

CORNET'S CHRONICLE

PARSONS FAMILY ASSOCIATION, INC.

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Deanna Parsons-Simons, Editor

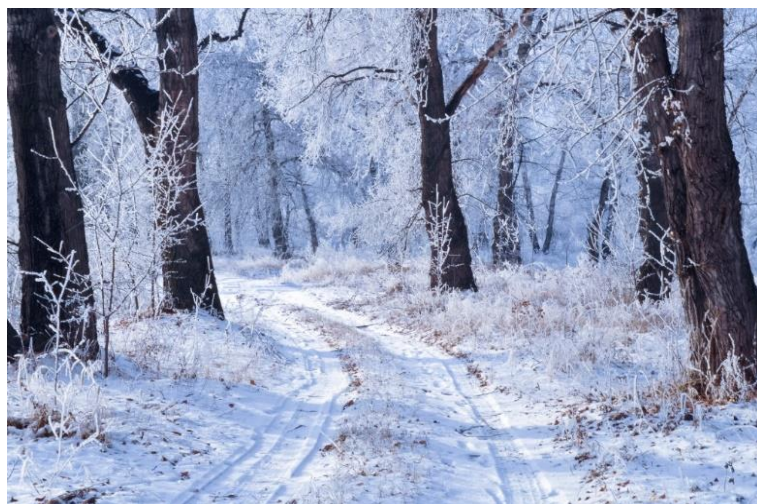
Spring 2017

Kim Graham, Co-Writer/Editor

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

Greetings Cousins!

This winter has brought lots of changes to the world, as well as to the Parsons Family Association (PFA). Our organization has lost two very dear members of our family who passed within a month of each other: *Hanne Parsons and John Armstrong*. They were both strong longtime supporters who were very active in the organization and will be dearly missed. You can see more details on the website "Parsons Memorial" section (page 3).



Other changes include the resignation of senior PFA officer James E. Parsons from his lengthy position as third vice-president. Additionally, Karen V. Williams, our website assistant, is stepping down from her official duties. Good News: This is an opportunity for our members (*that means you*) to become involved in these important areas. Anyone hungry to follow the path of many Parsons' before should consider filling either of these two officer appointments.

All positions in the PFA are volunteer posts and should be viewed as a service to keep all things Parsons viable and sacred. We highly encourage all officers to attend the yearly reunions as well as the annual Director's meetings, which are normally one evening apart, traditionally in late July. If you are interested, you may send me a formal bid of consideration for the nomination, or simply attend our next reunion.

This year our PFA reunion will be held at the Historical Northampton grounds in Northampton, MA on July 22, 2017. Please review the reunion section of this Chronicle for your reservation information. We look forward to seeing you in July!

Deanna Parsons Simons
President, Parsons Family Association
Deanna.simons@cornell.edu

BREAKING NEWS:

WEBSITE ADMINISTRATOR NEEDED: *Contact Deanna if interested!*

Tornado in Conway:

Well! We had a tornado in Conway on February, 25, 2017 around 6:30 pm. It was like a freight train coming at you - oh so loud and scary too! My house, which my grandfather, Howard Parsons helped build from 1930 to 1932 for my grandmother "Margaret Parsons," and the family farmhouse on Parsons Road narrowly missed being severely damaged. The now massive pine trees my grandfather planted in 1932, missed hitting the houses several times. If the wind was going the other way -- the house would have been crushed. I believe that there were "MANY" angels looking out for us that evening. Below is a link if you want to check *it out*.



http://www.masslive.com/weather/index.ssf/2017/02/tornado_touched_down_with_a_ve.html

"Tornado hits several Western Massachusetts towns: An EF1 tornado touched down in Western Massachusetts Saturday, briefly hitting Goshen before tearing a multi-mile path through Conway... It hit Conway first on Main Poland Road in the western part of Conway. A continuous path of damage is visible into downtown Conway. The path width in Conway varied from 50 yards in western Conway to 200 yards near the town hall... A state of emergency was declared in Conway at 9 p.m. Saturday, and the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency was called to assist with the recovery.

"February tornado a first in recorded history. Meteorologists with the National Weather Service called the tornado "a highly unusual occurrence." It is the first recorded tornado in the month of February since official tornado statistics began being kept in 1950."

TOWN OF CONWAY HISTORIAN INFORMATION REQUEST: *We are still looking for this info!*

On Nov 8, 2016 17:46, "Lee Whitcomb" <assessors@townofconway.com> wrote: To Kim Graham for the Parsons Family newsletter: *Conway's 250th celebration will be the weekend of June 16-18, 2017! As part of that event, the Conway Historical Commission is preparing an update of the town history. When the Town Hall burned in July 1950, the cannon and old town hearse and was dragged from the basement and Mr. Parsons took it up to store "temporarily" in his barn on the Parsons Farm. Sadly, that barn burned a few years later. Does anyone have any old newspaper clippings or information about that fire that destroyed the Parsons barn? They might tell what was lost in the fire and that could answer a question about the old hearse and cannon. Any interesting pictures or stories would be much appreciated – we are glad to scan and return them to you. You can contact the CHC at chistoricalc@tutamail.com. Hope to hear from you!*

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE AND REQUEST FOR ARTICLES / STORIES:

We need to set up a membership committee to increase our membership base. I have spoken to Deanna and we will address this issue at the next board meeting. Any ideas are welcome and if you'd like to be on this committee, please contact Deanna.

PFA is actively looking for interesting genealogic stories or articles (past and present) to be published in the Parsons Profile or Historic Profile sections of the newsletter. Please contact Kim Graham to get your article, history, or obituaries published.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 413-475-2499 or kbgbandits@gmail.com or kim_graham@comcastspectacor.com.

Being a Parsons

Written by James E. Parsons

"Being a Parsons" means being a productive member of society."

From the time I was a teenager to today, "Being a Parsons" was important as something that was to be honored. "Being a Parsons" was not only important to me but to my dad and to his dad and one might conjecture that this would apply to all the other dads back to the 1500's.

Having a known descendantcy and the values demonstrated by each of the generations became an objective of this descendant and successfully to my descendants. Living up to standards established by our descendants are worthy objectives not only for "Being a Parsons" today but to all the families of the world.

As a child, I remember attending a Parsons Family Association meeting held at Ross Park (the fifth oldest zoo in the United States) in Binghamton, New York on or about 1947. Many years passed before I attended another PFA meeting, but my last first wife and I attended several meetings, including the 50th held at the Hotel Northampton, Northampton, MA at which meeting the Hartt Chorus from the University of Harford performed. Now, the 100th anniversary is fast approaching and I hope that I am able to attend.



Left to right: James & Hanne Parsons, Joan & Rymn Parsons, Trisa & Deanna Parsons

Editor's Note: Jim Parsons has been an active member of the Parsons Family Association for over 40 years. He has held the position of 3rd Vice President for the majority of that time period and is proud to be a 10th generation descendant of Cornet Joseph Parsons. At the young age of 85, Jim has handed the board his resignation letter in December, 2016. Hint: There will an opening for his position. We would like to thank Jim for his contribution to the Spring Chronicle,

PARSONS MEMORIALS:



Hanne H. (Shumaker) Parsons, 79, went to be with our Lord on December 18, 2016. She is survived by husband James E. Parsons; children, Heidi (Paul) Mikeska, Deanna Simons, Alan Shumaker, Trisa Palacio, Andrew (Beth) Shumaker, Rymn (Joan) Parsons; Nancy (John) Armstrong. Hanne's great adventure began as a young woman who on her own left her home in Denmark to make a life in the US without a command of English and a limited support system. She was an inspiration for family life and a marvelous cook. Hanne was a believer in all her children who learned many life lessons from her strength and compassion. Through her life, she treated everyone with the same respect and held all to the same standards to which she lived. In lieu of flowers, the family would ask a donation be made to Sean's Standing Strong Mem. Fund (seanstandingstrong.org) or Vestal United Methodist Church (328 Main Street, Vestal, NY).

- See more at:

<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/pressconnects/obituary.aspx?n=hanne-h-parsons-shumaker&pid=183142671&fhid=16171#sthash.Z0ccrWrl.dpuf>



John Tiffany Armstrong, 82, of North Kingstown, Rhode Island, passed away on January 9, 2017. He is survived by his loving wife of 58 years Nancy (Parsons) Armstrong and his daughters MAJ Jennifer J. Armstrong, USA, Ret. (SFC L. Wayne Sparks, USA, Ret.) and Lauren D. Armstrong, Esq.; He will be sadly missed. Born in Bainbridge, NY John was the son of the late John and Mae (Tryon) Armstrong. He served as a technical rep. for General Electric for 13 years taking him to Japan, Thailand, and returning to the United States settling in Rhode Island for the past 52 years. He was a supervisor at the Providence Gas Company until his retirement in 2000. John was a North Kingstown Town Councilman, member of Habitat for Humanity board, an active member of the First Baptist Church in Wickford, founding member of the South County Squares. At the age of 50 he started to play the saxophone and has been a member of the North Kingstown Lafayette Band and the ROMPS (Retired Musicians Playing Swing), and the host of the classical music program, Divertimento, on the radio station WRIU. In lieu of flowers, gifts in his memory to The First Baptist Church in Wickford, 44 Main Street, Wickford, RI 02852 or to the charity of your choice will be appreciated. See more at:

http://www.independentri.com/new_obituaries/article_8ab893a2-d848-11e6-9590-337ad8208231.html

Historic Northampton Parsons Board Member Report by Kim Graham:

As an acting member of the Historic Northampton Board representing the Parsons Family Association, I am reporting the following event that occurred at the Damon Housework regarding our ancestor Mary Bliss Parsons. The exhibit was very interesting and opened ones senses to a different point of view. A very intriguing perspective in my opinion! Thank you Ms. Susan Montgomery for taking the time to delve into a Parsons's ancestor.

***The Great She-Goat:
Mary Bliss Parsons, 2016.
(Watercolor and Mixed Media, 24" x 36")
By Susan Montgomery***

Those of you Parsons' descendants scattered across the planet might have missed the autumn art exhibit at Historic Northampton of mixed media representations of our ancestor, Mary Bliss Parsons by artist Susan Montgomery. You can still visit and enjoy and marvel at:

<http://www.susanmontgomeryart.com/mary-bliss-parsons-accused-wit/>

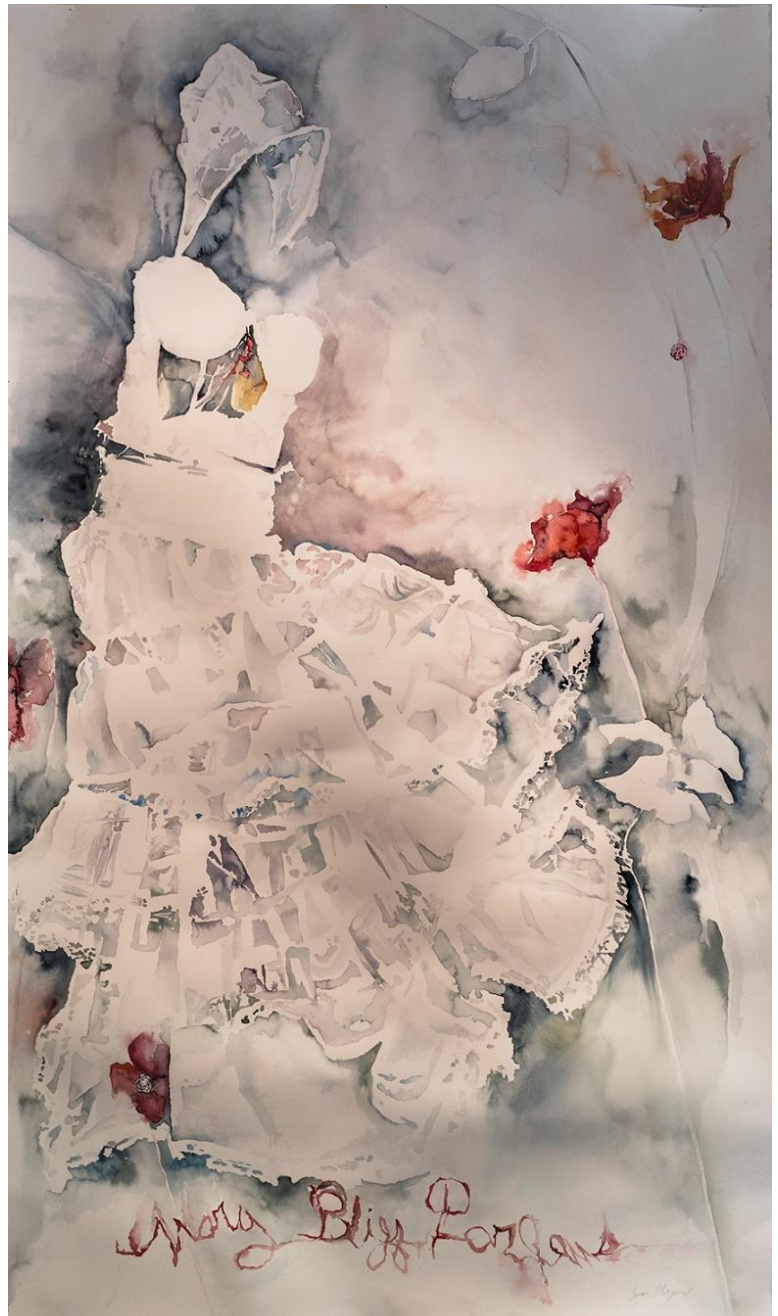
Artist Susan Montgomery's painting of Mary Bliss Parsons portrays some of the elements of the accusations against her. I asked Susan why MBP is a goat. Susan said because Mary was a leader, not a sheep.

The painting makes me think about how women represent mystery and desire that makes some people see us as faceless representations of fears.

Susan Montgomery is an artist residing in Western Massachusetts.

Her paintings, drawings, sculpture and prints are about stories that involve women's voices. Feel free to explore this site to learn more about her work or contact her directly.

For more information about the artist and her work visit: susanmontgomeryart.com



**Mary Bliss Parsons:
Accused Witch of Northampton
By Susan Montgomery**

In 17th Century New England, a witch was thought to be (usually) a woman who used her powers to affect good and evil, even making pacts with the devil. Some early Puritans found Mary Bliss Parsons, a member of one of the first families in 17th century Northampton, problematic. Indeed, Mary was a perfect blueprint for an early New England witch: a woman of middle-age and married to a successful man, a mother of 11 children most of whom reached adulthood, she was smart, savvy with her money, and known to speak her mind. Gossipers called her a witch and accused her of misdeeds toward animals and people. She was eventually brought to trial for witchcraft; for more details of this fascinating story, see <http://www.historic-northampton.org/highlights/parsonstrial.html>.

In her exhibition **Mary Bliss Parsons: Accused Witch of Northampton**, Susan Montgomery explores the confusing and contradictory rumors and accusations against Mary Bliss Parsons. The presentation of women in history, culture and our communal memory has always been a subject for Montgomery, who has worked with such figures in her art as Pope Joan, Marie Curie, The Radium Girls, Hester Prynne, and the Daughters of Saint Crispin among other female heroes.

Montgomery's selection of watercolor paintings are complemented by a sculpture installation and linocut print. Interspersed in the exhibition is an anvil from the permanent collection and copies of historical documents recording accusations by early Northampton town settlers against Mary.

The most meaningful historical connection to this exhibit is the land on which the museum itself sits: this was once the Parsons family estate. Her home, long razed, was a couple hundred yards from Montgomery's exhibition.

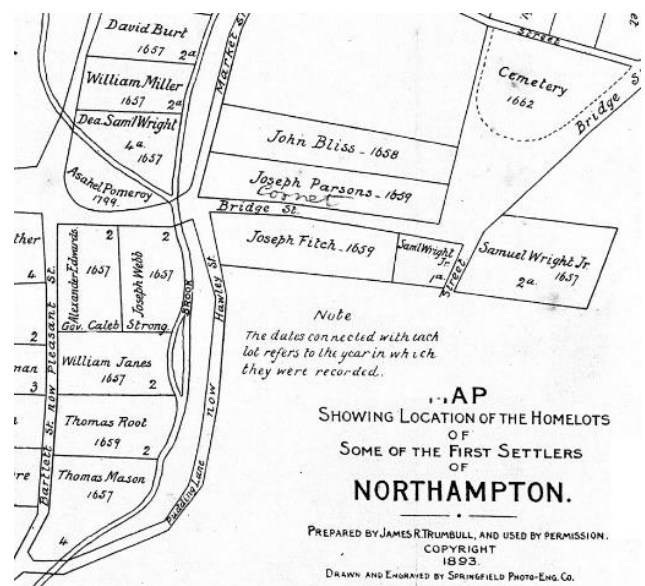
Susan Montgomery is an artist who lives and works in Easthampton, Massachusetts and teaches studio art and Art History at Westfield State University and Mount Wachusett Community College. She has been awarded several grants including The Sustainable Arts Foundation, Blanche E. Colman, and most recently a Northampton Arts Lottery grant for this exhibition.

For more information about the artist and her work visit: susanmontgomeryart.com



Photos from Susan Montgomery's webpage.

Below: 1893 map showing the location of the Mary Bliss Parsons homelot.
(From the collection of Historic Northampton)



PARSONS HISTORIC PROFILE:

The Life and Times of Willis Armstrong Parsons

...as told by his Great Granddaughter, Nancy "Camille" Cole



My Great Grandfather, Willis Armstrong Parsons, descends from the eldest son of Cornet Joseph Parsons and Mary Bliss Parsons—Joseph Parsons. My Parsons' lineage goes like this: Cornet Joseph, Esq. Joseph, Josiah, Isaac, Elias, Maurice, Edwin, Willis, Grace Parsons Cole (my grandmother), and Peter Cole (my father).

Maurice, my great, great, great grandfather, was born on November 19, 1797, at Chesterfield, Mass., and married Amanda Clark in 1819. He had 11 children, my great, great grandfather, Edwin, the eldest. Edwin, also born in Chesterfield, left Massachusetts for New York as a young man where he would spend the rest of his life in Central New York. In September 1846 he married a bright and beautiful young woman from Belle Isle who had graduated from finishing school at Cazenovia College, unusual for a woman of the times. Some of the following account is excerpted from my narrative non-fiction book on the life of my Great Aunt Marion Parsons, *The Brass Bell*.

The youngest son of Edwin Clark Parsons and Julia Armstrong Parsons' six children, my great grandfather, Willis Parsons, grew up along the Genesee Turnpike on the western edge of Syracuse, New York. All of Edwin and Julia's children—Willis, Mahlon, Francis, Charles H., Mary Amelia, and Amanda—were raised to be hard-working, honest, and thoughtful of others. When they came of age, most stayed along the Turnpike, bought farms or took over farms established by earlier generations, and set to living the life their parents had modeled for them. Some married childhood friends. Parsons married Jeromes, and Jeromes married Geddes's and Schuylers; Parsons and Jeromes married Terrys, and back and forth and so on and so on. Family names were repeated from generation to generation. In the small one-room schoolhouse, roll call was a series of reiterations of Marthas, Jameses, Edwins, Josephs, Charleses, and Johns. Surnames were often used as first names and middle names. One might imagine that even the family was sometimes confused by all the repeating names.

For Willis and his siblings and his cousins it was the best of childhoods. Aunts and uncles and cousins lived and farmed up and down the Turnpike. There were cow barns and pastures, tenant houses, vegetable gardens; crops and orchards. Giant oak trees provided shelter from the sun for livestock, keeping them cool in the summer and warm in the winter.

The children all worked on the farm—helped with daily chores. A gang of Parsons youngsters could almost always be spotted walking up and down the side of the road on a summer's afternoon. Girls went from household to household, helping with harvest undertakings, making jam, canning, or washing spring wool to be used for new school clothes. Every house had a treadle sewing machine, looms, and butter churns.

The boys fancied themselves as their fathers' right hand men—working in the barns, driving farm wagons pulled by a team of horses and filled with produce or newly-baled hay. When they played, they played hard—sometimes down in the swamp, sometimes along the stream flowing through the meadow across the road from the cow pasture.

Seemingly endless pasturelands provided a vast territory for games of hide and seek, soldier, riding the range, or crossing the prairies in covered wagons. No one held back when it was time to swing on the rope in the hayloft or climb one of the oak trees at the top of the hill out behind the Parsons' farm.

When Willis was a boy, Grandma Julia's house brimmed with family: Mother and Papa, children of all ages, farmhands, and cousins who time and again came to live in the brick farm house with the extended family.

Schooling took place in Mother Julia's parlour when Willis was young enough to be learning his A, B, C's—later on, when the eldest, Mahlon was grown and had

moved away to Michigan to start a family and a new life, Willis trudged through deep snow and frigid wind to a one room

schoolhouse where he and the others spent the day on hard wooden benches or behind small wooden desks dotted with inkwells. At the Terry Road School they wrote with quill pens, then fountain pens, or on chalk slates; they all learned together in one big room.



Bringing in the hay...

The Terry Road schoolhouse was just down the road from the Parsons' farmhouse. After school, if there were no chores, he and his brother Charles and his sister Mary would explore the barn, a mysterious place—dark corners, and musty odors of leather, grease, straw, and saddle soap. There were buggies and wagons to climb on; sometimes the children pretended they were driving the team to market. Farm implements and machinery could be examined but not touched.

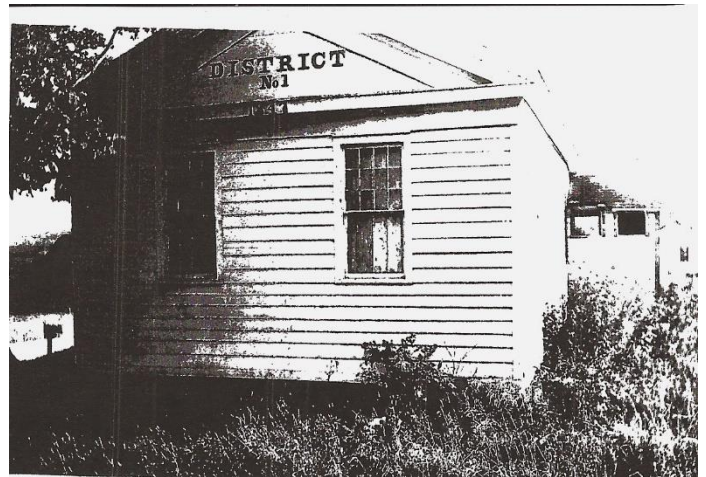
On special occasions in the dead of winter, they were taken on sleigh rides. The big sled was pulled by a large white horse, Willis recalled to his daughters' years later. "They'd pull us in the sled at night," he recalled to his youngest, Martha, as he tucked her in one winter night. "Then we'd meet up in Mother's kitchen for hot cocoa—we ate her molasses cookies. We enjoyed the sleigh rides at night. Sometimes the teacher would go with us and we'd sing songs on the back of the sleigh." Young Martha would be enraptured by Papa's stories, and couldn't imagine then that she, too, would enjoy sleigh rides in the dark of night one day.

At times, these endless winters may have felt much like Charles Dicken's winter of despair. And as in all Dicken's tales, there is a spring of hope. In the countryside on the west end of Syracuse, spring was a glorious time. Robins returned to nest in towering and lush maple trees where buds popped out all at once one morning in June. Winter would be all but forgotten and the children at Terry Road School could see there was much to look forward to, summer was upon them, a season of light and hope and all that was good in the world.

The schoolhouse had been donated by Cousin Guy Terry, whose daughter Alice, or Allie, would later marry Willis's older brother, Charles H. Parsons. The schoolhouse sat on a little hill at the front of the Terry Farm, and was covered with white clapboard siding; tall lead glass windows let rays of sunlight wash over the children's faces as they sat side-by-side on the long benches where they wrote their lessons with slates and chalk.

There was an outhouse out back. During the frigid Central New York winters, the classroom was heated with a box stove that had to be fed all day long. A breezeway-like structure held stacks of firewood. In the depths of winter, snowdrifts covered the wagon roads and farm roads, and the ringing of the brass bell could be heard for miles, no cushion of leafy orchards at that time to muffle the clang. The orchards would come later when, as an adult, Willis planted acres and acres of apple, cherry, and peach trees—his skills as a fruit grower so renowned, he would one day be the long-time president of the New York State Fruit Growers Association.

By the late 1800s, by the time Willis was a grown man with a family and two farms of his own, the old Genesee Turnpike was lined with more family farms—many related by blood or marriage, or both. Where now there is a hectic four-lane highway strewn with strip malls, gas stations, and convenience stores, there were orchards, fields, streams, and swamps. All along the Syracuse and Elbridge Plank Road (most called it the Genesee Turnpike),¹ carefully turned and sown patches of pastureland provided food for dairy cows—fresh grasses in the summer, and wheat and corn silage in the winter. If you took a summer drive in your horse drawn buggy, maple, elm, and oak trees lined the road, ample canopies of fresh green leaves provided shade from the hot sun.



Bouncing along to the clip clop of the team, maybe just two old mares, there might have been a light breeze carrying the sweet aroma of mowed grass, and the not-so-sweet scent of a barn yard. Broad, fan-shaped leaves danced overhead like green satin dresses sashaying in the sunlight. More than likely you'd come across cousins or friends—maybe an old friend you hadn't seen since the summer before, and this might delay your journey for as much as an hour. There were no phones and certainly no email and the only way to keep up with the news was by word of mouth or letters. At County Fair time, or later on, the State Fair, the road would be busier, bustling with families in buggies and democrat wagons heading to the Fair, prepared to spend the week.

In a letter to Marion from Willis dated 1923, he writes of fair-goers camping in his orchard: "Two young couples from Interlaken came to the Fair and camped at the lower end of the orchard. This was the sixth time they had been here for the Fair and same camp." Willis no doubt saw an opportunity to make a little extra cash by turning parts of his farm into a campground during Fair time.

¹ The Genesee Turnpike has been referred to by different names and iterations over time. The most common name used was the Genesee Turnpike. Today it is simply West Genesee Street as it passes through this area of the state. The road was built to connect one end of the state to the other; eventually the Erie Canal and the train replaced the road as a means for shipping goods and supplies. In the long run, the Canal was filled in and truck lines replaced trains for hauling goods across the state.

Dairy cows provided fresh milk for all the local farmers and their families and friends. It was a wonderful life filled with simple satisfactions like the sound of a woodpecker in a hollow maple, breakfast of hot oatmeal with a pitcher full of fresh milk, and fresh eggs—farmhands in from the barn for a meal. It was the spring of 1892 when Willis Parsons purchased 66 acres of prime farmland from Burritt Chaffee, just up the road from his father and mother's place on the other side of the Turnpike. He and his wife, Mary Anna, and their young girls, moved into the big old farmhouse and Willis set to the business of farming. Strapped into a harness behind a huge plow pulled by his father's best workhorses, he plowed acres and acres and rows and rows of loamy soil, planted potatoes, corn, and vegetables. A young cherry orchard already thrived on the eastern side of the property and he would nurse it into full production. He planted more fruit trees—apple, peaches, and pear.

Willis was a hard worker, a dedicated community member, and the stern father of three daughters, Grace b. 1883, Marion b. 1887, and Martha b. 1892. Stern though he may have been, they adored their Papa. And his farmhands looked up to the tall gentleman with the neatly-trimmed goatee. He had become a pillar of his community.

After Grandpa Edwin died in 1893, Grandma Julia's red brick house often sat empty. She began spending most of her time at Mary Amelia and her husband, James Schuyler Jerome's, or with Willis and Mary Anna. The old brick homestead that had once bustled with aunts and uncles and cousins, farm-hands, housekeepers, and friends had suddenly become as empty as a dance hall on a Monday morning. Julia Parsons' six children had grown, moved on up the road. Once Edwin was gone too, Julia preferred to be in the home of one of her children....

In 1924 Willis had his Lower Farm property surveyed and divided into lots. He began selling off the parcels, first to his friends, then to those who were willing to promise not to drink alcohol on the premises, to maintain dwellings of a certain standard. Willis and his cronies sketched out the new tract where the new school would be located. Once the Tract was complete, The Lower Farm would become a community abutting the western edge of Syracuse—it would maintain its own boundaries, its own organizations, and its people would retain governance of what was rightfully theirs. He would keep the 200-acre Upper Farm, enjoy his apple orchards; preserve his agricultural stronghold near the tiny village of Camillus, further to the west.



Julia Armstrong Parsons

Willis had a plan. He paid attention to what was going on in the world. He read the papers. He followed the stock market. Today you might say he was in the vanguard.

It was the beginning of mass scale industrialization. Those who could see into the future understood that this would mean changes throughout society. They understood that the world awaiting their children would be far different from the world they knew. People stepped forward to assert their right to manage their local schools in the way they saw fit. Up until this time, many of the school teachers around the country had been men, women were seen as not suited for the job, most certainly not suited to run a school system. Now the public school was taking off and men would be pulled in different directions—the war or the factory. It was a time of invention—new technologies that would change the way people lived. Willis's plan included donating his beloved cherry orchard, a nine-acre parcel that would be the site of a new red-brick community school. His middle daughter, Marion, would return from her teaching post in the wild west and take over as head of the school of his dreams.



Willis drives children down Cherry Road

Many changes had taken place since Cornet Joseph Parsons had landed on the rocks at the edge of the new world colonies 300 years earlier. From a fledgling settlement belonging to a confluence of Indian tribes, English and Dutch settlers, a new wave of immigrants had turned the countryside into a nation that was quickly becoming a “world power.” Many generations later, his children’s children and their children, and their children, and so on, had dispersed throughout the growing nation, many becoming school teachers, many fought in both the Revolutionary War and the Civil War. The Parsons Family were almost always leaders in their communities.

Willis had built a small empire of productive farmland, and now he was ready to let it go and serve the future he saw on the horizon of social and economic development that could no more be stopped than could the Niagara River. Plans were made for the new school, for a burgeoning community on the brink of an economic depression that many did not see coming. Willis must have, as he set the stage for a new community that could, in the cloud of struggle, take care of itself.

It was a Monday morning—early May 1926. The first signs of spring were popping through the remains of old snow and slush around the perimeters of the Parsons Farm. Marion’s students were still meeting in the Parsons’ parlour, waiting for the new schoolhouse to be ready the following fall. Now they were eager for summer, eager to spend their days playing in the haylofts, swimming in the creek, trapping muskrats down in the swamp. And there was the County Fair and the State Fair at the end of the season. The boys would go up to Mr. Jerome’s farm and pretend to be working, pitch a little hay, and watch the cows in the pasture. If he wasn’t too busy, Mr. Jerome might let them ride on the wide back of his enormous white horse.

On this morning it had rained hard during the night—loud claps of thunder, brilliant flashes of lightning illuminating the sky—but now the rain had stopped and the temperature was cool enough you could see your breath, the air thin like it sometimes is after a good rain has settled the dust.

It had been a particularly cold spring. Weeks earlier the temperature plummeted to 18 degrees. Willis worried about this, about his orchards. Marion and the children had watched him quietly from the corner where they worked on their projects as he came in and out of the barn carrying lanterns, loading charred black globes into the back of the democrat wagon. If the temperature were to drop again, he could lose all his fruit, some already in bloom. This could be the end of him, the ruin of his orchards.

On this morning a growing crowd of children waited at the back door of the Parsons' farmhouse. Overhead, gray thunder clouds swam angrily across the morning sky. The door was usually open, farmhands going in and out for scrambled eggs and coffee. Today not a soul was in sight. The Farm Manager came out through the door on the side of the barn, turned and locked the door, and then strode across the potato field without looking at the children huddled around the back door.

Finally the housekeeper opened the windowless door just wide enough to peer out. "Go back home, there will be no school today," she said, and the door closed as quickly as it had opened, the sound of it slamming shut like an exclamation mark.

The children wandered back up the Turnpike. Some wondered if they oughtn't to go over to Terry Road School, but no bell had been rung there, so they gathered in front of the service station on the north side of the road; boys played in the mud where the storm had soaked the dirt road; someone said maybe they should call it a day off school. Two girls stood close together by the edge of the road clutching their small pile of books. Belle Jerome opened her front door and headed across the lawn toward the children. She stood silently with the children and watched the farmhand from the Parsons' place walking up the road. He took long, even strides and kept his gaze on Belle who fingered the hem of her apron and watched the man as he approached.

Willis Parsons was dead. He had died of heart failure early that morning.

When Marion and Martha—both living back at the farmhouse with Papa and their stepmother, Allain—came downstairs that morning the house was dark. Allain stood by the window, staring through a small crack in the curtains at their own mother's flower garden. Tiny spears of iris buds poked through the ground, as they did every spring. A few yellow splotches of buttercups jutted out from the dreary and soggy piles of leaves left untended from last fall. Papa would be upset to see this neglect, but it made no difference now.

Someone from the barn had gone to get Grace at her house around the corner on Cherry Road. She and Claude and the twins would be up with the new baby, Peter. Grace had survived the death of her first-born, John; she and Claude had learned to endure the worst life had to offer. They would all get through this somehow.

The day of Willis's funeral, people came from all over the state—members of the fruit growers' associations and the grange where Willis once served as president; parishioners from the Congregational Church where he, and before him his father, had sat on the board;

cousins, brothers, and their wives; Willis's sister, Mary Amelia Parsons Jerome, whose husband, James Schuyler Jerome, was himself near death.

Throngs of neighbors gathered in the large parlour in the Parsons farmhouse, where just days earlier, children had giggled behind cupped hands when the stately gentleman strode through the room. On most days a hub of activity, the three-story farmhouse was as still as death itself on this day. All the rooms on the main floor were filled with family and neighbors. Shutters flapped in the spring breeze but made no sound. From the outside, the big white house towered in a quiet reserve on its perch above the corner of the Genesee Turnpike and the Parsons' farm road. Willis's prized Franklin automobile, polished, sat empty alongside the road, waiting to take him for one last ride up Myrtle Hill, to the cemetery where his parents, sister, cousins, aunts, and uncle were already buried.

The Parsons girls gathered around the kitchen stove, asking questions, wondering aloud, trying to get at the bottom of the mystery. Had their father known he was sick? Is that why he worked so hard to divide up the land and create the community he had begun to envision only a few years ago?

Marion may have stood back that day, and realizing what many of us do sooner or later, that the older generation has become too old and too feeble to carry on, that it would be up to them now, the younger generation—*Marion and her sisters* and all the cousins, Ned and Emma, Henry, Cousin Julia, Charles F. and Verne, Doctor Jim, Laura and Bessie; even Herbert and Guy, and Esther and Bertha who had moved away. They would do whatever it took to keep the Parsons family together, as they always had been.



1916 Sitting in the car, from left to right: Martha, Grace, Marion (the boy is John Parsons Cole)

A copy of *The Brass Bell* can be ordered by contacting: info@sahalielpublishing.org
You can also reach the author at: 503.914.9515

TREASURER'S REPORT:

The financial profile of the organization remains steady. I am sending out more newsletters by email and following up with a hard copy that includes the membership envelope. Book sales and membership renewals need to be addressed for a more efficient means of expansion and growth. Advertising the organization, its mission and goals, may increase attendance at the reunions and be beneficial at this time too. Perhaps accepting payments by getting a "Square" or using PayPal is now needed in addition to accepting checks and cash payments. I think the charges for accepting other forms of payment would expand the organizations membership base, increase books sales, increase donations for the maintenance of the Parson Homestead, and fund other projects as well ie: the 100th reunion.

At this reunion we are doing a catered picnic and requesting if possible for attendees to bring a dish (pot luck style) to enhance the buffet. Please let me know if you are attending and bringing a dish so I can track what to fill in with catering. We will also be getting a tour of the house and all its renovations and improvements.

Please come prepared with ideas for the use of the house, functions, etc. All ideas are welcome. If you would like to volunteer at the Parson House you should contact Laurie Sanders or Elizabeth Sharp, and they can find the right opportunity which would benefit all parties involved.

The Parsons Family Association needs to expand the membership base, please email me referral names and we will send out a newsletter to entice new family members to join the organization. We are looking for fresh ideas and are open to suggestions. Also, we are actively looking for genealogic stories or articles to be published in the newsletter. Please contact Kim Graham or Deanna to get your article, history, or obituaries published. If you have any questions, please contact me at 413-475-2499 (texting me is best) or

kim_graham@comcastspectacor.com or kbgbandits@gmail.com.

**Respectfully Submitted,
Kim Graham, Treasurer**

HISTORIAN'S REPORT:

First of all, I would like to apologize for not attending last year's annual reunion, unfortunately family business takes precedence over all else. Last year, a German family that was on vacation in New England, found and purchased an old family bible (2 vol. set) from a used book shop in Northampton. They discovered it contained Parsons, Strong, and Clark family birth, marriage, and death information. They went on-line and found our PFAWR's web page and contacted me. They were kind enough to donate the family bible to our association, to be given to the appropriate person or family, preferably a descendant of the original owner. At this year's reunion, I will give them to any PFA member that descends from anyone listed in the bible (i.e. Lysander Watson Parsons (1812-1890) and his wife Rachel Cordelia Strong (1816-1879) and their 6 children: Emma, Alpheus, Elnor, Lorenzo, Gilbert, & Francis), plus many others.

In the last two years, due to the lack of activity from PFA members (i.e. very few inquiries and almost no updated pedigrees), I've had very little official work to do. Because of the lack of new material, I have not updated the Internet version of our master database. However I have kept busy with other self-imposed tasks:

1. I've received many inquiries from other Parsons researchers around the country; inquiring if their unique Parsons lines were connected to our New England branch.
2. I've been going through our master database, looking for errors, duplicate entries, and adding additional source information where needed (i.e. census, birth, marriage, and death information).
3. I've organized and run the PFA's Western Region's reunions in 2015 in Sacramento, 2016 in Saratoga, and am planning our 2017 reunion in El Dorado Hills.
4. I've contacted Robert (Bob) Parsons, the CEO and founder of Go-Daddy, the largest ISP in the nation. It turns out that he and his family are our distant relatives. One of his close relatives, Gregg Freese, is their family genealogist and has researched their Parsons family history. Gregg was kind enough to supply us with a copy of their pedigrees, in order to add them to our master database.
5. And finally, I have been working on my own family history, other than Parsons.

Suggestions to help increase our membership and interest:

1. Members could copy their phone book pages, where Parsons are listed, so that information about our association could be sent out.

2. Convince family members and relatives to join our association.
3. Advertise our reunions, via word of mouth to family members, and advertise over the Internet.
4. Submit other family stories of interest (not necessarily Parsons) to our newsletter for publication.
5. To find guest speakers from the New England Historical Genealogical Society in Boston, for our reunions.
6. To organize some sort of association project.

Respectfully submitted,
Mr. Gary A. Parsons, Historian

OFFICERS:

PRESIDENT:	Deanna Parsons Simons	Deanna.simons@cornell.edu
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HISTORIAN:	Gary Parsons	parsons@pfawr.org
ASSISTANT HISTORIAN:	Philip Parsons, Esq.	crisandphil@yahoo.com
WEBSITE:	VACANT	

DIRECTORS: (listed alphabetically)

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Dr. Kenneth T. Doran;	Lydia C. Omasta;
Martha Parsons Ethier;	Phillip G. Parsons Esq.;
Araina Brown Heath;	Cris Parsons;
Bob Heath	

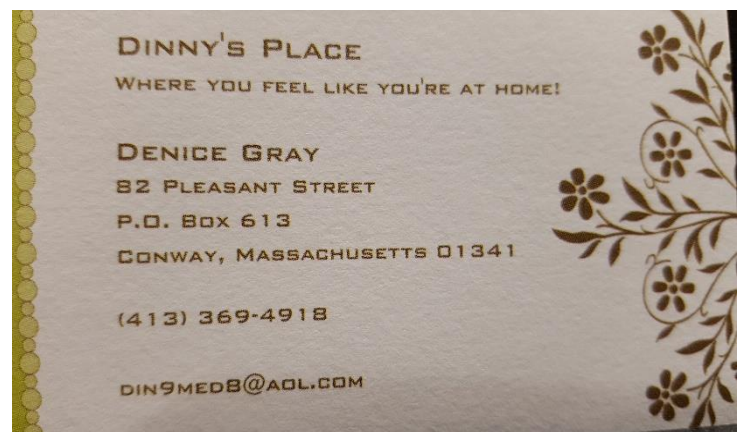
PLACES TO STAY:

Here is an awesome, comfortable, and reasonably-priced place to stay for a day or week whatever your needs are. There is lots of room, with a full kitchen, wireless and TV access, private picnic table, and all the trimmings.

Dinny and Lee run a mini farm (gentlemen's farm) with a donkey and ducks and they provide fresh eggs and a stocked refrigerator for pretty much all your needs. I have seen the rooms (apartment) and was amazed at what they provide. Dinny and Lee are down to earth and just great people. I highly recommend staying there if you can.

Sincerely

Kim Graham



OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS MEETING RESERVATIONS:

Place: Champy's at the Deerfield Inn, 81 Old Main Street, Deerfield, MA, 01342
Time: 5:30pm
Date: July 21, 2017; Friday
Type: Ordering off limited menu with selections of beef, chicken, fish, & vegetarian
RSVP: Kim Graham, 48 Parsons Rd, Conway, MA. 01341
PFA, PO Box 603, Conway, MA 01341

kbgbandits@gmail.com; kim_graham@comcastspectacor.com; cell (413) 475-2499; w (413) 545-3374

NAMES: _____

REUNION RESERVATIONS: *** **PLEASE RSVP BY: SUNDAY, JULY 10, 2017*****

Place: Historic Northampton, 46 Main Street, Northampton, MA, 01060
Tour Time: 10:00 am – Noon
Meal Time: 12:30 PM
Date: Saturday, July 22, 2017
Price: \$20.00
Type: Catered picnic style buffet
RSVP: Kim Graham, 48 Parsons Rd, Conway, MA. 01341
PFA, PO Box 603, Conway, MA 01341

kbgbandits@gmail.com; kim_graham@comcastspectacor.com; cell (413) 475-2499; w (413) 545-3374

REUNION RESERVATIONS: No. of Adults _____ No. of Children _____

NAMES:

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO THE PARSONS FAMILY ASSOCIATION



☐ **New Member/** ☐ **Renewal Application**

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**Parsons Family Association
P.O Box 603,
Conway, MA 01341**

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PFA Computer - Website Fund: \$	Maintenance Fund for Parsons Homestead \$	Special Gifts/Donations: 100 YEAR REUNION \$		Special Projects / House Fund: \$

Now might be a good time to get a copy of the book for your family, friends, or donate one to your local Library or Historical and Genealogical Societies – *please call for special discount for donations.* Massachusetts residence must add a 6.25% sales tax.

THE ENGLISH ANCESTORY AND DESCENTS TO THE 6th GENERATION OF CORNET JOSEPH PARSONS
(1620-1830) Compiled by Gerald James Parsons, A.B., M.S.L.S.

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