

Parsons Memorial School

Harrison, New York



*“Memories of Parsons”
~and~*

A Brief History of Parsons Memorial School

By Gene Westmoreland

~Forward~

June 25, 2011

This booklet is dedicated to the students, teachers, administrators and staff at Parsons Memorial School between 1948-1957.

As I have discovered, the memories of Parsons run deep and the history of the school reflects the history, and growth, of the Town of Harrison.

I have also become aware of the enormous stature of John Edward Parsons and hope this brief history will add to our pride in the school, to the memory of this generous and successful man and an appreciation for what his gift did for many generations of Harrison children.

My research brought me into contact with many wonderful people. Topping the list is Bob Torp, principal, and today's Parsons teachers and staff, along with people like Greg Ricci from the Harrison Historical Society and Richard Hourahan the Rye Historical Society's archivist, Emil D'Onofrio, Information Service Manager at the Port Chester/Rye Brook Public Library and the wonderful librarians at the Harrison Public Library. I also had the honor of meeting with David Parsons at "Lounsberry" the family estate in Rye.

Best of all was the opportunities to share stories and memories with former Parsons students and with my classmates from many years ago and visits with Miss Jean Kelly and Mrs. Frances Caputo-Viola two of our very early teachers.

The joy associated with our 50th Harrison High School Graduation Reunion (class of 1961) is tempered by the knowledge of lost friends, so a special note is made of childhood friends and Parsons classmates: Joe Angarano; Mike Ballone; Jean Ann Burrell; Stanley Carbone; Nat Carnavalla; Dan Castiglia; Butch DiBuono; Joe Nicita; Tom Robinson; Babes Rosenthal and Robert Underwood.

I hope you enjoy reading the booklet as much as I did putting it together.

Thanks for the memories,



Gene during his Parsons days.

Memories of Parsons

I'm not exactly sure why Parsons Memorial School has held such a vivid place in my memory but I doubt that I am alone. Our first school, our first friends, perhaps, but keeping in mind that we first saw Parsons as little kids, I think it has as much to do with the massive granite building itself – three stories high and such impressive architecture – almost “castle like”. The great lawn, the huge hallways and high ceilings, and the place where our brothers, sisters, cousins - perhaps even our parents - had attended and left a mark!

We would all be very proud of Parsons today. The huge windows are decorated much like we had done them with seasonal snowflakes, turkeys and sun flowers, but the interior of the building is a much brighter, happier place. The hallways remain remarkably wide but the cloak rooms are gone for much needed storage space and many of the kids are now provided with small hallway lockers. The classrooms themselves are much less formal. Gone are the rows of fixed desks with initials of siblings and earlier students carved into their wooden tops. In their place are colorful tables with child friendly movable chairs. Each table might accommodate 4 or 5 kids and each room seems bursting with colorful teaching devices. Gone too, is the use of the blackboards that we regularly helped clean - or occasionally wash - and gone is the chalk dust that left our clothes and hands dusty. In their place are Smart Boards which duplicates the teacher's computer monitor and opens up the whole world to the kids.

The classrooms are manned by friendly and energetic teachers and aids who seem far less distracted by whispering kids and gum chewing and more determined than ever to inspire the imagination. Smiling faces are everywhere. The big windows bring in lots of light, and brightly colored walls, modern overhead lighting and light colored floor coverings help accentuate the wide halls and create a cheerful atmosphere.

I guess I'm not surprised that as a kid I never noticed - or paid attention to - the inscription on the cornerstone of the oldest part of the building which was laid in 1897 in memory to the very short lives of John Edward Parsons' first three children. You may recall that the school was called Halstead Avenue School when we started, but a “petition” in the early 50's rightfully restored the name Parsons Memorial when we were in the fourth grade. The building was dedicated on February 12th – Lincoln's birthday – 1898, and classes were started at Parsons that same year which creates some interesting symmetry because, when we started our half-day kindergarten classes in September of 1948, it marked a 50th anniversary! So as 2011 marks the 50th Anniversary of our

graduation from Harrison High School in June of 1961, September 1948 marked the 50th Anniversary of the opening of classes at Parsons Memorial School in 1898.

1898! It might as well have been 1492 or 1776 to a five year old, because the 50 years between the opening of the school and our first day of class was a span of time far too big to comprehend. Heck, World War II had been over for barely three years and THAT was already “history” to our older brothers, sisters and cousins in high school! But the 50 years since Harrison High graduation, where did that go? We left the graduation ceremony on Feeley Field in a June thunderstorm a while ago – but 50 years! To many, JFK, the Vietnam War, the Beatles, all feel like yesterday, well maybe not like yesterday – but 50 years!

Almost everyone in our class was born in 1943. Our parents were part of the Greatest Generation living through the Great Depression as well as World War II. When we started school some of our families did not own a car, fewer had a TV and for most our first telephones were pre-rotary, some with party lines. We walked to school, alone or with a best friend, some even sprinted home for lunch provided by our stay-at-home moms.

The outside of the beautiful stone building looks remarkably the same as it did 60+ years ago. New, and better, doors and windows for sure and a few handicap ramps and safety railings have been added - gone are some of the fire escapes. Gone too, along with much innocence, are the many entrances we used. No more Girls and Boys entrances, just one closely monitored entry point on the north side of the building, under the bell tower, facing Broadway and directly opposite Maple Avenue. For many years, and until his recent passing, a gentle, grandfatherly, “security guard” welcomed each kid, each morning, many, if not most, by their first name. The kids have a very short walk, perhaps 20 feet, from the car drop off area - a crescent shaped “one-way” driveway that has been created off Broadway for this purpose. Some kids arrive by bus, virtually no one rides a bike to school and only those who live within a block or two of the school walk – and all those are escorted by a parent.

The school door opens at 8:00 AM but kids trickle in between 8:00 and 8:50 AM. No more first bell, second bell, followed by dozens of kids dashing for their assigned doors, squeezing up the staircase then dispersing to their homeroom for attendance, pledge of allegiance and morning announcements. Classes start at 8:55 AM but the 8:00 AM opening allows parents to drop off their kids before heading off to work themselves. During that hour the kids assemble in or around the cafeteria – the cafeteria is in the same place, just busier – and provides a bit of high level child care.

The big outside change is due to the automobile. My guess is that in our day many, if not most, of the teachers and staff lived local enough to get to the school by foot. For sure some of my teachers were also neighbors: Marie and Anne Devlin, Miss Vassalo, Mr. Metcalf and Miss Risoli all lived within a few blocks of my house on Henry Avenue. Automobiles mean parking lots so a portion of the field in the back of the building has been paved providing parking for about 40 cars. Additional parking has been created, on what had been lawn, in the front of the building between the sidewalk that leads from Halstead Avenue (opposite what had been Murray Chevrolet) towards the old bike rack and the narrow driveway that bordered Dr. Pennock's old house/office on Halstead on the southeastern corner of the property.

Aside from the recent planting of saplings, to replace the majestic trees that once lined that walkway, the front of the school looks very familiar. The front lawn looks well cared for and even larger and the tall flagpole looks enormous, perhaps because the mature trees are gone, and the statue of Christopher Columbus looks as grand as ever. While I grew to learn that our friend and classmate Doug DiPietro's father Barney was in the business, I did not realize that Mr. DiPietro had provided the engraving, along with the marble monument on which the statue stands. I was reminded by Ernie Ortiz that we were marched out from class to attend the dedication of the statue on Columbus Day in 1949. Columbus still looks determined, with Old World maps clutched in his left hand, he points boldly towards the New World with his right.

I was fortunate that today's Principal Robert Torp took a bit more than an hour out of his busy schedule to walk me through the building. The principal's office and those of other school administrators is located immediately to the left of the "new" main entrance and occupy what had been Mr. Metcalf's "Industrial Arts" classroom. While the boys will all remember "shop class" and Mr. Metcalf, I doubt many of the boys, if any, knew the location of the girls "Home Ec(onomics)" classroom and what Miss Bulivant and the girls were up to while we sawed and nailed slabs of balsam or pine. I was not blessed with the kind of skills necessary to create anything really good but did bring home a wooden lamp that my parents proudly used for many, many years. Across the foyer from what had been the shop class was the Science Room – do you remember Theresa Viscomi? Apparently she was still teaching at the school when a fire started in the Science Room and damaged much of that part of the building in 1974. It may have been at that time that the Administrative Offices were moved to Mr. Metcalf's shop and the science room went from Bunsen burners; test tubes and Pietri dishes to a kindergarten classroom.

The bell tower is as impressive as ever and the bell, which was used regularly until 2008, still works although it is seldom, if ever, used today. The steps leading to the bell

tower once led us to the Library. The Library has been moved but vivid memories of the room remain. While I didn't struggle with reading as a kid, there were some that did and it is wonderful to see all the efforts and resources in place today to help prepare kids for their future education and career. The old library is now an exercise room for the youngest kids, filled with a lot of fun looking stuff – very different from the Exercise Room Coach Fiore had for use by the Boys on the third floor outside the old auditorium. In the basement, two floors below the old library, is a cheery Faculty/Staff break room which replaced a dungeon like storage area – every nook and cranny of the school is used

A very sunny and familiar walkway connects this oldest part of the school to the main classroom area which was added to the original three-classroom building in 1908. The walkway has a few commemorative plaques and ancient class photos of current teachers and staff who attended Parsons, some during our era. In our 1961 High School Yearbook we have a couple of class pictures exactly like the ones on display, and I was pleased that I was able to identify a handful of kids for the principal.

At the end of this windowed walkway that overlooks the bike rack and front lawn, you go down a couple steps to what would have been Mr. Marshall's office on the right of a wide stairwell and the Guidance Office on the left. I'm certain everyone remembers Mr. Marshall, who started his 19 year run as Parsons' principal during our 2nd grade year. He was preceded by Miss McDonald, who probably met with our parents when we started our kindergarten year. Principal Torp told me that the old intercom speaker had only recently been removed from the wall just inside the principal's office but I was impressed and privileged to listen in as students read the morning announcements, over the new system, then led their classmates with the pledge of allegiance and a few upbeat seasonal songs.

This is the wing that housed our kindergarten, first and second year classes, and it looks much as it always did – just livelier. Keeping in mind that we went through the Berlin Airlift, the Korean War and the beginning of the Cold War at Parsons, it should be no surprise that I remember so vividly the Air-Raid Drills and Fire Drills. Fire drills would take us out of doors – perhaps even taking us down a fire escape (which I enjoyed) to the back of the building (overlooking the playground) or the front near the bike rack. Air-Raid Drills took us down to the basement and boiler room area. I seem to recall air-raid drills when we simply hid under our desks – boy I'm glad we dodged a real attack!

As I said earlier, every inch of space is used at today's Parsons, so the boiler room hallway we sought for protection from an A-Bomb or an H-Bomb now houses the music room and math labs and other specialty teaching areas. I learned that 25% of today's Parsons' students are Japanese, that (ESL) English as a Second Language is taught regularly and that all students study Spanish from their early years.

Even the tiny Boys Locker Room, a short walk down a narrow hallway from the Boiler Room, has been converted to working space. They have sealed off an old “gang shower” we boys used following intramurals and the locker area now fulfills academic needs. That narrow hallway led to the staircase and eventually down to the gym which looks much like it always did. The gym was also the site of “assemblies” (I seem to remember a magic show), musical “productions” and annual school plays. I even starred in one – by accident. Far too shy to volunteer for an actual part in the “dramatic” play I took on “stage hand” duties instead – but was assigned as the “understudy” for the lead character played by my good friend Tom Robinson. Sure enough, on the day of the show, Tom came down with a cold and I was now the lead – but allowed to carry the script – as I fumbled my way through the production. The stage looks the same and a small set of bleachers remains folded into the opposite wall. The floor boards look new, but lines on the floor and equipment suggest a very different gym curriculum.

Mr. Torp and I circled back upstairs to the second floor classrooms which, from the familiar hallways, seem to have changed little. I do recall vividly Miss Chipman’s nurse’s office because it was the site of several inoculations, but it may best be remembered for our Polio vaccinations, a series of three shots. We’d be lined up in the hallway and walked through the nurses’ office, and there was more than a few terrified students. Jonas Salk perfected the cure for polio in time for us, but I’m sure we all know, or remember, people - our age - who were not so lucky.

I’m sure we can all recall the third floor of this southeastern portion of the building which is more active than ever. Boys will remember Coach Fiore’s “Exercise Room” where we would be lined up around the room, counted off 1,2,3,4 then called out (“all #1’s to the center of the room”) to do push-ups, sit-ups, chin-ups and leg-er-roos – sort of a deep knee bend on one foot. Some of the boys, like Butch DiBuono and Rusty Valentino, were stars in this room while others hated the tension created as we struggled to produce an acceptable minimum number of “reps.” No talking was allowed and punishable with extra push-ups or by slaps on the rump administered by one of our bigger, but always empathetic, classmates.

Across the landing from the Exercise Room had been our Music Room where instrument lessons and practice took place, but the third floor had been dominated by the old auditorium. Little is left to suggest the former use of this room and its current tenants (teachers and staff) were surprised to learn that the upper level of their duplex office setting was once a stage and that fixed seating had occupied what is now several offices. None of us will ever forget Gwendolyn Brown, our music teacher and “theatrical director” who seemed, to me, to be right out of “Gone With the Wind.” I was among those in the

rag-tag McNamara's Band and part of an (annual?) Spring Pageant or St. Patrick's Day show for our proud parents. Even now, some 60 years later, when March 17th rolls around I look forward to hearing Bing Crosby's (slightly better) version of *McNamara's Band* and remember that performance - and Miss Brown.

Some may not remember, or ever even noticed, the stairwells leading to third floor in the other wing of the building. I'm certain that the gabled third floor of this 1928 addition to the school was used when the building housed the entire (K-12) school system in our parent's day (it was K-8 for us and K-5 today) but in 1940 when the "new" high school ("our" high school and present LMK Middle School) was opened those classrooms became excess and have remained unused since. I'll admit today that my curiosity took me up to this abandoned part of the school a number of times. Today the third floor in that part of the building is fenced and pad-locked off to prevent curiosity seekers and accidents.

We could all probably name one, or more, of our teachers who had a profound effect on our lives – for some it might have been Miss Brown, or Miss Viscomi, who taught us about the planets and constellations, opened up the wonders of the natural world and showed us the magic and power of magnets, or Miss Rente or Mr. Flint, who may have lit the artistic chord some have enjoyed their entire life, or Miss Rupert, who tried to bring life to our history books - I think I still have her homemade history book on the Town of Harrison.

For me it was Fred Fiore. He was a four-sport star athlete at Harrison High and NYU (back when they played big-time football) and an accomplished golfer having won a number of golf championships at Knollwood Country Club. He loved kids and was able to be patient with all the boys and inspire the athletes. He was respectful, even courtly, to the girls and disciplined his PE classes the way you might expect in the early '50s. He talked about hygiene and the dangers of smoking and was creative, doing his best to turn exercise into a game.

While today's Parsons' students look and act happy – even in the classroom – many of my fun times came before class or during lunch hour. This was the time we were allowed to participate in what is now referred to as street games. For the girls, it may have been jumping rope, jacks or hop-scotch. For the boys, it meant a variety of games involving baseball cards or sprinting around or through the large rhododendron bush the front driveway circled. The bush was thick enough to provide tunnels and pathways for exciting games of tag or hide-and-seek or to simply hide. As we became the "older" guys on campus, lunch hour provided time for a quick and spirited softball or football game on the back field. Another happy memory was a field trip arranged for through Mr. Carpenter,

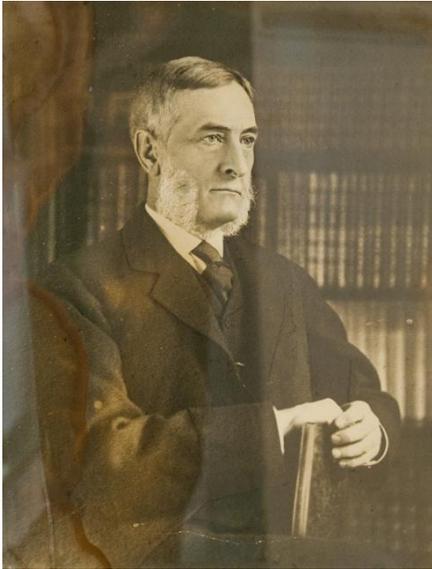
Martha's father, who I thought was employed at the brand new United Nations building in New York City.

Eighth grade for the HHS Class of 1961 will always remain unique in Harrison education history. Construction was nearing completion on the new wing at the high school (today's LMK Middle School), which would provide a Junior High School (with a pool!) for students who followed. The eighth grade classes from both Parsons and the Harrison Avenue School were divided into thirds and the combined students from the two schools spent a third of the year at the High School. In this way we got a chance to meet (at least some) of the other half of what would become the Harrison High School Class of 1961. Not sure how it was determined who would go when (alphabetical?), but mine was the last of the "tri-mesters". I enjoyed the "experiment", bus rides et al, and felt like a bit of a veteran when we started our freshman high school year in the fall of 1957 on our way to our June 1961 graduation.



Eighth grade: "Combined" group on top; Parsons in the middle; Harrison Ave. on the bottom.

Who was John Edward Parsons? (1829-1915)



John Edward Parsons

1898 - The School Opens

“**A** Grand Monument”; “A Red Letter Day for Harrison”. Such were the headlines on February 19, 1898 as the area’s weekly newspaper, the *Port Chester Enterprise*, reported that “the Parsons Memorial School House had been presented by John E. Parsons, the generous donor, to the district, and was dedicated to the cause of education”.

“The day saw the consummation of many hard struggles and much patient labor over five or six years...The difficulties were all surmounted, and by the generosity of John E. Parsons, and in memory of his three children who died many years ago, this beautiful building was dedicated last Saturday (February 12, 1898).”

A grand groundbreaking ceremony, and the laying of the cornerstone, had taken place just eight months earlier, on June 5, 1897, on what could only be described as another “red letter day” for Harrison. On that day the Board of Education, the Treasurer of the District, the teachers and some 90 school children assembled at 3:30 pm at the Harrison Fire Company Hall. The Fire House and Hall were located on Calvert Street (diagonally across from the Calvert Apartments). On September 5, 1896 the Union Free School District No. 6 of Harrison and Rye had leased the first floor of Fireman’s Hall for \$800 a year and, with some second hand desks and books and a cloth “blackboard,” classes were begun there on September 17, 1896 - with 99 pupils enrolled.

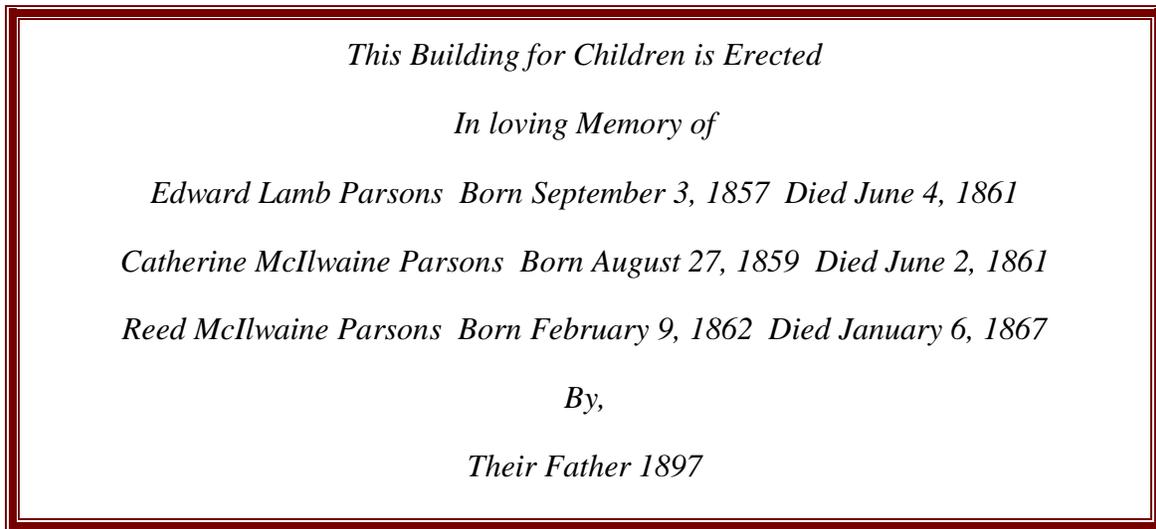
“76 Trombones Led the Big Parade”

The trombones may not have numbered 76 but led by the talented Steinmetz Band, the “fully equipped” Harrison Fire Company under the command of Fire Chief Millek, escorted the Parsons’ family, met up with the Board of Education and children en-route along Harrison Avenue, crossed the railroad tracks, turned, right onto Halstead Avenue, and triumphantly led them all to the site for the new school.

“The laying of the cornerstone was performed by two-year old John E. Parsons Morgan, grandson of Mr. Parsons, who was assisted by members of the Board of Education. An opening address and prayer were followed by the children singing “*America*” and the Steinmetz Band playing one of their stirring patriotic marches. The

children decorated the cornerstone with flowers and the ceremony concluded at 4:40 pm with cheers for Mr. Parsons. The children were then escorted back to the Fire House and had been dismissed.” Small town America at its best!

Mr. Parsons had been brief with his comments but said, “For our own welfare, and for the welfare of the nation, it is necessary that the foundation of these children’s character be built in true knowledge.” When you *note the birth and death dates* of the children, the inscription on the cornerstone becomes very touching:



It must have been a very emotional day for Mr. Parsons, whose wife of some 40 years had passed away the previous year, to dedicate the school to his first three (of 11) children all of whom had passed away 30-35 years prior - all under the age of five!

His wife’s passing – less than two months prior - and the memory of the loss of their three young children, must have contributed to the decision Mr. Parsons made on October 15, 1896, for a remarkable gift to the new Harrison and Rye School District No. 6. At their previous meeting (September 1896) the Harrison Board of Trustees had taken action to acquire close to five acres on Halstead Avenue at Summer Street (today’s Broadway) as a school site. A tax of \$5,500 had been approved and covered the cost of the property – with \$250 to spare!

At that October 15th meeting, Mr. Parsons made a formal offer in writing to “put upon this land a building composed of brick and stone, or of stone, the said building to cost not less than \$15,000 free of expense to the school district. He offered to donate \$30,000 toward the project of erecting a new school.” Even today, 115 years later, a donation of \$30,000 would be considered extraordinary, but consider that in “2011 dollars” his 1896 donation of \$30K might equate to millions!

Quite a Man!

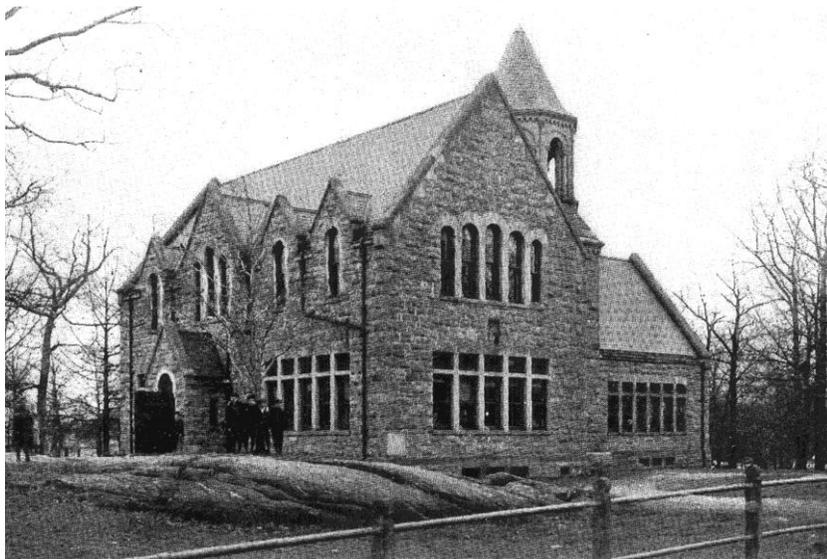
Mr. Parsons was not new to philanthropy. A resident of Rye, he and his family, gifted the City of Rye with the historic Square House where General George Washington had slept during the American Revolution, the city's library and fire house and, in some years, he is said to have given away more than half his large income to charity. Following his gift of the Parsons Memorial School, he was a founder and the first president of the New York Cancer Hospital – today's Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. Quite a man!

Construction on the school moved quickly and the formal dedication ceremony “the Red Letter Day” was conducted on Lincoln's Birthday 1898, already a celebrated holiday.

“The building was a sensation. ‘T’ shaped with a tower at the north angle. It was built of native granite with trimmings of Indian limestone. The granite was quarried on the premises. At the left of the side door (today's main entrance) was a plate bearing the district title, “Union Free School, Joint District No. 6, Harrison and Rye”.

“On the first floor were three classrooms and apartments for teachers and trustees. In the principal's classroom are desks for 36 students; in the Intermediate are 35 desks and there are 49 in the primary room.”

“A stone and iron stairway leads to a second story which is entirely occupied by an assembly room for school examinations, lectures etc. and has a seating capacity of 100. When needs of the school require it, the assembly room will be partitioned off into two class rooms making five classrooms with a total capacity of 220. In the basement are separate play rooms and toilet rooms for boys and girls.”



1898: Main entrance on left. Classrooms were left and right of main entrance. Third classroom became Miss Viscomi's science room on the right. Second floor was for lectures and exams. Boys and girls playrooms and toilets occupied the basement.

“Everything is modern in every detail and expense has not been considered. A renowned architectural firm and the area’s best known and responsible builders were engaged who had experience with many public building, both locally and in other cities. The new school building was first class in every respect. To top it off a baby grand piano was purchased by the Board of Education for the assembly hall.”

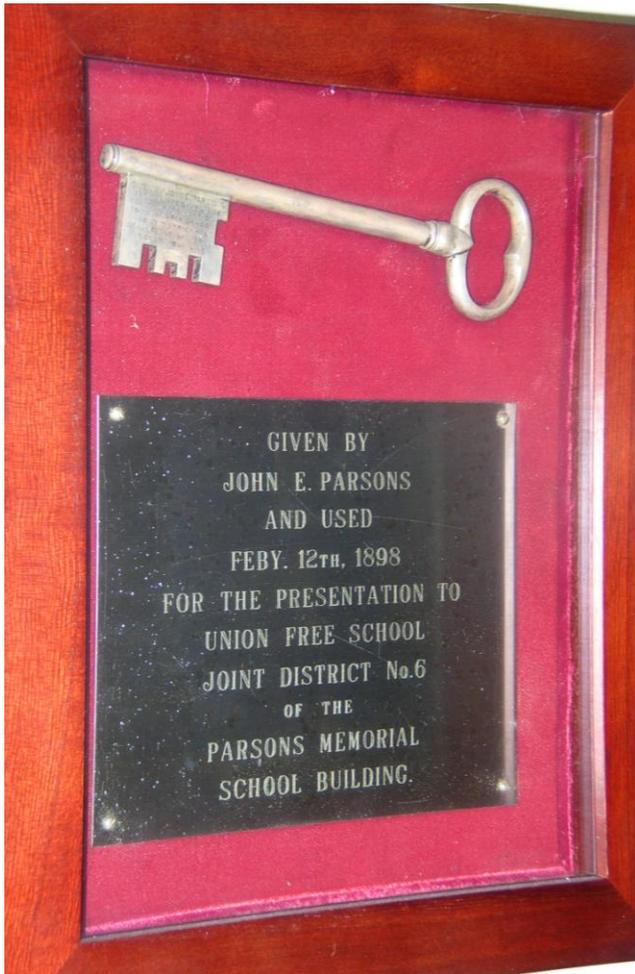
The Dedication Program was attended by almost 200 people – obviously a SRO crowd. The children were assembled in the play rooms in the basement and from there marched to the assembly room. After they were seated all the remaining space was filled by parents and visitors.

William R. Bull, President of the Board of Education, presided and the entire Board was present. The program was opened by the school children singing “*Our School*” which was followed by a prayer. Mr. Bull then introduced Mr. John Edward Parsons.

Now 69 years of age, Mr. Parsons had long been regarded as one of America’s most prominent lawyers. He had graduated third in his class from NYU in 1848 and from Yale Law School shortly thereafter. He was a founding member, and later President, of the New York City Bar Association. He would successfully argue a case in front of the U.S. Supreme Court representing the American Sugar Refining Company (today’s Domino Sugar Company). He had battled the “Tweed ring” as one of the original members of the NY City Bar Association formed to combat corruption in the courts. He was a prominent member of a number of New York Institutions including the American Museum of Natural History and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He was a long time member of the Board of Trustees, and served a record tenure as their president, at Cooper Union (College). Indeed, he was quite a man!

Parsons was said to have an unerring memory, keen intelligence and used flawlessly logical presentation of cases in the courtroom, but was said to be “cold and formal” with others – but not on February 12, 1898 when he spoke to the children about his boyhood and recalled the names of many of his school mates: the Purdy’s; the Halstead’s and the Haviland’s, names that were, and are, still familiar in the vicinity.

He reminded the audience that education was essential. “The question presented is not what shall we do with them (the children), but rather what they will do with us.” “That young people who are growing up shall be taught is just as important to my interests as it is to them and their interests.” “I have been glad of the opportunity of associating with it (the school building), the memory of children of my own whose remains rest a short distance from this spot.”



The ceremonial key presented by John E. Parsons is on display today in the Administration Office.

And finally, “All that remains is that I shall now turn over to the appropriate authorities the building, the construction of which has given so much pleasure to me. As I cannot deliver it physically, I have prepared a symbol and with this key I put the building in charge of the joint school district and the two towns.”

He then presented to Mr. Bull a large silver key on which was engraved: “Given by John E. Parsons and used February 12, 1898 for the presentation to Union Free School District No. 6 of the Parsons Memorial School building”.

Six-year-old Bertha Coxe thanked Mr. Parsons with a few simple words and joined the rest of the children to sing “*The School House Dedication*” accompanied on the new piano by Mrs. G.W. Hall.

Charles R. Skinner, State

Superintendent of Public Instruction, remarked that he had seen many school houses open but “none have impressed me more than this”, and “in building this beautiful building he has erected to himself a living monument, as long as it shall stand. In giving to you this beautiful building he has shown not only his love for little children but also for his state, his flag and his country!”

Chief R.R. Willets thanked Mr. Parsons for all he had done for the Harrison Fire Company - as he had also been one of their major benefactors for several years - and said he knew the thoughts in every fireman’s heart (indeed the entire audience) was “God Bless John E. Parsons”. What a legacy!

Noel Blakeman, filling in for Assemblyman Jared Sandford said, “An open school, free to all, is the surest safeguard to the future prosperity of the nation.” The Gods must have smiled - perhaps joined in - as the assembled group sang “*America*”, Rev. Mr. Grosvenor pronounced the benediction and the program ended – and a new era for education in Harrison began.



John Edward Parsons was a most prominent New York attorney and resident of New York City and Rye. He had a wonderful summer home in Lenox, Massachusetts. He was one of the founders, and the first president, of today's Sloan Kettering Memorial Hospital; he was a founder and early president of the NY Bar Association; he successfully argued a case in front of the United States Supreme Court and was a strong supporter of public education. He was a major benefactor to both the Rye and Harrison Fire Departments and gifted the City of Rye with the "Square House" where General George Washington stayed during the Revolutionary War. His estate in Rye "Lounsbury Farm" (left) is located on the Boston Post Road, immediately south of and adjacent to the Rye Golf Club. Rye High School is located on Parsons Street in Rye and Parsons Street in Harrison was the childhood home for five of our classmates (Ernie Fiore, Marilyn Burrell, Georgia Tenore, Ann DiBicarri and Joey Argarano). Mr. Parsons' son Herbert was a United States congressman from 1905-1911.



What's in a Name?

With such a glorious beginning and the noted generosity of John E. Parsons it seems inconceivable that the school name would ever change – but we can all recall that for our first few years the school was called the Halstead Avenue School. As late as October 1952 official school documents, and press releases to The Daily Item, provided by the Board of Education, referred to the “Halstead Avenue School,” with no reference to Parsons.

In a 1998 story about the school, Lynne Cascio, a staff writer for The Daily Item on the occasion of the building centennial celebration said, “For a while the school was called Halstead Avenue School” and suggested that this had been the case “in the 30’s and 40’s” and there is plenty of anecdotal support for that belief. In a 1993 Daily Item story Carol Tateo Geary recalled “discovering the cornerstone behind some bushes” and that “she and friends successfully petitioned the school district to bring back the original name.”

'Parsons' Name Voted For Halstead

Harrison's Halstead Avenue School, so-called for many years because of its location and convenient usage, will revert to its original designation as the Parsons Memorial School, according to last night's unanimous decision of the Harrison Board of Education at the Harrison High School library. Joseph A. Vassallo, president of the Board, conducted the meeting.

The recommendation was made by School Supt. Louis M. Klein, who followed his monthly report with an exhibition of several old records that have been given by Roy M. Davis, noted amateur photographer and lifelong Harrison resident. The records indicate that John E. Parsons paid for the building and gave it to "School District 6 of Harrison and Rye" in memory of his deceased children.

The Parsons Memorial School was dedicated Feb. 12, 1898 and the Board agreed that the name has never been changed, as it approved Dr. Anthony V. Sisca's motion that the institution revert to its original designation. Among the Davis gifts was a clipping from the Port Chester Enterprise of June 12, 1897, describing the laying of the cornerstone.

Daily Item, January 9, 1953

Carol remembers standing outside the Harrison Post Office and some of the local retail shops collecting signatures. When the list became impressively long they presented their petition to Town Hall who must have passed it along to the Harrison Board of Education. At the January 1953 Board of Ed meeting Superintendent of Schools Louis M. Klein recommended to the Board that they "revert" to the schools original designation (Parsons Memorial School). Supported by photos from Harrison resident and noted amateur photographer Roy M. Davis the Board, led by President Joseph A. Vassallo, was unanimous in support of the proposal. There decision was noted in *The Daily Item* on January 9, 1953.

There had never been a formal motion to drop the name Parsons Memorial – it just happened. Beginning in 1912 the building served children from K-12 and the growing number of high school graduates were said to be from "Harrison High School". In 1925 the *Harrison Avenue School* opened joining the town's other elementary schools: the *Lake Street School* and the *Underhill Avenue School* and a few years later by the *Purchase Street School* and the *Pleasant Ridge (Road) School*. At that January 1953 meeting

the Board noted that it had been in that spirit that Parsons was simply, but regularly and officially, referred to as the Halstead Avenue School.

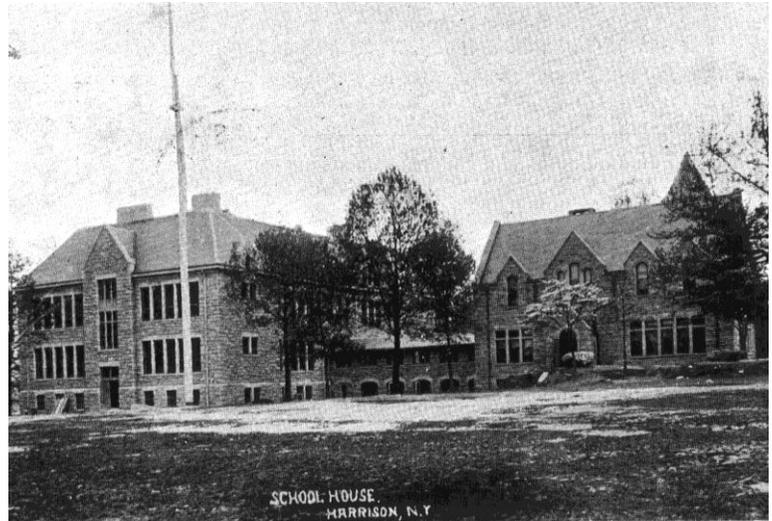
Whatever the reason, it was only right to correct the "error" and properly live up to the 1898 dedication comment that "as long as this building stands" it will be a living monument to John E. Parsons. Kudos to the Board of Education - and thanks to Carol Tateo and friends.

The First 50 Years

There is not much documentation of the first 50 years at Parsons Memorial but it seems safe to say that the population explosion of the New York suburbs certainly contributed to the two major expansions to Parsons over the 30 years following its glorious birth.

The 1908 Expansion

Recalling that Harrison had 99 children registered for classes at the Fire Company Hall in 1896, it is safe to assume that Parsons opened in 1898 with close to a capacity enrollment. My guess is that the assembly hall designed and used for “examinations and lectures” was probably converted into “permanent” classrooms before too long and the building capacity of 220 was surely challenged soon after, which undoubtedly led to the 1908 expansion. This wing included approximately 16 classrooms on the first two floors, along with modern administrative office space, the future Home Ec classroom, the heating plant and delivery and receiving area. The top floor housed an auditorium, which could seat the entire student body and a state of the art health room and music room of later years.



The cornerstone and the school as it looked after the 1908 expansion.

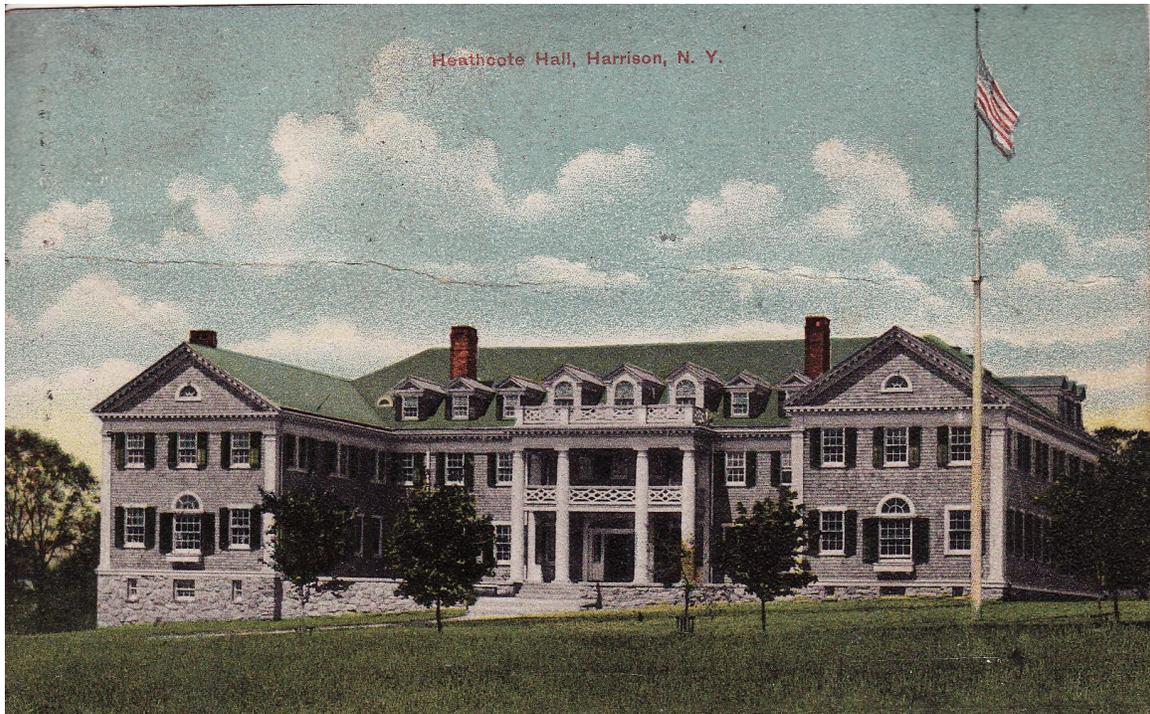
First High School Classes in Harrison

On December 21, 1889, largely through the efforts of Principal Forrest T. Shutts, Parsons Memorial School was admitted by the New York State Regents Department as a registered “Junior School”. Two years later in September of 1891, Mr. Shutts introduced material for a one-year high school course – the first offered in Harrison.

Despite these efforts, prior to 1912, Harrison students who went on to public high school went to Mamaroneck, Rye Neck, Port Chester or White Plains. Keep in mind that in those days a high school degree might have been the equivalent of today’s Bachelor’s Degree. People of means sent their kids to private schools and Westchester County and Harrison provided several options. One of the grand private schools in Harrison was Heathcote Hall, and later the Kohut School, a 10 acre campus located on South Road about a quarter mile from the north end of today’s city bound Metro-North parking lot. Opened

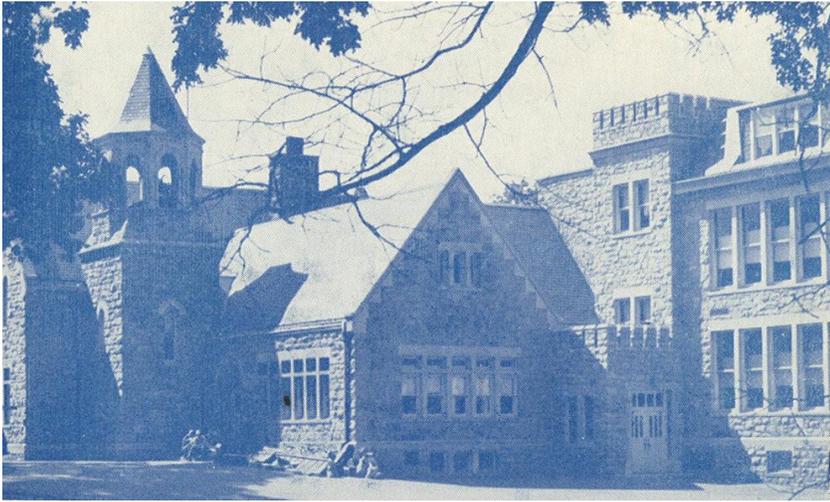
around 1900, Heathcote moved out in 1920 to merge with the Rye Country (Day) School and Kohut moved in, relocating from Riverdale, in the Bronx, to the Harrison site.

The Kohut School (and Heathcote before them) offered classes from kindergarten right through college entrance until December 1955 when the school burned to the ground. The head master and many of the students moved over to another of the area's elegant private schools, the Marvel Academy, which was located about 1 mile away, at the intersection of Osborne Road and the Boston Post Road (across the street from today's Osborne School).



The stately Heathcote Hall – later occupied by the Kohut School, was located on South Street. It burned to the ground in 1955.

When George U. Hill became principal at Parsons in 1908 there was no high school in Harrison. In September of 1910 a two-year course was started and in 1911 another year was added. That same year Harrison became a Senior High School and by June 1912 Harrison graduated its first class of six students.



The final Expansion in 1928

The Town of Harrison and Parsons Memorial continued to grow through the “teens” and into the Roaring 20’s. Theresa McGowan, who entered Parsons around 1907, recalled in a 1998 interview, that the third floor auditorium was used every school day. She remembered how students filed up to the top floor every morning to sing, “My Country ‘Tis of Thee” with the principal.

Beginning in 1912, Harrison children could go from kindergarten right through high school at Parsons but, once again, the growing population created crowded conditions (in 1927 the old auditorium was divided by curtains and used for additional classroom space) and called for another expansion - the final expansion to the school - in 1928. This is the wing that contains the cafeteria, the gymnasium and three full floors containing approximately 18 additional classrooms.

Harrison continued to grow. In 1920 there were 88 high school grade students. By 1930 that number was up to 191; up again to 329 in 1935 and, according to the 1941 HHS Yearbook, the number had swelled to 479 (this number may have included 8th graders) by 1940. If K-7 averaged only 40 kids per year the Parsons school building must have bursting at its seams - accommodating more than 700 students!

Parsons had served students from K-12 from 1912 until 1940 but the tremendous population growth led to the laying of a cornerstone for the town’s first stand-alone high school (our high school and the present LMK Middle School) in 1939; classes began there in 1940 and 88 students graduated in June of 1941. In 1974 the cornerstone was laid for today’s central high school, which serves the entire town of Harrison, classes 9-12. Parsons Memorial and other elementary schools serve K-5, and LMK grades 6-8.

Mr. Marshall and our Teachers



Roswell Marshall came to Harrison from Rochester, New York in 1937. He was a graduate of the University of Rochester and taught high school English and Dramatics in Harrison when the high school was still in the Parsons Memorial building. He was appointed principal of the “Parsons Memorial Elementary School” in 1950, where he developed extracurricular programs such as sports teams, dramatics and public speaking. He also ran the summer school.

Even as kids, I think most of us recognized that Mr. Marshall was a special guy – and we were right! He served as the Parsons principal until 1969 then spent two years as Louis M. Klein’s Assistant Superintendent before retiring in 1970. He was elected to the Harrison Board of Education in 1972 and served until 1978.

His civic work in Harrison is the stuff of legends. He was the Executive Secretary of the Harrison Chamber of Commerce from 1970-1983; he was a charter member of the Harrison Rotary Club; he was the Boys Scouts Commissioner and Chairman of the Harrison District and mentored boys working towards their Eagle Scout rank for many years.

He was the Director of the Continuing Education for Adults in the late 50’s; received the Silver Bowl for Scouting; the B’Nai B’Rith award for outstanding community work and the Paul Harris Fellowship from the Rotary Club. In 1983 Mr. Marshall was chosen “Harrison’s First Citizen of the Year”.

There were stories about how Mr. Marshall would give needy school children money for lunch, and long after their Parsons’ days, young adults would seek him out for advice and encouragement if they were struggling in college or the workplace. More than one person believed that, “there are many successful people from Harrison who have gone on to bigger and better things because of his kindness and compassion as a leader in the Harrison School System.” We had Mr. Marshall pegged pretty well.

Our teachers 1948-1957



Jesse Anderson



Geneviese Bauer



Joseph Berino



Gwendolyn Brown - Music



Wilma Bulivant - Home Ec.



Frances Caputo - First Grade



Louise Chipman - Nurse



Dorothy Cleary - First Grade



Freda Cole - Fourth Grade



Natalie Cooper - English



Edna Cornell - First Grade



Marie Devlin - Fifth Grade



Fred Fiore - Gym



Iris Friedgen - Girls Gym



Mary Hannon - Kindergarten



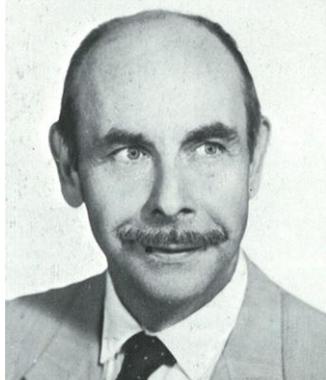
Jean Kelly - Second Grade



Anna Kiernan - Third Grade



Mary Ellen Marrinan - Fourth Grade



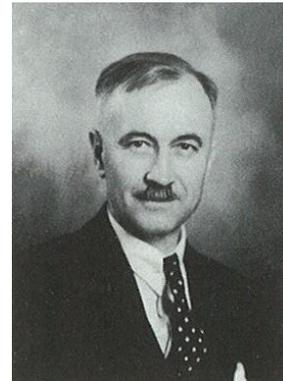
John Metcalfe - Industrial Arts



Katherine Murray - Fifth Grade



Jean Novello - Third Grade



Elmer Pennock, MD - School Doctor



Phil Perrone - Custodian



Myra Phillips - First Grade



Mary Quinn



Dorothy Roberts - Librarian



Margaret Rupert - History



Doris Schoenof - Fourth Grade



Jean Spinazzola – Secretary to Principal



Theresa Viscomi - Science

Camera Shy

Juliette Albanese

Ruth Caricati – Kindergarten

Doris Ceccon – Third Grade

Anne Devlin – Secon Grade

Robert Flint – Art

Mary Fulbeck – Sixth Grade

Mary (Vassalo) Galasso – Second Grade

Agnes McDonald – Principal until 1950

Constance McGowan – Sixth Grade

Marie Rente - Art

Regina Sullivan – First Grade

Parsons Photo Gallery

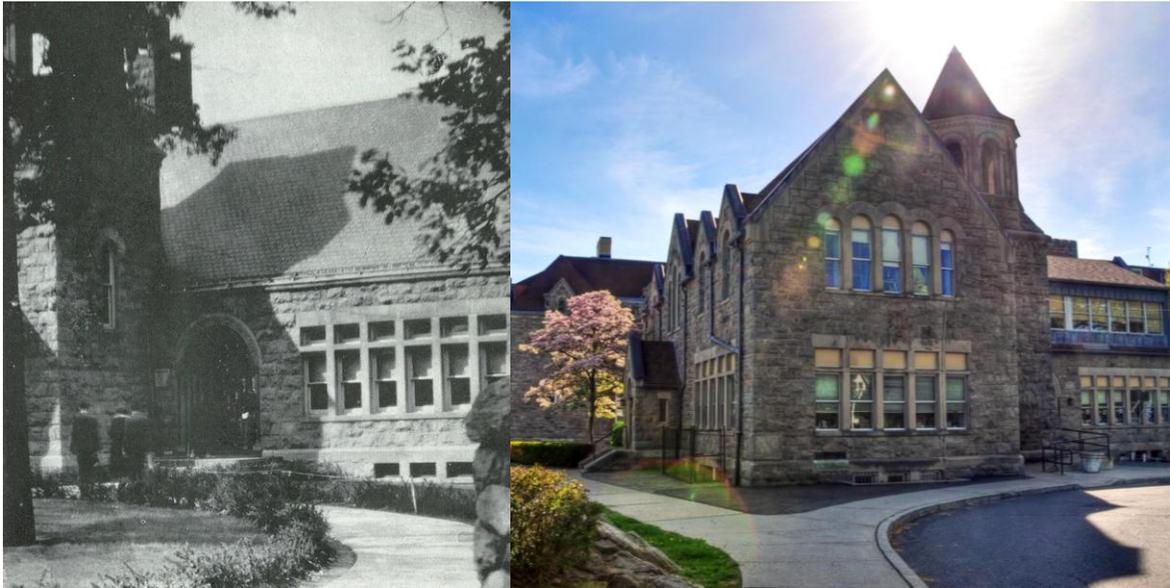


While the picture on the left is from the late 1930's some of our classrooms were still equipped with wooden top desks, complete with inkwells and adorned with the carved initials of earlier students. Today's classroom is a much cheerier place.



This vintage photograph from the 1930's shows the 3rd floor auditorium. Yesterday's seating area provides faculty office space today and the "stage" is now part of today's school library. That's Parsons' Principal Bob Torp on the auditorium floor and me on the old stage.





In our day on the left. Today on the right. Cornerstone is visible directly over “fork” in the sidewalk.
Car drop-off circle leads to “Main Entrance” on Broadway.



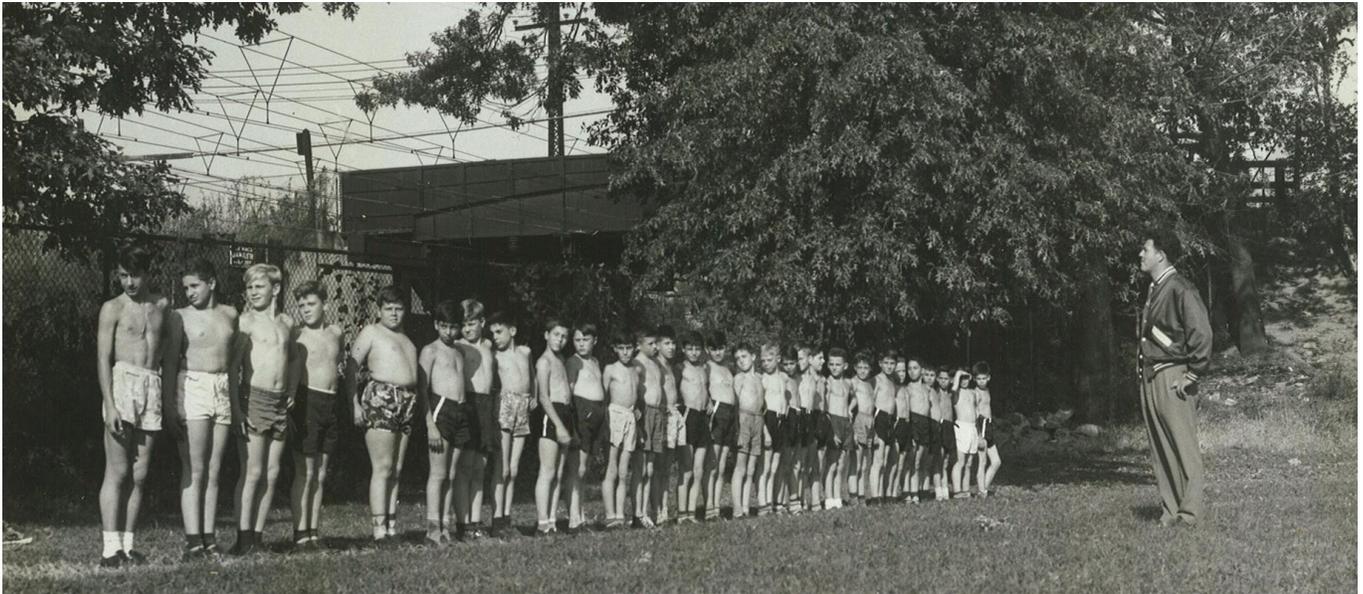
First floor hallway. Mr. Marshal’s office was just around the corner to the right. Small lockers have replaced the “cloak rooms.”



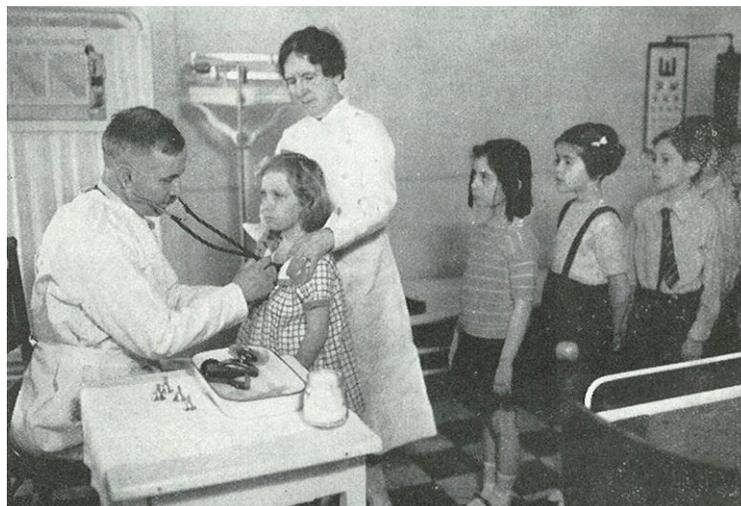
Today's administrative offices occupy what had been our Industrial Arts Classroom. "Shop classes" were organized and closely monitored by Mr. John Metcalf. Boys were taught simple electric wiring and how to work with metal and wood. The girls attended Home Economics classes conducted by Wilma Bulivant where cooking and sewing were the orders of the day.



The gym and cafeteria today.



Girls gym classes looked like a lot of fun—and what neat uniforms! Patty Kohlberger recalls waltz and other social dancing lessons from Mrs. Friedgen. Fred Fiore used his military experience to organize his Boys gym classes. Pictured are some of the older kids following an “eyes right” order which led to “counting off” to divide us into teams for softball, kickball or football games. Indoor classes in the gym usually included laps around the gym, a variety of relay races, rope climbing and games of “knock out.”



Nurse's office with students lined up for annual physicals which included hearing & vision checks & inoculations.



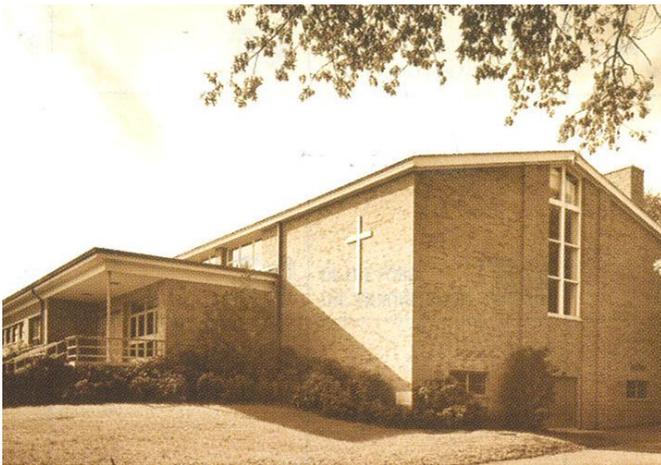
The third floor of the 1928 expansion. Parsons served K-12 from 1912 until 1940 but when the new high school (today's LMK Junior High) opened in September 1940 the third floor classrooms became excess and have not been used since.



Does this picture of the library bring back memories? Our Library was located at the top of the bell tower staircase, in the original (1898) part of the building, in what had been designed to be an “assembly room” – for testing and lectures. It was in this room that the opening ceremonies were held on February 12, 1898. Today the room serves as an exercise/playroom for the youngest students.



While few knew her first name no one forgot Miss (Gwendolyn) Brown. This (1952-53) picture of a 4th grade music class must have been a rehearsal for some sort of show. Standing from the left are: Ernie Fiore; Woody Becker; Nat Carnavalla; Joey Castellano; Pete Madrazo; Barbara Hoehn; Irving Storts and Camee LaRusso. To the right of Miss Brown are: Mary Miles; Gene Westmoreland; Diane Bennett and Dixie Howell.



Pictured here are Catholic children crossing Halstead Avenue on their weekly pilgrimage from Parsons to St. Gregory's Elementary School for "religious instruction". Grades 1-4 were dismissed early for "CCD" on Wednesday's and grades 5-8 on Thursday's. Sister Michael was one of the teachers. St. Gregory's opened in September of 1953 and closed in 2003. Today the school operates as a very successful pre-K.



The back of the school today



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This is Harrison 2004-2005 Guide

Rick Carpinello, The Journal News

Chuck Stogel

Robert Torp, Principal, Parsons Memorial School

Greg Ricci, Harrison Historical Society

Jean Kelly and Frances Caputo Viola Teachers, Parsons Memorial, 1950's, Millie Delzio, former Secretary to Parsons principal

Parsons "grads" MaryAnn Santoro, Marilyn Burrell, John Callahan, Ernie Ortiz, Fred Ide, Ernie Fiore, Patricia Kohlberger, Carol Tateo, Joy Westmoreland, Anita Palizolla, Karla Volpe, Doug DiPietro, Evelyn Ide, Tom Stroh, Bill Westmoreland

Photography: John DeTemple

Through The (our) Years at Parsons

Events that shaped our lives:

1948-1949 Kindergarten

Harry Truman is elected President*Mahatma Gahdi is assassinated by religious extremists*”Big Bands” dominate music world*The “bikini” becomes more “daring”*Porsche is founded*Prince Charles is born*Israel is declared independent state*NASCAR conducts first race for modified stock cars at Daytona Beach*US participates in Berlin “Airlift”*Cleveland Indians win the World Series over the Boston Braves. The Indians have not won since and the Braves have moved from Boston to Milwaukee to Atlanta*IBM builds the SSEC – Selective Sequence Electronic Calculator. This early computer contains 12,000 tubes*A new house costs \$7,700



The iconic statue of Christopher Columbus looks as good as it did when it was dedicated on “Columbus Day” (October 12th) 1949 – a ceremony that we attended! The monument and engraving were done by classmate Doug DiPietro’s father Barney - the marble statue may have been sculpted in Italy.

1949-1950 First Grade

The Korean War begins*Statue of Christopher Columbus is unveiled at Parsons Memorial at the corner of Halstead and Broadway*Russia has the “bomb”*RCA “perfects” color TV*First VW Beetle is sold in US*National Basketball Assoc. comes into being*Cornerstone laid for U.N. Headquarters in NYC*Yankees win first of five consecutive World Series and will win the American League pennant every coming year through 1958 (except 1954) and will participate in 6 “subway (world) series”*NATO is established*China becomes a Communist country*First Emmy Awards Presented

1950-1951 Second Grade

Roswell Marshall replaces Agnes McDonald as Parsons principal*First Xerox machine is produced*Guys and Dolls hits Broadway*The “credit card” is introduced by Diners Club*8 million US homes have a TV*Phil Rizzuto awarded AL MVP*Charles Schultz introduces “Peanuts” comic strip* US federal spending exceeds \$42 billion*Pres. Truman sends US military personnel to Vietnam to aid French forces*Cinderella is a hit movie*Brinks Robbery in Boston

1951-1952 Third Grade

CBS “introduces” color TV with show hosted by Ed Sullivan and Arthur Godfrey*Average cost for 4 years of college = \$1,800*Little League baseball begins in Harrison*Flouride is added to local water supply to fight tooth decay*“I Love Lucy” joins “What’s My Line” and Captain Video as popular TV shows*NJ Turnpike Opens*Allen Freed coins the phrase “Rock & Roll”*Polio afflicts 50,000 Americans*Electricity is produced by Nuclear power for the first time



1952-1953 Fourth Grade

3 of 5 American families own a car; 1 of 3 own a TV*Jonas Salk invents Polio vaccine*KFC opens first franchise*first issue of Mad Magazine*WWII hero General Dwight D. Eisenhower is elected president*First Holiday Inn opens in Tennessee*“Today” show debuts with Dave Garaway as host*Harrison Board of Education returns to original name for “Parsons Memorial”

1953-1954 Fifth Grade

Harrison school children take part in nationwide polio vaccine “experiment”
*Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II*Joseph Stalin dies*Ian Fleming publishes first James Bond novel, *Casino Royale**Playboy debuts with Marilyn Monroe gracing cover and centerfold*The Corvette goes on the market*TV Guide begins*Korean War ends*First open heart surgery performed in Philadelphia*Sir Edmund Hillary reaches top of Mt. Everest*Nikita Khrushchev comes in power*St. Gregory’s Elementary School opens in Harrison*





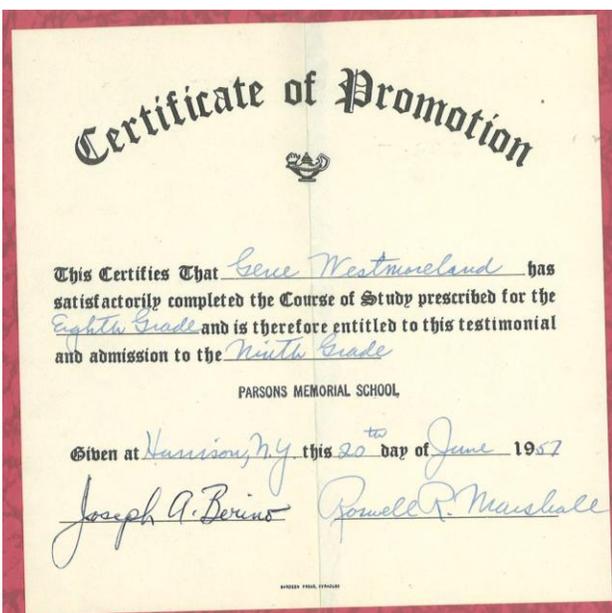
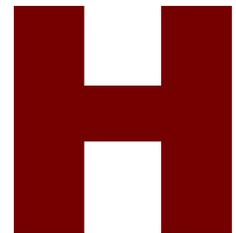
1954-1955 Sixth Grade

“Blackboard Jungle!” featuring Bill Haley and the Comets singing “Rock Around the Clock” shakes up America* Roger Bannister breaks the “four minute mile” *First issue of Sports Illustrated* Senator Joseph McCarthy conducts hearings on Communist infiltrators in America* The words “under God” are added to our daily “Pledge of Allegiance” *Elvis cuts his first record* Ike signs new Social Security bill* Dow Jones closes at 382* Ellis Island

closes* Supreme Court rules Brown versus Board of Ed* First organ transplant

1955-1956 Seventh Grade

Harrison beats Rye breaking Rye’s 33-game winning streak. Harrison will next beat Rye in 1960 breaking another 33-game winning streak* “Gunsmoke” debuts* James Dean stars in “Rebel Without a Cause” but dies later in year in car crash* First McDonalds* Coca Cola first sold in cans* Mickey Mouse Club* Seat-belt law is passed* Fiber Optics are developed in England* Bill Gates is born/ Albert Einstein dies* Velcro is invented* “64,000 Question” is a TV sensation



1956-1957 Eighth Grade

“Ike” is re-elected President* Rock and Roll sweeps the world* Princess Grace marries Prince Ranier* Fidel Castro rules in Cuba* Following 1957 season Brooklyn Dodgers and NY Giants leave NY for California* Wizard of Oz first shown on TV* Rocky Marciano retires undefeated* Federal Highway Act approved - 41,000 miles of interstate highways to be constructed over next 20 years* Sputnik is launched* American Bandstand w/ Dick Clark* Little Rock Arkansas!* The term “beatnick” is coined* Columbia professor wins

\$129K on “fixed” quiz show “21” * 2/3 of new cars are bought on “credit”

Sports at Parsons Memorial

Aside from the well documented fact that the Harrison Huskies first official football game against the arch-rival Rye Garnets was played in 1929 – during the years Parsons served as the town’s high school (1912-1940) there is little recorded history about interscholastic sports.

Until the final Parsons expansion in 1928 the school had no athletic facilities at all, but in 1925 when the Harrison Avenue School opened it included grounds that would serve as the high school football, baseball and track & field facilities for many years and it is clear that HHS fielded teams in all those sports even though the athletes attended classes at the Parsons building. The one exception appears to be varsity basketball. A gymnasium was part of the 1928 expansion and during the 1930’s varsity basketball games were played at Parsons.



Varsity basketball at Parsons gym vs.
Greenwich High School.

How far back does the Harrison/Rye rivalry go? Some say it goes back to the 1660’s when the Siwanoy Indian Tribe “sold” what became the Town of Harrison twice, first to Peter Disbrow and John Budd in 1662 as part of the Town of Rye and again to John Harrison in 1695. Neither Disbrow/Budd nor John Harrison bothered to file valid claims with the provisional government so it wasn’t long before a dispute arose as to the true owner - and John Harrison came out the winner. Harrison’s “Purchase” was upheld and gave us an early, but overlooked, 1-0 lead in the legendary series.

Others would say that the football rivalry started around 1900! An article in the December 15, 1900 edition of the *Harrison Observer* reported the results of a December 8, **1900** Harrison/Rye football game played at Harrison’s (Railroad) Station Park, with a final score of 21-0 Harrison! The Harrison Football *Team* actually played the Rye Football *Team* on back-to-back weekends that year with Harrison taking both ends of the home and home series - both by shutout scores, 6-0 and 21-0.

The rules appear to have been quite different in those days. According to the article, and football historians, touchdowns were worth only 5 points, plus the chance for an extra point, and each score was followed by a kick-off, but it was the team that *scored* that received the kick-off.

DECEMBER 13,
 1900
 SPORTS IN HARRISON

E Saturday Mr. Graham swore out a warrant before Justice Baruch for the arrest of Hamilton.

RT Before the warrant was served on Saturday, Mr. Hamilton visited Mr. Graham and apologized for his unruly conduct. Mr. Graham in consideration of the apology, withdrew his complaint.

ED James Wier, who was also assaulted and abused by Mr. Hamilton applied, on Saturday, for a warrant from Justice Baruch, but was refused, as the assault took place in the town of Harrison and the charge of alleged slander occurred in the town of Mamaroneck.

RR On Tuesday, Mr. Hamilton was arrested on a warrant issued by Justice Crowe, of Harrison, on complaint of Mr. Wier. His examination was fixed for Thursday afternoon, but it did not take place as Mr. Hamilton is laid up with sciatica rheumatism.

Harrison Football Players.

The Harrison Football team played their last game of the season last Saturday, against a team from Rye, at Station Park, Harrison. The Rye boys came to Harrison, very much worked up over their defeat at Rye the previous Saturday. The Harrison boys have played all comers this year, and after forty-five minutes of playing the Rye boys found Harrison had some football stock.

The game was called at 3.30. Harrison won the toss and chose the western goal. Rye kicked to Connors who brought the ball to Rye's fifty yard line. Then Gilbert made a magnificent run to Rye's ten yard line, where he was downed by Taylor. Harrison by playing swift ball soon pushed Connors over for first touchdown. In a dispute Harrison did not get a chance to kick a goal. Score 5 to 0.

The Ryes kicked to M. Gilbert, who brought the pigskin back to center of field. The Ryes could not hold the Harrison boys, who pushed them back to Rye's forty-five yard line. Here it was Young's turn to make a run, which he did, carrying the ball over for a second touchdown. Young missed the goal. Score 10 to 0.

Rye kicked the ball to Foshay, who brought the ball back to center of field. Harrison worked the ball to Ryes twenty-five yard line. Here Rye got the ball on a fumble but could not gain any ground, so Taylor punted to Rye's forty yard line. The

Ryes succeeded in getting the ball but they lost it on downs. Then they signaled Connors through center who walked right over the pile and made a touchdown, but Gilbert in interfering for Connors, held Taylor and the ball was brought back to Rye's fifteen yard line where the whistle blew for time. Score 10 to 0.

In the second half Young kicked to Meyers, who was downed on Rye's thirty yard line. Rye lost the ball on downs. Then Harrison worked the ball up the field near Rye's goal and soon shoved Gilbert over for a third touchdown. Goal missed. Score 15 to 0.

Rye kicked to Bull who brought the ball to Harrison's fifty yard line. By snappy playing, they soon pushed Young on for a fourth touchdown. Gilbert kicked a pretty goal. Score 21 to 0.

Rye kicked to Gilbert who was downed on Harrison's forty yard line. Here they worked the ball back and forth changing hands several times. Rye finally succeeded in getting the ball back to Harrison's twenty yard line when time was called. Score: Harrison 21, Rye 0.

LINE UP.

RYE. Jackson, Chase, Weeks, Gleason, Banks, Baruch, M. Taylor, Meyers, G. Taylor,	right end right tackle, right guard, center, left guard, left tackle, left end, quart. back, right half back, left half back, full back,	HARRISON Dixon McGrath Hunt Foslay Thompson Studwell Bull Young Gilbert Connors
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Touchdowns—Young 2; Connors 1, Gilbert 1.
 Goals—Gilbert 1.
 Time of Halves—25 and 20.
 Referee—H. K. Bartow, Rye.
 Time keepers—For Rye, Mr. Pope; Harrison, O. Mandeville.

HARRISON FOOT BALL RECORD.

HARRISON FIRST TEAM.	
Sept. 20.	St. Peter's Guild, Second Team 5
	Harrison Foot Ball Team 5
Oct. 13.	Mamaroneck Foot Ball Team 0
	Harrison Foot Ball Team 0
Oct. 23.	St. Peter's Guild, Second Team 0
	Harrison Foot Ball Team 0
Oct. 27.	Mamaroneck Foot Ball Team 0
	Harrison Foot Ball Team 0
Nov. 17.	St. Peter's Guild Second Team 6
	Harrison F. B. T. 5
Dec. 1.	Rye F. B. T. 0
	Harrison F. B. T. 6
Dec. 8.	Rye F. B. T. 0
	Harrison F. B. T. 21
SECOND TEAM	
Oct. 26.	Harrison F. B. T. Second 18
	Milton F. B. T. 0
Nov. 5	Harrison F. B. T. Second 11
	Mamaroneck F. B. T. 0
Nov. 13.	Harrison F. B. T. Second 12
	Mamaroneck F. B. T. 0
Nov. 25	Harrison F. B. T. Second 11
	Mamaroneck F. B. T. 0

Official high school football got its start in Westchester County when Mt. Vernon played New Rochelle in 1897 but quickly spread. By the late 1920's nearly 20 Westchester County high schools were fielding football teams. Keep in mind that into the 1920's NYS School District No. 6 encompassed both Rye and Harrison. There were a few different locations throughout the two towns that offered high school classes. Students generally attended the nearest school to their home but it seems clear that the Parsons location accommodated students from parts of both Harrison and Rye.

While I found no records of the Harrison or Rye Football Clubs beyond the 1900 double header it seems likely – given the growing popularity of the sport – that they continued in some manner until the fall of 1929 when both schools (now with adequate facilities) fielded varsity football teams for the first time.

The competition – the rivalry – must have been fierce from its beginning. The very first Harrison varsity players, their dads and older brothers may have knocked heads versus Rye in the "Club" era and members of the first Harrison and Rye High School teams may have even been classmates at Parsons a year or so earlier.

Labeled as “rumor” on Wikipedia is that the origin of the Harrison-Rye game stemmed from a dispute in the 1920’s over of all things - Parsons Memorial School! As noted earlier, when it was established, there was one school district covering both Rye and Harrison – Union Free School District No. 6. In the 1920’s as both towns began to boom the school district was split up into the current Rye School District and Harrison School District.

Rye kept the 4 elementary schools that had been in their town and Harrison kept the 5 that were in their town but there was one left – Parsons Memorial. While Parsons was in downtown Harrison some argued that if it were kept by Rye both districts would have an equal number of elementary schools. Others argued that it did not matter because the Town of Harrison is geographically larger than the Town of Rye. To complicate the matter, Parsons was the oldest building - dating back to 1898. Supposedly, to settle the argument, there was a football game held, and the winner kept Parsons!

The argument over Parsons certainly stirred the spirits! There is another story that speaks more of a sand-lot type football game – perhaps the last of the old Harrison versus Rye *club* team rivalry. The winner of the this Harrison-Rye game is not known, however (according to Wikipedia) it is known that it took place in 1928 – and that Harrison kept Parsons Memorial.

Both stories sound a bit far-fetched, but hey, such is the stuff of legends.

School Anthem

(Sung to the tune of the Notre Dame Fight Song)

Parsons Memorial we are for you
We pledge our love and our loyalty true
Your sons and daughters singing today
Salute you with pride and honor say
Hail Alma mater, long may you be
Proud of each one of us...

School anthem written by Miss Brown



Gene Westmoreland

Genewestmoreland.golf@gmail.com

www.westmorelandgolf.org



Parsons Bell Tower at night