

# Parsons' Paper Company Workers Database

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## Introduction

Mining the Mystery of Holyoke 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 people of Holyoke.

One way our class has begun this journey is by analyzing an old registry found in an attic in Holyoke.

This book kept the names of employees who worked at the Parsons Paper Mill in Holyoke 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.

## Workers' Summary

Tasked with finding information about employees at a paper mill, we used the database ancestry.com.

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

Figure [1](#)

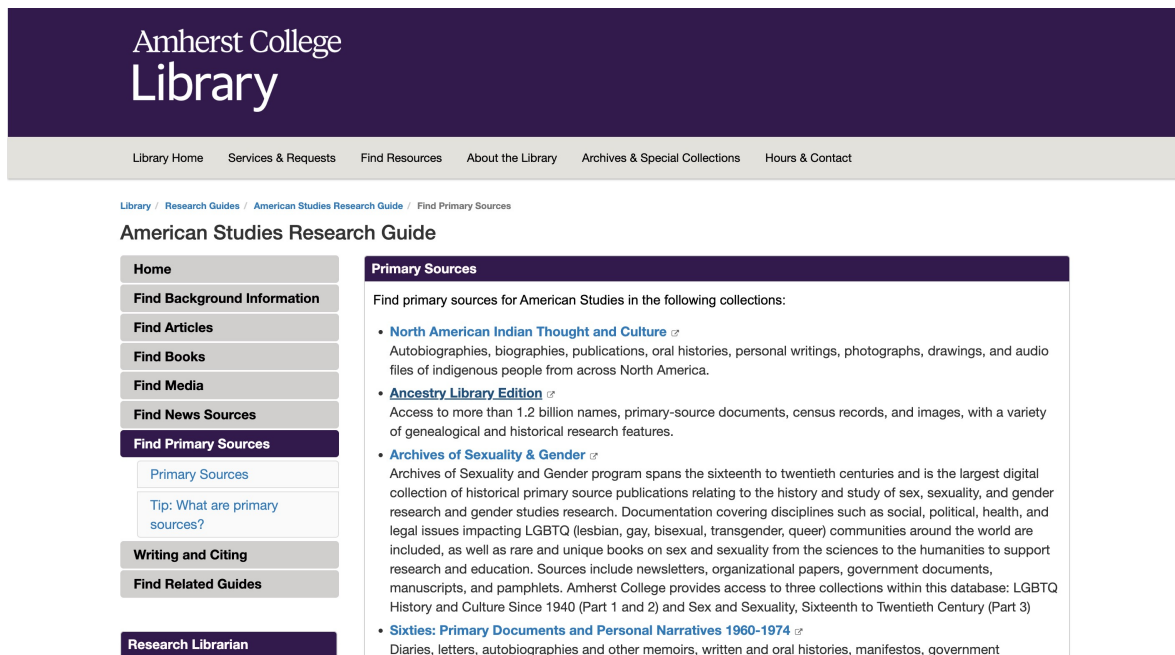


Figure 1: Once on the Amherst website, we clicked the link to Ancestry Library Edition

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

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.

The number of names that appear in first search. We used educated guess to selected the most appropriate person.

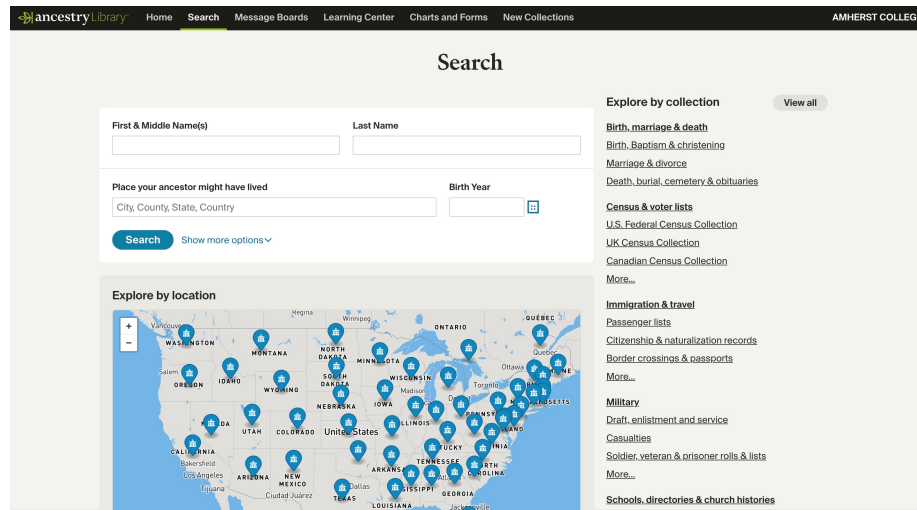


Figure 2: Ancestry.com ‘search’ screen

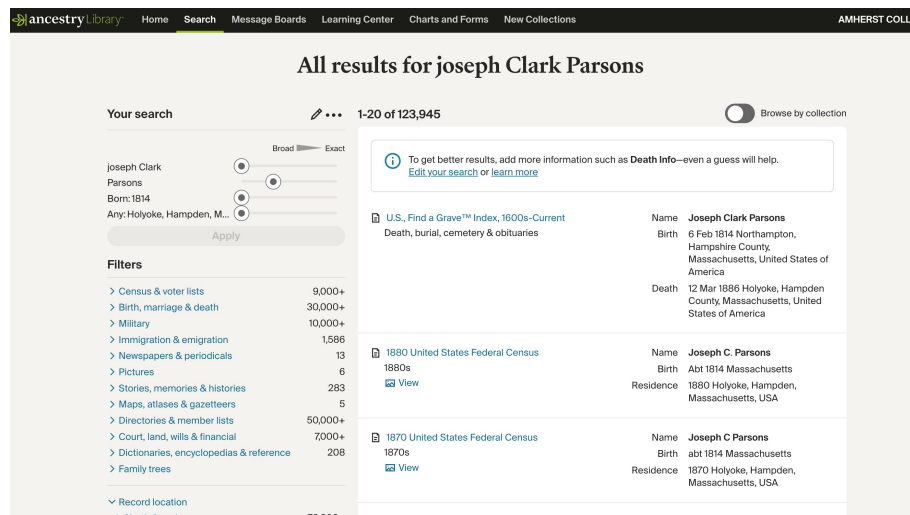


Figure 3: Initial search results

The amount of information we could find on each worker varied from name to name but in general, we were able to find birth year, birthplace, spouse, children, parents, occupation, and address. We then compiled these results into a spreadsheet.

Lucy Allen was one of the names in the record book.

**Lucy M Allen**  
in the 1870 United States Federal Census

**Detail** Source

Name: Lucy M Allen

Age in 1870: 28

Birth Date: abt 1842

Birthplace: Massachusetts

Dwelling Number: 42

Home in 1870: Holyoke, Hampden, Massachusetts

Race: White

Gender: Female

Post Office: Holyoke

Occupation: Works in Paper Mill

Father of Foreign Birth: Yes

Mother of Foreign Birth: Yes

Inferred Father: [Job H Allen](#)

Inferred Mother: [Anna Allen](#)

Household Members (Name)	Age
<a href="#">Job H Allen</a>	64
<a href="#">Anna Allen</a>	48
<a href="#">Eliza Ann Allen</a>	29
<b>Lucy M Allen</b>	28

Figure 4: Lucy Allen's Profile

She was born in Massachusetts in 1842 and lived in dwelling 42.

We were unable to find the house number or the street name but we did find that Lucy had a sister named Eliza Ann born in 1841.

**Eliza Ann Allen**  
in the 1870 United States Federal Census

**Detail** Source

Name: Eliza Ann Allen

Age in 1870: 29

Birth Date: abt 1841

Birthplace: Massachusetts

Dwelling Number: 42

Home in 1870: Holyoke, Hampden, Massachusetts

Race: White

Gender: Female

Post Office: Holyoke

Occupation: Works in Paper Mill

Father of Foreign Birth: Yes

Mother of Foreign Birth: Yes

Inferred Father: [Job H Allen](#)

Inferred Mother: [Anna Allen](#)

Household Members (Name)	Age
<a href="#">Job H Allen</a>	64
<a href="#">Anna Allen</a>	48
<b>Eliza Ann Allen</b>	29
<a href="#">Lucy M Allen</a>	28

Figure 5: Eliza Ann Allen's Profile

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

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

The interesting thing about the Allen family is that Eliza Ann, Lucy, and Job all worked at the Parsons Paper Company.

Anna Allen stayed at home.

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

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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Enter your email address and we will send you a link to your personalized Discovery Page where you can view and download all of the great finds you make while here.  
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**Suggested Records**

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

Figure 6: 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.

## Appendix

First, we accessed the Amherst College Library account for Ancestry.com. Second, we clicked the “Search” option and typed in the names of the workers and set the location to Holyoke, Hampden, MA. Finally, we used common sense by checking if occupation of the worker was the paper industry to figure out which of the search results were our person of interest.

## Database

This is the aggregated info for some of the workers who worked in Parsons’ paper in the 1860s:

```
ancestry <- readr::read_csv("ancestry_addresses_updated.csv")
```

```
Rows: 22 Columns: 11
```

```
-- Column specification -----
```

```
Delimiter: ","
```

```
chr (11): First name, Last Name, Birthday, Death Day, Address, Spouse, Child...
```

```
i Use `spec()` to retrieve the full column specification for this data.
```

```
i Specify the column types or set `show_col_types = FALSE` to quiet this message.
```

```
glimpse(ancestry)
```

```
Rows: 22
```

```
Columns: 11
```

```
$ `First name` <chr> "Ellen", "Joseph", "William", "James", "Patrick", "Patric~  
$ `Last Name` <chr> "Strick", "Parsons", "Kelly", "Casey", "Kelley", "Hollom"~  
$ Birthday <chr> "1859", "2/6/1814", "1834", "1843", "1840", "1835", "1849"~  
$ `Death Day` <chr> "N/A", "3/12/1886", "N/A", "N/A", "N/A", "N/A", "N/A", "N~  
$ Address <chr> "N/A", "House 22, Dwelling 165, Suffolk Street", "Holyoke~  
$ Spouse <chr> "N/A", "Lucretia Hoyt Parsons", "Catherine Kelly", "Ann C~  
$ Children <chr> "N/A", "Catherine Turner Taft, Fannie Colton Parsons, Eli~  
$ Birthplace <chr> "Chicopee, Mass", "Northampton, Hampshire County, Massach~  
$ Mother <chr> "N/A", "Lydia Parsons", "Irish", NA, "N/A", "Irish", "Can~  
$ Father <chr> "N/A", "Justice Parsons", "Irish", "Patrick Casey", "N/A"~  
$ `US born?` <chr> "Yes", "Yes", "No", "No", "No", "No", "No", "N/A", "Yes",~
```

Here is a [LINK](#) to this repo