

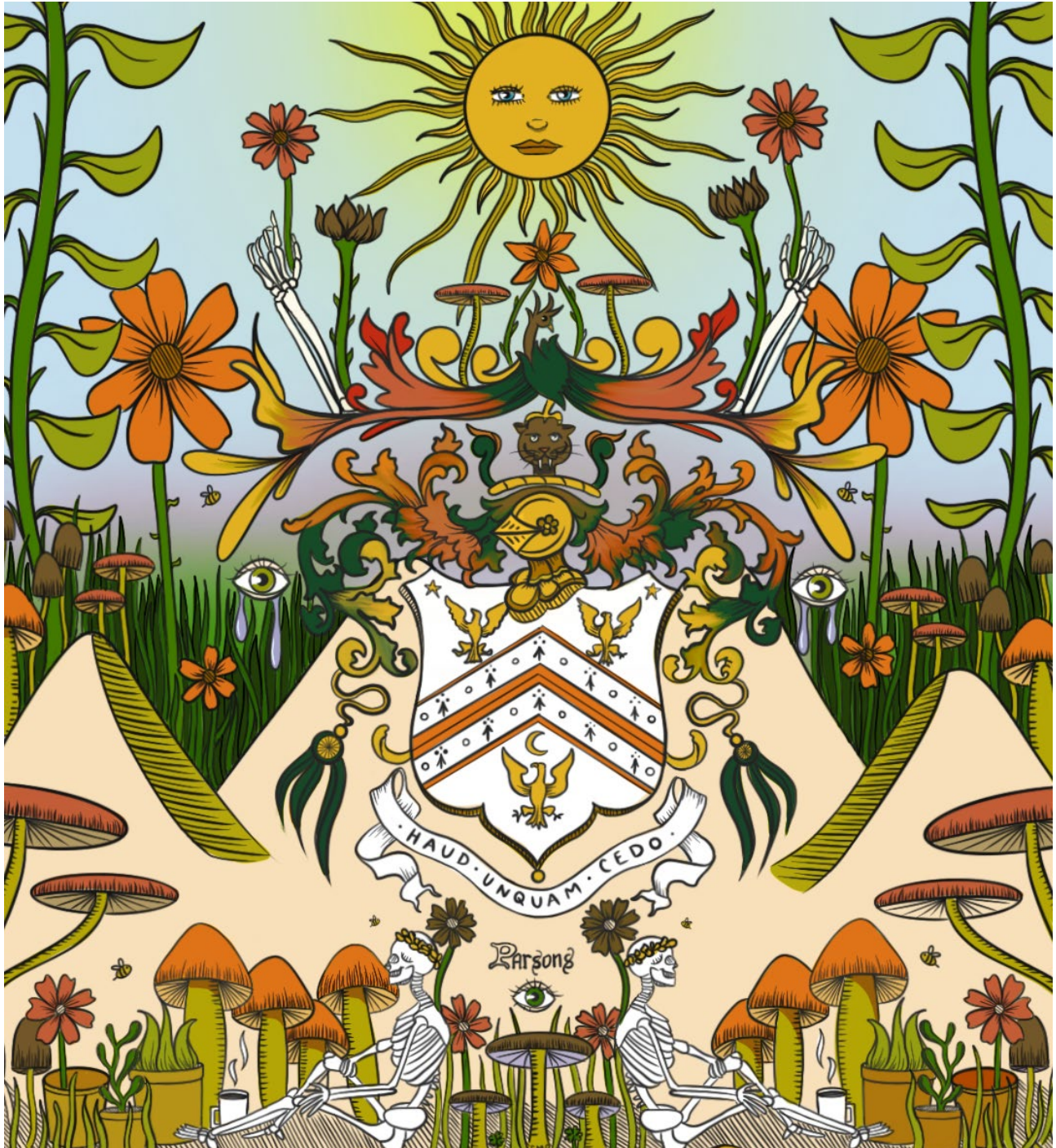
# CORNET'S

# CHRONICLE

# PFA

Parsons Family Association

The latest news and updates from the Parsons Family



# **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

President's Message by Deanna Parsons-Simons.....3  
“Reflections from the 100<sup>th</sup> PFA Reunion” by Elizabeth Parsons Patton.....4  
“The Short Life of a Genius” by Gary Parsons.....6  
“My Dubious DNA” by Karen Vorbeck-Williams.....7  
Historic Northampton Update from Laurie Sanders.....8  
Obituary: Lydia C. Omasta.....10  
Obituary: Rosalie Ann Parsons Mailman.....11  
Obituary: Willis Underwood.....12  
Current PFA Officers & Directors List.....13  
Vacancy for Website Administrator.....14  
Contact Us.....15  
[2024 Reunion Registration Form](#).....16  
Printable Membership Form.....17/18

**FEBRUARY 2024 ISSUE**

# **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

PFA President Deanna Parsons-Simons speaks on the 100th reunion

Firstly, I would like to thank everyone who attended the uber successful PFA 100<sup>th</sup> reunion last summer in Northampton, MA. It was a truly spectacular weekend of events and fellowship. I was so elated to spend time with our members to engage in wonderful conversation and form everlasting bonds.

As a result of our first in-person reunion since the pandemic, there is renewed excitement and momentum throughout the entire Parsons Family Association. Looking forward, we are poised to grow our membership and continue ensuring that the Parsons Family and its history is preserved for years to come. The Executive Committee has spent the last six months planning the location and date of our next reunion. We are pleased to announce that the 2024 Parsons Family Association Reunion will take place **Saturday, July 27th in Salem, Massachusetts**. Our luncheon will be held in the ballroom at the **Hawthorne Hotel, 18 Washington Square W, Salem, MA 01970**. The hotel is holding a block of rooms for the occasion, so please feel free to reach out and book one, just indicate that you're with the Parsons Family Association event. Room rates range from \$189 to \$229 nightly. More details on the day's proceedings, including a detailed timeline, will follow in subsequent correspondence. The reunion will cost only \$30 per member (children 12yo and under are free) to help support the next reunion and contribute to the continued maintenance of family archival materials. Register [HERE](#) or utilized the print form at the end of the newsletter to confirm attendance.

Salem is the ideal location for a family with unique ties to the witch trials to gather. It has been many years since a PFA reunion took place in Salem, and this year represents an opportunity to return to the Massachusetts shore in July for some family fun (and beach time for those interested)! Thank you to all who participated in our 2024 reunion survey a few months ago; the results considerably helped the planning process.

Here's to another 100 years of reunions! Thank you to each and everyone of you for making this possible and contributing to our Association.

Fond Regards,  
Deanna Parsons-Simons  
President, Parsons Family Association

FEBRUARY 2024 ISSUE

# REFLECTIONS FROM THE 100<sup>TH</sup> PARSONS FAMILY ASSOCIATION REUNION

VP Elizabeth Parsons Patton shares thoughts from her first PFA reunion

I should be honest: I wasn't even aware that the Parsons Family Association existed! I found out because I needed supporting documentation for my application for the General Society of Mayflower Descendants and I was led to a book that may have the answer to what I was looking for. I went to the Daughters of the American Revolution Library in Washington, D.C. and found the book that I was looking for: **The Parsons Family, Vol. One compiled by Gerald James Parsons**. Shameless plug: we sell that book on our [PFA website](#). It summarizes the full genealogical history of the Parsons Family, tracing back to sixteenth century England. Right there, on pages 654, 655, and 656, was the information that I needed on Simeon Parsons (1773-1852). Along with discovering the book, I learned of the PFA and our upcoming 100<sup>th</sup> Family Reunion in 2023. I quickly paid for a lifetime membership and attended the 2021 Reunion via Zoom, since COVID was precluding in-person meetings.

I was completely new. Being that this was my first meeting, I had no idea what to expect. Even if someone had told me, I would have never expected what happened while I was there. For some reason that I still do not understand, I was nominated to be the Parsons Family Association's second vice president! I promptly said, "I do it!" From that moment, I jumped right in. That was the beginning of our Executive Committee's weekly virtual planning meetings for the 100<sup>th</sup> Reunion in Northampton, MA, where the Parsons family started their lives in colonial America. Months flew by and it was time to pack up our car and drive from Washington D.C. up to Northampton. Upon arrival, we were treated to a lovely concert on the grounds of the Historic Northampton that Friday evening, July 28<sup>th</sup>. The sun was out and low in the sky, and the attendees were comfortably seated on blankets or garden chairs around the gazebo where Les Boulevardiers were playing. There were about 50 Parsons in the crowd that night. Afterwards, we walked to Northampton Brewery for dinner.

Just in those few short hours since arriving, I had met so many of my Parsons "cousins" that I never knew existed. It was a wonderful warm feeling to be connected with family that, up until that moment, was completely unknown to me. It was like finding something that you didn't know was lost. Along with my husband, Tom, were our daughter Julia and her 3-month-old son, Spencer, and our niece Arden, who traveled all the way from Tampa, Florida to experience a



## **FEBRUARY 2024 ISSUE**

Parsons Reunion. I was so happy that they were willing to come along to meet distant everyone. Immediately, you feel more connected with Parsons family history that extends hundreds of years back to southern England and the namesake of this newsletter, Cornet Joseph Parsons.

The following day, Saturday the 29<sup>th</sup>, we found ourselves, 80 family members strong, at the Hotel Northampton ballroom. The business meeting and luncheon was lovely. After lunching, our guest speaker was Jonathan Wright, a local craftsman who took the wood from the fallen Parsons House maple tree and fashioned it into cutting boards for us. Inscribed on the back side was, "Parsons House Maple, 2023 Northampton, MA, PFA 100<sup>th</sup> Reunion". This is a very special keepsake, and I'm lucky to have been there to receive one. Jonathan Wright brought a large cross section of the actual maple tree that stood on the Parsons property for a least 200 years and talked about all the people who would have walked by this tree and all the history it witnessed. He gave me a new way to think about old trees. After Jonathan we enjoyed a reading by "Plays in Place", a group that writes and produces plays uniquely suited to a particular site and audience. In this case, they prepared something about Mary Bliss Parsons, our ancestor who was accused of witchcraft. It was excellent! Several actors came and performed live for us.

Saturday evening, we gathered at the historic Wiggins' Tavern at the Hotel Northampton for cocktails, conversation, wonderful hors d'oeuvres, and live music performed by local Massachusetts musician, John Demers. Being in that very old tavern was the perfect atmosphere for continuing our discussions from earlier that day and to all be together for a good time. Sunday morning, we walked to the Bridge Street Cemetery, where many Parsons ancestors are interred. We gathered at the large Parsons headstone, one of the most notable structures in the cemetery. Author and Parsons ancestor, Kathy-Ann Becker, was dressed in antique period clothing from the late 1600s and addressed the Parsons family attendees. She took us back in time to when Mary Bliss Parsons and Joseph Parsons walked the streets of Northampton and gave us a glimpse into what life was like for them and their family. Dressed as a town crier, she rang her handbell with vigor, as would have been the custom. It was very moving and powerful. I for one, was shedding tears.

Growing up as Elizabeth Parsons in Marshfield, Massachusetts, my father had one brother who never married or had children, and one sister who had three children and lived in far-off Costa Rica. I had three Parsons cousins and an aunt who we rarely saw, which is why attending the 100<sup>th</sup> Reunion was very special for me on so many levels. I loved meeting as many Parsons as I was able to. Everyone was so warm and inclusive, and most had been attending the reunions for as long as they could remember. It really is a powerful feeling, being in a room with 80 of your

## FEBRUARY 2024 ISSUE

blood relatives celebrating 100 years of the family coming together every year to see each other, get caught up, and to enjoy each other's company, knowing that they all have Parsons' blood. I felt honored to be there and I know that my father, Gordon Parsons, and his father Clifford S. Parsons, and my "Uncle Bill" aka: William Parsons, and my great uncle Stanley Wright Parsons from Copenhagen, NY would all be so proud and thrilled that I was in attendance and now have a new family of Parsons that I will look forward to seeing year after year.

## THE SHORT LIFE OF A GENIUS

Historian Gary Parsons recounts the life of Marvel "Jack" Whiteside Parsons, commonly known as "The Father of Modern Rocketry."

Marvel Whiteside Parsons was more commonly known as Jack Parsons. He was the son of Marvel Harold Parsons of Springfield, Massachusetts, and his wife, Ruth Virginia Whiteside of Chicago, Illinois. Jack was born on October 2, 1914, in Los Angeles, California and died at his home in Pasadena, California on July 17, 1952. He married Mary Helen Northrup on April 26, 1935, in Glendale, California. As requested, he was cremated, and his ashes spread over the Mojave Desert. Jack is the 7th great-grandson of our Cornet Joseph Parsons.

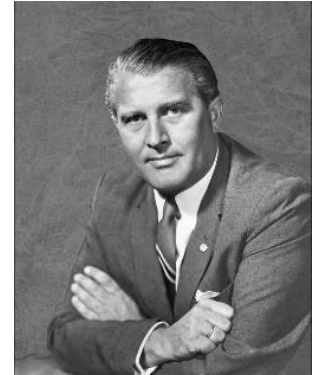
As a young man, he was always interested in science fiction and developed a keen interest in rocketry, the occult, and the supernatural. In 1928, he and a friend started a club, performing rocket experiments on the beach. He attended Pasadena City College, University of Southern California, and Stanford University. During the Great Depression, he had to drop out of college due to financial reasons and apparently never received an advanced degree. Even through all this, Jack became a rocket engineer and chemist.



In 1934, he joined others from Caltech who were affiliated with the Guggenheim Aeronautical Laboratory (GALCIT), Rocket Research Group. With GALCIT's support, they gained funding from the National Academy of Science to conduct government research concerning designs for jet assisted take off of military aircraft. In 1942, the GALCIT Group became the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL). Parsons was one of the principal founders of both the Jet Propulsion Laboratory and the Aerojet Engineering Corporation.

## FEBRUARY 2024 ISSUE

As a scientist, Jack made many scientific breakthroughs in the field of rocketry and was referred to as the “Father of Modern Rocketry.” Parsons was a genius and helped develop not only solid-fuel rockets but was also a pioneer in the development of jet assisted take off technology, known as JATO. This technology uses small rockets hung under a plane's wing to provide an assisted takeoff. Because of what he did, all his work was classified by the federal government. Because of the classified nature of his work, little is known of his many achievements.



## MY DUBIOUS DNA

Author Karen-Vorbeck Williams researches her ancestors: Mary Bliss Parsons, John Carrington, Andrew Sanford, and William Tuttle

When I was in my twenties I typed forms, mimeographed them, and mailed them to my grandmothers asking for names, dates, places, and memories of their grandparents and great-grandparents. With those names and dates, I have grown a family tree of many thousands on Ancestry.com—too large and distant in time to be believable. I've gotten all the way back to Charlemagne, to Rollo the Viking, kings, and queens from England—the bloody Plantagenets—and across Western Europe, crusaders, knights and their ladies, and at least two saints. It's a cliché to say you are a descendant of Charlemagne's. The genealogy joke is “So is everybody.” Ancestry DNA tests don't prove anything after around the 1730s. That leaves all the later connections untested.

The story I want to tell you is about the ancestors I found living in or near the Connecticut River Valley during the 17th century. About 368 years ago, three of my many-greats grandfathers lived within miles of one another. It is fun to wonder if they ever met. John Carrington (b. 1602) lived in Wethersfield, Andrew Sanford (b. 1617) was right next door in Hartford, and to find William Tuttle (b. 1607) you had to go downriver, turn right at Saybrook, and follow the coast to New Haven Colony.

Somehow, through six generations, all three of them merged into a woman named Asenath Carrington (b. 1763). She was born a hundred years after her fifth great-grandfather John Carrington was hanged alongside his second wife Joan. Both had been convicted of

## FEBRUARY 2024 ISSUE

witchcraft. The connection came when Asenath married John Parsons (b.1753) making her connected by many generations to Cornet Joseph and Mary Bliss Parsons. So, what am I to think about my DNA when you consider that Andrew Sanford was accused of witchcraft—as was Mary Bliss Parsons—and John Carrington was executed for witchcraft. So far, I've got three ancestors connected to witchcraft.

William Tuttle, however, had nothing to do with witchcraft. He's famous for his children: two axe murderers and his daughter Elizabeth, famously considered a loose woman during her time. Elizabeth Tuttle, however, was the grandmother of the leader of the American Enlightenment, theologian Jonathan Edwards (b. 1703). He was also the third president of Princeton University. To me, he is a second cousin eight times removed. Searching for your ancestors is a rewarding way to learn history. I recommend it.

## HISTORIC NORTHAMPTON UPDATE

Co-Executive Director Laurie Sanders details progress on the Parsons House

In August 2023, Historic Northampton staged three original plays in the newly restored and re-opened Shepherd Barn (1805), including one featuring the story of Mary Bliss Parsons. The Parsons Family Association saw a sneak peak of this show when "Plays in Place" performed it at the 100th reunion. All 12 performances were sold out, and encore performances will take place in June 2024. We hope you'll be able to attend!



This fall Historic Northampton submitted two grants to support in-depth investigations of the Parsons House (1719). The proposed studies include:

- 1) a detailed analysis of the house's architectural history using building archaeology and materials analysis;
- 2) a structural engineering study to evaluate the house's stability and integrity;
- 3) an assessment of required modifications for accessibility (ADA) compliance; and



## **FEBRUARY 2024 ISSUE**

- 4) an evaluation of energy-efficiency improvements consistent with preservation and a commitment to carbon neutrality by 2030.

Together, all four investigations will inform our decisions about restoration, renovation, and a new interpretive plan for the house. We hope to reopen the Parsons House to the public in 2026.

Thank you to everyone in the Parsons Family Association for your support. We're particularly grateful to those individuals and families who sent contributions to help fund the studies of the Parsons House.

If you are interested in supporting this work through a donation, please be in touch with Laurie Sanders, co-executive director, at [lsanders@historicnorthampton.org](mailto:lsanders@historicnorthampton.org). Our Facebook post featuring an area downstream from a beaver dam in the Parsons Brook Conservation Area has reached more than 345,000 people. To see the video, click this [link](#).

# **OBITUARY: LYDIA C. OMASTA**

Lydia Omasta, former Parsons Family Association President, passed in November

Westhampton, MA - Lydia C. Omasta. 98, of Westhampton formerly from the West Farms section of Northampton, died Friday, November 10, 2023, in Wilbraham where she was a long-term-care resident. She had been born in Northampton on May 31, 1925, to Fred and Elgie (Parsons) Challet.

She was educated in Northampton public schools and attended Massachusetts State College (now the University of Massachusetts). In 1946 she married Paul Omasta, Jr and together they lived in Northampton where Paul had a construction business. In 1974 the couple moved to Westhampton.

Lydia was initially a homemaker, but later she became quite the social butterfly. As a member of over 80 years, she was extremely active in the life of her church and was also an avid member of countless civic organizations. Affectionately known as "Mrs. O", she was also a dedicated kindergarten aide for many years. She worked in several diverse capacities: Meals on Wheels driver, Westhampton town select person, and home-care aide, to mention a few.

She is survived by two daughters, Nancy Bostic (John Jr) of Florida and Marcia Sullivan of Southampton. She also leaves 5 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren. Along with her parents, Lydia was predeceased by her husband in 1989 and her sister Dora in 2015.

A service to celebrate her life was held Saturday, December 16 at the Westhampton Congregational UCC. The family will greet friends after the service, and all are welcome to the collation following. Burial will be private at the convenience of the family.

# **OBITUARY: ROSALIE PARSONS MAILMAN**

Rosalie Ann (Parsons) Mailman passed in September

Howland - Rosalie Mailman, 85, passed from death into life eternal on Sunday, September 3, 2023. She was born July 17, 1938, in Manchester, Connecticut, the daughter of Edith (Pearson) Parsons and Atherton Parsons, and grew up on the family farm in Southampton, Massachusetts. Rosalie was the valedictorian of her class at Easthampton High School in Massachusetts, and received her BS in Home Economics from the University of Massachusetts. She married Paul Mailman of Palmer, MA, in 1959, and they spent most of their married life between Montpelier, Vermont and Lowell, Maine.

Rose and Paul were blessed with four daughters. Rose was very busy at home but later worked at Kellogg-Hubbard Library in Montpelier. She enjoyed reading, decorative painting, and sewing. She had a beautiful soprano voice and loved to sing hymns. She was a member of the Word of God Fellowship in Burlington.

Surviving in addition to her husband of 64 years are daughters and sons-in-law, Brenda Phillips and Mike of Plattsburgh, New York, Christa Boucher of Fairfield, Heidi Pearsall and husband, Web of Shortsville, New York, and Ericka Mailman and Alan Howard of El Dorado Hills, California; grandchildren include Matt Phillips, Jenny Phillips Riley, Eric Phillips, Paul Rice-Boucher, and Clara and Reid Howard; great-grandchildren, Alexandra Phillips, Maddy and Emmy Riley, and Aubrey Phillips. In addition to her parents, Rose was predeceased by a son-in-law, David Boucher; and a brother-in-law, John Mailman.

Graveside services were held at a later date in the Lowell Cemetery with pastors Keith Shorey and Scott Shorey presiding. In lieu of flowers or contributions, Rose asks that you do something kind for someone in need. Rose's family would like to extend heartfelt thanks to the staff at Cummings Health Care Facility for the loving care they gave to Rose. Special thanks to Julie Quinn of Dignified Medical Care and Candice Osborne of Gentiva Hospice. Many thanks also to her good friend Vivian Sibley for her support.

# **OBITUARY: WILLIS UNDERWOOD**

Willis M. "Jed" Underwood passed in July

Southampton - Willis M. "Jed" Underwood, 52, passed away on Friday, July 28, 2023 surrounded by his loving family. He was born in Westfield to Nancy (Brown) Underwood and the Late Willis M. "Skip" Underwood, III. He was a graduate of Gateway Regional High School and he received an Associate's Degree in Nursing from Edison State College in Ft. Meyers, FL.

He was employed as a registered nurse for the Palliative Care Program at Colley Dickinson VNA and Hospice. Jed was a "Jack of all trades" and loved to tinker in the garage, fixing, building and repairing things for family and friends. He also enjoyed camping, 4 wheeling, dancing and was always the life of the party.

He is survived by his beloved wife Amy B. (Webb) Underwood, his loving children, Sara R. Underwood and Evan M. Underwood, all of Southampton, his caring mother, Nancy Underwood of Westfield, his sister Carolyn Wyckmans and her husband Robert of Easthampton, and his brothers Corey R. Underwood of Montgomery and Dennis W. Underwood of Westfield, many extended family members, friends and co-workers. A Celebration of Life was held on Saturday, August 5, 2023 in the Firtion Adams Funeral Service, 76 Broad St. Westfield, MA.



## **OFFICERS & DIRECTORS**

### **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**DEANNA PARSONS SIMONS**, PRESIDENT

**NICHOLAS SIMONS**, FIRST VICE PRESIDENT

**ELIZABETH PARSONS PATTON**, SECOND VICE PRESIDENT

**RYMN PARSONS**, THIRD VICE PRESIDENT

**KIM GRAHAM**, TREASURER & CLERK

**TRISA PARSONS PALACIO**, SECRETARY

**GARY PARSONS**, HISTORIAN

VACANT - WEBSITE ADMINISTRATOR

### **DIRECTORS**

**ARAINA BROWN HEATH**

**BOB HEATH**

**CRIS PARSONS**

**KIM GRAHAM**

**MARTHA PARSONS ETHIER**

**NANCY PARSONS ARMSTRONG**

**PHILIP G. PARSONS, ESQ.**

### **DIRECTORS EMERITUS**

**JAMES E. PARSONS**

**FEBRUARY 2024 ISSUE**

# **WEBSITE ADMINISTRATOR VACANCY**

Join our historic family association team!

Are you tech-savvy and passionate about preserving family legacies? We are seeking a skilled website administrator to join our 100-year-old association. As the guardian of our digital heritage, you'll manage family files and coordinate the seamless functioning of our website and social media platforms.

Key Responsibilities:

- Coordinate and manage updates to our family website and social media platforms, ensuring a user-friendly experience for all members.
- Organize and maintain family records with meticulous care.
- Implement security measures to safeguard our digital archives.

Requirements:

- Proficient in Wordpress and website back-end maintenance.
- Familiarity with data organization and storage.
- Strong oral and written communication skills.

Why Join Us?

- Become an intimate part of a cherished family legacy that spans centuries.
- Contribute to the preservation of the Parsons Family history in the digital age.
- Work with a dynamic team dedicated to fostering family connections.

If you're ready to blend technology with tradition and safeguard our family's archives, apply now! Together, let's continue the legacy that binds us across generations. To apply, please email [ParsonsFamilyAssociation@gmail.com](mailto:ParsonsFamilyAssociation@gmail.com).

**FEBRUARY 2024 ISSUE**

# **CONTACT US**

To contact any executive committee officers or directors, please send an email to [parsonsfamilyassociation@gmail.com](mailto:parsonsfamilyassociation@gmail.com)!

Follow us on Facebook at

<https://www.facebook.com/ParsonsFamilyAssociation/>.

Check out our website <https://parsonsfamilyassn.org/> for all things Parsons and continuous updates on upcoming events.

# 2024 PFA Reunion Registration Form

Complete this form and send via mail or PDF via email or fill out online

Last Registration Day - Friday, June 28, 2024

## Reunion Information

Venue: Hawthorne Hotel, 18 Washington Square W, Salem, MA 01970

Date: Saturday, July 27, 2024

Time: 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM

Price: \$30 per adult; children under 12 are free

## Payment Information

Pay online, by mail, or in-person at the event

Please address checks to "Parsons Family Association, Inc." and mail to:

*PFA, P.O. Box 603, Conway, MA 01341*

## Attendee Information

Please fill name and contact information of attendees.

### Your Name

First Name	Last Name

### Contact Email Address and Phone Number

Email	Phone Number

### Will you have a guest with you?

Yes/No

### Guest Names

First Name	Last Name	Under 12?

### Guest Contact Email Address and Phone Number

Email	Phone Number





# Parsons Family Association Membership Form

*Fill out this form by hand or on your computer.*

Name:			
Number of Other Members Registering:			
Names of Other Members: <i>If registering for other members, please include their names here.</i>			
Street Address, City, State, ZIP: <i>If registering for other members, please include their addresses here.</i>			
Phone Number: <i>If registering for other members, please include their phone numbers here.</i>			
Email Address: <i>If registering for other members, please include their email addresses here.</i>			
Descendant of (if known):			
New or renewing member(s)? <i>If registering for other members, please include whether they are new or renewing members here.</i>			
Membership type:	Regular (\$20) <i>Must renew annually</i>	Number of memberships:	Sum Total:
	Sustaining (\$40) <i>Must renew annually</i>	Number of memberships:	Sum Total:
	Lifetime (\$300) <i>No renewal needed</i>	Number of memberships:	Sum Total:
Donations or Special Gifts:	Parsons Homestead Maintenance Fund <i>Write dollar amount in box</i>		
	Parsons House Restoration Project <i>Write dollar amount in box</i>		
	Website Fund <i>Write dollar amount in box</i>		
Total \$ amount enclosed:	<i>Write dollar amount in box</i>		

## **FEBRUARY 2024 ISSUE**

### **Membership Form Next Steps**

#### **For Electronic Form Submission**

1. **Save** this completed form to your computer.
2. **Email** this completed form to *parsonsfamilyassociation@gmail.com*.
3. **Pay** on our website's membership page (<https://parsonsfamilyassn.org/parsons-family-association-membership/>) or **mail** check/cash to below address.

#### **For Paper Form Submission**

**Mail** this completed form and enclosed check/cash to:

*Parsons Family Association, Inc.  
PO Box 603  
Conway, MA 01341*

\*\*Make checks payable to Parsons Family Association, Inc.