

Story #1

The Panther Hunt

November 24, 1881

Thanksgiving day a young man living with Paul Crowell in Barnard, took his gun and went out to hunt partridges. A light snow had fallen the night previous and the tracks of any animals as well as that of a man could very plainly be seen. He had not gone far on the hillside when he discovered tracks of unusual size. They were round and shaped like that of a cat, but enormously large. He followed them up for about half a mile and came at once upon an immense great Panther! Being startled and without any preparation for so formidable a creature, he hurried back and went to the house of Mr. Alexander Crowell's, a nephew of Paul Crowell's and told his story. Mr. Crowell being an old hunter immediately took his gun, loaded it heavily with shot, and with one of his boys started in pursuit.

They took the track near where the young man left it and followed it to the eastern part of the old Aiken place, a little north of Mr. Crowell's.

Here he was again found in the edge of some woods which are in sight of the houses. When discovered he was crouched on his belly and forepaws – lashing his tail and ready for a spring. There were low bushes in the way – some low spruces – and as Mr. Crowell had nothing but a shotgun and knew the charge would not amount to much except at close range – he lay down on his belly and crawled under them and towards the animal. When within about twenty feet – he fired – the head being towards him – and broke his foreleg. He bounded a little, flew at the dog which was worrying him and then fell over on one side. Other parties coming up he took a rifle and put a bullet through his head and finished. Mr. Crowell says he was tracked from the Pomfret poor farm – passed near the Lime pond in Barnard to the place he was first discovered. He thinks he has been prowling round the hills west of Barnard Village for some time, as a good many sheep have been killed in that region. He does not think he has been seen until the day he was killed, but has been frequently heard in the night – giving a loud wailing cry not unlike a cat, only louder. Where he came from is a matter of a good deal of uncertainty. Probably from some section north and west of where he was killed.

From the western part of Barnard ... on toward Stony Brook, Sherburne and Killington, is an almost unbroken line of forest he could easily traverse in the night without being discovered.

The size was enormous. He stood about three feet high – measured 6 ft., 10 inches from nose to tip of tail and weighed 182½ lbs.

The Aiken Stand is ten miles from Woodstock on the old turnpike between Woodstock and Royalton.

C. Dana

The foregoing, in all its chief particulars, was related to the undersigned the day after it occurred. The statement after being written, was submitted to Mr. Alexander Crowell and pronounced all right.

C. Dana