Greetings Cousins!

Beneath the snow sleeps signs of spring. Until then, we will marvel at the winter landscape and be truly thankful. Currently, it’s time to mark your calendars for the 96th Parsons Family Reunion.

The reunion will be held this year on Saturday, July 21st, 2018. Further, we will gather at the historic Griswold Inn located in Essex, CT, nestled along the Connecticut River. We’ll have lunch at the Inn with the option to participate in our scheduled entertainment.

The Essex Steam Train offers an hour long ride at either 2pm or 3:30 pm that day. The station is close to the Inn, approximately 1.4 miles. It travels along the Connecticut River with plenty of options for nature and bountiful bird watching near the tidal wetlands of Pratt Cove and Chester Creek. These are added expenses to be paid at the train station. The prices are as follows: Adults $19.00; seniors $17.00; and children (2-11) $10.00. Other extras to your excursions include Open Car: $7.00, First Class Car: $12.00/passenger, and Caboose $5.00.

If you are a PFA Director, the Directors meeting and site have been finalized. Directors will meet on Friday, July 20th, at Luce Restaurant in Middletown, CT, at 6:30 pm. We’ve reserved space in their solarium portion of the restaurant. Dinner will be off the menu, followed by the meeting. This venue came highly recommended by Nancy Parsons Armstrong. She and John visited there several times, and Nancy continues to frequent this spot as time and events allow.

I highly recommend making hotel reservations near Essex at your earliest convenience. This area of Connecticut is a very popular summer destination spot. Hotel options will dwindle quickly, and we don’t want anyone to miss out. I look forward to seeing everyone at the reunion. Until then, stay warm and safe.

Warm regards,

Deanna Parsons Simons
President, Parsons Family Association
Deanna.simons@cornell.edu
Good News from Historic Northampton

Northampton, Massachusetts

As you may remember from last year’s newsletter, in November 2017 an anonymous donor offered Historic Northampton an amazing $150,000 matching challenge. Part of the donor’s goal was to further Historic Northampton’s revitalization, but another goal was to stimulate the organization’s year-end appeal. Boy, did it work! Between mid-November when the gift was announced and January 1, more than 300 donors gave a record-breaking $100,000! Since then, another $20,000 has arrived and only $30,000 left to raise.

What will these funds be used for?

Historic Northampton has lots of plans for 2018, but of greatest relevance to the Parsons Family is our intention to move forward with improvements to the Parsons House. In addition to improving the drainage around the house, Historic Northampton will soon hire an architect to conduct a structural/historical assessment of the building. Once that report has been reviewed and approved by a state board, Historic Northampton will be able to begin renovating portions of the house so that it can be re-opened to the public during the house’s 300th anniversary in 2019.

When is the deadline for the matching gift?

Historic Northampton has just a few weeks to close the gap—the deadline is March 17, 2018.

If you’ve already given, thank you! If not, we hope you’ll be willing to help Historic Northampton turn $150,000 into $300,000.

To make your contribution, checks can be sent to Historic Northampton, 46 Bridge Street, Northampton, MA 01060 or on-line by visiting www.historicnorthampton.org.

PS: To keep updated on what’s happening at Historic Northampton, visit their Facebook page and sign up to be on their Constant Contact list.
Martha’s Story:

It almost seems like a dream that I actually was in Africa last fall. It is not a place I had ever thought I would visit, but when your daughter is there for 27 months, you do things you didn’t expect to do. I am so glad Emily is in Rwanda, I loved my trip there to see her, and I loved the people and the beautiful country. I feel very lucky to have had the experience of going there.

The first thing most people think of when they hear about Rwanda is the awful, government-sponsored genocide that took place in 1994….and that is if they have even heard of Rwanda. It was kept pretty much out of the news as neighbors killed neighbors and an estimated 1,000,000 people were killed in 100 days and 2 million left the country as refugees. If most people have heard anything about Rwanda it is because they watched the movie,” Hotel Rwanda.” Before I left on my trip I read several books about Rwanda and the genocide, but the movie does not accurately depict what happened. The genocide was an awful thing that these people went through and those who survived and have continued to survive are working very hard at putting the genocide behind them and helping their country unify, progress, and prosper.

I don’t think there is a flat piece of land in Rwanda. It is called the land of 1000 Hills. Everywhere you look there is another hill off in the distance. Ninety percent of the people are farmers and they terrace and till these hills, growing food to exist on and maybe extra to sell at the market. I couldn’t help but think how much my father, Earle Parsons, would have loved to see the agriculture there. They grow bananas, plantains, potatoes, sweet potatoes, beans, and rice. They raise sheep, goats, chickens, and pigs. However, eating meat is rare. They do not have refrigeration, so maybe have meat 1-2 times a month.

Rwanda is one of the smallest countries in Africa. It is also one of the most densely populated, having about 7 million people in an area about the size of Massachusetts. It has a mostly rural population, and is located just south of the equator. It has a temperate climate because the elevation is 3000-5000 feet above sea level.

Emily lives on the top of one of those many hills. To get to her home, we had to take two-hour bus ride from the capital, Kigali, to one of the other larger cities in southern Rwanda called Butare. From there it was a 45 minute trip to the top of the mountain. Usually one would take a moto, a small motor bike from Butare to Gikonko. My first trip up was at night in a taxi because I had a few bags and it was raining. The road to Gikonko Health Center is not paved. It’s full of pot holes and ruts that make our New England roads in the spring seem smooth in comparison. As we were driving along, all of a sudden there was a big clunk and the car stopped. I looked out the window and we were on the edge of a drop off. I could see ground but it was a ways below us. The driver
asked us to get out of the car. By then we had attracted about 10 men from the nearby village. The whole front left tire was in a huge hole. Before I could think about what we could do to get out of this mess, the men from the village surrounded the car and just lifted it out of the hole and set it down on the road. My introduction to Rwandan hospitality!!

My other trips up and down the mountain were on a moto. It was a little scary the first time, but by the time I left I was taking pictures of the beautiful hillside on my way down the mountain. I must say, as beautiful as the pictures are, they do not capture the true beauty of the country side.

Gikonko Health Center is run by the Catholic Church—a church, schools, nursery age through grade 12, surrounds it. Just down the hill a bit, there is a small village. In Rwanda, you have a village that is part of a sector which in turn is part of a district, which is part of a Province. Gikinko Health Center is in one of the four sectors and 30 villages that compose the Gisagara District. Gisagara District is in the Southern Province of Rwanda. Gikonko health Center is run by Dr. Uta, a German surgeon who is an also a nun. She is renowned for doing life changing surgeries on kids with Hydrocephalus and Spinal Bifida. These are two conditions that can occur with poor prenatal health and nutrition. Both conditions can severely limit a child that is born with them. If Hydrocephalus is corrected early, the child can live a normal life. Spinal Bifida is harder to correct, but can be improved with proper intervention. Google Gikonko Health Center and read about the work Dr. Uta has done. It’s amazing! She has been there for 27 years and runs the very well organized Health Center.

The Health Center provides housing for Emily. She has a cute studio apartment near some of the nurses and other Health Center employees. She has her Parsons Family Award proudly on display in her bookcase. She is a very lucky Peace Corps volunteer because she has a flush toilet and a cold shower. Dr. Uta treats her employees quite well as far as housing goes. You always have to sleep under a mosquito net in Rwanda to avoid malaria. That is another area the health center focuses on, malaria prevention.

All of the staff at Gikonko Health Center are amazing. They treated me like I was a celebrity. If my trip taught me anything, it made me realize that I do not have to worry about Emily. She is surrounded by wonderful people who look out for her. It is like she has 20 mothers, and some big brothers, looking after her. All were more than willing to tell me what their role at the Health Center is. I was amazed how sophisticated their record keeping is regarding the diseases that they see. They have to report on how many cases of diarrhea (it can kill a child), HIV-Aids and malaria they see as well as maternal and fetal death and incidences of malnutrition. They are always trying to make these numbers go down through the educational programs they offer the people from the villages. Each village has three Community Workers. These are volunteers who help identify pregnant women, sick children, and families in trouble food wise. They try to get people to come to the Health Center for medical attention.
Gisagara District is one of three poorest districts in Rwanda. In 2005, 51% of the children were considered malnourished. Interventions have been instituted and now the incidence of malnutrition is down to 38%. This is due in part to government programs that try to educate the parents about nutrition, and make them more responsible for the children’s nutrition by helping them with backyard and village gardens and enrolling the children in milk programs. This milk program is one of the programs Emily works with. They keep careful records of the baby’s heights and weights, and if they are identified as malnourished, they are entered into a program that gives them education as well as milk for the baby.

Rwanda has universal health care for its people. All you have to do is sign up, and you pay a nominal fee based on your income to get health care. This amazed me! And what else amazed me was that mothers in the milk program have to participate in nutrition classes. They also have to do some work at the health care center. It might be food prep, gardening or cleaning. They would sling the babies on their back and do the jobs and then head home. They participate in the milk program twice a week. It isn’t a total freebie for them. The United States might take a lesson!

I have never seen such cute babies as I did when I was helping Emily and Donata, the dietician, do heights and weights. They have huge brown eyes and look at you with such cute expressions! Mamas carry the babies on their backs from the minute they are born until they can walk a good distance on their own. The kids never fuss and never try to get down. The Mamas work in the fields, go to market, clean, garden, and walk everywhere with the babies on their backs. You often see young girls and boys carrying water bottles or a younger sibling on their backs, practicing this skill.

The older children, and even some adults, are fascinated by people with white skin. Emily and I were walking up from the village one day and I felt little fingers on my arm. When I turned around there were six or seven kids following us, and one was petting me. They think white skin might feel different. It happened several times. The kids also like to practice their English. The language of Rwanda is Kinyarwanda. The second language used to be French, but the children are now learning English. Every morning when Emily and I would walk from her house uphill to the Center, and the kids would be in the school yard. They always said “hello” and we would answer “hello,” and then they would ask, “How are you?” We would say fine and ask how they were. No answer, just giggles. They hadn’t learned any more English. The older teens and 20 years-olds were very proud of their English skills and often would ask to try to communicate in English and say they wanted to get better at it. Some of them were very good.

As much as I loved helping at the Health Center, Emily wanted me to see other parts of Rwanda. So we traveled around. We went to the city she initially was housed in, located in Eastern Province and called Rwamagana. There I got to meet her host family and see where she lived for the first nine weeks she was there. The family was lovely, and again you would think I was some kind of a celebrity. We had tea with the family. Their living room could have been a living room in America, but the house did not have running water and you had to use a latrine and take bucket baths! I also got to meet some of Emily’s Peace Corp friends and some friends she had made while living in that city. It was wonderful to be able to put actual faces to the people she talked about all the time.
One of the highlights of my visit, and also a highlight for Emily, was that we took a safari to Akagera National Park. It is not a huge park because after genocide people lived on the land and hunted the animals. Eventually the land was divided, some for the people and some for the animals and preservation of the park. Akagera has been slowly reintroducing some of the animals that had been wiped out. We had a wonderful time.

We hired a driver with a pop-top safari truck and we had a great guide. We were one of the first trucks out and saw so many animals. We rounded a corner and a whole herd of elephants with a baby were right there in front of us. We saw zebras, many kinds of deer, water buffalo, and hippos. I want you to know that baby wart hogs are the cutest little things. It’s hard to believe they grow up into big wart hogs! The best part for Emily was when we found the giraffes. They were just grazing and majestically meandering along. They are just beautiful creatures.

We decided to stay in the tents at Akagera. It ended up being the fanciest place we stayed, totally green... solar power, no plastics of any kind. It is located on a river and we were in tents along an elevated walkway. There were only nine tents, so it was a small place. They fed us a traditional Rwandian meal on a deck by candlelight. We had veggies, bread, and dish that reminded me of chili, all cooked on an open fire pit. As we were eating, two hippos came out of the river and we were able to watch them rooting along the ground looking for food. All the tents had a little patio. Before my trip, I had never sat out and read a book with a baboon playing nearby! The whole experience is one we both will never forget.

The other spot Emily wanted me to see was located in Northern Rwanda. We went to Gisenyi. It took pretty much all day to get there on the buses, and the countryside was breathtaking. It was greener than both Southern and Eastern Rwanda. The road was fairly narrow with many hairpin turns. It is the area where the mountain gorillas were and we would have loved to see them, but a Gorilla Trek is very, very expensive. So, we chose to stay in the Diane Fossey Hotel, and that was as close as we came to gorillas. Gisenyi is a fairly touristy city. It had a different feel to it than the other big cities. Lots of recreational activities take place on the lake. They have a mix of American/European type food and Rwandian food. We spent a very relaxing day sitting by the lake, taking in the activities, and enjoying the food.

Then we headed back to Kigali, the capital, and spent our last day together relaxing by the pool at Mille d’Collines, or as it is more commonly known, Hotel Rwanda. It’s a beautiful hotel and so hard to believe all that happened there during the genocide. In Kigali there is a beautiful memorial to the genocide. It’s very moving exhibit, and many victims are buried there. They still find bodies they are added to the massive graves that are surrounded by beautiful gardens. If you have ever seen the Viet Nam Memorial and experienced how it feels to view that, this memorial gives you the same overwhelming feelings.

It was a wonderful trip. Getting to see and do things with Emily, and meet her friends and co-workers, was my favorite part. The Rwandian people are fun, hardworking proud people who make do with so little. Rwanda is a very clean country, and the scenery is breathtaking. Fun fact: They are one of the cleanest sub-Saharan cities in Africa. I felt very safe there. If it wasn’t over 24 hours of travel to get there, and a bit expensive, I would love to go back. Emily will be home this summer. Jerry and I could not be prouder of her!
Emily’s Story:

Muraho!

Greetings from Rwanda to the Parsons Family Association! For those of you who I have not met over the years, my name is Emily, and I am an honorary Parsons through my mother, Martha Parsons Ethier. I am currently living and working in rural Rwanda as a Maternal and Child Health volunteer as part of my 27 month Peace Corps service. Rwanda is a small rural country in East Africa known by most of the world as the site of large scale ethnically-based Genocide that occurred in 1994. Now, however, Rwanda is a beautiful, peaceful and stable country that is held up by the Western world as being an example of successful democracy and upper economic mobility in the developing world. Rwanda is now known as the Land of 1,000 Hills, and I am proud to call it my home.

As stated above, I became involved in the Parsons Family Association through my mother whose maiden name is Parsons and my father, Jerry, who has always supported the organization. I grew up attending reunions all over the New England as well as planning meetings and other special events. My time spent around the PFA and its members has fostered an appreciation for history and its preservation and consideration in the modern world, as well as a sense of civic duty and the importance of community outreach and hard work. I can honestly say that these lessons and values learned have largely contributed to the decisions that have led me here to Rwanda and the Peace Corps.

I recently had the chance to reflect even further on the influence these experiences and values have had on my life and work when my mom came to visit me in Rwanda. At the end of October 2017 my mom took three planes and traveled for over 30 hours to meet me in the capital called Kigali. Over the next two weeks we spent our time traveling around the country visiting a mixture of tourist areas, historical sites, educational institutions, and we spent a week in my village.

We went on a safari at Akagera National Park and saw hippos, giraffes, and elephants, and we spent the night in a tent lodge looking out over the park and surrounded by animals and the stars. We spent time on the water near Lake Kivu and travelled to visit the host family I lived with when I first came to Rwanda. We visited the Genocide Memorial in the city and took a picture outside of Peace Corps Headquarters.
However, my favorite time during her visit was the time we spent in my village. While in my village my mom was able to stay in my small house and experience the daily struggles and joys of living and working in a rural village health center in the hills of Rwanda, including periodically having no running water or electricity. She met my friends, neighbors and staff and was able to see for herself how safe and supported I am by my community. We assisted around the Health Center as needed, such as helping to weigh and measure babies before they received vaccinations, all of which are done to fight the physical and developmental effects of childhood stunting which is common in Rwanda.

One of my favorite pictures taken during her time here was taken during a “quiet” moment on vaccination day when Mom was able to sit and hold one of the tiniest babies that had come in with its mama. One thing (of many) that my mom and I have in common is our love of babies and little kids, so I knew that she would love working at vaccination days when we are surrounded by adorable babies and their proud mamas. My health center serves a catchment area of only a few square miles, but that area is home to over 26,000 people. This means that any community event, such as vaccination days, can become chaotic and overwhelming, especially if you don’t speak the language or understand the culture, but Mom jumped in like a champ and my staff LOVED having her here. One of my favorite observations she made while traveling around my new home was how much my Grandpa Earl Parsons, who lived on, worked, and ran his family farm where my mom grew up in a small close knit community, would have loved this country, the landscape and the people.

I am incredibly thankful and proud to have been able to share this experience with my mom and by extension with my friends and family at home. With just over six months left in my service and living in Rwanda, I have not only begun planning for my re-entry into the US and for getting back into being an active member in PFA and my other community and service activities, but I have had a chance to reflect on the people and events that brought me here. After spending over a year away, and then being able to share this experience here with my mom, I am reminded how important family truly is and how lucky I am to be a part of ours. Now, just as 24 years ago my parents brought me into their family, and by extension the PFA, I am lucky enough to have brought my mom into my second family here in Rwanda.

As I say to all my friends and family since I began my service here when signing off.
Love you to Rwanda and back!

Emily
PARSONS HISTORIC PROFILE:

Our Grandmother Ancestor
By Nancy “Camille” Cole

If you’re reading this article, if you subscribe to Cornet’s Chronicle, most likely you are a descendant of Cornet Joseph Parsons, a relative of a descendant, or simply interested in genealogy, history, and in particular, early New England settlements of the 17th century. The Parsons Family Association was founded in 1923 by Rev. Frank E. Miller of Lowville, NY. The first meeting was held in Boonville, NY that same year, and according to my immediate family records, my Great Grandfather, Willis A. Parsons, was in attendance. Our by-laws state that the purposes of the association include, “Perpetuation of history and tradition of the Parsons Family in America.” Further reference includes promoting and obtaining “…items of mutual interest in connection with the Family and to furnish, provide and classify such facts pertinent to the Family and its history….”¹

If you are a direct descendant of Cornet Joseph, you are, of course, a direct descendant of Mary Bliss Parsons, his wife. We live in a paternal (of or relating to the father) society, though this is slowly changing. So the Parsons Family genealogy as recorded in the early volumes by Henry Parsons, did not include Parsons Daughters. Also, we know little about the Bliss family. We do know that Mary Bliss Parsons was born in England circa 1628, that she is the daughter of Thomas and Margaret (Hulins) Bliss, and that she married Joseph Parsons on November 26, 1646. They had 11 children. The practice of chronicling only the male descendants ended, however, with the publication of The Parsons Family, The English Ancestry and Descendants to the Sixth Generation of Cornet Joseph Parsons, compiled by Gerald James Parsons. He states in his Forward that he will include the daughters.

We do, however, have quite a bit of information about Mary, herself, if not the Bliss Family. She was what we might called a character. Her story is fascinating and somewhat sensational and even so scandalous, that much has been written about her. Several of our kin have written books about her, and she is referenced in a number of other books, as well as in an abundance of online exposés. Most of us are aware of her story, in general, and I’ll present, in a little more detail, information about Mary Bliss Parsons that I gleaned from Gerald Parsons’ book, Volume One, and numerous articles and book excerpts. If you haven’t already, you too may be interesting in reading about Mary Bliss Parsons.

Both Mary and Joseph came here from England. Joseph came on the Bart Transport in 1630. They may have known each other as youngsters in England according to records of where they lived. At any rate, they ran into each other here and married at Hartford, Connecticut, and settled in Springfield, Massachusetts², where they were considered founders of what was then a settlement.

Joseph found himself in and out of court for various settlement-related issues. He was in the public eye as one of the wealthiest and active people in both Springfield and Northampton, serving on all kinds of juries and committees—a public servant you might say. These were litigious times, and from what I’ve read, mistrustful,

¹ http://www.parsonsfamilyassn.org/

² Of interest to note, the author and her cousin were born in Springfield in 1948 and 1947, respectively, almost 300 years later.
unfriendly people. Mary was attacked and embroiled as the subject of gossip and accusations. Specifically, she was accused of witchcraft by women in the settlements who could be jealous, vindictive, and unkind—a nasty sort, not unlike the Internet bullies and “mean girls” of today.

Mary’s initial accuser was a Sarah Bridgman, a neighborhood gossip you might say. And as rumors do, this one took hold and spread like a bonfire in the wind. Mrs. Parsons was a witch, and the buzz was embellished as it traveled throughout the settlements—cows died, little boys had their knees ripped out; a baby died in infancy. Upon hearing these stories, Mary’s mother, Margaret Bliss, became enraged (Mary and her mother shared a personality—smart and feisty) and flew into action by confronting Mrs. Bridgman. Of course, like most gossips, she denied culpability, and then told Mrs. Bliss a story about Mary and a blind man and his son.

Hearing about this was the last straw for Cornet Joseph who was now exasperated by it all, and he filed a slander suit against the Bridgmans. Our ancestor’s case resulted in a trial and subsequent conviction of Mr. Bridgman (paternal society) on the grounds of superstition, jealousy, and spite. He was ordered to pay 10 pounds sterling for damages and court costs of seven pounds, one shilling, eight pence. Way to go Joseph.

One might hope this would be the end of it all, but the rumors and the superstitions did not cease. The tongues of vicious little girls began to wag. They told tales—perhaps longing for the attention of the wealthy Parsons woman. In one episode of note, cattle began to die on one farm where Mary had visited. Soon, every mishap in the area became the aftermath of Mary. Surely, witnesses agreed, Mrs. Parsons was under the ‘influence of the powers of darkness’—she had wandered around at night and her husband had to lock her inside at night and hide the key.’ Even, apparently, our ancestor Benjamin, Joseph’s brother, testified at one point to these ‘indications of mental unsoundness.’ Why, said some, they had seen her walk on water! Surely, said others, she is possessed with the devil and has been seen falling down in fits.

Today, we could imagine what may have been happening to her, if indeed any of these sightings of running through the night and falling to the ground held any validity. In some of the research that’s been done by scholars who’ve written about her, there have been documents found alluding to what we would today call domestic abuse. None of this is proven, and there could be many other medical explanations. I would never want to shed a dark light on Cornet Joseph. I love the image of the man who risked life and limb to come here and settle communities that would thrive, to successfully raise 11 children who all became solid members of the community. I love the mythology of the man. And he chose for himself an outspoken and highly-intelligent woman. Mary may have been a somnambulist, a sleep walker. She may also have been, say some today, a mind-reader and could thus find the key hidden by her husband, and so banished to the cellar at night.

As far as illnesses and deaths in the settlement, there are rational explanations for those too. Of course there is. Children get sick. Cows die. Crops fail.

But our Mary was not to be trifled with. While the gossip continued—an affront to Mary and her family—and they were not about to let it go. The feud between the families was in full swing.

Eighteen years later, in 1674, and well after the Parsons’ relocation to Northampton, Mary was yet again accused of witchcraft. The Bridgmans came forward again, despite their previous punishments in the Slander case. Were they seeking revenge? Probably. Or perhaps it was just on-going jealousy for which Sarah Bridgman could not let go. She was envious of Mary’s wealth, of her success in raising all those
children who all made it to adulthood with the exception of one. She was bitter about Mary and her husband’s stature in the community. She resented, one can be certain, the outcome of the Slander trial, of the Parsons’ wealth and prominence in the Northampton settlement where Mary and Joseph had relocated and had been early settlers. Why, they said, Mary Parsons is just not right—the women chattered up and down Main Street, down Pudding Lane, and way out past Mill River and the surrounding farms.

This was a true Hatfields vs. the McCoys feud—a battle. So, in 1674, Sarah Bridgman’s husband and another relative brought charge against Mary, reviving the old grudge. And here’s the rub: Sarah had by this time been dead for six years. In this suit, Mary was charged with the deaths—via witchcraft—of women in the Bridgman family. The gossip had been revived, and Mary soon found herself, at her own behest, face to face with her accusers in court.

This time, the case was remanded to Boston courts where poor Mary found herself languishing in a Boston jail cell, waiting for her trial. When she finally appeared before the court magistrates, she was summarily accused of lacking the ‘feare of God… being instigated by the divill…and committed several acts of witchcraft.’

Mary pleaded not-guilty, taking her to trial where she was eventually found not-guilty. She had argued her own case. She had faced off with her accusers. ³

The Parsons returned from Boston to Springfield in 1679 or 1680. Joseph died three years later on October 9, 1683, and Mary was to live well into her 80s when she died in Springfield on January 29, 1712. And as these family feuds are wont to play out, it did not end after the Boston trial. Rumors and suspicions persisted. After Joseph’s death, and after Mary and their children were to inherit an estate of over 2,000 pounds and through her cleverness was able to parlay that sum into a considerable fortune, the jealousy and resentments continued and Mary was again the subject of gossip. These further rumors snaked through the next generation that included of all people, Mary’s granddaughter, Mary, who had married Ebenezer Bridgman, Sarah’s grandson. Now she, too, was the subject and accused of being a half-witch. It does ring of other family feuds we’ve heard about over the years. If you read the books and articles about Mary, there’s more to discover about this unique woman who I am proud to call my ancestor.

A few of the books written about Mary Bliss Parsons include, but are not limited to:

- Silencing the Women: The Witch Trials of Mary Bliss Parsons, by Kathy Ann Becker
- The Strong Witch Society, and Beyond Infinite Healing, Diaries of Mary Bliss Parsons, by D.H. Parsons
- The Lost Revelation: the Diary of Mary Bliss Parsons, by D.H. Parsons, with Elise Brion
- The Great She-Goat: Mary Bliss Parsons, by Susan Montgomery

Camille is the author of The Brass Bell, a narrative nonfiction account of her Great Aunt Marion Parsons who launched a school in her father’s cherry orchard in an old hen house that has grown today to be one of the top Blue Ribbon schools in the country.

To purchase a copy of The Brass Bell, visit Amazon.com or contact Camille at: 503.914.9515, or by email: schoolhouse2@comcast.net


³ It should be noted that the Salem Witch Trials, as they came to be known did not ensue until sometime around 1692, where some 170 were accused, 19 hanged, one pressed to death, and four were to die in prison awaiting trial.
TREASURER’S REPORT:

I am continuing to send out newsletters by email and following up with a hard copy that includes the membership envelope. Some ideas to rejuvenate the organization are to advertise the organization, its mission and goals, which may possibly increase memberships, book sales, and attendance at the reunions. I believe it is time to look at accepting payments by getting a “Square” or using PayPal in addition to accepting checks and cash payments. 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, such as the 100th reunion. Additionally, it would also be beneficial to look at cloud-based systems to track membership and allow multiple users to access the data in a real-time fashion. I am currently considering Little Green Light software as it allows multiple users to be able to work on it and it can automate some processes such as sending out thank-you emails for membership, donations, or special gifts.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE AND REQUEST FOR ARTICLES / STORIES:

- We need to set up a membership committee to increase our membership base. 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 413-545-3374 or via email at kbgbandits@gmail.com or kim_graham@comcastspectacor.com.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kim Graham, Treasurer

OFFICERS:

PRESIDENT: Deanna Parsons Simons deanna.simons@cornell.edu
FIRST VICE PRESIDENT: Laura Pilsano Parsons lplsano@westfield.ma.edu
SECOND VICE PRESIDENT: Araina Heath whitestarris@gmail.com
THIRD VICE PRESIDENT: Nicholas Simons nsimons8165@gmail.com
SECRETARY: Trisa Parsons Palacio Dlaltrisa2cnn@yahoo.com
TREASURER/CLERK: Kim Graham kbgbandits@gmail.com
HISTORIAN: Gary Parsons parsons@pfawr.org
ASSISTANT HISTORIAN: Phillip Parsons, Esq. crisandphil@yahoo.com
WEBSITE ADMINISTRATOR: VACANT
WEBSITE LIAISON: Ken Silsby ksilsby66@gmail.com

DIRECTORS:

James E. Parsons;
Nancy Armstrong;
Kim Graham;
Dr. Kenneth T. Doran;
Lydia C. Omasta;
Martha Parsons Ethier;
Phillip G. Parsons Esq.;
Araina Brown Heath;
Cris Parsons;
Bob Heath
OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS MEETING RESERVATIONS:

Place: Luce Restaurant, 98 Washington Street, Middletown, CT 06457
Website: lucect.com; Phone 860-344-0222

Time: 6:30 PM
Date: July 20, 2018; Friday
Type: Ordering off menu
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:

Place: The Griswold Inn, 36 Main Street, Essex, CT 06426 / GRISWOLDINN.COM
Date: Saturday, July 21, 2018
Welcome: 10:30 AM
Meeting: 11:00 AM
Lunch: 12:00 PM Ordering off a Limited Lunch Menu
Price: $25.00

Train tour: 2:00 PM The Essex Steam Train offers an hour long ride
Price: Adults $19.00; Seniors $17.00; Children (2-11) $10.00.
Open Car: $7.00, First Class Car: $12.00/passenger, and Caboose $5.00.

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**

**Newsletter Format Preference:** check one  
- Hard Copy  
- Email Address:

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

**Membership Rates (per family)**  
- Life Membership $200.00  
- Regular Membership (Annually) $10.00  
- Sustaining Membership (Annually) $25.00

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**Name:**

**Address:**

**City, State:**

**Phone:**

**E-mail address:**

**Descendants of:**

---

**Membership (circle choice):**  
- Life $200  
- Regular $10  
- Sustaining $25  
- BOOK ORDERS  
  - $75 + $5 = $80  
  - Donation/Multi-book purchase price $65+$5 = $70  

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

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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.

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**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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**ORDER FORM**

**NAME:**  

**ADDRESS:**  

**CITY:** ___________________________  
**STATE**  
**ZIP CODE**

**NUMBER OF BOOKS**  
**TOTAL COST:** $________

**MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO THE PARSONS FAMILY ASSOCIATION AND MAIL THEM TO:**  
PARSONS FAMILY ASSOCIATION, INC, PO Box 603, Conway, MA 01341