



This portrait of Will Cressy and Blanche Dayne remains hanging in the public meeting room on the second floor of the Bradford NH Town Hall.  
(As of March, 2009.)

Also hanging on the same wall are separate portraits of Will's parents, Frank Cressy and Annette Ring Cressy. A fourth portrait is also present – Annette's father, Edmond Ring.



Throughout the written history of “Cressy and Dayne” is the frequent mention of Marion Hodges. Marion is the cousin of Blanche Dayne. She appeared in many of their plays, assisted in the management of their stagecraft, and was a constant companion on many of their trips around the country and the world. This portrait was taken in 1901, a year after Will and Blanche were married. After Will's death in 1930, Marion returned to Hackensack, New Jersey where she remained for the rest of her life. Blanche retired from the theater and lived a quiet life in St. Petersburg, Florida until her death in 1944.



## WILL CRESSY DIES IN FLORIDA

People in this community were shocked to learn of the sudden death of William Cressy who passed away at his winter home in St. Petersburg, Fla., May 8. Mr. Cressy has been known in this section for many years having spent many summers at his summer home at Blodgett's. Last season Mr. Cressy sold "Weonitt" to Mr. Fred Snyder of Boston and had leased the cottage on North Main street owned by Victor Smith for the coming season. Through the courtesy of the Manchester Union we print herewith their account of the noted actor's death.

St. Petersburg, Fla., May 8.—(AP)—Will Cressy, 66, veteran actor, died early today at his home here. While entertaining soldiers near the front in the World War he suffered from a gas attack, which affected his heart.

Cressy had been on the stage most of his life and was in the original "Old Homestead" company with Denman Thompson. With his wife he had toured most of the large vaudeville circuits of the country.

Will Martin Cressy, probably the last of the famous interpreters of New England rural character on the stage, was born in Bradford, N. H., on Oct. 29, 1863, and was the son of Frank and Annette M. (Ring) Cressy. He was educated in the public schools and in Concord High school, and embarked on a commercial career, first as a clerk in a Concord store and afterward as a traveling salesman, but his real talent and liking were for the stage.

Like his father, he had gained a considerable local reputation in amateur performances, but his first professional engagement was with the Frost and Fanshawe company in 1889. Associated with him in this troupe was his brother, the late Harry R. Cressy, and also Miss Blanche Dayne, to whom he was subsequently married and who has shared with him the fame won by the "team" of Cressy and Dayne in this country and abroad.

### Married in 1900

Will Cressy and Blanche Dayne were married at Troy, N. Y., on Jan. 19, 1900.

After their stock company engagement, the two were together in the support of Denman Thompson in "The Old Homestead" and for six years Will Cressy played the part of "Cy Prime". His conception of the role elevated it to a high place among humorous character sketches and has ever since been the standard of comparison by which other actors assaying it are judged.

A conference and a resulting contract with representatives of the B. F. Keith interests started Cressy and Dayne upon the long and amazingly successful vaudeville career that ended only with Mr. Cressy's death.

The Cressy sketch, or one-act play, became famous, too, and of these tabloid dramas the author produced more than 150, besides writing a great number for other vaudeville teams. Once he attempted a full-length drama, a four-act play, but this was neither successful from the box office standpoint nor satisfactory to himself.

The only other important interruption of what he came to regard as his destined life work was when, for a few weeks, he played the leading part in "Lightnin'" in New York during the temporary absence of Blanche Dayne,

### Travels Took Them Far

Cressy and Dayne traveled much, not only in America but in Europe and Asia. Their wanderings carried them into England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, France, Belgium, Holland, the Hawaiian and the Philippine Islands, China and Japan. Wherever in these lands they found English-speaking audiences large enough, they presented their sketches of New Hampshire country life.

In 1918, Cressy and Dayne went to France with the Theatrical Overseas league, under Y. M. C. A. auspices, and did their part in making life more endurable for the American boys in the camps and the trenches. They went far up toward the front lines and gave several performances actually under shell fire. Mr. Cressy was slightly wounded by a shell fragment and was badly gassed. From this last, he never fully recovered.

For a time, both before and after the war, Mr. and Mrs. Cressy were assisted in their performances by Miss Marion Hodges, a niece of Mrs. Cressy, whose home is now in Hackensack, N. J., but who as a child lived in Concord. In later years, they had returned to the type of play in which they achieved their first success, with all the action and dialogue depending upon two characters.

### Summer Home in New Hampshire

The Cressys had a summer home at Blodgett's Landing, Lake Sunapee, and a winter residence at St. Petersburg, Fla. It had been their recent custom to confine their theatrical engagements to the fall and spring months, passing the winter in Florida and the summer in New Hampshire. They at one time owned a home in California but decided several years ago to transfer their interests to the East.

Mr. Cressy had numerous activities outside the routine of the theatre. For many years, he gave Saturday morning shows in all the towns he visited for the benefit of poor and orphaned children, cooperating in these with Rotary clubs.

Special performances for charity were commonplaces with Cressy and Dayne, one of these in particular, in Concord during the war, yielding a profit of several hundred dollars for the Red Cross.

He was active in all the war drives in 1917 and 1918, was one of the "Four Minute Men" at large appointed by President Wilson to make brief speeches in theatres and elsewhere, and he frequently told the story, with frank pride of 29 speeches made in two weeks in and around San Francisco. He sold Liberty bonds amounting to hundreds of thousands of dollars.

He printed in pamphlet form about 20 popular war poems and devoted the proceeds of their sale to the various war funds. More than \$5,000 was given for the purchase of tobacco for the soldiers.

Mr. Cressy wrote voluminously of his travels, contributing to newspapers, theatrical and other periodicals.

### An Author, Too

Two books bear his name. One, "The Hills o' Hampshire" was written in collaboration with James Clarence Harvey, and presented in story form the material earlier used in two or three of his dramatic sketches that were closely allied in these. In "Continuous Vaudeville",

Mr. Cressy collected a great number of anecdotes gathered in his fourneys about the world. Besides these, he wrote a series of "histories" of the states, humorous in style, of which thousands of copies were sold.

Much of his travel was by automobile and he drove one car more than 200,000 miles. With it, he crossed the American continent several times and made tours of the rural districts of Great Britain, Ireland, France, Belgium, Holland, China and Japan.

For several years Mr. Cressy was president of the Cottage Owners' association at Blodgett's Landing. He was active in Rotary and Kiwanis clubs and was both a Mason and an Elk. His religious affiliation was with the Christian Science church and in politics he was a Republican.

His only immediate survivor is his wife. His father died last summer while visiting his son at Blodgett's Landing.

The last appearance of Cressy and Dayne in Manchester was in December, 1928.



William Martin Cressy  
October 29, 1863 – May 3, 1930