

Parsons' Paper Company Workers Database

Lorraine Oloo and Camden Heafitz

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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 1). 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. We used the database ancestry.com. The link to Amherst's access to ancestry website is [here](#).

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.

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

NAMES.	NO. POUNDS.	NO. REAMS.	NO. DAYS.	PRICE.	TOTAL AMOUNT.	RENT, OR BOARD.	BALANCE DUE.	DATE.	SIGNATURES.
Geo Papillion	22 ^{1/2}	154		\$9.07	59.07			March 1 st	Geo Papillion
James P. Dowd	19 ^{4/10}	6		33.69	63.69				James P. Dowd
W. J. Lord	24 ^{2/10}	14		57.16	725	449.1			Walter J. Lord
Geo A. Day	23 ^{4/10}	154		58.75	725	51.50			Geo A. Day
O. E. Wheler	22 ^{4/10}	14		51.93	16.57	35.36			Oren E. Wheler
A. L. P. Sykes	25	106		48.75	16.57	27.18			A. L. P. Sykes
J. Fairall	25 ^{2/10}	154		58.75	857	50.18			Journal Fairall
Chas Robertson	25	76		31.25		31.25			Charles Robertson
Chas H. Morgan	25	84		21.88		20.83			Charles H. Morgan
Elin Donohue	23	64		23.00		23.00			Elin Donohue
Johannah Stack	25	"		25.00		25			Johannah Stack
H. Casey	24	"		24.00		24			H. Casey
Fannie Strong	25	"		25.00		25			Fannie Strong
Geo Whitemore	25	"		25.00	12.42	12.58			George Whitemore
Maria Brown					00.00				Sarah Slater
Sarah Slater	24 ^{2/10}	"		24.50	12.42	12.08			Sarah Slater
Clara Woodworth	25 ^{4/10}	"		28.75	12.42	11.33			Clara Woodworth

Figure 1: Page 259 of the Registry

Ancestry.com search screen:

- Header: ancestry Library, Home, Search, Message Boards, Learning Center, Charts and Forms, New Collections, AMHERST COLLEGE
- Search bar: First & Middle Name(s) and Last Name input fields.
- Place your ancestor might have lived: City, County, State, Country input field and Birth Year input field.
- Search button and Show more options dropdown.
- Explore by location: A map of North America showing locations across the United States and Canada.
- Explore by collection: A sidebar listing various collection categories such as Birth, marriage & death, Census & voter lists, Immigration & travel, and Military.
- View all link: located at the top right of the sidebar.

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.

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!

Sarah Camp	22	9	1875
Mary Smith	22	4	22/11
M. Brown	343.0	1/1	13/21
Lila Davis	2.95	4	28/68
Lucy Allen	2.28	494	28/36
M. Brown	1.28	494	"
Maryl. Brown	4.86	23%	13/73
E. A. Allen	4.95	264	12/03
C. H. Ford	5.27	264	32/03
Martha Wright	1034	2	20/68
E. Donlinson	797	2	15/94
S. Beannegard	788	2	15/16
Mary Davis	1118	2	22/16
Mary Holland	902	2	18/04
	15/15	2	3/10
	310	2	6/21
	561	32	14/11

Figure 4: Lucy and Eliza Ann Allen in the Registry page 259

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

ancestryLibrary Home Search Message Boards Learning Center Charts and Forms New Collections

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
Job H Allen	64
Anna Allen	48
Eliza Ann Allen	29
Lucy M Allen	28

Figure 5: Lucy Allen's Profile

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
Job H Allen	64
Anna Allen	48
Eliza Ann Allen	29
Lucy M Allen	28

Figure 6: 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.

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

We found record of him on page 253 and 264.

John Lynn	27	17 10	0
E. H. Wellington	27 1/2	67 50	
Martin Moran	27 1/2	87 75	
Wm McKey	27 1/2	144 70	
John King	27 1/2	48 31	
J. S. Allen	27 1/2	58 50	
Nich. P. Dunn	27 1/2	40 50	
Sam T. O'Leary	31 1/2	56 83	1 7
Richd. Mayhew	31 1/2	46 50	
Edward W. Wolf	29 1/2	53 17	
Cat. Mayhew	25 1/2	40 63	
Cat. O'Hare	28 1/2	44 62	
Joe Beaudear	27 1/2	48 88	
Joe Beaudear Jr	6 1/2	9 75	
John Vaughan	28 1/2	44 60	
	27 1/2	49 25	

Figure 7: Job Allen in the Registry page 264

Anna Allen stayed at home.

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

- pay, daughters paid by the number of hours
- moved a lot (different addresses, include the directory images), paid board sometimes, didn't at times
- roles: finishers , father was in manufacturing, expected in the time
- Lucy first appears in 1861, Eliza appears in 1862
- Worked for the entire decade
- Hard to comment on the literacy, consistencies in signature

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

The screenshot shows a memorial page for Joseph Clark Parsons. At the top right is a "Print" button. The title "Joseph Clark Parsons" is followed by the subtitle "in the U.S., Find a Grave™ Index, 1600s-Current". Below the title is a photograph of a white, ornate granite headstone in a cemetery. The headstone has "PARSONS" engraved on it. To the left of the headstone is a link "Want to get involved? Click here." The main content area is divided into sections: "Detail" and "Source". The "Detail" section contains the following information:

- 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>

To the right of the "Detail" section is a "Send Your Find Home!" box with a "Send document" button and a privacy statement link. Below this is the "Find a Grave" logo. The bottom right corner features a "Suggested Records" section with links to North America Family Histories, 1500-2000 and Geneanet Community Trees Index, both for Joseph Clark Parsons.

Figure 8: 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.

The screenshot shows the Amherst College Library website. The top navigation bar includes links for Library Home, Services & Requests, Find Resources, About the Library, Archives & Special Collections, and Hours & Contact. Below this, a breadcrumb trail shows Library / Research Guides / American Studies Research Guide / Find Primary Sources. The main content area is titled "American Studies Research Guide" and features a sidebar with links for Home, Find Background Information, Find Articles, Find Books, Find Media, Find News Sources, Find Primary Sources (which is highlighted in blue), Primary Sources (with a tip: "Tip: What are primary sources?"), Writing and Citing, Find Related Guides, and Research Librarian. The main content area is titled "Primary Sources" and describes finding primary sources for American Studies in collections like North American Indian Thought and Culture, Ancestry Library Edition, Archives of Sexuality & Gender, and Sixties: Primary Documents and Personal Narratives 1960-1974.

Figure 9: Once on the Amherst website, we clicked the link to Ancestry Library Edition

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~  
$ 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