

6 Seminary Avenue, Hopewell - Harry L. Cox, Barber (1906)

Rev. 5/6/2022 b - D. Dixon

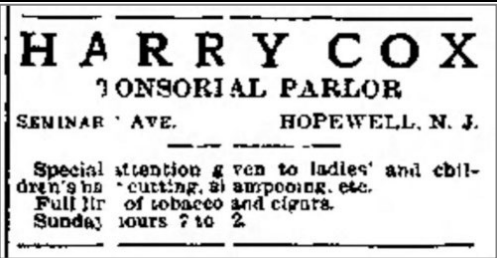

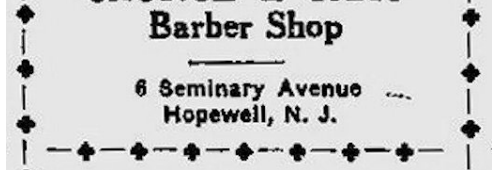
6 Seminary Ave. is a narrow building built by Harry L. Cox as a barber shop in 1906 when he was 21. The shop was expanded several times, but was gone by the late 1950s. The location is now a driveway between the back of the corner building at 21 East Broad and 8-10 Seminary next door.

Harry Lester Cox (1885 - 1945) was a Hopewell institution. He later bought and then lived in the corner property (21 East Broad). His son Raymond Cox also operated a barber shop there. In his spare time, Cox also managed the Hope Theatre (16 Seminary) in the early 1920s.

Harry Cox also helped train and partnered with other local barbers, as the business became Cox & Cray in the early 1920s, and then transferred to Cronic & Cray after Harry Cox's death in 1945.



Harry Cox Shaving Parlor (c1907)

<p>Harry L. Cox barber shop (1909 - 1922)</p> <p>1909 - Harry L. Cox build barber shop at 6 Seminary 1909 - 108 shaving mugs 1909 - Rear addition - "waiting and reading room" by 1914 - 3 additions 1920 - Another addition; Bought 21 East Broad corner 1920-22 - Managed Hope Theatre (16 Seminary)</p>	 <p>[HH 1906-07]</p>
<p>Cox & Cray barber shop (1923- 1945)</p> <p>by 1923 - Cox & Cray; extensive interior improvements 1925 - Beauty Parlor with private entrance for ladies 1926 - Hopewell barbers raised prices to 25 cents 1932 - Shave Lindbergh reporters and photographers 1940 - Working 60 hours per week, 52 weeks a year 1944 - Nighttime contact for fire alarm 1945 - Died, age 59</p>	 <p>[HH 2/9/1927]</p>
<p>Cronic & Cray barber shop (1945 - 1950s)</p> <p>by 1950 - Cronic & Cray at 6 Seminary by 1959 - Cronic & Cray at 8 Seminary c 1959 - 6 Seminary building gone</p>	 <p>[HH 12/20/1950]</p>

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Harry L. Cox, Barber (1906 - 1945)

Harry Lester Cox (1885 - 1945) was a Hopewell institution for the first half of the 1900s. In the 1900 U.S. Census, at age 15, Cox was listed in the living with his parents on a farm in the Hopewell area, with his father working as a "farmer" (at age 75), and Harry as a "farm laborer."

By the 1905 N. J. Census, at age 20, Cox was listed as a "barber," and he was working at the barber shop of Fred Cronce by 1906. [HH 6/26/1906]

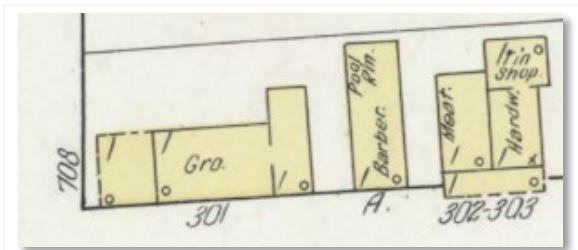
In April 1906, at age 21, Cox married Larena Morrell. [HH 4/18/1906]



Harry Cox outside his Shaving Parlor (c1907)

That July, Cox started building his new barber shop on Seminary avenue. [TET 7/18/1906] It was described as his "Tonsorial Parlor" in newspaper ads, and "Shaving Parlor" on the building. The official opening date of the shop was later set as 7/13/1906. [HH 7/7/1909]

By his third anniversary in business in 1909, after starting in a small shop with one chair, "with hard work and digest attention to business," Cox had enlarged the shop, with three chairs, and "108 shaving mugs on his shelves." The shop also had added a journeyman barber and a helper, and an electric vibrator and electric fan. [HH 7/7/1909]



1912 Sanborn map -
Barber front, Pool Room rear addition

Also in 1909, Cox completed a new addition to the rear of the shop as a "waiting and reading room," which made it "the largest and finest in town." [HH 11/10/1909]

From the 1914 Hopewell Herald Progress Edition:

No one who has watched the career of Harry L. Cox within the last few years, can deny him a foremost position among the essentially self-made young men of the borough who have made real progress. Mr. Cox came here originally from New Hope, and as a boy started to learn the barber trade with Fred. Cron[c]e. In fact he was little less than a boy when he began business for himself but by good service, and courtesy, he has not only made himself one of the most popular young men of the town but built up by far the largest business of the kind here. The building occupied he not only built himself, but has enlarged three times. The Cox barber shop is headquarters for practically all the leading business men of the borough. It is splendidly fitted up with three chairs, plate glass mirrors, electric vibrators and all up-to-date conveniences. All sanitary measures are taken advantage of. The many rows of private cups indicate that the shop has a strong hold on the best class of trade. A large and complete line of cigars, cigarettes and tobacco carried, while in the rear a first-class pocket billiard table is in almost constant use.

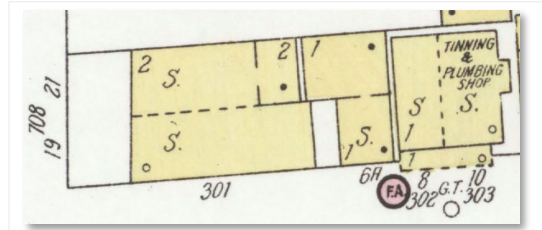


Harry Cox - 1914
Hopewell Herald
Progress Edition

In 1920, at age 35, Cox bought the corner property, 21 East Broad, including his barber shop and the A&P grocery store on East Broad, for \$4800. [HH 3/24/1920] His family was living there in the 1930 and 1940 Census. They were previously living at 55 Broad Street. [1918 WW I Draft, 1920 Census]

In 1920, Cox also built another addition to the shop, "and installed another pool table." [HH 5/5/1920]

By 1920, Cox also took over management of the Hope Theatre (16 Seminary) with Albert Lewis. [HH 10/6/1920] Then in 1922 Cox and W. G. Lowe rented the theater, only to have it damaged in a fire that summer. [HH 7/12/1922]



1927 (& 1935) Sanborn map - Barber shop front, larger rear addition

Cox & Cray, Barbers (1923 - 1945)

Harry Cox also helped train and partnered with other local barbers, as the business became Cox & Cray in the early 1920s, and then transferred to Crouce & Cray after Harry Cox's death in 1945.

By 1923, Cox partnered with Harry B. Cray to form Cox & Cray, based in the shop at 6 Seminary. [HH 5/20/1923] Cray had opened a shop on Broad Street in 1917, and had been running joint ads with Cox listing barber shop hours in town ("closed all day on July 4th"). [HH 6/27/1917]

In 1923, Cox & Cray made "extensive improvements" to the interior of the building, including a new large mirror, two new chairs "of the latest design," and "a new fountain in the center." The one room also was made into two with a "lattice partition and archway."

In 1925, Cox & Cray advertised their Beauty Parlor as open for business, with a private entrance for the ladies. [HH 3/18/1925]. Cox also was quoted as saying that he bobs ladies hair and guarantees satisfaction. "If you're not satisfied, he will return the amputated hair." [HH 4/1/1925]

The next year, Hopewell barbers raised their prices to 25 cents. [HH 5/19/1926]

Cox was busy in 1932 as the press descended on Hopewell after the Lindbergh kidnapping, described as the "town barber who has shaved more reporters and photographers than he ever knew existed." [TET 3/7/1932]

In the 1940 Census, at age 56, Cox is listed as working 60 hours a week, 52 weeks a year. His schooling is listed as elementary school, 7th grade.



[HH 3/18/1925]

In 1943, Dean Ashton describes closing up the barber shop in *Be It Ever So Humble* (1947):

Squinting his eyes against the glare of the overhead light, Harry Cox glanced at the clock in the Cox & Cray barber shop on Seminary Avenue.

"Eight o'clock - time to close up," he remarked to his partner, Harry B. Cray, who was applying an open-blade razor expertly to the nape of a customer's neck. Cox deserted his own patron momentarily to snap the lock on the door and lower the shades, shutting off a view of the shop's interior from the street. He glanced at the "waiting row" which consisted of two "hair-cuts." Cox returned to his own barber-chair and his scissors resumed their nervous chatter. [Be It Ever So Humble, recounting event from February 1943]

In 1944, Cox also was the nighttime contact for emergency calls to the Hopewell Fire Department in those times of limited phone service (daytime calls went to Cutter's drug store):

At night, however, the calls go to Harry Cox. He turns on the current by direct wire [for the fire alarm], and then puts in a few fast phone calls to make sure that firemen are roused up and quickly on the job. [Be It Ever So Humble, from January, 1944]

Harry Cox died in 1945 at age 59. He was remembered as a charter member of the Sourland Mountain Sporting Club, a director of the Point Pleasant Fishing Pier, and a member of the Hopewell Fire Department and the Calvary Baptist Church.

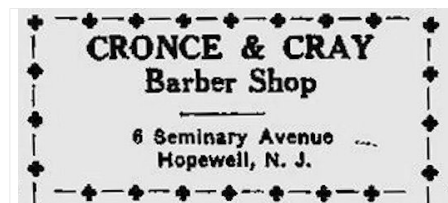
Dean Ashton's *Hopewell News* hometown broadsheet published for locals serving overseas during World War II commented regularly on Harry Cox, his success growing his peas and beans, and the "Hot Stove Card Club" in the back of the shop (it took a lot to interrupt the card game in progress).

Harry Cox felt especially close to the fellows in military service, for he had seen most of them grow up from the time from they came in for their first haircut and squirmed through fear that they would not live through the ordeal. By actual count, more than a hundred of the shop's customers were in the armed services during the war. [12/26/1945]

Cronce & Cray, Barbers (1945 - 1950s)

After the death of Harry Cox in 1945, his son Raymond Cox, also a barber, helped with the business, and then moved to Pennington and later started own shop next door in the corner building that his father had bought at 21 East Broad, becoming the next generation Hopewell institution.

Meanwhile, Harry Cray partnered with George Cronce to form Cronce & Cray, also still at 6 Seminary. As a young man, Cronce has apprenticed with Harry Cox from 1916 to 1919 before joining the Navy, where he also was drafted to serve during World War II. Cronce & Cray operated at 6 Seminary through at least 1953, before moving next door to 8 Seminary by 1959.



[HH 12/20/1950]

The original Harry Cox barber shop building was presumably demolished around 1959.

References

Information extracted and summarized from sources including books, reports, maps, deeds, newspapers, and photos.

Many of the original materials (i.e., documents, maps, aerials, and photos) come from the many contributors to the Hopewell Valley History Project and are shared on the site - see the Acknowledgements page (HopewellHistoryProject.org).

Comments, additions, and corrections are welcome.

See the companion Hopewell History Brief for more information on Hopewell barbers - **Seminary Avenue - Hopewell Borough Barbers**.

Thanks to the contributors who kindly provided information and materials, including:

- Robert Witkowski ("Mr. Haircut")
- American Legion Post 339

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