

# John Thomas Parson

*May 26, 1870 — April 28, 1951*

John Thomas Parson, Professor Emeritus of Engineering Drawing, died in Conklin Sanitarium, Ithaca, on April 28, 1951, following a long illness. He was born in Washington, D. C. on May 26, 1870, and received his education at Corcoran Scientific School and George Washington University. On September 16, 1896 he was married to Bertha Champlin of Washington, D. C, who survives him.

After three years of employment in the United States Engineer Office at Washington, and extensive travels in Cuba, West Indies, South and Central America, Parson came to Ithaca in 1893 to work with Estevan Antonio Fuertes, Dean of the College of Civil Engineering, on plans for Brazilian sewer systems. He then did further work as a consulting engineer on sewer design in Washington, Philadelphia and Harrisburg, before returning to Ithaca in 1895 to accept an instructorship in civil engineering. Thus began a teaching career that was to continue for 43 years until the time of his retirement in 1938. He was promoted to the grade of assistant professor in 1903 and was made Professor of Drawing in 1919.

Professor Parson was an excellent and well-liked teacher who gave unsparingly of his time and effort in order to inspire students with his own enthusiasm for good drafting. He himself was a highly skilled illuminator and engrosser, and for many years he was called upon to ornament membership “shingles” for student organizations and the credentials of delegates representing the university at academic functions. He was the author of a textbook on “Lettering for Beginners”. As a collateral enterprise he formed and operated the Armstrong Company, which for a number of years carried on the manufacture and sale of portable school buildings.

Professor Parson was perhaps best known to students, and will be recalled by alumni, for the part he played in the development of a winter sports center around Beebe Lake. Near the turn of the century, with the full approval of President Schurman who was himself a skillful skater, Parson personally secured the necessary funds, machinery and staff for clearing snow from Beebe Lake and putting the ice in suitable condition. Year by year, largely through his efforts, new facilities were added, including the first two toboggan slides, a temporary shelter house, and music. Parson’s infectious enthusiasm and his faith in the need and value of the whole project were fully justified by the results; and the burden of operation was then taken over by the Athletic Association, permitting him to step out. Now on the site where he labored, the permanent building known as the Johnny Parson Club commemorates his useful service and the community’s gratitude to Professor Parson.

He was a member of Zeta Psi Fraternity, Volunteer Fireman's Association of Ithaca, Protective Police, and was actively interested in civic affairs in Ithaca.

The death of John Thomas Parson brought to a close a versatile and colorful life, most of which was devoted to the service of the university and its students. His genial disposition, his kindly interest in people, and his evident desire to help his students in every possible way will long be remembered by a host of friends.

*Romeyn Berry, Carl Crandall, R. Y. Thatcher*