



Past Presented

By Hugh R. King

Early Stores In Springs

David Dimon Parsons (1811-1882) was the first storekeeper in Springs. By October 1837 he was merchandising on the side before he opened his store. His house was near the corner of School Street and Old Stone Highway and has since been moved to Springs-Fireplace Road. It is the current home of Robert and Hilda Talmage.

Parsons owned a great deal of land in and around Springs and in 1844 he bought for \$100 the land for his store (the current vacant Springs General Store) from Isaac Edwards. In 1844 Sineus Edwards's sloop Florian arrived at Fireplace Landing with 45 tons of stone from Connecticut to be used for the foundation and cellar for Mr. Parsons's store. Also 4716 feet of lumber was transported to be used to build the store. Ten thousand shingles came from Sag Harbor. The freight bill for the material shipped on the Florian was \$189.52. Parsons paid for this by cash payments of \$70, two feet of wood, and sundries (groceries). He still had a balance of \$117.45 to pay Mr. Edwards and his partners.

We find also that David Dimon Parsons bought a store for his son Jehial Parsons in East Hampton. This store was located where Victoria's Mother and the Village Toy Store are now situated. If you look closely, those two stores are part of an old house. Jehial Parsons was the Supervisor of East Hampton in 1872 and 1882, as well as serving as Postmaster.

After David Dimon Parsons died, his son John Mulford Parsons ran the store. He later sold the store to Charles K. Smith, who earlier had worked at the store for Mr. Parsons. Smith, who was from Amagansett, owned and operated the store from the 1880s to 1915. However, he didn't open the store right away after purchasing it, he just moved his family there from Amagansett. You see, Mr. Smith had another job, he was a marine engineer on the bunker boats at Promised Land in Amagansett. In 1892 he served on the steamer Ranger, a bunker boat captained by Captain Josh Edwards. In 1896 Charles K. Smith engineered on the Sterling with Captain Gabe Edwards.

In January 1892, Charles K. Smith opened his grocery, also a feed store, and by March he was said to be doing a good business. Mr. Parsons was said to have sold a great deal of pancake mixture at his store, as packaged pan-

cake mix had not yet been developed. He had a mix of his own secret formula which included buckwheat, wheat, and canaille (whole wheat). The general store run by Smith was a gathering place for men to "chew the rag" and tell stories. The men while talking would walk over and cut a chunk of cheese from the wheel, and at the end of each month Mr. Smith would present them with a bill for the cheese!

George A. Parsons also had a store where the Parsons Anderson House (Springs Library) is located. In 1888 he went out of business and the stock and fixtures were sold. In 1892 George A. Parsons went to work in the store run by Charles K. Smith and it was he and Mrs. Smith who probably ran the store when Smith was working on the bunker boats. Mr. Smith's son Frank Smith ran the store after his father's death for a while. Another of Charles K. Smith's sons was Nat Smith who also worked at the blacksmith shop of Charles Silas Parsons.

Another store across Accabonac Creek from Charles K. Smith's store was first operated by Joseph D. Parsons and later run by his son Walton "Wal" Parsons until the 1920s. Wal Parsons's store was not always neat, as the tobacco-chewers punctuated their discussions by spitting on the floor. Wal Parsons was on the road quite a bit with horse and wagon peddling wares in the neighboring villages. Wal's store sold fresh pork, ice cream, and shoes. The store also served as a dance hall kept by Charles Miller and as an ice-skating rink and pool hall. It was known for a while as "Parsons' Hall." (It was later torn down, I believe.)

Back to Charles K. Smith's store. Tony Fields operated the store for a while selling canned goods and cheeses, and during the Depression of the 1930s the store was probably vacant except for a few families who rented the building for a home. Some time during the middle 1940s Dan Miller bought the store and owned and operated it for some 20 odd years. There have been others who have operated the store since, which is now owned by Michael and Janice Collins of Springs.

Another interesting fact is that the post offices in Springs were located in the two general stores of Wal Parsons and the present Springs General Store which was owned by David Dimon Parsons and Charles K. Smith. The postmaster was paid by the number of

stamps sold. The mail came from Amagansett, first by the stage of Jeremiah Baker and later the railroad. Someone of course had to deliver the mail from the railroad station in Amagansett after Mr. Baker's stage ceased to run in the early 1900s. Postmasters in Springs, all of whom had their office in a store, were David Dimon Parsons, Julius D. Parsons, John Mulford Parsons, Joseph D. Parsons, George A. Parsons, Hale H. Parsons, Abail Jane Parsons (Mrs. Joseph D.), Walton G. Parsons, Frank P. Smith, his sister Miss Carrie Smith, and Samuel Edwards Field. Florius Miller was acting Postmaster in Springs from June 3, 1922 to July 21, 1922, using his home as his office.

Footnotes to History

According to Norton "Bucket" Daniels and Helen Hults, there was another old store in Springs located on the east harbor side of Louse Point in

the early 1920s. The structure resembled a Western frontier trading post. The store was built by a former soap peddler named Morgan who ferried the lumber for the building across the sound from Connecticut. Most of the first floor of the building was utilized as a general store which Mrs. Morgan operated. Norton Daniels remembers purchasing penny candies and "Whistle," an orange drink made and bottled in Sag Harbor by the Wilson Bottling Company.

I am greatly indebted to Carleton Kelsey for sharing his notes on the stores and postmasters of Springs with me as well as Anne Collins, Michael and Jan Collins, and Helen Hults in providing information that formed the basis for this article. In addition, Ferris Talmage's "Springs In the Old Days" and Norton Daniels's "My East Hampton" were also used to write this article.

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What's New This Year?

By Nancy Hyden Woodward

With this article *The Independent* begins a series on the business changes taking place and that will take place this Spring in East Hampton and Southampton Towns. Once again, what was familiar last year may be gone or significantly altered in 1996.

McCarver & Moser

As the government arm of the Village of East Hampton approaches its moving day (about three weeks more) into the new Village Hall (the former Lyman Beecher House), renovation of the old Village Hall for new tenants nears completion. On May 1, Everett McCarver and his Swiss watchmaker/jeweler partner, Roland Moser, expect to open a branch there of their Sarasota shop, McCarver & Moser.

"When we were in Geneva, Switzerland, last year," McCarver said from his St. Armand Key store, "Cartier suggested that we come up and see the Hamptons, particularly East Hampton. They felt that we would do well there." The partners saw the building last July, just after the barricades had been taken down. They "fell in love at first sight" with it and East Hampton, bought property in Northwest, and are building a house.

McCarver & Moser will bring to the South Fork similar merchandise and services that have made it one of the Gulf Coast's pre-eminent shops. The partners will be the exclusive outlet in the Hamptons for Steuben, Cartier, jewelry designer Henry Dunay, and watchmakers Vacheron Constantin, Chopard, and Franck Muller, among others. In addition, it will be the first external boutique in the country to carry Van Cleef & Arpels jewelry and gifts. (The famed Manhattan-based shop has its own branches in Palm Beach and Beverly Hills.)

Springs General Store

This Winter, the Springs General Store's owners chose not to renew their lease. The store, which has been a landmark since it first opened in 1905, has acquired new tenants who will carry on its tradition as a general store.

Springs resident Lauren Jarrett and part-time resident Sharon McCobb are aiming for an Easter opening. They come to their new venture from different vantage points: Jarrett as book illustrator (more than half of them cookbooks) and back-up studio chef for Springs resident Pierre Franey's television series, and McCobb from her years

working in the business end of restaurants and hotels, as wife of Roger Vergnes, a cookbook agent, and as daughter-in-law of Jean Vergnes, original chef/partner of Le Cirque. It just so happens that Franey and the elder



Vergnes are close friends and next-door neighbors in Springs.

"The idea that we are connected to the two of them is amusing because we are expecting them to show up in the Summer, from time to time, and do a little *plat du jour* from time to time," Jarrett said. "I think that Sharon and I both run a little more to the Tuscan end of things taste-wise, but when Jean and Pierre show up, it will go French."

Jarrett, who will be the cook in the to-be-enlarged kitchen, says the store "will be an upgraded, prettier version of what it was." The partners plan to carry the basic line of standard groceries and sandwiches, plus a line of in-house prepared foods that will include salads, lunches on trays, and dinners on trays. Some of them will be fresh, others will be made there and frozen.

"We are going to stress fresh, very tasty foods, reminiscent of when Jane Cranston ran the store several years ago," Jarrett said.

They also expect to have a larger selection of produce that will be refrigerated, instead of being kept out on the front porch in the sun. The porch will be for rocking chairs and checker tables, and an occasional resting place for Jarrett's chocolate and yellow labs, Luna and Odin. Customers may also have a chance to see Lena, McCobb's now-five-month-old daughter.

When she was asked what drew them to undertake the new venture, McCobb said that its availability "was a shock to all of us. A lot of people wanted it and, since I was between jobs, we seized the moment. My end will be the business side of it."

Jarrett said, "I used to spend a lot of time there, especially when Jane had it. Sharon loves it too. So it is a real nice opportunity to take one of the prettier buildings in Springs and turn it into what it could be. That's the idea, to make it into the nicest place we can,

comfortable for the regulars and for the Summer people."

What will happen to Jarrett's artistic career, if she's going to be in the kitchen? "Right now I'm doing the floor plan and I'm doing the graphics for the sign, which I then have to paint," she said. "And I'm doing the graphics for the T-shirt and apron that we will have. So I get to draw with one hand and stir with the other. I've always wanted to feed Springs, so this is my chance."

Bridgehampton Cafe

The restaurant at the corner of Main Street and Ocean Road in Bridgehampton has metamorphosed over the years into different kinds of eating establishments. Now it is being readied for transformation from One Ocean Road to Bridgehampton Café. Its owners are Don Evans, owner of the famed Water Club in Manhattan and one of the founders of 95 School Street in Bridgehampton, and Water Club partner Carmine Parisi.

Southampton architect Peter Cook has re-designed the exterior, with the entrance relocated to the northeast corner of the building, its original site when the space housed Muller's Market. For the first time, the street windows will all be the same size, as well as larger. Evans said that the 1906 tin-ceiling dining room will be spruced up, and the long bar, while remaining where it is, "will look dramatically different."

The executive chef will be John De Lucie, who was sous executive chef at Nick & Toni's three years ago and recently worked in Manhattan. Evans

characterizes his food as "simple and unfussy." Lunch will be served on weekends, and dinner will be served Thursdays through Mondays, until Summer, when it will be available every evening.

Bridgehampton Café will be open year-round, managed by Eve Jarrett of East Hampton. "She has extensive catering experience, so we will be doing on- and off-site catering also," De Lucie said. The restaurant will open for dinner on March 28.

Steph's Stuff

For 20 years, Stephanie Frank was in Manhattan, where she worked in wholesale children's accessories. Last Friday, she re-opened her first store, "Steph's Stuff," on Newtown Lane next to Sam's Pizza. She got the idea to open a store last October. At that time, she opened "Steph's Stuff" in its original location, the brick courtyard that used to lead to O'Mally's restaurant.

Frank, whose married name is Tekulsky and who thinks she probably should be known in East Hampton as Stephanie Tekulsky, in keeping with her children and husband's identities, said that her tiny store primarily is for children, but it also features items of adult interest.

"My main goal is to keep everything very affordable, from new and collectible toys — whatever I fancy to pick up, to women's jewelry, a very small selection of children's clothes, and gift items like hand bags and salt and pepper shakers," she said.

The shop will be open every day of the week and, later, some evenings.

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