

## Celebrating a Double Sesquicentennial (1871-2021)

Contributed by Henry Mcadam

**F**orestburgh Township of New York State's Sullivan County, especially the Hartwood Estate (and its mountain lake), figure prominently in Stephen Crane's short life, both in the time he spent there with his family, and in his fiction. The sesquicentennial of his birth in 1871 coincides with the opening of the final link in the Ontario & Western Railroad line he used to travel from NYC to Port Jervis and on to Hartwood for visits to his brother Edmund. Two essays, one in remembrance of Crane and family recollections of him, and the other focused on his novella *The Third Violet* (1896), explore ways in which the two are intertwined. In writing these I am mindful that several individuals have helped with background research. Portions of both essays draw on material my brother Gordon and I shaped into a section of an account of our own ancestral connections with Sullivan County and the Thompson-Forestburgh regions of it.<sup>1</sup> Nancy Bachana of Rock Hill, and Paul Lounsbury of Hurleyville, contributed to background information on Forestburgh, and Nancy Conod, Director of the Minisink Valley Historical Society, did the same for Port Jervis. My thanks to all of them for current and future research assistance.

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### “Corduroy Trousers and Briarwood Pipes”: Stephen Crane's Forestburgh 150 Years Ago<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Family Remembrances: An Account of Our Irish Ancestry in the Catskill Mountains, New York*. Four volumes, privately printed (Winnipeg, Canada & Monticello, NY) between 2013 and 2016.

<sup>2</sup> This is Part 1 of a two-part essay. Part 2 will focus on Crane's novella *The Third Violet* (1896), and in doing

Crane's love of this rural area finds its most personal expression in letters written from there in late 1895 and early 1896.<sup>3</sup> The first letter is from mid-October 1895, a week after the publication of *The Red Badge of Courage* (hereafter *RBC*). Several days later (23 October), he wrote to a NYC friend with political advice, but he closes with some personal news: “I am working pretty well here. Better than in New York [City]. Missed my first partridge today. Crash.” (Letter 114). The next day he notes: “The brown October woods are simply great ... There is a kitten in the stables ... and there is a dog who trims his whiskers ... What can be finer than a fine frosty morning, a runaway horse, and only the still hills to watch ... I missed my first partridge yesterday. Keh-plunk. Bad ground, though. Too many white birches. I haven't written a line yet.” (Letter 115).

Five days later Crane demonstrated that the peace and quiet of Forestburgh and Hartwood have helped to restore his creative juices. On 29 October he wrote to Ripley Hitchcock, editor of *RBC*'s publisher D. Appleton & Co.: “Dear Ripley: The story [*The Third Violet*] is working out. I have made seven chapters in the rough, and they have given me the proper enormous interest in the theme.” (Letter 116). By the end-of-year holidays, *The Third Violet* was completed and sent to the editor. One of Crane's first letters of 1896 was written on 2 January to a different publisher who had requested biographical information. Crane responds promptly with a succinct verbal “selfie”, which emphasizes his casual, rural image, but elevates Edmund's estate caretaker status to that of a wealthy local landowner:

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so will illuminate the importance to Crane of the local passenger railroad service. Photo of Crane courtesy of Stephen Crane Society; photo of Hartwood Train Station courtesy of Minisink Valley Historical Society. Print excerpts are within the limits of the “fair usage” rule.

<sup>3</sup> References to Crane's published letters are from Stanley Wertheim & Paul Sorrentino (eds.), *The Correspondence of Stephen Crane*. 2 volumes (NYC, Columbia University Press, 1988).

I live in Hartwood, Sullivan County, N.Y. on an estate of 3500 acres belonging to my brother, and [I] am distinguished for corduroy trousers and briar-wood pipes. My idea of happiness is the saddle of a good-riding horse (Letter 169).<sup>4</sup>

On 12 January, Crane writes to his latest flame (Nellie Crouse of NYC) and, between long paragraphs replete with amorous overtones, includes a note on what has now been his “home base” for the prior three months:

I am dejected just now because I have to start for [NYC] tonight and leave the blessed quiet hills of Hartwood. [Editor S.S] McClure is having one of his fits of desire to have me write for him, and I am obliged to go see him. Moreover, I have a new novel [*The Third Violet*] coming out in the spring, and I am also obliged to confer with the Appleton's about that. But I am hanged if I stay in New York more than one day. Then I shall hie me back to Hartwood (Letter 184).

Crane returned, but only for a brief summer visit. He then left for shared adventures as a war correspondent in Greece (1897) and Cuba (1898). Brief residence in the UK ended abruptly when he sought relief from chronic tuberculosis and cholera at a German spa. He died there on 5 June 1900 at age 28, and his remains were brought to the USA for burial in the family plot in Hillside, NJ (near Newark). His companion for his final three years, Cora Crane Taylor (1865-1910), traveled to Forestburgh to pay her personal respects that same summer, signing the Hartwood Club register on 7 July 1900: *Mrs. Stephen Crane, Brede Place, Sussex, England.*<sup>5</sup> Recollections of Stephen by a brother and a niece are worth including.

## Edmund Crane Recalls Brother Stephen at Hartwood

In 1894, I moved my family to Hartwood, New York, and took charge of a 3,600 acre tract of land known as the Clapham Property. Stephen soon made us a visit and came often afterward. When with us he wore a disreputable looking cap, sweater, corduroy trousers, and heavy shoes. His two favorite occupations when with us were riding, and sailing a tiny centerboard sailboat I had built. Writing near the front window of the living room, office and post office combined, he would keep a casual watch of the pond in front of the house. If a breeze sprang up he was out and in the sailboat to stay as long as the breeze lasted.

He had a strenuous game he played with the girls, his nieces. Armed with newspapers rolled into clubs, the three girls would attack Stephen fiercely and he would defend himself with such determination as sometimes to rout all three. Sturdy blows were given and taken in good part. Stevie was not a natural sportsman in regard to hunting and fishing. One day he complained of having nothing to do and I suggested he take the setter, Judge Noble, and go after birds. He was disinclined to do so, fearing to spoil my dog. I told him to call the dog and go up the swale on Buck Mountain across [Crane] pond ... He game back with two grouse and a rabbit ...

He dearly loved a good horse. He would tell stories of the different horses he had ridden, from the white pony with the branded shoulder to the last one ridden in Florida by the hour [in 1896-1897] ... Many a race we had over the roads [of Forestburgh] that back in 1896 and 1897 were anything but good, risking our necks with very little thought of the danger ....<sup>6</sup>

## Edith Crane Recalls “Uncle Stevie’s” Furniture at Hartwood

Edith Crane was Edmund Crane’s nine-year-old daughter, who saw Stephen on almost a daily basis during the autumn and winter (1895-1896) he lived with the family in Hartwood. On 11 May 1960, when she was 74, she wrote to a Crane researcher, Lillian B. Gilkes, with her recollection of the furniture that her “Uncle Stevie” brought with him

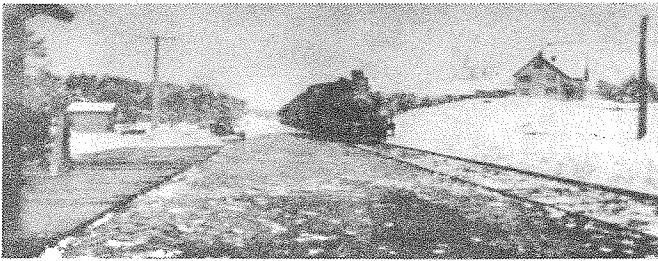
<sup>4</sup> Edmund Crane *worked for* the Hartwood Estate, and was postmaster for the local community.

<sup>5</sup> *For a summary of Cora’s extraordinary life, see “Cora Crane” in the SC Encyclopedia 67-70.*

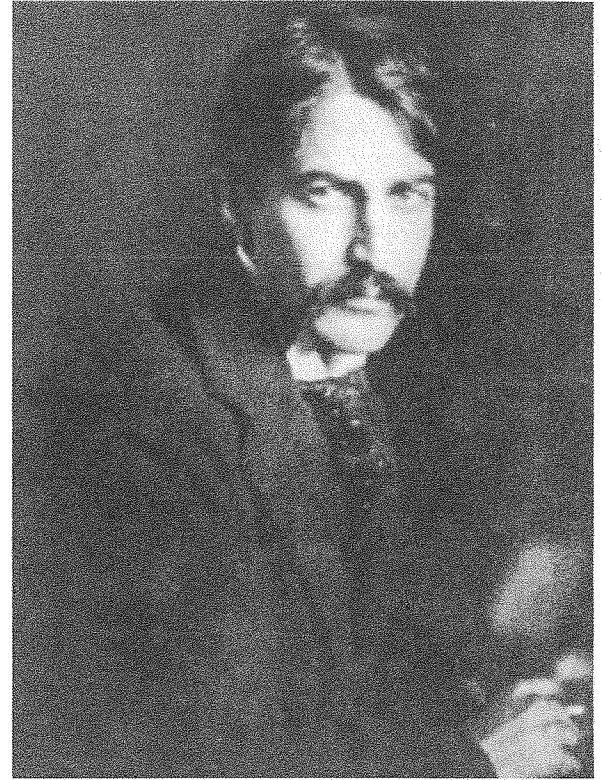
<sup>6</sup> Paul Sorrentino (ed.), *Stephen Crane Remembered*, (Univ. of Alabama Press, 2006) 13-14.

when he moved to Hartwood from his apartment in NYC in October 1895. It is obvious, from the amount, that Crane had taken advantage of the frequent train service to Forestburgh. Another factor was the ease of unloading it onto the platform of Hartwood Station, and transporting it just across the tracks into Edmund's house ("Hillside" in some contemporary accounts) above the pond:

Some of the things he brought are three chairs that are much-admired antiques now. There are two wall plaques, round ones [made] of plaster. One is the head of [composer Wolfgang Amadeus] Mozart; the other of [Ludwig von] Beethoven. Two beautiful large casts of a lion and a lioness have been broken [since then]. There was a full set of teacups, and a set of wine or whiskey glasses. There's a beautiful little Cloisonne teapot. [There once] stood in one corner of our living room a bed warmer tied with a big satin bow. In another was a large tip-up table over which he draped his *serape* [brought back from Mexico in the summer of 1895]. There are besides [those things] two framed engravings that look as though they are illustrations for *The Red Badge [of Courage]*. There was another picture painted in colors. Agnes [Edith's older sister] took it when she married and we never got it back. "Mame [Mary]", Uncle Stephen said to my mother, "If I don't come back, these things are yours".<sup>7</sup>



Hartwood Station platform (left), the Monticello - Port Jervis train, and "Hillside" (rt), the farmhouse and property above Crane Pond (not visible, but to the right) managed by Stephen's brother Edmund and his wife Mary, where Crane wrote *The Third Violet*.



Stephen Crane (24), when *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895) was published, and he started writing *The Third Violet* (1896)

**Short Video of Stephen Crane: Photos, Film Clips, and Narration**  
(Prepared by the Sullivan County Historical Society, May 2014)

Interested readers might want to use this link to access this short video:

[http://www.sullivancountyhistory.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=562:stephen-crane-in-sullivan-county&catid=78:video&Itemid=109](http://www.sullivancountyhistory.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=562:stephen-crane-in-sullivan-county&catid=78:video&Itemid=109)

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Also available (at YouTube) is a dramatization of selected segments of Stephen Crane's life, "To Escape My Fate" (1993), a lively fictional interview with Crane six months before his death:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-aZdIkNsdK>

<sup>7</sup> *The Correspondence of Stephen Crane*, Letter # 109 footnote # 1 pp. 123-124.