

The Legacy of Charles R. Crane

By Leonard Miele

Known to the Woods Hole community as the “patron saint” of the Marine Biological Laboratory, Charles Richard Crane was one of America’s most prominent citizens during the first half of the 20th century.¹ As a successful businessman, philanthropist, diplomat, and world traveler, he was an advisor and confidante to U.S. presidents and world leaders and served on international commissions that influenced foreign policy in Russia, China, Turkey, and Palestine. He was a self-educated Renaissance man who, as his biographer Norman E. Saul has noted, “never went to high school. All his knowledge was self-acquired. He learned to speak good French, fair German, and quite a lot of Russian.” Although he never earned a college degree and completed only eight years of schooling, he was awarded five honorary doctoral degrees for a celebrated career as a humanitarian and statesman² and appeared on the cover of *Time Magazine* on March 9, 1931.

Charles Crane was born on August 7, 1858, in Chicago, Illinois, the eldest son of entrepreneur



Charles Richard Crane, the patriarch of the Crane family and the “patron saint” of the Marine Biological Laboratory. Dana Hull-The World’s Work, 1909.

Richard Teller Crane who founded the R.T. Crane Brass and Bell Foundry in 1855, a company that would become one of the world’s largest and most successful manufacturers of plumbing fixtures and supplies. At the age of ten, Charles Crane began working as an apprentice at the Crane Company foundries after school and during school vacations. This early introduction to all aspects of the plumbing industry was invaluable training for him to be president of the company, albeit forty-two years later when his father died in 1912. He served as president for two years, retiring in 1914

and selling his interest in the company to his brother Richard Teller Crane, Jr. for a reported 14 million dollars.³ According to company records, the brothers built the “Great Works,” a new, up-to-date central plant for the Crane Company on 160 acres on the southwest side of Chicago. At a cost of 12 million dollars, this modern facility had forty-seven separate buildings with seventy-two acres of floor space. The company was serviced by five railroads,

employed 10,000 workers, and had forty-three sales offices throughout the United States.⁴

When Charles was nineteen, he enrolled at the Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, New Jersey to study engineering. Complaining of digestive problems, he left the school within a week, the first sign of his being "allergic to formal education."⁵ Since Richard Teller Crane was a hands-on, self-made millionaire, he was critical of education in general, asking in a *Chicago Tribune* interview "...what's the use of education beyond the three R's, if a boy is going into business?"⁶ Because he was especially critical of Ivy League colleges that "pampered, wined and dined, and spoiled the elite youth of America into an alcoholic stupor," he was sympathetic to Charles' decision to leave school to experience the real world as his classroom.⁷ Since the elder Crane had the financial means to indulge or spoil his "elite" son, the younger Crane embarked on an enviable seventeen-month tour of the world, assimilating unfamiliar cultures and political systems.

From September 1877 to June 1878, Charles traveled to England, Spain, France, Italy, the Ottoman Empire, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and Greece before joining the Crane family in Paris for a brief reunion. At the end of June 1879, he was in New York City to begin another extraordinary adventure that would last nine months. Sharing navigational duties with a captain on the small sailing vessel *Venture*, he traveled for 110 days to reach Indonesia where he visited Christmas Island, Jakarta, Java, and

Krakatoa. Before returning home in March, 1880, he journeyed to India, China, and Japan and had seen much of the world by the age of twenty-one.⁸

Charles Crane was an active citizen of the world his entire life, immersed in the culture and history of Russia, China, and the Middle East. In 1887, he traveled to Russia for the first time to work on a joint business venture between the Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company and the Crane Company. Beyond expanding his company's financial interests, he became lifelong friends with Russian intellectuals, political reformers, Eastern Orthodox clergy, writers, and musicians. He was enamored of the "genius of the Russian people" and funded programs to share Russian music, literature, and history with Americans interested in Slavic culture.⁹ In collaboration with the University of Chicago, Charles Crane endowed a Chair of Slavonic Studies at the University. To recruit Russian/Slavic scholars for the program, Crane invited university president William Harper to accompany him to Russia in 1900. Harper was impressed by Crane's influential social connections on this journey and was elated when it was arranged for them to meet Count Leo Tolstoy and Tsar Nicholas II.¹⁰

Charles Crane loved the eminent church choirs he heard in the Orthodox churches throughout Russia. To promote Russian singers and singing in the United States, he invited Ivan T. Gorokoff, a well-known Moscow musician, to organize the Russian Cathedral

Choir at Saint Nicholas Russian Orthodox Cathedral in New York City. As the major patron of the choir, Crane financed Gorokoff, the eight adult male vocalists he enlisted in Russia, and the twenty-one American boys of Russian heritage who toured the country under Crane's sponsorship.¹¹ The choir performed for President Woodrow Wilson at the White House and visited the Crane estate in Woods Hole every summer. The choir was active and in demand from 1912 until 1918 when the Russian Revolution brought about its demise.

In 1929, Soviet dictator Josef Stalin ordered the closing of the thirteenth century Danilov Monastery in Moscow. Since he banned the ringing of church bells throughout Russia, the eighteen bronze bells at the monastery were to be melted down for ammunition. As fate would have it, Charles R. Crane intervened to save these cultural treasures. For approximately \$50,000, Crane purchased the bells and donated them to Harvard University.¹² From 1930 to 2008, seventeen of the bells were installed in the Lowell House tower, while the eighteenth bell was placed in the tower of the Baker Library at the Harvard Business School. Ranging in weight from twenty-two pounds to thirteen and a half tons, the bells were rung during commencement every year and during solemn occasions such as the death of Martin Luther King and the 9/11 tragedy.¹³ When the monastery reopened in 1983, officials of the Orthodox Church and the Russian government began a successful campaign to have the bells returned in 2007 and 2008.

Charles Crane will always be remembered for the two endowment funds he established in the 1920s that are still operating today. The Friendship Fund, with its initial endowment of \$2,000,000, was first formed to support the financial needs of the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, where Charles Crane was a member of the Board of Trustees. He soon realized that smaller organizations and non-profits in the community also needed financial help. Through his descendants, the Fund, after 100 years, continues to support those in need. In 1930, Charles Crane transferred \$1,000,000 from his Friendship Fund to endow the Institute of Current World Affairs he developed with his son John Oliver Crane in 1925. Since they believed that many policymakers were not informed about the world and current affairs, they created fellowships for young professionals to travel overseas and experience other countries. After operating for a full century, the aim of the ICWA is to provide a two-year immersion program that "advances American understanding of international cultures and affairs."^{14, 15}

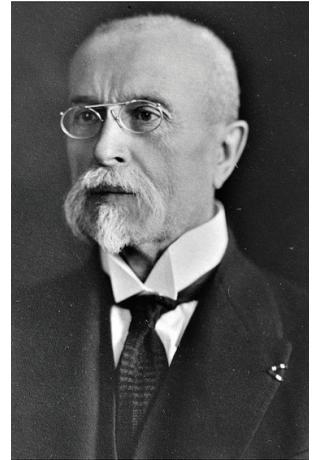
A Life of Diplomacy

For six years, Charles R. Crane was the president of the Municipal Voter's League in Chicago, a reformist group supporting honest government and social justice. As a local businessman and concerned citizen, he wanted to change the culture of political corruption that permeated Chicago politics. Nationally, Crane was a major Republican supporter of William Howard Taft in the 1908 presidential

election. For his party loyalty, and his international experience, he was appointed the U.S. Minister to China in 1909. Unfortunately, he was recalled from this position even before he reached Peking for making indiscreet comments to reporters about predicting an eventual war between Japan and the United States.¹⁶ During the 1912 presidential election, Crane dismissed the Republican Party and embraced Woodrow Wilson's Democratic policies, donating \$10,000 to his campaign. Crane eventually became vice chairman of Wilson's finance committee and donated another \$40,000 to elect Wilson.¹⁷ It was no surprise that Crane, who would become Wilson's friend and political advisor, would be offered the Ambassadorship to Russia. Unfortunately, Crane had just assumed the presidency of the Crane Company and could not accept the appointment.

Woodrow Wilson did enlist Charles R. Crane to join former Secretary of State and Nobel Prize winner Elihu Root on a diplomatic mission to Russia in June of 1917 to evaluate the stability of the country. Since Tsar Nicholas II had abdicated on March 15, Wilson wanted to establish an alliance with the new revolutionary government and to seek its support of the Allied cause during World War I. When Crane was selected to be on the Root Commission, he had already traveled to Russia to view the situation. He was pleased to see that old liberal friends such as foreign minister Paul Milyukov were part of the democratic but weak Provisional Government, which ended when the Bolsheviks took power in the October revolution.

In 1896, Charles Crane visited Prague, Czechoslovakia to meet Thomas Masaryk, a professor of philosophy and sociology at Karlova University. This intellectual encounter would create a political and familial bond that would join the two of them for the rest of their lives. Masaryk would first come to the United States for the year 1904-1905 to fill the chair of Slavonic Studies that Crane had established at the University of Chicago and again in 1918 when Crane arranged for the political activist Thomas Masaryk to meet with President Wilson to enlist his support to liberate Czechoslovakia from the Austro-Hungarian Empire.¹⁹ Having been a member of the Austrian parliament for seven years, Masaryk became a prominent leader in freeing the Slavic people from Austria-Hungary on October 28, 1918, weeks before the end of World War I. He became the first president of the Republic of Czechoslovakia, serving three terms from 1918 to 1935. Due to Crane's friendship with Masaryk, it was not surprising that the first U.S. ambassador to Czechoslovakia was Charles Crane's oldest son John Teller Crane; that Masaryk's personal secretary was Crane's youngest son



Thomas Masaryk,
the first president of
Czechoslovakia.
Bain Collection,
Library of Congress.

John Oliver Crane, and that Masaryk's son Jan married Crane's youngest daughter, Frances Anita Crane.

After the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, President Wilson sent Charles Crane on another diplomatic mission to the Middle East to determine the postwar future of those nations that were once part of the Ottoman Empire. During June and July of 1919, Crane partnered with Henry C. King, the president of Oberlin College, as part of the Inter-Allied Commission on Mandates in Turkey, or the more familiar King-Crane Commission. Their final report, which the British and the French were able to suppress for two years, concluded that the majority of Arabs in the region favored an independent Syria but were opposed to the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, an idea that would not come to fruition for another thirty years.²⁰

Charles Crane's proudest diplomatic moment came in 1920 when President Wilson named him the U.S. Minister to China from May 1920 to June 1921. Although he served only briefly, the well-to-do Crane was eager to help the impoverished Chinese population during a year of widespread famine. He was a hands-on diplomat who worked among every class of people. His only concern was to supply seed grain to the hungry and to generate public works jobs for the poorest members of Chinese society.

Because of his efforts, he was made an Honorary Advisor to the Government of China when he left his post as the foreign minister. As Crane

has noted, "I've been on the inside of many interesting jobs in my life, but the best job I ever did was organizing the famine relief in China."²¹

One of Crane's final forays into personal diplomacy took place in 1931 when he journeyed to Arabia to meet the legendary Wahabi leader Abdul-Aziz ibn Saud, a desert sheikh who ruled central and northern Arabia. According to Crane's biographer David Hapgood, this meeting became a small anecdote in the history of Saudi Arabia. Crane was concerned about the dry farming methods used in the desert and suggested that Ibn Saud use artesian wells to irrigate the land. During their five-day meeting, Ibn Saud agreed to allow Crane's mining engineer Karl S. Twitchell to search for water throughout the region. Although Twitchell was unable to find a reliable source of water, he found a seemingly inexhaustible source of petroleum, a discovery that would change the entire world. Ibn Saud offered Crane the chance to develop this resource with him, but Crane felt it was "better for a nation to develop its own resources with its own talent and money."²² In 1932, Ibn Saud became the first founder and king of Saudi Arabia and one of the wealthiest, most influential men in the world. Crane admired Ibn Saud and compared him to his father when he described him as having a "great natural human brain entirely unspoiled by education, except the education of human experience."²³

The Marine Biological Laboratory

A highlight of Charles Crane's philanthropic career was his association with the Marine Biological Laboratory, the iconic research facility in Woods Hole. Over a thirty-eight-year period, beginning in 1901, he contributed over one and a quarter million dollars to alleviate deficits, purchase land, and construct laboratory buildings in a campus-like setting bordering the waters of Great Harbor. Crane was introduced to the MBL in 1900 when he visited his sister Frances Crane Lillie and her husband, Dr. Frank R. Lillie. Mrs. Lillie is remembered for donating the Angelus Bell Tower and Mary Garden to St. Joseph Church on the north shore of Eel Pond. Befitting a scientific community, the two bells in the tower are named Mendel and Pasteur.²⁴ Mr. Lillie was the assistant director of the Laboratory at the time of his brother-in-law's visit to Woods Hole and encouraged him to embrace the MBL community. In 1901, Crane became a valued member of the board of trustees, followed by his election as president of the corporation from 1903 to 1925. With Crane as the major benefactor, the MBL experienced a remarkable period of growth, both in size and prestige.

From 1909 until 1923, Crane pledged \$20,000 a year to cover unexpected costs at the Laboratory. In 1914, he funded the Crane Laboratory at a personal cost of \$135,000. Utilizing his business acumen, Crane presented the MBL with a gift of \$1,405,000 in 1924, given jointly by John D. Rockefeller (\$400,000),

the Rockefeller Foundation (\$500,000), the Carnegie Foundation (\$100,000), and Crane's Friendship Fund (\$405,000). When the Crane building needed additional space, Crane provided \$222,000 in 1925 to construct the Lillie wing with its modern laboratories and large auditorium.²⁵ Just beyond the auditorium on display is a bronze statue of Confucius that Charles Crane brought back from China when he completed his diplomatic duties. In jest, MBL Fellow Jane Maienschein has noted that "tradition holds that a researcher who places a penny in Confucius's hands will have rewarding research results, whereas those who fail to observe the custom will only publish in the *Journal of Negative Results*."²⁶

Charles Crane served as president of the Corporation of the MBL for twenty-two years. When he resigned from this position in 1925, the board of trustees acknowledged his invaluable contributions in their letter of acceptance: "Almost every year of your Presidency, you have made notable additions to our estate, among which are the Kidder lot, cottage and annex, the Whitman and Ritter cottages, and New Homestead and Mess Hall, the Bar Neck property, our first permanent and fireproof laboratory which should be known as the Crane Building and finally the completion of the fund for the building and equipment of the New Laboratory and the permanent endowment of your annual gift of twenty thousand dollars from the Friendship Fund."²⁷

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Marine Biological Laboratory and to honor Charles Crane on his eightieth birthday in August of 1938, the board of trustees commissioned a painting to be hung in Lillie Auditorium. Representing the trustees, Crane's brother-in-law Dr. Frank Lillie made the following poignant remarks: "After we are all gone these far-seeing eyes and this friendly face in its familiar Woods Hole setting will long speak to our successors as the best friend the Laboratory has ever had."²⁸

Cornelia Crane

Charles Crane married Cornelia Workman Smith on November 2, 1881 in Paterson, New Jersey, when she was nineteen and he was twenty-three. Her parents were Sarah Hemingway Workman and John Oliver Smith,



Cornelia Crane, the matriarch of the Crane family.
Courtesy Woods Hole
Historical Museum.

an organist and choir master. Cornelia was also a musician, creating inspirational compositions her entire life. And, like her parents, she was a devout Presbyterian. Early in their courtship, Charles revealed to Cornelia that his skepticism of the Christian church could jeopardize

their relationship. In 1878 he wrote: "I do not feel the slightest sympathy with what are generally known as the 'Orthodox Creeds of Christianity'; nor is there any hope in my mind in favor of such a feeling; nor do I think I should wish to have that feeling."²⁹ It was a tribute to their mutual respect for each other that their marriage lasted fifty-seven years.

The Cranes first visited Woods Hole in 1902 when Charles began his association with the Marine Biological Laboratory. With four teenagers in tow, Cornelia would embrace the Woods Hole community for the next thirty-nine years. In 1908, the family occupied the Daniel Webster Butler "cottage" on Butler's Point, purchasing it in 1909, and declaring it their permanent residence in 1915. While Charles served as president of the MBL Corporation, Cornelia became an early member of the Falmouth Nursing Association, a longtime member of the Woods Hole Woman's Club, and an eventual member of the MBL Corporation. Perhaps her greatest distinction at this time was to support Charles' philanthropic endeavors and diplomatic career, especially as Minister to China. While they were on assignment in China in 1921, she was awarded the Decoration of Mercy, the highest honor the Republic of China could give to a woman, for her famine relief work with starving women and children.³⁰

Cornelia was a talented, published musician who wrote melodies for children's prayers and nursery rhymes and composed sacred music for the book *As a Little Child* and the nine-volume *The Spiritual Way*. She was particularly proud of



An early photo of the Crane estate on Juniper Point. Courtesy Woods Hole Historical Museum.

her composition "Alleluia" whose dedication to Pope Pius IX was acknowledged when she had a special audience with him at the Vatican in 1929. This was a singular moment for Cornelia: she had converted to Catholicism in 1927 when she became a member of St. Joseph Church in Woods Hole. When she died on November 21, 1941, it was fitting that a men's quartet at the church sang "The Lord's Prayer" to music written by Cornelia.³¹

The imposing Crane estate on Juniper Point, previously known as the Butler estate on Butler's Point, was located on the neck of land overlooking Woods Hole Passage between Little Harbor to the east and Great Harbor to the west. The main house on the nine-acre property, a Queen Anne-style dwelling built c. 1878, had twenty rooms to accommodate

the six members of the Crane family and their domestic help. The four-story tower on the southeast side of the house had commanding views of Nobska Lighthouse and Vineyard Sound. Two smaller residences were on the estate as well as a stable, greenhouse, Japanese water garden, superintendent's cottage, clay and turf tennis courts, private swimming pier, and a boathouse which housed Charles Crane's beautiful library/study with over 1,000 books gathered from around the world.³²

Charles and Cornelia Crane had five children: Richard Teller Crane II, Cornelia Crane, who died at age three, Mary Josephine Crane, Frances Anita Crane, and John Oliver Crane. Except for Richard, three of the surviving siblings had strong ties to Woods Hole.

Richard Teller Crane II

Richard Teller Crane II, the namesake of his prosperous grandfather, was born on August 12, 1882. When he was only nineteen years old, he graduated from Harvard College with a Bachelor of Science degree, an honor the elder Richard Teller probably believed he earned while he was “pampered, wined, and dined” at Harvard. To his credit, Richard Teller Crane II would prove to be a successful businessman



Richard Teller Crane II, the eldest son of Charles and Cornelia Crane. National Photo Collection, Library of Congress.

and diplomat like his father, although his life would come to a tragic, premature end. When he married Ellen Douglas Bruce in 1909, he was a vice president of the Crane Company. One year later he became the president of the Crane Valve Company in Bridgeport, Connecticut, a position he held from 1910 to 1914.

The Cranes purchased Westover Plantation, an historic colonial plantation along the James River in Westover, Virginia, when Richard became the private secretary to Secretary

of State Robert Lansing during the Wilson administration from 1910 to 1919. Because of his father’s association with President Masaryk of Czechoslovakia, Richard was appointed the first U.S. Minister to Czechoslovakia from June 11, 1919 to December 5, 1921, serving at the same time his father was the Minister to China.³³

When Richard was fifty-six, he was killed by his own shotgun while hunting on his Virginia plantation. Newspapers reported that he stumbled in the underbrush and his gun accidentally discharged and penetrated his right temple.³⁴ Sadly, his death on October 3, 1938 was just four months before his father died in February of 1939.

Mary Josephine Bradley

Mary Josephine Crane, born on April 23, 1886, experienced a challenging, but triumphant childhood. When she was eighteen months old, Charles Crane noticed a lump under the skin on her back that he had removed, unfortunately, by an incompetent doctor in Oakland, California. Her incision became infected, blood poisoning set in, and she lost her hearing in both ears. The resourceful Charles Crane took Josephine (as she was called by family and friends) to see Alexander Graham Bell, the renowned Canadian scientist and teacher of the deaf. Bell believed that it was possible for the deaf to speak and avoid their dependence on sign language as evidenced while working with his deaf mother, deaf wife, and famed student Helen Keller.³⁵

Alexander Graham Bell tested Josephine and made the following observation: "You have a very bright child here. Do not cripple her for life by sending her to a deaf school to learn finger talk. In Vienna there is a speech doctor who will teach her lip-reading. She'll then have a normal life."³⁶ For two winters, Josephine worked with Dr. Viktor Urbantisch in Vienna where she learned to read lips and speak in a modulated, contralto voice. As her sons noted in a 2005 family biography of their mother, "We never tried to correct her pronunciation, we didn't want to spoil a good thing. Such linguistic gymnastics delighted us. She joined in the laughter, not a bit embarrassed."

Josephine was a student at the University of Wisconsin when she met Harold Cornelius Bradley, a professor of physiology and chemistry at the university's medical school. They were married in July of 1908, lived in Madison, Wisconsin for the next forty years, and had eight children: Mary Cornelia, Charles, Harold, David, Stephen, Joseph, Richard, and William. In January 1916, their only daughter Mary Cornelia died of meningitis when she was six years old. To honor her memory, Harold and Josephine raised over \$75,000 over the next four years to establish the Mary Cornelia Bradley Hospital

for the Study of Children's Diseases, the first children's hospital in Madison.³⁷

Although the Bradleys were summer residents of Woods Hole, they were active in the community and known to most of their neighbors in the village. Harold was the president of the Woods Hole Choral Club, a Commodore of the Woods Hole Yacht Club, and a member of the physiology investigative staff



Mary Josephine Crane Bradley and her husband Dr. Harold Bradley.

Dear Mother booklet, courtesy of Woods Hole Historical Museum.

at the Marine Biological Laboratory. Josephine, on the other hand, was the matriarch of seven sons and the manager of the most famous home in Woods Hole. In 1912, Charles Crane hired the Minneapolis architectural team of William Gray Purcell and George Grant Elmslie to build a summer "bungalow" for the Bradleys one-half mile south of the Crane estate

at the tip of Juniper Point. For the past century, boaters and ferry passengers traversing Vineyard Sound have been awed by what has become known as the Bradley "airplane house." With its wing-like cantilevered rooms and breathtaking views of Martha's Vineyard and the Elizabeth Islands, the Prairie style home was built in six months at a cost of \$30,000.³⁸ The Bradleys vacationed on Juniper Point until 1943 when the United States Army requisitioned the home as a guard post during World War II.

The Bradley house with its commanding view of Vineyard Sound. Courtesy Woods Hole Historical Museum.



When Harold Bradley retired from the University of Wisconsin in 1948, he and Josephine moved to Berkeley, California where she died on January 26, 1952 at the age of sixty-five. Because of her father, she is immortalized by a painting that is on display at the National Gallery of Prague in Czechoslovakia. As a slavophile, Charles Crane commissioned Alphonse Mucha, the most prominent of all Czech artists, to paint the portrait of Josephine as a wedding gift in 1908. As a further honor, Mucha chose this image to illustrate the one hundred crown banknote he designed in 1920 for the newly created Czechoslovakia.

Frances Anita Crane

Frances Anita Crane was born on November 8, 1887, into a world of privilege and wealth. As the daughter, sister, and wife of foreign diplomats, she was a renowned socialite and hostess who, like her father, lived a life of travel, diplomacy, and philanthropy. Historian and family friend Norris Houghton described her as "Tall, with an imposing, almost regal mien, she seemed very much the grande dame and a

great beauty, quite remote from all mundane concerns."³⁹ In Woods Hole, however, she led a more tranquil, grounded life. She was an ardent benefactress of theater and music in Falmouth and an active participant in the community affairs of the town.



An Edwin Gray portrait study of Frances Anita Crane. Courtesy the *Falmouth Enterprise*.

In 1907, twenty-year-old Frances Crane left Bryn Mawr College after her junior year to marry twenty-four-year-old Robert William Leatherbee, a 1905 graduate of Harvard College. The couple met during the summer yachting races in Marion, MA. At the end of

World War I, during which Robert had served on the War Shipping Board, the Leatherbees moved to Brae Burn Farm in Hatchville village in Falmouth. As the successful proprietor of Brae Burn Farm, Robert developed one of the largest and most efficient dairy farms in New England while serving as the head of the Cape Cod Milk Producers Association and as the director of the Cape Cod Farm Bureau. For the next three decades of his life, until his death in 1954, he was a respected citizen of the Falmouth community as a member of the Planning Board and Finance Committee, the president of the Falmouth Rotary Club, and the president of the Cape Cod Council of the Boy Scouts of America.⁴⁰

The Leatherbees had three children: Charles Crane Leatherbee in 1907, Robert William Leatherbee in 1910, and Richard Teller Leatherbee in 1914. When Frances and Robert divorced in 1924, the two younger sons dropped the surname Leatherbee and became known as Robert and Richard Crane. Of the three sons, Charles Crane Leatherbee is the best-known for co-founding the University Players in 1928, a summer theater that introduced Henry Fonda and Jimmy Stewart to theater audiences. With financial help from patrons such as his mother and grandfather, Charles Leatherbee built the Old Silver Beach Playhouse in North Falmouth where he partnered with fellow collegians Bretainne Windust and Joshua Logan to produce and direct plays at the popular beach venue until 1932. Joshua Logan would become a famed stage and film director, winning a Pulitzer

Prize for co-writing the musical *South Pacific*.⁴¹ In 1933, Charles Leatherbee married Joshua's sister Mary Lee Logan, a marriage that ended sadly two years later when Charles died of pneumonia at age twenty-seven. Mary never remarried, pursued a three-decade career as a senior travel editor at *Life* magazine, and, at age sixty-one in 1972, died tragically by drowning when a canoe she was in capsized in Campbell River, British Columbia.⁴²

In 1916, Charles R. Crane built Frances a home (*i.e.* estate) on Gardiner Road in the Gansett section of Woods Hole, just as he had done for Josephine on Juniper Point. Known as *Whitecrest*, the home generated comments in the *Falmouth Enterprise* that Frances "grew up with all the assurances of great wealth" and "was a personage in a graceful period of Falmouth life."⁴³ Built on a hill with a breathtaking view of Buzzards Bay (and Marion), the white colonial, three-story home sat on three acres of land with a rose garden, orchard, private beach, and three-car garage. The fifteen-room home, excluding servants' quarters, was the perfect locale for the lively Wednesday night suppers that Frances hosted for the company of the University Players. Norris Houghton recalls that "In those days she affected long Empire gowns in pastel shades ...and looked as though she should be permanently planted at the head of some broad marble staircase."⁴⁴ The Leatherbees divorced in 1924 and at the end of the year, on December 28, Frances became the wife of Czechoslovakian diplomat Jan Masaryk and the daughter-in-law of Czech president Thomas Masaryk.

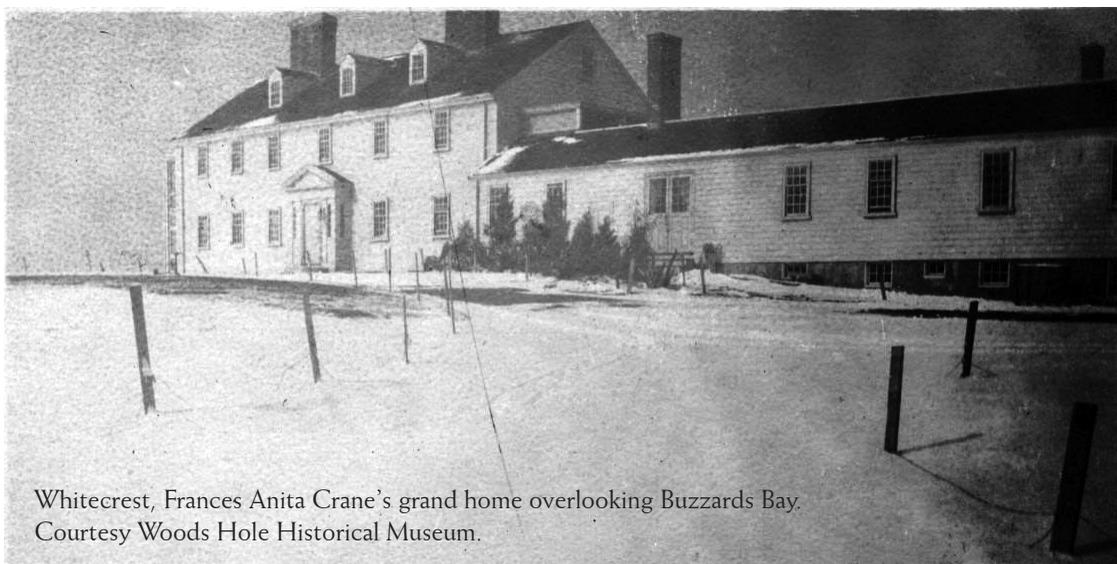
The Crane family had been aligned with the Masaryk family since 1896 when Charles R. Crane first met Thomas Masaryk in Prague. When Jan Masaryk was twenty years old in 1906, he traveled to the United States with plans to be a concert pianist but instead worked for the Crane Valve Company in Bridgeport, Connecticut, under Richard Teller Crane II, his future brother-in-law and future Minister to Czechoslovakia. Jan and Frances met in 1921 at a July 4th party at Schoenborn, the palace in Prague that Charles Crane purchased for the U.S. government to house its embassy.⁴⁵ The newly married Masaryks moved to London when Jan Masaryk was appointed the Czechoslovakian Minister to the Court of St. James. For six years, they made their home in the London embassy where Frances relished her role as an international hostess and embraced her colorful life of diplomacy and travel. Although Frances had all the



Frances and Jan Masaryk on board the *SS George Washington* crossing the Atlantic in 1925.
Wikimedia Commons.

trappings of being a true “grande dame” and was able to visit her family every summer in Woods Hole, her life with Jan came to an end with the annulment of their marriage in 1931.

Jan Masaryk would remain a Foreign Minister to Czechoslovakia until March, 1948. On the



Whitecrest, Frances Anita Crane's grand home overlooking Buzzards Bay.
Courtesy Woods Hole Historical Museum.

morning of March 10, his body was found on the pavement below his third-floor apartment at the Czernin palace in Prague. To this day, no one has been able to prove if he died of suicide, as most international papers reported, or was pushed from a window by Soviet agents. Two days after Jan Masaryk died, 200,000 people stood in a line two-miles long to view his body as it lay in state at the Czernin palace, a fitting tribute to the man who had made strenuous efforts to keep Czech independence.⁴⁶



Jan Masaryk,
Czechoslovakia's
Foreign Minister.
Wikimedia Commons.

When Frances Masaryk returned to live at Whitecrest in 1931, she chose to be known as Mrs. Frances Crane for the rest of her life. Immersing herself in countless civic endeavors, she "dedicated herself to community work on Cape Cod up to the very day of her death," according to her brother John Oliver Crane. She was a member of the Falmouth Garden Club and the Woods Hole Woman's Club; she supported the fund drives of the Salvation Army and the Society for the Protection and Care of Children; she was on the Strawberry Festival parade committee and participated at the annual teas and sales at the Church of the Messiah in Woods Hole; she initiated a successful Share-a-Shawl campaign for English women dealing with post-war fuel shortages;

and she was on the Board of Directors of the Falmouth Nursing Association and a founding member of the Coonamessett Music Society.⁴⁷

Continuing the interest in theater she had shown by supporting her son's theatrical endeavors with the University Players, Frances Crane and her brother John built the star-studded Falmouth Playhouse in 1949 at the Coonamessett Resort in Hatchville overlooking Coonamessett Pond. As the managers of the resort, they converted the barn-like Coonamessett Club on the property into a professional summer theater with 596 seats and a stage fifty-two feet wide and twenty-eight feet deep. With Frances' son Robert acting as associate producer, the theater was leased to Robert Aldrich, the producing director of the iconic Cape Cod Playhouse in Dennis and the husband of famed Broadway star Gertrude Lawrence.⁴⁸

It is ironic that the world of the theater which Frances loved so much would be a footnote to her tragic death at the age of sixty-six. On the evening of August 9, 1954, she attended the opening night of the play *Dear Charles* at the Falmouth Playhouse starring Tallulah Bankhead. After the performance, she joined the star and other theater friends at the Treadway Inn to enjoy the piano music and to renew their friendship, unknowingly for the last time. While driving home to Whitecrest along Sandwich Road early in the morning, her car crashed into another car driven by an Air Force policeman. Although he survived the accident, Frances Crane died an hour and a half later at Cape Cod Hospital in Hyannis,

ending the life of a vibrant, prominent member of the Falmouth community.⁴⁹

For over sixty years, Frances has been memorialized by the popular wildlife and hunting preserve that bears her name in Falmouth's Hatchville neighborhood. On October 10, 1958, the Division of Fisheries and Game purchased approximately 1,400 acres of land from the Crane-owned Coonamessett Ranch company with the "assurance that the area would be used for Wildlife Management purposes and would be called the Frances Anita Crane Wildlife Management Area."

John Oliver Crane

Of the four Crane children, John Oliver Crane, born on December 28, 1899, was the one most closely allied to his father, championing his philanthropies and embracing his global view of life and travel. When he was twenty years old, he took a leave of absence from Harvard College after his junior year to join his parents in Peking when Charles Crane finished his assignment as Minister of China. At the end of June until the first week of August in 1921, John traveled with his father on a six-week adventure across Siberia and Russia on the Trans Siberian railroad. Since there was no passenger service at the time, Charles Crane purchased two train cars for \$3,000. One was a second-class compartment retrofitted with a sitting room, dining room, stove, icebox, and a hired Chinese cook. The second car was a small freight car that was welded to the compartment car and outfitted with provisions such as needles, scissors, soap, and medicine to



Photo of John Oliver Crane on the cover of his memorial service at the Church of the Messiah in Woods Hole. Courtesy Woods Hole Historical Museum.

barter for food along the 10,000-mile journey. Since they were dependent upon attaching the train cars to any available locomotive going in their direction, they had to deal with erratic travel schedules and bureaucratic red tape at most border crossings.⁵⁰

After completing his studies in English History and International Relations at Harvard in 1921, John's family connections enabled him to move to Prague in 1922 to become the researcher and private secretary of Czechoslovakia's president Tomas Masaryk. Just as his father and his brother Richard had been part of Masaryk's political world, John immersed himself in Czechoslovakian diplomacy for the next eight years, even becoming part of the Masaryk family when his sister Frances married British foreign minister Jan Masaryk. John Crane became a close confidant and life-long friend to both President Masaryk and Edward Benes, the Czech foreign minister and the next president of Czechoslovakia.

John Crane joined his father on another adventure in 1929 when they made a two-month winter tour of Arabia and the Persian Gulf. This trip was a lasting memory for the twenty-eight-year-old John Crane: he and his father almost lost their lives in what became an international incident. On January 21, the Cranes left Basrah to visit Kuwait, a 110-mile journey through the Iraqi desert. As their caravan of Chevrolets crossed unfamiliar tribal boundaries, they were attacked by the Akhwani, the most savage of the Wahabi tribesmen. Although there were reports of 160 tribesmen in the area, John reported seeing only twelve armed Akhwani horsemen approaching them. Unfortunately, the Reverend Henry A. Bilkert, an American missionary who was sitting next to Charles Crane, was mortally wounded in the gunfire. John Crane, perhaps thinking about his upcoming marriage at the end of the year, reflected upon Bilkert's death and his own good fortune to be alive in the following diary entry: "The chances are that, had they dropped off their mounts to get a firm aim, we should all have long since been cut to pieces. Such is the desert law."⁵¹

Upon his return from the Near East, John Crane prepared for his next trip to Europe and his aristocratic wedding in Rome. On October 18, 1929, John married Countess Theresa Martini Marescotti in a private chapel at the palace of her uncle, Prince Ruspoli. Serving as witnesses for John were his brother Richard and his brother-in-law Jan Masaryk. The couple lived in Prague and in Rome on a 400-acre dairy farm John bought from Count Marescotti for \$450,000 in 1931.⁵² Managing



John Oliver Crane and Countess Theresa Martini Marescotti at their wedding in Rome in 1929.
Courtesy Woods Hole Historical Museum.

this successful farm helped prepare John for his management of the Coonamessett Resort when he returned to the United States. Before their marriage ended, the Cranes had one child, Francesca Giacinta Crane.

John's second marriage to Sylvia Engel took place in Greenwich, Connecticut, on July 7, 1945. She was a bright, politically active woman who received a Bachelor's degree from Brooklyn College in 1938 and a Master of Arts degree from Columbia University in 1942. As a civil liberties activist, Sylvia Engel Crane was blacklisted during the 1950s, which prompted her to become the vice

chairman of the Committee to Abolish HUAC (House Un-American Activities Committee). As an historian, she authored two books: *White Silence: Greenough, Powers, and Crawford, American Sculptors in Nineteenth-Century Italy* and *Czechoslovakia: Anvil of the Cold War*, John's unfinished book which she completed after he died.⁵³ Locally, Sylvia Crane embraced the educational efforts of the Woods Hole Child Center, the oldest operating cooperative preschool in Falmouth. In 1951 and 1952 she served as president and chief fundraiser for the building of the Center's main facility on Harbor Hill Road in Woods Hole.⁵⁴

Together, the Cranes organized the Coonamessett Music Society to bring classical music to Falmouth, the endeavor initiated by John's sister Frances. To honor Frances' memory, they established the annual Frances Anita Crane music award of \$500 for musically talented high school students on Cape Cod and in Wareham. As political partners, they were directors of the China Welfare Appeal, raising funds for the Chinese Industrial Cooperatives organized by their friend Edgar Snow "to forestall the manifestly developing tide of revolution" in China." Unfortunately, all the funds they collected were confiscated by Chiang Kai-Shek's corrupt family, enabling Joseph McCarthy to politicize the work of the



John Oliver Crane and his second wife Sylvia Engel Crane in 1954.
Courtesy the *Falmouth Enterprise*.

Cooperatives and name "Edgar as one of the band of agrarian reformers who lost China for us to the Reds." Similarly, John organized the American Society for Cultural Relations with Italy (ASCRI) to raise money for food and shelter for war-stricken victims. As Sylvia noted, "John and ASCRI were violently red-baited in the yellow press and the whole glorious plan collapsed like a house of cards. After this first direct experience with McCarthyism, John refused to join any further political venture, but he cheered and spurred me on aplenty."⁵⁵

The Cranes had two sons, Charles Maurice Crane and Thomas Smith Crane, and maintained homes in New York City along Central Park and on Juniper Point in the Crane family homestead. They had been married thirty-seven years at the time of John's death on May 16, 1982. John Crane will be remembered as a philanthropist for continuing his father's legacy: he managed and promoted the Institute of Current World Affairs and served as secretary-treasurer, president, and life-long trustee of the Crane Friendship Fund. As an historian, he will be remembered for his first-hand accounts of Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Yugoslavia, and Russia in the *Siberia Diary-1921*, *The Little Entente*, and *Czechoslovakia: Anvil of the Cold War*.

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