Clarkson Crane papers

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2020
Descriptive Summary

Title: Clarkson Crane papers
Dates: ca. 1894-1992
Collection Number: 1997-46
Creator/Collector: Crane, Clarkson, 1894-1971
Extent: 2 linear feet (1 carton, 3 boxes)
Repository: GLBT Historical Society
San Francisco, California 94103
Abstract: The bulk of the Clarkson Crane papers consist of published and unpublished novels, short stories and other writings by Crane who was a lecturer in English literature at the University of California Extension School.
Language of Material: English

Access
The collection is open for research. Funding for processing this collection was provided by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC).

Publication Rights
Copyright to published and unpublished materials has been transferred to the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.

Preferred Citation
Clarkson Crane papers . GLBT Historical Society

Acquisition Information
Gift of Clyde Evans on April 10, 1998 (in two installments, 2 deeds).

Biography/Administrative History
Clarkson Crane (1894-1971) was a writer and Lecturer in English Literature at the University of California Extension School. He was born in Chicago on September 20, 1894, the only child of Harold Osland Crane and Elizabeth Clarkson Crane. His parents were from well-to-do Chicago families, and Clarkson was raised in the privileged world of Chicago’s Near North Side. He attended the Chicago Latin School until his family moved to the Marysville, California area around 1910. Crane graduated from the Thacher School in Ojai, California the following year. It had always been assumed Clarkson would attend one of the Ivy League universities, but a financial reversal that severely affected the family fortune prevented him from obtaining that goal. He instead enrolled in school at the University of California, Berkeley, from which he was graduated in 1916. While at Berkeley he contributed material to the campus literary publication, The Occident, and worked on the campus humor publication, The Pelican, and the yearbook Blue and Gold. In 1917, after a year of writing, Crane joined the United States Army along with several Berkeley friends. He became an ambulance driver during the war, and took part in the campaigns of Aisne and Champagne in 1918, and was later given the Croix de Guerre Citation for bravery under fire. He was honorably discharged from the Army at the Presidio in San Francisco in 1919. Over the next several years Crane continued to write, at his uncle's home in Carmel, in San Francisco, and in New York. During this period he had several stories published in The Smart Set and The Dial. In an extended visit to Paris in the mid-1920s, Crane wrote his first, and most successful novel, The Western Shore. Returning to San Francisco in 1926, he became a Lecturer in English Literature, and in English Grammar, at the University of California Extension School, and was a night reference librarian at the Mechanics Library in San Francisco. In the same year, Crane met a young native Californian, Clyde Evans, through a mutual friend. A romance ensued that turned into a lifelong relationship. During this period he also met a young lesbian poet named Elsa Gidlow. Elsa and her companion Tommy (Violet Henry-Anderson) formed a lasting friendship with Crane and Evans. Both lived for a time on Joice Street above San Francisco’s Chinatown, and Clarkson’s letters to Gidlow (see the Elsa Gidlow Papers, 1991-16) hint at the strength of this relationship, based in part on their common interest in writing. Crane wrote nine novels, three of which were published in his lifetime: The Western Shore (1925), Mother and Son (1946), and Naomi Martin (1947). Mother and Son was translated into French and published as Mère et Fils by Éditions Du Dauphin in 1948. A paperback edition of Naomi Martin was published as Frisco Gal by Novel Library in 1949. Crane also published over a dozen stories between 1920 and 1961, and wrote at least a dozen more. Mr. Evans arranged for reprinting of The Western Shore in 1974.

Scope and Content of Collection
The bulk of the Clarkson Crane papers consist of published and unpublished novels, short stories and other writings by Crane who was a lecturer in English literature at the University of California Extension School. Clarkson Crane (1894-1971) published three novels and over a dozen stories during his lifetime. His most successful work was “The Western Shore,”
published in 1925. The collection includes editions of all his published novels, as well as one of “Last Adventure,” which Crane translated from the original journal of Albert Bernard de Russailh. Crane and his companion, Clyde Evans, were together for 47 years. The collection also contains correspondence, including from Crane to Evans, between Crane and his parents and with publishers; materials related to their lifelong friend, the lesbian poet Elsa Gidlow; personalia; and photographs of Clarkson, Evans and their friends and family. The photographs date back to the 19th Century but the bulk of the materials are from 1924-1974.

**Indexing Terms**

- Literature.
- Gay couples--California--San Francisco.
- Gidlow, Elsa, 1898-1986

Clarkson Crane Container List