

Clarence A. Crane

Born 11/28/1872 or 1875

Died 07/06/1931



Clarence Arthur Crane was born in Garrettsville, Ohio. His father was a producer of maple sugar. Clarence married Grace Edna Hart on June 1, 1898, after a courtship of only two months. The following summer, the couple's only child was born, poet Harold Hart Crane. The Cranes' marriage was a difficult one. Grace Crane suffered from mental illness, and the couple separated on several occasions. The marriage finally ended in divorce on April 7, 1917.

Despite his troubled personal life, Crane prospered as a businessman. He worked for his father until 1903, when he formed his own maple sugar business in Warren, Ohio. Crane's company quickly emerged as the largest producer of maple sugar in the world. In 1909, Crane sold the business, but he continued to work for the firm as a salesman in Cleveland, Ohio, for the next two years. In 1911, Crane began to produce chocolate candy in Cleveland. His company was known as the Queen Victoria Chocolate Company.

In 1912, Crane created a new type of candy. He realized that many people refused to buy chocolate during the summer months because chocolate melted easily in the heat. To produce the new candy, the chocolate maker used a machine that pharmacists used to manufacture round flat pills. He then punched a hole in the middle of the candy, making it resemble a life preserver. Crane called his new candy Life Savers. Initially, Life Savers only came in peppermint flavor.

Crane marketed the candy, known as Pep-O-Mint Life Savers, as a breath mint, claiming on the packaging that it was "For That Stormy Breath." Originally, Crane packaged the candy in cardboard tubes. The wrapper had a picture of a sailor tossing a young woman a life preserver.

In 1913, E.J. Noble, an advertising executive from New York, approached Crane with a new promotional campaign for Life Savers. Crane rejected the proposal but decided to sell the rights to Noble for \$2,900. The new producers wrapped Life Savers in foil tubes to better preserve the candy. They also marketed the candy to saloon owners, hoping that customers would use Life Savers to improve their breath after drinking and smoking in the bars. Once saloon owners began selling the candy, Life Savers soared in popularity and Mr. Noble made millions on his \$2,900 investment.

Crane remained involved in the candy business for the remainder of his life, although he no longer manufactured Life Savers after 1913. He formed the Crane Chocolate Company in 1916. While the company was headquartered in Cleveland, by 1921, the firm had sales offices in New York City, New York, and Kansas City, Missouri.

In 1927, Clarence Crane purchased two cottages in Chagrin Falls. He spent \$10,000 on the two cottages and built a two story, 10,000 square foot addition that connected the 2 cottages. He painted the combined buildings a bright yellow and added gardens and fountains and opened business as a restaurant called 'Crane's Canary Cottage'. The restaurant served local meat and produce. In 1930, Crane married Bessie Meachem, the restaurant hostess. The cottage served as the out-of-city home for the Cranes, who stayed in private rooms upstairs. The employees lived in the north end of the building without heat or insulation, but holes cut in the floor provided warmth from the kitchen below. With impressive fireplaces, good food and a sophisticated atmosphere, the restaurant gained a national reputation. Will Rogers and Duncan Hines ate there, Charles Lindbergh had a reception and stayed in one of the guest rooms, and John D. Rockefeller had his own table.



Clarence Crane in front of Canary Cottage 1927

The cottage eventually closed down during WWII. The building has been used for many commercial endeavors since and is now home of the Inn of Chagrin Falls.

Clarence Crane died on July 6, 1931. He is buried in Park Cemetery in Garrettsville, Ohio



Sitting room, Crane's Canary Cottage, Route 422 Chagrin Falls Village Ohio



Exterior of Crane's Canary Cottage,



The Cottage today as Game Keeper's Tavern (left, closed in 2017,) and the Inn of Chagrin Falls (right.)