

# Parsons' Paper Company Workers Database

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2023-02-17

## Introduction

Mining the History of Holyoke (STAT210) is a class at Amherst College with a mission statement of curating and publishing a piece of Holyoke's history and making it accessible to the town's people.

One way our class has begun this journey is by analyzing an old payroll registry found in an attic in Holyoke and now available in the archives of the Holyoke Public Library History Room. This register tracked pay for employees who worked at the Parsons Paper Mill in Holyoke, Massachusetts (the "Paper City") in the 1860s.

It has been remarkable to track down so much history as each page of this nearly 400 page registry has upwards of 30 names, and each name has its own story worth telling.

In the registry, we can see one's name, number of days worked, their wages, whether or not the worker had rent or board due, the final balance owed, and signature (see Figure ??). See <https://r.amherst.edu/apps/nhorton/Parsons-Paper/> for an interactive display of the register.

## Workers' Summary

We took on the task of finding information about some of the employees at the paper mill using the database Ancestry.com.

On page 259, we found two women with the same last name which was common back then but still we decided to search for one of them on Ancestry.com.

Their names were Lucy and E.A. Allen. When we searched for Lucy, we found that E.A. stood for Eliza Ann Allen—they were sisters! (see Figure ??)

Lucy was born in Massachusetts in 1842 and Eliza Ann was her older sister born in 1841. They lived in dwelling 42.

Their father's name was Job Allen and their mother was Anna Allen.

Received of the **PARSONS PAPER COMPANY**, by their Agent, the sum prefixed to our Signatures,  
being in full of all demands up to March 1<sup>st</sup> 1868

NAMES.	No. POUNDS.	No. REAMS.	No. DAYS.	PRICE.	TOTAL AMOUNT.	RENT, OR BOARD.	BALANCE DUE.	DATE.	SIGNATURES.
Geo Papillion			22 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>	15/4	59 07		59 07	March 14	George Papillion
James P. Dower			19 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub>	10/6	33 69		33 69		James P. Dower
W. T. Lord			24 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>	14/	57 16	725	49 91		Walter T. Lord
Geo A. Day			23 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub>	15/	58 75	725	51 50		Geo A. Day
O. S. Wheeler			22 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub>	14/	51 93	1657	35 36		Olin S. Wheeler
A. L. P. Sykes			25	10/6	43 75	1657	27 18		A. L. P. Sykes
G. Farrell			23 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>	15/	58 75	857	50 18		George Farrell
Chas Robulson			25	7/6	31 25		31 25		Charles W. Robulson
Chas H. Morgan			25	8/	20 83		20 83		Charles H. Morgan
Ellen Donohue			23	6/	23 00		23 00		Ellen X. Donohue
Johannah Stack			25	"	25 00		25		Joh. X. Stack
W. Casey			24	"	24 00		24		W. X. Casey
Sammy Strong			25	"	25 00		25		Sammy Strong
Geo Whittemore			25	"	25 00	1242	12 58		George Whittemore
Maria Owen					00 00				
Sarah Slater			24 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>	"	24 50	1242	12 08		Sarah Slater
Clara Woodward			23 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub>	"	23 75	1242	11 33		Clara Woodward

Figure 1: Page 259 of the Registry

Job was born in England and moved to the United States sometime before 1841.

Like his daughters, he too worked at the Parsons Paper Company.

We found record of him first on page 3. (see Figure ??)

Anna Allen stayed at home.

This was a common life for a working-class family in Holyoke, Massachusetts in the 1860s.

From what we were able to gather, Eliza and Lucy were finishers meaning they helped with finalizing the paper making process.

We made this assumption when we found Lucy's name on Page 2 under the label "Finishers."

See (Figure ??)

Eliza and Lucy were paid not by the number of hours or days they worked but rather the number of reams they finished.

We can see on page on page 2 that Lucy finished 756 reams of paper for the month of January in 1861.

Eliza's name first appeared in 1862 on page 34 right below her sisters name, one year after her sister first started working. (see Figure ??)

Coincidentally, they were one year apart in age.

Perhaps their father Job did not want his daughters to work until they were 20 years of age.

It seemed that the Allen family had trouble finding a permanent residence as we found a number of addresses reported across different resources.

Ancestry.com showed that the Allen family lived in dwelling 42 with no street name reported.

(see Figure ??)

The Holyoke directory of 1869 shows that the Allen family lived on Dwight Street.

(see Figure ??)

Finally, on page 19 of the 1883 directory, Lucy is reported to have lived at 236 Maple Street.

(see Figure ??)

It is also worth noting that Lucy, Eliza, and Job worked for roughly the entire decade at the mill suggesting the daughters were not pursuing any form of education.

It is difficult to determine if the Allen family were literate or not due to inconsistencies in signatures.

Some signatures have "X" in them while others do not, and the handwriting is different across the decade suggesting they did not always write their own names.

Lucy Allen died on May 11, 1893 in Holyoke, Ma.

Conversely, we were able to find records on Joseph C. Parsons; the founder of the Parsons Paper Company.

**Joseph Clark Parsons**  
in the U.S., Find a Grave™ Index, 1600s-Current

[Print](#)

[Detail](#) [Source](#)

**Name:** Joseph Clark Parsons  
**Gender:** Male  
**Birth Date:** 6 Feb 1814  
**Birth Place:** Northampton, Hampshire County, Massachusetts, United States of America  
**Death Date:** 12 Mar 1886  
**Death Place:** Holyoke, Hampden County, Massachusetts, United States of America  
**Cemetery:** Forestdale Cemetery  
**Burial or Cremation Place:** Holyoke, Hampden County, Massachusetts, United States of America  
**Has Bio?:** N  
**Father:** [Justice Parsons](#)  
**Mother:** [Lydia Parsons](#)  
**Spouse:** [Lucretia Hoyt Parsons](#)  
**Children:** [Catherine Turner Taft](#), [Fannie Colton Parsons](#), [Elizabeth Hoyt Prescott](#)  
**URL:** <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/137384548/joseph-clark-parsons>

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**Find a Grave**  
Provided in association with Find a Grave

**Suggested Records**

- North America, Family Histories, 1500-2000  
Joseph Clark Parsons
- Geneanet Community Trees Index  
Joseph Clark Parsons

Figure 2: Joseph C. Parsons' Profile

Born on February 6, 1814, in Northampton, Hampshire County, Massachusetts to Lydia and Justice Parsons, Joseph Clark Parsons was a local businessman who became very successful after founding his mill.

He married Lucretia Hoyt Parsons and had three daughters; Catherine Turner Taft, Fannie Colton Parsons, and Elizabeth Hoyt Parsons.

We found that Parsons lived in house 22 of dwelling 165 on Suffolk street which was quite close to his Mill.

This was surprising because we expected him to live in the upper-class district because wealthier people lived in hills above sea level.

If we continued our research, we would aim to find descendants of the Parsons Paper Company that are still living today.

## Technical Appendix

First, we accessed the Amherst College Library account for Ancestry.com.

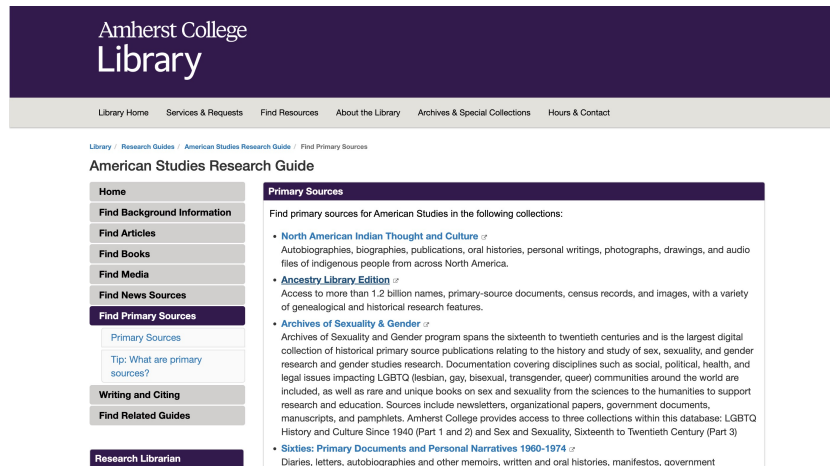


Figure 3: Once on the Amherst website, we clicked the link to Ancestry Library Edition

The link to Amherst’s access to ancestry website is [here](#).

Here is how the ancestry website looks at a first glance:

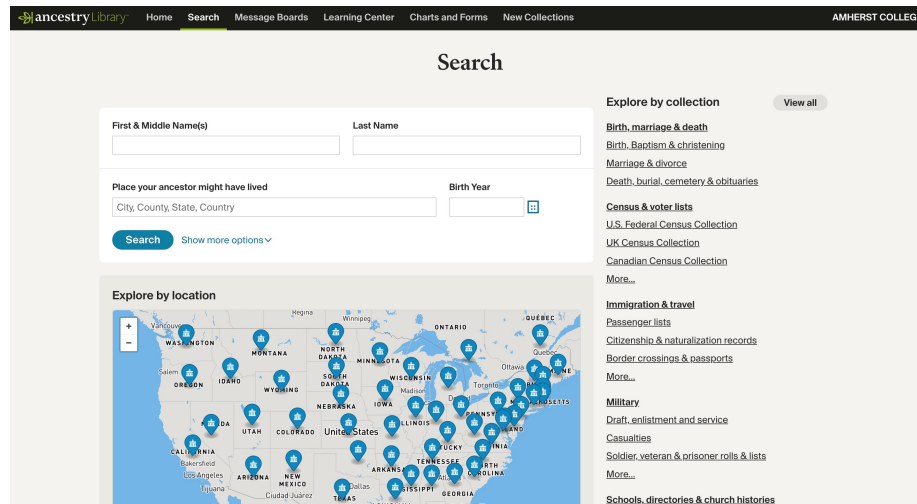


Figure 4: Ancestry.com ‘search’ screen

By searching for a name and a place, (Holyoke, Hampden, Massachusetts), we were able to find census information from the 1800s and track down paper mill workers.