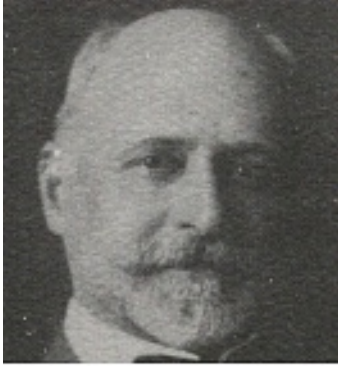


William Miller Sperry (1839 - 1927)

(Reprinted from the dedication program May 21, 1967)



William Miller Sperry who came to Cranford in 1898, and two of his brothers Thomas Alexander Sperry and Joseph Austin Sperry, had much to do with the development of the Cranford community as all three maintained a sincere and continuing interest in the civic growth of the area.

Today, the influence of William M. Sperry and the Sperry family is still apparent in Cranford, not only through the many Sperry descendants still living in the area including many who are attending these dedication ceremonies today - but in the memories of many long-time residents who knew the Sperry brothers and their families.

William M. Sperry, the son of Jacob Austin Sperry and Susan Langley Sperry, was born on September 14, 1859, at Bristol, Tennessee. His father, a Knoxville newspaper editor and supporter of the Confederate cause, was active in the Civil War. His great-grandfather, Jacob Sperry, was one of Capt. Daniel Morgan's company of Virginia sharpshooters who journeyed from Winchester, Va., to join Washington's Army in the historic assault on Quebec in 1775.

Shortly after the turn of the century, William M. Sperry purchased a half interest in The Sperry and Hutchinson Company, distributors of S&H Green Stamps. He succeeded his brother, Thomas A. Sperry, who originally founded the firm in 1896, as president. His grandson, William S. Beinecke is now chairman of the board of the firm.

William M. Sperry was one of the founders and later president of the Cranford National Bank, which later became the Cranford Trust Company and is now the Cranford Branch of the Suburban Trust Company. He was also a director of the Cranford Mutual Building and Loan Association, now the Cranford Savings and Loan Association.

Active in local real estate and construction, Mr. Sperry remodeled the old "Opera House" block on North Avenue west, after a disastrous fire. The building now houses the Suburban Trust Company. In 1906, he also erected the Sperry Building in downtown Cranford which still bears his name. Mr. Sperry was the donor of the Sperry Park bordering the Rahway River in Cranford. The site is now known as the Sperry Section of the Rahway River Park of the Union County Park Commission. Sperry Park included a lagoon formed by a dam across the Rahway River which served as the focal point of the Annual Cranford Venetian Water Carnival, probably the most entertaining and popular event of the time.

William M. Sperry married Carrie M. Whitehead in 1890 in New York City. She died the following year. They had one daughter, Carrie Regina, now Mrs. Frederick Beinecke. In 1897, in Chicago he married Emily L. Mooney. They had three daughters: Dorothy, now Mrs. Frederick Curtis; Virginia, now Mrs. Frederick Young, and Emily Louisa, now Mrs. Reeves Dollner.

Mr. Sperry died at Roosevelt Hospital, New York on May 1, 1927. He was buried in Fairview Cemetery, just a short walk from Union Junior College and the site of the William Miller Sperry Observatory.