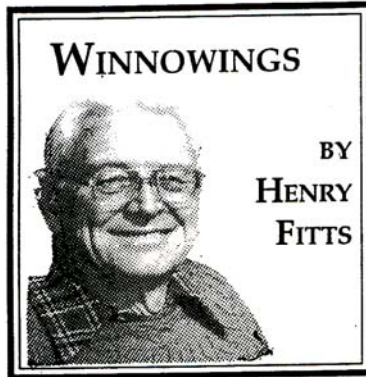


Who was Cressey?



Lake Sunapee presents a fascinating question to the residents of Blodgett's Landing and Bowles Road.

Why, these folks would like to know, is the point just south of the Landing known on some charts as Cressey Point and on others as Echo Point? And if Cressey was a man, what did he do to get his name affixed to the particular promontory?

In attempting to answer this question, I consulted the Geodetic Survey maps that have adorned the back hall of my Sunapee abode for many years, and I found a chart of the big lake dated 1926, on which the point of land in question was labeled "Echo Point." I believe the spot was owned in that year by a family named Snyder, from Winchester, Mass., and since that time no one by the name of Cressey has been the owner. Thus the mystery still stands unsolved.

An ancient Indian tale remains, however. The legend of Echo Point tells of two braves of the Passaconaway Tribe who tired of their simple diet of potatoes in what later became Aroostook Country and struck out overland toward the southwest. They had heard tales of a great river that would carry them far to the warm south, where they could hope to find better food to fill their empty bellies.

As former members of an

encampment at Umbazookas Lake (just north of Moosehead), these two enterprising fellows felt ready to make their way on land or water, and thus the great stretch of Winnepesaukee made them only a temporary barrier. They swam across and continued on their way, guided by the summer sun, until they reached the shore of the Wild Goose Water and looked across the narrow channel toward what we call Great Isle.

Standing on that strange point of land, while discussing their next move, they suddenly realized that their unguarded voices were echoing back to them across the water. Feeling no fear of danger, they lifted their voices with greater volume and emphasis. Using one of their favorite cries: "Eet-chow!" they called again and again, and laughed together as the echoes returned to them.

But suddenly there was a change. The return call came unmistakably in a feminine voice, again and yet again. The two braves looked at each other and spoke their identical thoughts. "Food! She's inviting us to dinner!"

Without another thought, they plunged into the water and swam with lusty strokes to the island. There, on the shore, they were greeted by two lovely maidens of the Penacooks, who gave them food and shelter and urged them to remain.

The ancient legend comes to an ambiguous end when we learn that the girl's father suddenly appeared. As chief of the Penacooks, he passed sentence upon the two intruders: be put to death; or marry the chief's two daughters.

The ancient legend fails to tell even the names of the two braves. We can call them O'Brien and Callahan. And the name of that point of land, Echo Point, has stood for these many years.

ARGUS-CHAMPION
APPEARED THURSDAY AUGUST 22 1946

This response to “Winnowings” was originally drafted in 1996. It was never published. In 2009, the text was modified.

October 1, 1996

COPY

Albert Stein, Editor
Argus-Champion
86 Sunapee Street
PO Box 509
Newport NH 03773

Dear Mr. Stein:

The attached screed was created just for fun. I hope you enjoy reading the words and hearing my answer to Henry Fitts' recent *Winnowings* question: "Who was Cressey?" Please share this with Henry with the hope he will feel gratified someone really does hear his questions.

You may print any part(s) of this you wish, and may also use my name if you wish. I welcome your editing the text to fit a small column. Thus, to coin a pun, "edit at Will!"

I derived my first name from the admiration and love my mother placed on her adoptive family. Thus, there is only a social, not a genetic connection between me and that great family. With the detachment that comes from this sort of context, I have been blessed by, literally, boxes of artifacts, written orations, unpublished materials and books which I plan to use to do a more thorough research into that part of the Cressy family. I am certain that there were second cousins and great grand nephews, and what not. But from all I have learned, I am the last connection, through my mother's adoption, to that branch of the Cressy family which occupied Cressy Point.

My mom frequently told me that the original family name came from the French village "Crécy", where the first major battle of the Hundred Years War was fought in 1346. More locally, the Bradford Historical Society has much information about the Cressy family I am describing here, and the Newbury and Sunapee Historical Societies each have excellent material about the way people lived, travelled and vacationed there a century ago.

Let me know if I can help further. I thank you for motivating me to write these words, it was worth the time and effort - I had so much fun crafting them.

Sincerely,

(s)

Cressy Goodwin

A Reply to "Who Was Cressy?"

Winnowings

By Henry Fitts

Argus-Chainpion

86 Sunapee Street

PO Box 509

Newport NH 03773

The hydrangeas on Cressy Point are no longer there. We searched, my son and I, by walking down the central road, and again by circling the entire peninsula in a canoe, much as my maternal grandparents and their families did ninety years ago. Oh, by the way, Cressy was not a person, but a whole group of them! Well known in their day! Sadly forgotten now.

I marvel at how rapidly fame and familiarity escape with the passage of time! Even the name is now misspelled, no doubt because some cartographer unfamiliar with the local folklore was describing Lake Sunapee and its features a half a century ago and put it down that way just as some remote relatives used to spell it. My mother was adopted into the Cressy family in 1917. She outlived all the other members of her family. I was born after all my Cressy ancestors had left this world, and she passed their surname to me as my given name so I could hopefully remember and pass along some parts of that heritage.

As a child growing up in Concord, NH, I was surrounded by the history and legacy of the Cressy family. But like most children, was blind to the historical meanings of all my surroundings. I am grateful, however, to have had parents who took precautions to preserve that precious heritage for later discovery after they had gone. For example, there is that hydrangea bush in front of the house at 45 Thompson Street where I grew up in Concord. The same plant I had been told so long before had been dug up from among the many growing on Cressy Point and brought back to the Cressy property on Thompson Street. Muriel Gladys Cressy married my father in the front room of that house in 1936. The hydrangea bush was much younger then, and could be seen just beyond the front windows as the newlyweds looked out. That house, you see, had been inherited by my mother about a year before. But, I get ahead of myself. Let's go back to the beginning. Most tales are better told that way!

Frank Cressy and his wife Annette Ring Cressy were born in Bradford, New Hampshire. Their portraits hang today on the wall of the second floor dance hall in the Bradford Town Hall. Accompanying these are those of their son, Will, and his wife, Blanche Dayne. Frank owned and operated a local grain feed business quite successfully until he sold it to purchase a much larger operation in Concord. Frank and Annette moved from Bradford. Apparently sons Harry, and William remained in Bradford for a short while. There was a third sibling, May Florence Cressy, but little is recorded about this youngest child.

Annette (a remarkable woman of her time) purchased in her own name a lot and house, and the family moved in 1887. This is the same structure now located at 24 South Street in Concord. Harry worked in his father's business for some time, eventually taking it over. Feed and grain was distributed by horse and wagon to hardware stores in several towns around Concord. I suspect, but have no direct proof, that this company, over the years, was later sold to various owners until it became the Merrimack Farmers' Exchange, now the Blue Seal Feed Company, located in Bow, NH.

Harry was a member of the NH General Court, and I now have photographs of him joined by all the other members of the House of Representatives. Harry's brother, Will also worked for his father at

the grain mill for a while, but soon became involved full time in his passion: vaudeville acting and play writing.

About 1921, Harry and his wife Vinnie built their new home right behind the family homestead. This new house at 45 Thompson Street, was the building in which I grew up. It remains today much as it was when it was first built. (At least the last time I chanced a look!)

My mother's recollections to me of her childhood were of a warm and caring family, one that never wanted much for financial resources. The grain and feed business Frank owned and operated, and vaudeville actor Will's career provided sufficient income to make the family among the more successful in Concord at the time. But they were not opulent. They invested well, used good china, travelled extensively, but did not openly display their wealth. I believe my Mom told me once that it was the world traveler Will while on tour performing his one act plays, who originally brought the hydrangeas from some foreign land back to Cressy Point. Along with other exotic natural plants perhaps some of which still quietly grow today on that point of land.

In 1900, Will Cressy married his acting partner, Blanche Dayne, who also lives in Bradford, and the two became world renown as the traveling vaudeville team "Cressy and Dayne." They played all over the country and throughout Europe and Asia. Will's most famous character was "Cy Prime" whose stage antics made the acting troupe quite noteworthy. During his career, Will Cressy wrote "more one act plays than any other American author." After the start of the First World War, President Wilson appointed him as an ambassador of good will, and he travelled the country making speeches, selling war bonds and generally supporting the war effort. Records show he travelled to Europe several times to entertain the troops. Will Cressy, I am told, was the "Bob Hope of the First War." No one living today remembers Will, but his career and characterizations help explain the love the nation held for him in the early part of this Twentieth Century. On a tour in France, perhaps near the village of Crécy, he was overcome by mustard gas which seriously disabled his lungs. After retiring, Will and Blanche lived in New Hampshire for a short while, writing humorous pieces when the mood struck. The two finally moved to St. Petersburg Florida where the winter air was more accommodating to his respiratory disability. They lived out their lives quite comfortably I am told, and he was held in esteem as a "native son" by residents of both states. Neither group knowing much about the other! This was good, because the Civil War had already been fought!

One of the primary ways the family avoided the heat of the summer (and the suspected health problems caused by living in the city with all its "miasma of bad air") was to regularly visit the property on Lake Sunapee with its "clean air." I always believed the Cressy family owned the property on Cressy Point – but a verifying check of recorded deeds is clearly in order. I understand that at the time, this spit of land and the entire property from the main road to the water's edge all around it was a single lot. Also, as far as I know, the name "Cressy Point" was never a registered trade mark nor a certified title listed on any deed. It was just known locally that way at the time because this is where the Cressy family could be found. And, of course, knowing them as well as they did, the locals always spelled "Cressy" correctly!

I was told the family would plan days ahead and travel from Concord by train to Sunapee Village, then take the wagon or coach around the back road to the "cottage" where they would spend several weeks, perhaps months or more. When automobiles did appear, I was told they had a hard time running through the local "trails" and "wagon roads." After the turn of the century, the "cottage" must have been more of a seasonal home than a short-stay camp. I doubt the family rode up for just a day or just a weekend, given the social customs of that period, the time needed for traveling, and the trouble managing luggage. Several photos I found in an early Cressy family album shows the property in 1908, a year before my mother was born. Many wood and canvas canoes were on the

lake, and belles with their beaux all well-covered in buttoned bathing attire also are shown on the adjoining album pages.

Muriel described Vinnie (her mother) and Annette (grandmother) as being prolific writers. Each had authored several published articles, and they spent much time outdoors crafting words with pen and paper. Annette read the oration at the country's Centennial Celebration in Bradford - a "lengthy piece" she authored in 1876. My mother told me that as a child she would often travel with the family from Cressy Point to Mount Kearsarge, at what is now Winslow State Park, for family picnics. This adds credence to the notion that the Cressy family stayed at Lake Sunapee for prolonged periods during the summer months.

The cottage and Cressy Point property had apparently been sold off by the late 1920s after several members of the family had passed on. Grandparents Frank and Annette died first. Harry with Vinnie inherited the South Street Cressy property. Shortly after Harry's death, Vinnie sold off the house and land at 24 South Street, moving her remaining personal and family items into the 45 Thompson Street home where she lived for a while with Muriel. Included among these artifacts were two trunks of costumes used by Cressy and Dane; a statuette (Rogers style) of Cy Prime; handwritten manuscripts and the complete musical scores used to support most of their plays. Also was the family photograph album. I found all these and more when I cleaned out the house prior to its sale in 1993. The costumes have since been donated to the NH Historical Society.

Vinnie died in 1934. My mother was the last remaining legal heir of that branch of the Cressy family and she inherited the Thompson Street property. She later told me she wanted to see for herself some of the foreign places Will and the rest of the family had talked about so often. She took an extensive tour of Europe following Vinnie's death. My father, Harold T. Goodwin, moved to Concord from Dover in his childhood and lived around the corner on South Spring Street, (where the federal building now stands). He courted my mother in the mid 1930's. After her return from Europe she and my dad were married in 1936 in the front room overlooking that hydrangea. After I was born three years later, I was brought home to live in this house until I went to college.

As a child, I remember frequent swimming trips to Blodgett's Landing. I regret I was too young to take note of the reminiscing by my parents; too young to realize I was within site of the Cressy cottage and Cressy Point and without any understanding what these meant. Nearly every Father's Day (and frequently in between) through the 1940s and 1950s we would picnic on Mount Kearsarge. Again because of my youth, I was completely without understanding at that connection to the family heritage.

My mother died in June 1970, and her ashes were later scattered on Mount Kearsarge. For the next twenty plus years, my dad lived alone at 45 Thompson Street. In 1991, his health deteriorating, he moved to Connecticut to live with me and my wife Jeanne. Later, in 1993, Harold was forced to sell his home... the final true Cressy home.

On November 29, 1995 Harold died. His ashes joined my mother's on Mount Kearsarge this past Father's Day (1996).

By the way, neither my mother nor my father ever mentioned anything about Indians! After reading *Winnovings*, I ponder the influence at the time of the great romantic fervor abounding the land involving native Americans. There is a correlation perhaps with the then past-but-within-memory expansion of the West... One photo in the family album shows Buffalo Bill Cody riding down Concord's Main Street - In a Concord Coach! The public was interested in Wild Bull Hickok... Calamity Jane... and closer to New England, James Fennimore Cooper.... Hiawatha... All the stuff

of good novels and, perhaps, one act plays as well. Wouldn't it be marvelous if Will Cressy created the myth of echo point and planted it into the local culture at the time? Could this be why he owned a late Nineteenth Century Smithsonian Institute volume recording in great detail the culture and beliefs of the American Indians and how they lived - the book I found just three years ago? He probably didn't do such a mischievous deed, but such is the stuff of legends! And with his sense of humor, who knows!

Just a year ago, on October 1995, my son Severin joined me to explore Cressy Point. We found what I must believe to be the old Cressy cottage, which now shows its identity (by the name on the mailbox): "Cressnald," and its address: 304 Bowles Road, Newbury.

By canoe, (wood and canvas, of course!) we next approached this structure from the water and (in the driving rain) took several photos. The setting and general structure of the building are identical to the 1908 photograph I found. But, of course, landscaping and a new porch make for a good disguise!

That was when we learned by walking down the road there are no more hydrangea plants on Cressy Point. We also found several other buildings on the point not just the one "cottage." Subdivision? Progress?

Having come late to an understanding of the importance of what my parents had left behind, but unable to keep the plot of earth on which the Concord hydrangea was growing, I had fortunately taken a cutting from that second generation bush in front of 45 Thompson Street several years ago. This cutting is now a mature plant flourishing in my Connecticut front yard. That hydrangea will remain to me and my children as a living symbol of my "Cressy family" and of their heritage.

But for the living, life does go on. Growth and death. Renewal and relocating. Continuity through change. Yet, I believe change sometimes returns us to where we began. Maybe this is so, maybe not. Should any of the present owners of property on Cressy Point on Lake Sunapee wish, I am willing to provide a fourth generation cutting from that original Cressy hydrangea bush, allowing it to return back to the point where a century ago it first took root.

Someone could then add a photo to some album for an unborn grandchild to discover a century later, and be able to answer "Who was Cressy?" Spelled correctly, of course!

Cressy was not a person. He was a whole lot of them. All of whom are now gone.

--Cressy Goodwin
October, 1996