

Burying Ground Preservation Group, Inc.

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HEDGES PARSONS BURYING GROUND, EAST HAMPTON, NY:

CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT & CONSERVATION TREATMENT REPORT

The Hedges Parsons Burying Ground, named for family patriarch Hedges Parsons (1783-1865), is located at 58 Old Stone Highway in Springs, Town of Easthampton, NY. The family burial site is one of several surviving in the hamlet of Springs, which was remote from the populated Village of East Hampton in the 18th and 19th century, prompting local residents like Hedges Parsons to set small parcels aside for burial purposes. Eleven individuals are known to be interred at the site, nine members of the Parsons family and two others – Cora Bell King and Jessie A. Burns – whose grave markers provide clues for their memorialization at the Parsons family site.

The burying ground is surrounded by a wooden picket fence painted white and supported on stone posts. The wood pickets have been restored; the stone posts, which are rough-hewn from granite, date from the mid-19th century and appear original to the site. Conservation treatment of the burying ground is important primarily because the names, birth and death dates, interrelationships among the deceased, and other genealogical data preserved on the monuments are irreplaceable records that require preserving in the context of East Hampton Town's history. Restoration and cleaning promote legibility of the markers and assists genealogists and historians in their work.

The project of surveying, recording, assessing conditions and undertaking treatment and repairs was conducted between June and August of 2020 when the monuments were cleaned, restored and photographed. Eleven headstones and seven footstones were conserved. The oldest headstone and footstone belong to Mr. Seth Parsons (1759-1792) and are carved in brownstone, while the remaining markers are carved from marble typical of the 19th century. The most recent stone is that of S. Foster Parsons (1839-1920). In addition, there are two granite markers that are broken pieces of a fence post; while included in the site survey, these stone blocks do not appear to be grave monuments.

Four of the markers required special techniques of conservation treatment; the remaining seven, all of which were tilted, soiled or discolored with bio-growth, required straightening and cleaning with a gentle detergent and the application of D/2, an anti-microbial agent. Restoration of the Hedges Parsons Burying Ground is now completed. The four monuments that called for special treatment – Rachel D. Parsons, Hedges Parsons, Jessie A. Burns and Seth Parsons – exhibited a range of conservation issues encountered in a typical 19th century family burying ground. In addition, preliminary research suggests the circumstances surrounding the burial of Cora Bell King (aged 11) and Jessie A. Burns (aged 47) in the Parsons family burying ground, but warrants further investigation.

Rachel D. Parsons & Hedges Parsons

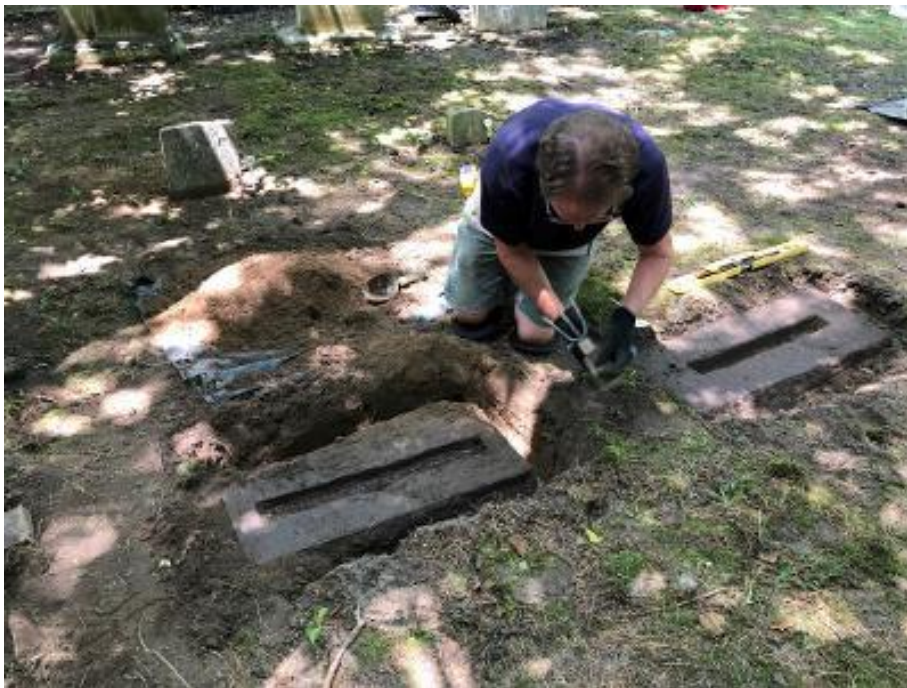
The two tall, white marble tablets had become dislocated from their brownstone bases and reset into the ground. Lacking adequate support due to their size and weight, the leaning tablets were vulnerable to falling and breaking. Soiling and bio-growth impaired legibility.

Treatment included hand-cleaning the tablets gently with water and detergent, and treating with an antimicrobial agent to eradicate discoloration due to bio-growth; excavating holes deep enough to reset the bases below grade; hoisting them with a heavy duty tripod to facilitate repositioning and

leveling; lowering and fastening the tablets to the bases; and backfilling and spraying with D/2 antimicrobial solution to brighten the stone surfaces by eradicating bio-growth.



Tablet before cleaning and resetting (left) and during conservation treatment with tripod (right).



Brownstone bases discovered after excavation required leveling before the tablets were reset.

Jessie A. Burns

The Burns monument, a tablet set on two bases of graduating sizes, had fallen and broken. Treatment began by lifting the pieces from the ground and probing for the lower base, which was hidden below grade. Each of the three pieces – the upper tablet section, lower tablet with base, and lower base – were hand-cleaned and realigned for drilling. Pins were inserted into the holes to strengthen the repairs, which employed structural adhesives. After reassembling, the monument was repositioned, the lower base being set into the ground with only the top showing as it would have appeared originally.



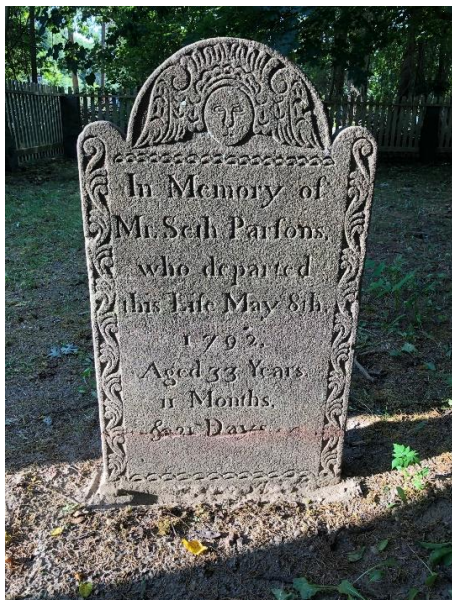
The tablet had fallen and broken, its lower section remaining attached to the upper base (above left). A lower brownstone base (upper right) was discovered by probing and was reset and pinned to the upper base. Final repairs were undertaken by pinning the tablet at the break, resetting and cleaning.

Seth Parsons

The oldest of the monuments, the Seth Parsons marker dates from 1792 and is carved from brownstone typical of mid- to late 18th century practice. The marker was broken and reset into the ground, concealing its lower section and consequently hiding a portion of the inscription. Repairs included removing the broken lower section, realigning and reattaching the two with structural adhesives, and resetting.



The marker before conservation (left) was upright but the inscription was partially buried. Probing revealed a large lower section (right), which was excavated and reattached to the upper section, allowing for the full inscription to be exposed after resetting (below).



Cora Bell King

Found on site leaning against a tree, the King marker memorializes a child who died weeks short of age 11. The monument's inscription identifies Cora Bell as the daughter of Remington and Lilla Belle King. Research documents her as their first child and dying at "The Springs" (Rattray, East Hampton History, p. 416). The King's second child, Selden Leroy, was also born in Springs but future children were born in Amagansett, where the family later relocated. Future research may document the relationship between the King family – which was prolific in Springs – and the Parsons family, and the reason why Cora Bell King was laid to rest in the Parsons family burying ground.



Jessie A. Burns

The largest monument at the site, and one of only two not bearing the name of Parsons, is that of Jessie A. Burns. The Records of the Town of East Hampton identify a "Miss Jessie A. Burns" who died of typhoid fever at age 46 (Vol. 5, 1905, p. 643). Historic maps of the Springs community do not identify the Burns family as local landowners. Future research may reveal more about the tragic circumstances surrounding her death and the reason for her burial in the Hedges Parsons Burying Ground.





Beers, Comstock & Cline. Map of Long Island. 1873. "East Hampton" (detail). The location of the "D. D. Parsons" house (circled above) is near the site of the Hedges Parsons Burying Ground. David Dimon Parsons (1811-1882) is interred at the site, as was his father Hedges Parsons (1783-1865) for whom the burial ground is named.