

'A gorgeous property'



PHOTOS BY STEPHANIE ZOLLSHAN — THE BERKSHIRE EAGLE

The historic 19th century Crane Model Farm, one of many stately residences built in Dalton by the family who founded Crane Currency, is being renovated for use as a local company's headquarters.

New use found for historic former residence

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DALTON — Berkshire Money Management recently paid \$1 million for Crane's historic and stately Model Farm Mansion on Main Street and is investing \$780,000 in a renovation to make it the company's new headquarters.

"It is just an incredible, gorgeous piece of property," said Allen Harris, CEO and chief investment officer of Berkshire Money Management, which monitors and manages investment portfolios.

The 15-room, two-story main house, at 12,424 square feet, sits on a 28.5-acre parcel.

Berkshire Money Management of Pittsfield, which has been looking to expand, hopes to move its operations into Model Farm by the summer, according to Allen.

"We're really tight on space," Harris said.

Crane Currency, formerly known as Crane & Co., has been selling local properties that it seldom uses.

Model Farm was built in 1898, according to an appraisal of the home that was done for BMM, by Frederick G. Crane Sr., who was president of what was then known as Crane & Co. in 1922 when the paper company was first incorporated. The grounds were designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, who laid out New York City's Central Park. Model Farm is located near Sugar



The room inside Crane Model Farm as served as both a living space and a conference area since the structure was built over 100 years ago.

Hill, which former Governor and U.S. President W. Murray Crane built in 1906. These two structures are among several large residences that belonged to the Crane family,

of Main Street that is located between the Pittsfield town line and the center of Dalton. One reason the western end of town is known as Craneville is because so many Crane family members built their homes on a section

of Main Street that is located between the Pittsfield town line and the center of Dalton.

"Each of the Cranes built a house

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along that way," said local historian and author Carole Owens of Stockbridge. "I think the significance of these houses is tied to the significance of the rise of the Crane family.

"That's a marvelous story," she said. "Here we are in this tiny little local town in the corner of Massachusetts and (company founder) Zenas Crane goes from nothing to building one of the largest paper businesses anywhere. These houses, each one of them, is the symbol of the success of this little Massachusetts family, God bless them."

Retired Crane Co. executive Timothy Crane of Windsor, Frederick G. Crane Sr.'s grandson, remembers visiting Model Farm as a child. He believes the home was called Model Farm due to the interests that his great-grandfather and grandfather, Frederick G. Crane Jr., followed. Frederick G. Crane Jr. was a noted conservationist.

"It was built in the era when my grandfather and great grandfather were gentleman farmers," Timothy Crane said.

More recently, the Dalton Civics Art Committee has sponsored a Christmas event at Model Farm.

Although Frederick Crane Sr. was a third-generation member of the family that founded Crane & Co., the company itself has only owned the property for 24 years.

Frederick Crane Sr. died in 1923, but his son, Frederick G. Crane Jr. left the property to Berkshire Medical Center. The property was deeded to BMC in December 1980, two years after Frederick Crane Jr.'s death, but it didn't change hands until 1990, when Crane's widow, Thekla W. Crane, moved from the mansion into a nursing home. She died in 1991.

BMC used Model Farm as a conference and education-



STEPHANIE ZOLLSHAN — THE BERKSHIRE EAGLE

Berkshire Money Management is renovating the inside of Crane Model Farm in Dalton for use as its new headquarters.

Crane Model Farm Key facts about one of Dalton's most historic buildings*:

Year built: 1898

Builder: Frederick G. Crane Sr.

al center before selling it to Crane & Co. for \$550,000 in May 1993.

Crane renovated the main house for use as a training and conference center, added a cafeteria, an elevator and stairs, and converted part of the second floor into an executive apartment. But Crane only used the property sparingly for conferences and functions.

Crane, which has supplied currency paper to the U.S. government since 1879, has undergone a transformation in recent years, selling both its technical materials and stationary divisions in order to concentrate on its more lucrative currency operations. The company has

also been selling underutilized properties that it owns in the Berkshires, including the Stationary Factory on Flansburg Avenue, and a 41-acre parcel of undeveloped land between High and Pleasant Streets that was purchased by the town.

The company's decision to sell Model Farm is part of this strategy.

Address: 161 Main St.

Floors: 2

Rooms: 15

Area: 12,424 square feet.

Grounds: Designed by Frederick Law Olmsted

"From our perspective, it's a surplus property and we weren't using it effectively," said Crane spokesman Craig Conrad. "We decided to sell it as we have with other properties that we're not using for business."

Berkshire Money Management, which Harris founded in 2001, moved to its current location at 392 Mer-

Owners: Frederick Crane Sr. & Jr., Berkshire Medical Center, Crane Currency, Berkshire Money Management.

***Sources:** BMM home appraisal; Berkshire Eagle files; local historians.

rill Road in Pittsfield in 2010. The firm, which has eight employees, has been expanding its regional investment operations and needs space to hire more employees to keep up with the demand, Harris said.

"What we need to do is hire more people for the business development side," Harris said. "The servicing

side is doing pretty well."

BMM's current office, which the company also renovated, is a two-story commercial building on less than an acre and 2,200 square feet of office space, Harris said. It is currently for sale.

BMM plans on utilizing all of the space in the mansion except for the apartment.

The firm is currently planning on hiring two additional employees.

"Hopefully, we'd like to double the staff within a few years," Harris said. "That would be nice."

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