



The Barnard Bulletin

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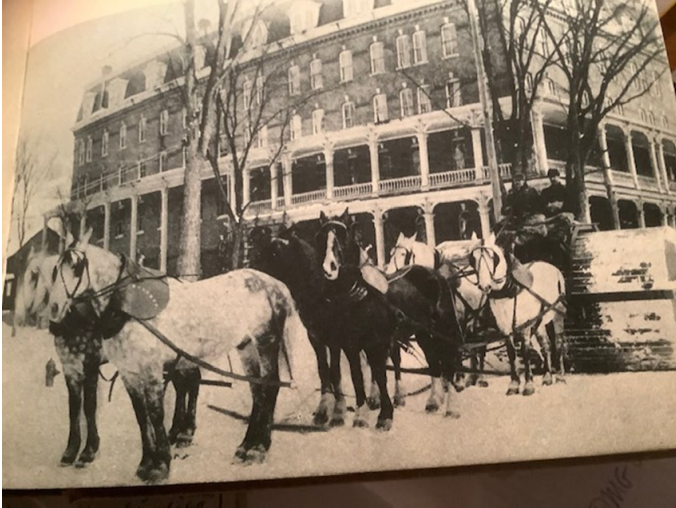
A VERMONT WRITER

BY MARGARET EDWARDS

This column is an offering of The Danforth Library in Barnard and a chance to introduce a Vermont writer who deserves wider renown.

Charles Edward Crane

1884 – 1960



In the 1890s, Vermont's winter roads were not plowed but were packed by "snow rollers." Above is a 6-horse team hitched to a huge, heavy roller, taller than a horse. This photo was taken by E. T. Houston in Montpelier, Vermont, and was printed in *Winter In Vermont*.

A writer, risen from the dead and curious about his reputation's fate, would soon know he was fading fast from the cultural memory if he found that his biography was accorded a paragraph or two in Google, but no photo of him could be found. Similarly, if no photo of him surfaced in Wikipedia. Imagine, too, his finding that his books of essays, published and very popular in the course of his lifetime, are now out of print and rare. Yes, the ghost of Charles Edward Crane would be a dismal shade indeed were he to confront his current obscurity.

Crane was very much a Vermont writer, because his primary subject—in fact, his *exclusive* subject—was this state. Not New England, nor an amalgam of it with New Hampshire and Maine, Vermont and *only* Vermont was his focus and his abiding love. He was a booster. All his rollicking, highly readable prose was grounded in the pride he took in living here and writing about it.

Like most diehard Vermonters, Crane must have insisted he was born elsewhere *only by accident*. He was still a young boy when he moved with his parents from Illinois to Ludlow, Vermont. His father, Clarence Crane, had purchased a newspaper, *The Vermont Tribune*. His mother, Mary Thomas Crane, embraced new circumstances in a place that was far less populated and less "advanced" than what she had been used to.

In 1942, as a man in his sixties, Crane would reminisce about nights with his school friends "...when we bundled

ourselves up in buffalo robes, packed ourselves into two- or three-seated sleighs behind two or sometimes four horses, all belted with bells, like Santa Claus's steeds, and went merrily off to a candy pull or indoor games or a dance at some hill farm up Mount Holly way. Not a boy or girl among us that wasn't as familiar with the horse as present-day lads are with the steering wheel."

Crane's education took him from Black River Academy to Dartmouth College. After his graduation, he joined the Associated Press and began getting jobs as a journalist. He became a correspondent and a feature writer for newspapers in Boston, New York, Pittsburgh, and London. While he was living in New York, in 1913, he married Elizabeth Frances Wilcox (a poet). In 1915, they had a son, Charles Edward, Jr., and in 1917, a daughter named Esther.

Crane would later enjoy weaving personal accounts of family life into his feature-writer's narratives. Here's an example:

My daughter 'Tigger' has just hove in from Mount Mansfield with half a dozen of her mates, who stomp their feet and pile their skis just inside the storm door after six hours in the open. For scarcely half an hour's ride away, Mansfield lies like a prostrate Gulliver, and over that giant's face these Lilliputians with slats on their feet ascend by tow ropes or the new chair lift and descend according to experience, either on skis or on the seats of their pants. Grave old Gulliver lies there under the thick blanket of snow tucked about his chin, snoring with the wind.

What took Crane back to Vermont was exactly what had prompted his father's move many years earlier. He bought a newspaper—*The Middlebury Register*—and became its editor. Later he moved his family to Brattleboro and worked for *The Brattleboro Reformer*, moonlighting on the side by writing publicity copy for Vermont businesses.

Someone in the National Life Insurance Company must have noticed with what facility Crane wrote, because in 1931 the company hired him as its first publicity director. This job that he kept until he retired in 1955 must have given Crane a much higher salary and put him in a position to write his books. The volume entitled *Pen Drift* (1931) was a collection of the best of his newspaper columns. Then came *Let Me Show You Vermont* (1937), *Life Along the Connecticut* (1939), and *Winter in Vermont* (1942).

The charm of Crane's work is manifold. (All quotes are being taken from his *Winter in Vermont*.) His voice in prose is generally cheerful—"Winter is a privilege, isn't it?" Yet he can acknowledge with gracious ease that "Every man's winter is not like this" and go on to describe rural hardships ("the all too frequent thawing out of frozen water-pipes ... illnesses that the doctor can

Cont. next page - Crane

Crane - Cont. from front page
scarcely get to”) concluding that Vermont’s “winter is a hard taskmaster” for some.

Crane has a knack for locating himself very precisely and celebrating the good luck of his particular perspective:

I write from a special vantage point. I'm within ten miles of the geographical center of Vermont. I figure that my typewriter is anchored in latitude 44 degrees and 17 minutes north, which is near enough to being exactly the half-way point between the equator and the pole to make my position fairly neutral. I figure also that there passes right through my typewriter one of those less imaginary lines, known as snow contours, bringing me just within the best of Vermont's next-to-heaviest snowfall—a belt that more or less fringes the Green Mountain Range, which is nature's big snow fence, running the full length of our little state.

He ends this paragraph by imagining the Worcester Range’s collapse so that his gaze can travel from his study window in Montpelier all the way to “*the uplifted, clean-shaven, but snow-lathered chin of Mansfield.*”

Another charm of Crane’s work is his inclusion of frequent and always apt quotations from literature. That he cites such stalwarts as Thoreau and Emerson is to be expected, but he also quotes the Bible and Keats, and easily lets his erudition wander into the works of Sidney Lanier, James Russell Lowell, and Charles Dickens, among a slew of others. Occasionally his quotes will give a kind nod to a fellow journalist such as Walter Pritchard Eaton (now as obscure as Crane). Each quotation or literary allusion that Crane inserts into his narrative deftly amplifies the subject at hand. Sometimes it even lends an extra bit of humor, such as this limerick Crane includes by Rudyard Kipling:

*There was a young man in Quebec
Who was buried in snow to his neck
When asked, “Ain’t you friz?”
He replied, “Yes, I is
But we don’t call this cold in Quebec.”*

Reading Crane’s work now holds a charm for the reader that the author also counted on in his own era. A contemporary reader is led into a world of traditions and institutions that have long since vanished. But Crane’s readership, too, sensed that he was describing an isolated culture that elsewhere had succumbed to modernity. As a sample, Crane’s description of Vermont’s “book wagons” is fascinating:

Only this morning I saw one of the book-wagon girls, clad in wind-proof jacket and ski pants, climbing to the wheel of her book-wagon truck to set out in below-zero weather over snow-covered roads to carry the gospel of good reading to remote hamlets. In the basement of the State House Annex there's the incoming income tax on one side, and the outgoing traveling library of the Vermont State Public Library Commission on the other...Steel stacks accommodate some

35,000 books, and hallways are piled with boxes, each holding about a five-foot shelf of books. The duty of the several young women employed there is to keep these volumes in perpetual motion. The wear and tear the books get indicate the service they render. A repair desk is constantly busy to give the volumes as long a life as possible.

Crane can delve into a subject in a penetrating way, doing research, but then he has a keen instinct not to overdo it, not to be pedantic or know-it-all or tedious. He credits *Field Book of Animals in Winter* by a Dr. Ann Morgan, then gives us quick summaries. After going on for a bit about how earthworms in winter hibernate in clusters “six feet under the sod,” he moves on to a related topic:

There are a few insects which really enjoy the winter in a normal way. These are the snow-born Boreus, winter snow-flies, and snow-born midges. The little, almost wingless snow-fly with long legs that you sometimes see on the snow in winter is the crane-fly. The field cricket hibernates beneath stones, but the house cricket stays around. This cheery insect, by the way, is becoming more common, and we may eventually have a cricket for every hearth. Now and then, I am told, they overdo a good thing and invade a house by hordes.

Another charm of Crane’s work is his grasp of a rich folklore that’s often related in the form of yarns or anecdotes. “In Stowe I was told an amazing story” begins Crane’s narration of an incident that happened in 1915 when there was little snow from December until the middle of February. Loggers counted on a thick snow pack for bringing timber on sleds from the forests. (There were no big logging trucks.)

Ingenious Yankees that they were, the loggers built a huge sprinkling cart of heavy planks held together with irons, filled it with brook water dipped up with iron barrels, and went over and over that five-mile stretch of dirt road, sprinkling it during the night and letting the cold night freeze it. They eventually built up a sledding surface, and drew over it some 3,000 loads of logs to a total of three million board feet of timber, saving the day and the cut.

In his *Winter in Vermont*, Crane touches all the classic topics that a reader would expect to find in such a work: the variety of wild animal tracks in snow, the careers of famous skiers, adventures in snow sculpting and wood gathering. Crane also includes some rites of spring as part of his overview of “winter,” because “sugaring off” and town meetings happen in Vermont when snow is still on the ground.

Crane’s descriptive writing is always inclusive and insightful. His amiable tone and agile shifts between one topic and another keep all his books lively. But his best moments in prose come when he invokes a personal experience, such as this one of winter skating.

The Black River had several bends in it. The most exciting were not the lateral ones but the up-and-down
Cont. next page - Crane

*Crane—Cont. from previous page
 ones, as I skated behind my sister Alice and her big
 boyfriend... It's an adage of ice that 'when it cracks,
 it bears; when it bends, it breaks.' But I can remem-
 ber winter nights when the Black River was coated
 hardly more than plate-glass thick, and it bent with a
 undulating rhythm as I followed my older sister and
 her heavy beau, while he broke the ice of her affec-
 tions, and I momentarily expected that they, Cupid,
 and I would get a wetting. But luck was always with
 us, the sustaining force of love.*

The Danforth Library has one copy of Charles Edward Crane's *Winter in Vermont* in its rare book section. The book does not circulate but can be read in the Library during official open hours.

DANFORTH LIBRARY NEWS

Curbside service: Wednesdays from 3-5 p.m. and Saturdays 10 a.m. to Noon.

Call 802-234-9408 during open hours to make your request or get suggestions from us. Your requests will then be packaged and labeled for pickup in the foyer. Masks are required. Please continue to put returns in the outside book-return slot.

High-speed ECFiber Wi-Fi is intended to be available from outside the building during this pandemic. However, we have had some problems recently, so if you have had problems please know that we are working to get it fixed--hopefully by the time you read this bulletin.

Book Donations: Book donations are on hold for the present while we refresh our collection to make way for new books. However, if you have paperbacks in good condition, please contact Kassie Tibbott at Ktibbott@gmail.com, who is collecting paperbacks for the area correctional facilities.

Stay safe and well,

From all of us at Danforth Library

Trustees: Margaret Edwards, Judy Maynes, Ellen Miles, Susan McNulty, and Edythe Wright.

**WARNING FOR ANNUAL MEETING
 OF THE WINDSOR CENTRAL UNIFIED
 UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT**

The legal voters of Windsor Central Unified Union School District, comprising the voters of the Towns of Barnard, Bridgewater, Killington, Plymouth, Pomfret, Reading, and Woodstock, are hereby warned and notified that an **Informational Hearing** will be held via audio/video conferencing pursuant to Act 92, on Thursday, February 25, 2021, commencing at 6:30 P.M., for the purpose of explaining the 2021-2022 proposed budget.

Pursuant to Act 162 of 2020, the legal voters of the Windsor Central Unified Union School District are

hereby warned and notified to meet at their respective polling places hereinafter named for the above-referenced towns on Tuesday, March 2, 2021, during the polling hours noted below, for the purpose of transacting during that time voting by Australian ballot.

The voters residing in each member district will cast their ballots in the polling places designated for their town as follows:

Barnard Town Hall	10 am - 7 pm
Bridgewater Town Clerk's Office	8 am - 7 pm
Killington Town Hall	7 am - 7 pm
Plymouth Municipal Building	10 am - 7 pm
Pomfret Town Offices	8 am - 7 pm
Reading Town Hall	7 am - 7 pm
Woodstock Town Hall	7 am - 7 pm

MARCH 2, 2021

AUSTRALIAN BALLOT QUESTIONS

Article 1 The legal voters of the specified towns designated within this itemized Article shall elect the following:

Barnard: one school director to assume office upon election and serve a term of three years or until their successor is elected and qualified

Bridgewater: one school director to assume office upon election and serve a term of three years or until their successor is elected and qualified

Bridgewater: one school director to assume office upon election and serve the remaining year of a three-year term or until their successor is elected and qualified

Killington: one school director to assume office upon election and serve a term of three years or until their successor is elected and qualified

Plymouth: one school director to assume office upon election and serve the remaining year of a three-year term or until their successor is elected and qualified

Plymouth: one school director to assume office upon election and serve the remaining two years of a three-year term or until their successor is elected and qualified

Pomfret: one school director to assume office upon election and serve a term of three years or until their successor is elected and qualified

Pomfret: one school director to assume office upon election and serve the remaining two years of a three-year term or until their successor is elected and qualified

Woodstock: two school directors to assume office upon election and serve a term of three years or until their successor is elected and qualified

Article 2 Shall the voters of the Windsor Central Unified Union School District approve the school board to expend **Twenty-Two Million Seven Hundred Fifty-Five**

Thousand Six Hundred Thirty-Eight Dollars (\$22,755,638), which is the amount the school board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year? It is estimated that this proposed budget, if approved, will result in education spending of \$18,784.13 per equalized pupil. This projected spending is \$654,112 or 2.96% higher than spending for the current year.

Article 3 Shall the voters of the Windsor Central Modified Unified Union School District authorize the board of directors under 16 V.S.A. §562(9) to borrow money by issuance of bonds or notes not in excess of anticipated revenue for the school year?

Article 4 To elect an uncompensated Moderator who shall assume office upon election and shall serve for a term of one year or until their successor is elected and qualified.

Article 5 To elect an uncompensated Clerk who shall enter upon their duties on July 1 following their election and shall serve a term of one year or until their successor is elected and qualified.

Article 6 To elect a Treasurer, to be compensated \$6,500.00, who shall enter upon their duties on July 1 following their election and shall serve a term of one year or until their successor is elected and qualified.

Dated the 4th day of January, 2021

Signed: CUUSD Chair

LISTER NOTES

As of the end of December 2020 the Listers office is down to one Lister. Lois Resseguie and Virginia Nix have resigned as Listers as of the end of 2020. Richard Lancaster, with the help of Ryan Silvestri from New England Municipal Consultants (NEMC), will be continuing the work of the Listers office until Town Meeting is held.

The only outstanding propert valuation appeal was heard in December 2020, but the decision of the State Hearing Officer has yet to be forwarded to the Listers Office. Once the value for the Smart property at 16 Midsomer Meadows Lane is received, that property value will be used to update the 2019 and 2020 Grand List values, and will remain as the appraised value until the next General Reappraisal, or until a significant change is made to the property.

At Town Meeting the legal residents of the Town of Barnard will be presented with an article to dissolve the Board of Listers and hire NEMC to preform the duties of the Listers Office on a year to year contract basis. Should that Article pass there will be no need to elect three Listers as required by law. It will also mean that the overall budget for appraisal services will be reduced, mainly because there will be no need to have three Listers on salery, as opposed to one professional appraiser.

For some the loss of the Listers Office may be difficult. It has been an institution since the State of Vermont first charted the Towns that are locally governed, with Town residents filling the necessary elected positions. However, the elected position of Lister is not one that residents wish to run for. In the last few decades, more new Listers have been appointed than have been elected, and in 2021 three Listers will have to be elected by ballot. In light of the fact that so few people are interested in the position, the Town of Barnard may be better off hiring an appraisal firm to do the job.

It should also be noted that the job of Lister is one of the few Town Elected Positions that needs training in order to perform the job adequately. As State Property Tax Law has become more complicated and the number of taxable parcels increases, along with the diversity of these parcels, the process of appraisal has increasingly gotten more complicated. It may not be too long before that State will mandate training and a certain level of certification for at least one Lister in each Town. This is a deterrent for many of the residents that might consider being a Lister, and it is also an expense that currently is underfunded by the State.

Given that a State certified appraisal firm has to have the necessary training and expertise in order to operate in the State of Vermont, it may be easier to contract for the appraisal services than it is to elect, and train, three new Listers.

Whatever the outcome of the vote at Town Meeting this year, the process of appraising properties will continue in an effort to keep the burden of property taxes equitably distributed among the landowners of Barnard. Please do not hesitate to contact the Listers/Appraisers Office if you have a question regarding the Grand List valuation of your real property in Barnard.

LOCAL CRYPTOGRAM

A cryptogram is a code in which one letter is substituted for another. For example, the word "Church" could be written BWMSBW. The letter B would be the letter C and would be so throughout the entire message. In this message J = N. The solution is found by trial and error. The CRYPTOGRAM answer is on the last page.

"HLSVOWVX, PFLJ DFL TWXQ UH
PZJDLV QLLC LJTELQQ WJT JU
WCUOJD UH PZQDHOE
VLMUEELMDZJK MWJ SVZJK
SWMG WJX WZV UH QOCCLV."
- QFZVELX AWMGQU

THE PLANNING COMMISSION meets on the first Monday of the month at 7:00pm at the Town offices.

ECFIBER Governing Board meets the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 7pm in 012 Oakes Hall, Vermont Law School. More information at <https://www.ecfiber.net/>

BARNARD CONSERVATION COMMISSION meets the second Monday of the month, 7:00pm, Town Hall.

ZONING ADMINISTRATOR zoning@barnardvt.us, 234-9211. By appointment only, no standing hours during due to the COVID-19 restrictions. After hours cell 603-762-5280.

BEES MEETINGS are held at 6:30pm on the 2nd Thursday of each month in the library at the school.

DANFORTH LIBRARY HOURS: Wed 3:00 – 5:00 p.m. and Sat 10:00 - Noon. Curbside only. Please call 802-234-9408 with requests. Mask required for pick up. Wi-Fi access available from outside the building.

SELECTBOARD meets the first and third Wednesday of the month at the Town offices at 7:00pm.

SELECTBOARD ASSISTANT, Rob Ramrath, 234-2911 x 2, Cell 603-762-5280, selectboard@barnardvt.us. By phone at any time, in person by appointment.

ZONING ADMINISTRATOR, Rob Ramrath, 234-2911 x 2, Cell 603-762-5280, zoning@barnardvt.us. By phone at any time, in person by appointment.

TOWN CLERK office hours are Monday & Tuesday, 8:00am-3:30pm. Public access is restricted. Call 234-9211 for an appointment.

THE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD meets the third Thursday of the month at 7:00pm at the Barnard Town Hall as necessary.

THE BARNARD ACADEMY SCHOOL BOARD meets at 6:00pm at the school on the third Monday of each month.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY Programs to be announced. Questions? email: historicalbarnard1761@gmail.com

BARNARD LISTERS listeners@barnardvt.us, 234-9576. Office hours, except holidays: Wednesday 9:00am - 11:00am; by appointment; or anytime a Lister is in the office.

THE BARNARD ENERGY COMMITTEE meets on the 2nd Tuesday of the month, 7:00pm at the Town Hall

YOGA CLASSES offered at Danforth Library, Mondays 9:00am - 10:30am with Amanda Anderson. Classes are by donation; for more information contact Amanda@innerliftyoga.com. Yoga Classes are also offered on Thursdays from 9-10:30 with Beth Umba. Contact Beth at: bethumba@gmail.com.

BARNARD GENERAL STORE, Monday-Saturday: 7am-7pm, Sundays: 8am-6pm. <https://www.facebook.com/barnardgeneralstore>

BARNARD LISTSERV: to subscribe please send an email to: barnard-subscribe@lists.vitalcommunities.org

RECYCLING HOURS: Saturdays, 8:00am to 4:00pm,

THE BARNARD INN is running a "Feeding Neighbors & Sustaining Community" campaign. Purchase an e-Gift Card and in turn the chefs will feed neighbors. Whole chicken dinners (serves 4-6) and individual sized meals to help feed Vermonters in need. Thank you and please stay safe. E-Gift Cards are available at www.barnardinn.com.

LISTER NOTES

On December 14, 2020 at 9:30AM the listers participated in the defense of the 2019 Board of Civil Authority (BCA) decision on the valuation of the property owned by Scott and Amy Smart, parcel ID 02-0665, located on Midsomer Meadows Lane. The Smarts had appealed the 2019 BCA decision to Property Valuation and Review (PVR). PVR assigned Mr. Richard Scholes as Property Valuation Hearing Officer and Mr. Scholes arranged for both parties to be heard by video and teleconference.

Mr. Smart contended that the his property had a fair market value in the neighborhood of \$700,000 as of April 1, 2019. This value was based on the sale of properties that he felt were comparable to his, and that he had purchased the property for around \$500,000 in 2015. Mr. Smart felt the market had reached a low in 2019 and that the repairs and improvements that he had made to his property before 2019 did not significantly increase its market value, considering that a number of other structural issues that lowered the properties marketability.

The Listers based their \$1,100,00 valuation on comparable Barnard property sales in 2019 and the mass valuation model that had been built for the 2019 reappraisal. The issues that had been noted by the NEMC appraisers during their inspections were taken into account.

Mr. Scholes decision is likely to be filed with PVR within a week of the hearing, and PVR will likely send notification of the decision to Mr. Smart and the Town before the end of the year. Thus it is hoped that the Listers can certify the 2019 and 2020 Grand Lists as being complete, with no hearings pending.

CRYPTOGRAM ANSWER

“February, when the days of winter seem endless and no amount of wistful recollecting can bring back any air of summer.”

- Shirley Jackson

The Barnard Bulletin is published around the twentieth of each month. This issue and 5 years of back issues can be found on the web at BarnardBulletin.news. We can be contacted at PO Box 161, Barnard VT 05031-0161, or by email at Info@BarnardBulletin.info.