."

Rod Smith entered the eight-room Grant School at Holly Street and Springfield Avenue as a second grader, immediately after his family moved from Jersey City to Cranford in September of 1893. His recollections of the curriculum and of the principal, Richard E. Clement, or "Clemmy" as he was called, are truly memorable. He pictures the principal as "looking in many ways like Lincoln", with large flat feet, a long bony structure, and an Adam's apple which "played up and down and sideways over his round collar, separate from the shirt." He describes hands like Lincoln's, "almost down to his knees", and a walrus moustache and long coal-black hair. We learn that Clemmy taught civics, chemistry and higher mathematics, whereas "with new principals there had to be a number of teachers to take over those subjects."

This principal was admired by the boy, Rod. The man, Rod, reminisced how Clemmy would take a rifle and go out on the riverbank and "pick a crow out of the tallest tree without any difficulty" and would "come around at recess, before school, or at lunch and show up the big boys when it came to running broad jumps and high jumps."

As for discipline, "He could also hold his own when he caught the boys who needed a little more rough treatment than normal" but (with a chuckle) "it was not overdone, although there were times when he asserted a great deal of discipline without touching the pupil." This comment, his interviewer sized up as "diplomatic."