

RHODES COLLEGE  
FOUNDED 1848

14 February 1989

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STONE RIVER  
NATIONAL  
BATTLEFIELD  
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DR. FRANKLIN M WRIGHT  
1550 N. PARKWAY, #103  
MEMPHIS, TN 38112

Mr. Charles M. Spearman, Historian  
Stones River National Battlefield  
Murfreesboro, Tennessee

Dear Mr. Spearman:

I think you will find the enclosed of interest for your file on Batteries H & M. These newspaper clippings were in the Papers of Margaret L. Britton Parsons, widow of the Rev. Charles C. Parsons, which I was generously permitted to bring to Memphis for photocopying in June-July 1986. They were then in the custody of her grandson Hugh M. Thompson of Madison, Mississippi, a retired contractor and Sewanee graduate (Class of 1930). I fear the clippings, and also the 1878 (and earlier) letters, etc. perished in the fire which badly damaged Mr. Thompson's house in Madison, September 1987.

Those which I have numbered '1', '3' and '4' are contemporary with his death and are from the Memphis newspapers APPEAL and AVALANCHE, both of which managed to maintain daily publication throughout the terrible ordeal altho' both were produced by skeleton staffs and consisted of a single folded sheet. Number '3' is of course a reprint from the Troy, NY paper... I presume Troy is adjacent to West Point -- hence some West Pointer, perhaps a chaplain there or fellow former colleague on the faculty, wrote the deserved tribute to Parsons.

It is interesting that the Troy eulogy concluded with the opinion that Parsons' name should be enrolled with those of the martyrs who have died for their fellow men. This was not immediately done but was in fact finally accomplished by the resolution passed at the Triennial Conference of the U.S. Episcopal Church, Anaheim, California, August 1985 when Parsons and his fellow martyr priest young Louis Schuyler, plus the four Sisters of the Community of St. Mary, were officially placed on the Calendar of the Lesser Feasts and Fasts of the U.S. Church (annual feast day: September 9 which was the day when Sister Superior Constance, aged thirty-two, died of yellow fever at the Sisters' House adjoining the Cathedral here on Poplar Street.

The allusion to the fact that Parsons gave up a reasonably comfortable Army officer's salary for the small maintenance allowance of an Episcopal priest is quite true. In 1872, when Parsons and wife were living in the modest little Rectory of the Church of the Good Shepherd here in Memphis (his first pastorate) his old classmate and friend Gen. George A. Custer came to Memphis as part of the entourage accompanying the Russian Grand Duke Alexis (son of Tsar Alexander II) either en route to a buffalo hunt on the Plains or returning therefrom, I forget which just now. Custer went out to pay a visit to The Rev. and Mrs. Parsons. He insisted they be present as guests at the Grand Ball arranged at the Peabody Hotel here for the Grand Duke (this was the old Peabody on Main at Monroe not the present structure on Union) and, as he later wrote to his wife Elizabeth "it was the first time they had been 'in company' since they left West Point at the end of 1870."

  
**RHODES COLLEGE**  
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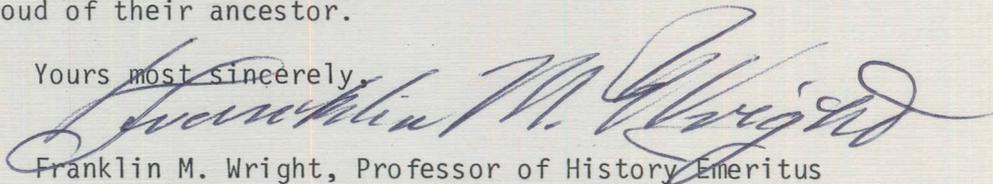
The 1927 (January) obituary notices of Mrs. Margaret Parsons are from the Jackson Clarion-Ledger (No. '2' most probably) and the Canton paper (No. 5) . The latter's caption garbles the name of Annandale, an area which took its name from the vast three storied Italian Villa style plantation house which burned in 1924. It was the girlhood home of Margaret Parsons and it was there that she and the young, or youngish, widower Parsons met in August 1876. His first wife, the beautiful Celia Lippitt Parsons, died at the Rectory of Holy Innocents' Church, Hoboken, NJ, of which Parsons was then Rector, two hours after the birth of her son Charles C. Parsons, Jr., December 5, 1875.

Because Clipping No. '3' did not xerox well, although I lightened the copier to maximum, I have provided a transcript from my original photocopy which is more legible altho' still a bit smudged or darkened by age. I attach same to the photocopy.

One very good source of information on Parsons which you can easily find either in the Library of the State University there or certainly at Vanderbilt, is the article "Two Martyrs of the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1878" by my late colleague and chairman and longtime friend Dr. John Henry Davis. He wrote it for the West Tennessee Historical Society, of which he was an active member, and it is printed in Vol. XXVI (1972) of their Papers. Mr. Jack Carley, of the COMMERCIAL APPEAL editorial staff (died 1962) was very interested in matters military and concerning West Point. Through an earlier interest in General Custer's somewhat chequered career in the Service, he became interested in Custer's friend and West Point Classmate of 1861, Charles Parsons and had intended to do either a book or at least an article on Parsons. He died before he could accomplish this but his widow asked Dr. Davis to use the materials -- which he did. The Carley Papers are now in the Memphis Room Local History Collections, Memphis Public Library, 1850 Peabody, Memphis.

I am sure Mrs. Charles C. Parsons III of Yazoo City would be pleased to procure for you a copy of the West Point Cadet photo of Parsons, circa 1859, of which she obtained one for me in 1986. A letter on Department of Interior letterhead would please and impress her since she, and the other modern family members are, with justice, proud of their ancestor.

Yours most sincerely,

  
Franklin M. Wright, Professor of History Emeritus

P.S. The Archivist at West Point might want to have a copy both of my letter and of the Photocopy of newspaper clippings for their Parsons File. The late Asst. Archivist, Mr Kenneth W. Rapp, kindly provided me with a photocopy of Parsons' obituary biography printed in the 1879 CLASS REUNION BOOK of the Academy. It was written by his classmate Col. D.W. Flagler, then (1878-79) stationed at the Rock Island Arsenal, Illinois. Flagler quotes portions of the tribute Henry A. Huntington wrote for the Chicago TRIBUNE, 7 September 1878, a clipping of which is in the Scrapbook of Dr. George C. Harris at the Memphis Public Library -- it was probably that Flagler (I mean Huntington) sent to

his widow., Margaret.

2000 North Parkway/Memphis, Tennessee 38112-1690/Telephone 901-726-3000

Rev. C. C. PARSONS, rector of Grace and St. Lazarus churches, died yesterday after six days of fever. From the first day of the epidemic he labored incessantly among his parishioners, knowing no rest so long as there was good to be done. Mr. Parsons was a graduate of West Point, and served during the war in the Federal army, with distinction, rising to the rank of lieutenant-colonel of artillery, which he surrendered to take a place in the ranks of the ministry of the Episcopal church. He was first settled in charge of a parish, we believe in New Jersey, then in New York, whence he came to this city about three years ago. He was not long in making his way to the hearts of our people. All classes learned to love and confide in him and to look to him as one of the most gentle of christian ministers. He was chaplain of the Chickasaw Guards, and was beloved by his comrades as the unit of all that was strong, noble, manly, refined and Christ-like. His loss is deeply deplored, not alone by the members of his own, but by those of other communions by whom he was beloved.

A hero died on Wednesday when the Rev. Charles Carroll Parsons, rector of St. Mary's parish, Memphis, fell a victim to the yellow fever. He was the famous Col. Parsons of the Fourth United States Artillery during the war, whose gallant conduct at Perryville brought him the honors of two braves. Subsequently he fought with Custer on the frontier against the Indians. Later he was appointed assistant instructor of ethics and of English and military law at West Point, and while on this duty resigned from the army and entered the Episcopal ministry. In the army he was a friend of all young officers. By precept and example he kept many in the path of morality who looked upon him as a model christian soldier and gentleman. His

resignation from the service he adorned was prompted by a sincere conviction that the ministry offered a sphere of usefulness to him which the army did not afford. His faith was the inspiration of many noble deeds and great sacrifices, and entailed actual poverty. Personally he was a warm-hearted man of most fascinating manners, a good husband and father. Intellectually he was distinguished as a gentleman of culture and classical refinement. Physically, his bearing was most striking, erect, and with the aspect of one accustomed to command. His death in the very prime of life, will be deplored by many whose gratitude and love he earned. Dying amid the scourge, we may be sure he did his duty nobly to afflicted and suffering humanity. The name of Charles Carroll Parsons deserves to be enrolled in the list of those martyrs who have died for their fellow men. —Troy (N. Y.) Times, September 8th, 1878.

## MADISON WOMAN TO BE BURIED AT MANNSDALE

### Mrs. Charles C. Parsons Succumbs at Ingleside After Brief Illness

Funeral services will be held on Tuesday afternoon at 2 o'clock from the Chapel of the Cross near Mannsdale for Mrs. Charles C. Parsons, Rev. Val Sessions, of Bolton, Rev. Mr. Gray of Canton and Bishop Theodore DuBose Bratton, conducting the obsequies.

Mrs. Margaret Louise Britton Parsons, widow of the late Charles Carroll Parsons, died Monday morning just before noon at Ingleside plantation after a short illness. She was 81 years of age.

The deceased was the daughter of the late J. W. Britton, widely known Madison county planter. Her loveable character, sweet and charming disposition, made her greatly beloved by all who knew her. She was a typical woman of the South.

She was born on the Annandale plantation and was a direct descendant of the Earl of Annandale of Scotland. The plantation on which she was born was built by her grandmother, Mrs. J. T. Johnson.

She is survived by two children, Charles Carroll Parsons, of Memphis, and Mrs. Grantham Thompson, of Ingleside. Eight grandchildren also mourn the passing of this estimable woman.

Mrs. Parsons was one of the first members of the Chapel of the Cross congregation, having been throughout her long and useful life a consistent worker of the Episcopal church.

Burial arrangements will be in charge of A. L. Albritton, of Canton.

## BELOVED WOMAN PASSES MONDAY

### Mrs. Margaret Louise Britton Parsons Dies at Her Ingleside Home.

Mrs. Margaret Louise Britton Parsons, 81 years of age, died Monday morning at 11:30 at her home "Ingleside", near Madison.

Mrs. Parsons had resided in Madison county for many years and possessed many friends who will regret to learn of her death.

"Ingleside" is the adjoining property of the famous "Annandale" which was built by the grandmother of the deceased, Mrs. John T. Johnstone. Mrs. Parsons was a direct descendant of the Earl of Annandale of Scotland.

The funeral services were held Tuesday afternoon at two o'clock at the Chapel of the Cross at Annandale, where six generations of Mrs. Parsons' family are represented. The services were conducted by Rev. Val Sessions, of Bolton, assisted by Bishop Bratton of Jackson, and Rev. Duncan M. Gray of Canton.

The deceased is survived by one son, Chas. C. Parsons of Memphis, one daughter, Mrs. H. G. Thompson of Ingleside, and eight grandchildren, Margaret, Fannie Hugh and John Thompson of Ingleside; Chas. Robert, Elizabeth and Margaret Parsons of Jackson.

Funeral arrangements were in charge of A. L. Albritton of Canton.

The pall bearers were: Messrs N. P. Lightcap, V. E. Ricks, G. M. Smith-Vaniz, Loyal Reese, Creed Roland, and M. L. DeWees.

DEATH aimed high when his fated dart struck down Charles C. Parsons, late Colonel of the U. S. A., and rector of Grace Episcopal church. Yet the mark was fair and near and bared for the blow. Into the room of disease the christian soldier marched. The hand which had applied the match to cannon on the battle-field lifted the dying head, cheered with prayer the departing soul day and night to his own fated exposure, this man invaded the strongholds of the plague, carrying help to the body and the soul of many a stricken man. Death struck hard and true. The chivalrous soldier, the honored shepherd of a flock, the courteous, polished West Pointer, the favorite friend, particularly of the youth of Memphis, was borne to his last resting place. Over his grave, in marble, let this be cut:

"A MARTYR OF 78."

"HE DIED FOR THE PEOPLE AGAINST WHOM HE HAD FOUGHT."

## THE LATE REV. C.C. PARSONS

A hero died on Wednesday when the Rev. Charles Carroll Parsons, rector of St. Mary's parish, Memphis, fell a victim to the yellow fever. He was the famous Col Parsons of the Fourth United States Artillery during the war, whose gallant conduct at Perryville brought him the honors of two brevets. Subsequently he fought with Custer on the frontier against the Indians. Later he was appointed assistant instructor of ethics and English and military law at West Point and while on this duty resigned from the army and entered the Episcopal ministry. In the army he was the friend of all young officers. By precept and example he kept many in the path of morality who look upon him as a model Christian soldier and gentleman. His resignation from the service he adorned was prompted by a sincere conviction that the ministry offered a sphere of usefulness to him which the army did not afford. His faith was the inspiration of many noble deeds and great sacrifices, and entailed actual poverty. Personally, he was a warm hearted man of most fascinating manners, a good husband and father. Intellectually he was distinguished as a gentleman of culture and classical refinement. Physically, his bearing was most striking, erect and with the aspect of one accustomed to command. His death, in the very prime of life, will be deplored by many whose gratitude and love he earned. Dying amid the scourge, we may be sure he did his duty nobly to afflicted and suffering humanity. The name of Charles Carroll Parsons deserves to be enrolled in the list of those martyrs who have died for their fellow-men. \*\*\*See note below

Troy (N.Y.) Times, September 8th, 1878.

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\*\*\* In fact the death of Charles Parsons occurred at 10:30 P.M., Friday, September 6, 1878 and his burial at Elmwood Cemetery took place on the forenoon of the following day (Saturday, September 7, 1878.) There being no clergyman well enough or available to accompany the body, the Prayer Book Burial Service was read by John Lonsdale, Jr., Secretary of the Citizens' Relief Committee, himself to die from yellow fever only nine days later. Also, Parsons was in fact Rector of the combined Memphis parishes of St. Lazarus and Grace Churches. However, when fever was declared epidemic in mid-August 1878 he sent his wife Margaret and their two infant children to safety at Annandale Plantation, Madison, Mississippi, and went to stay at the House of Dr. George C. Harris, Dean of St. Mary's Episcopal Cathedral on Poplar Street so that he could assist Dean Harris with the ongoing relief work among the stricken in what was the worst infected area of the city.