

# 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 town's people.

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.

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.

Received of the PARSONS PAPER COMPANY, by their Agent, the sum specified 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. Capillson	23 1/2	8 1/2	59 1/2	59 1/2	59 1/2	14	45 1/2	March 1 <sup>st</sup> 1868	George Capillson
Jamie P. Donn	19 1/2	3 3/4	33 6/7	53 6/7	53 6/7		53 6/7		Jamie P. Donn
H. J. Cook	24 1/2	5 1/2	72 5	72 5	72 5	49 9/10	22 6/10		H. J. Cook
Eis G. Day	23 1/2	5 1/2	51 7/8	51 7/8	51 7/8	81 5/8	51 7/8		Eis G. Day
O. S. Wheeler	22 1/2	8 1/2	165 7	165 7	165 7	35 3/4	129 3/4		O. S. Wheeler
A. L. D. Sykes	23 1/2	4 1/2	49 1/2	49 1/2	49 1/2	27 1/2	22 1/2		A. L. D. Sykes
C. Faure	23 1/2	5 1/2	51 7/8	51 7/8	51 7/8	50 1/8	1 1/8		C. Faure
Chas. R. Weston	25 1/2	8 1/2	81 2/5	81 2/5	81 2/5	81 2/5	0		Chas. R. Weston
Chas. H. Argon	23 1/2	9 1/2	90 1/2	90 1/2	90 1/2	20 1/2	69 1/2		Chas. H. Argon
Eliza Penhine	23 1/2	23 1/2	23 1/2	23 1/2	23 1/2	28 0/0	2 1/2		Eliza Penhine
Johannah Stack	25 "	25 1/2	25 1/2	25 1/2	25 1/2	25	0		Johannah Stack
W. Cawley	24 "	24 1/2	24 1/2	24 1/2	24 1/2	24	0		W. Cawley
Sammy Birrell	25 "	25 1/2	25 1/2	25 1/2	25 1/2	25	0		Sammy Birrell
Geo. Whitemore	25 "	25 1/2	124 2	124 2	124 2	124 2	0		Geo. Whitemore
Maria Brown				60 0/0	60 0/0				Maria Brown
Sarah State	24 1/2	24 1/2	124 2	124 2	124 2	12 0/0	11 1/2		Sarah State
Clara Wadsworth	25 1/2	25 1/2	124 2	124 2	124 2	11 3/4	11 3/4		Clara Wadsworth

Figure 1: Sample page of the Registry

## 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](#).

The screenshot shows the Amherst College Library website. The header reads "Amherst College Library". Below the header is a navigation bar with links to "Library Home", "Services & Requests", "Find Resources", "About the Library", "Archives & Special Collections", and "Hours & Contact". Under "Find Resources", there is a link to "American Studies Research Guide". The main content area is titled "American Studies Research Guide". On the left, there is a sidebar with links to "Home", "Find Background Information", "Find Articles", "Find Books", "Find Media", "Find News Sources", "Find Primary Sources" (which is highlighted in blue), "Primary Sources", "Tip: What are primary sources?", "Writing and Citing", and "Find Related Guides". At the bottom of the sidebar is a button for "Research Librarian". The main content area is titled "Primary Sources" and contains a list of collections: "North American Indian Thought and Culture", "Ancestry Library Edition", "Archives of Sexuality & Gender", and "Sixties: Primary Documents and Personal Narratives 1960-1974".

Figure 2: Once on the Amherst website, we clicked the link to Ancestry Library Edition

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

The screenshot shows the Ancestry.com search interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links to "Home", "Search", "Message Boards", "Learning Center", "Charts and Forms", and "New Collections". The "Search" tab is active. Below the navigation bar, there are input fields for "First & Middle Name(s)", "Last Name", and "Place your ancestor might have lived" (with fields for "City, County, State, Country" and "Birth Year"). There is also a "Search" button and a "Show more options" dropdown. To the right, there is a sidebar titled "Explore by collection" with links to "View all", "Birth, marriage & death", "Birth, baptism & christening", "Marriage & divorce", "Death, burial, cemetery & obituaries", "Census & voter lists", "U.S. Federal Census Collection", "UK Census Collection", "Canadian Census Collection", "More...", "Immigration & travel", "Passenger lists", "Citizenship & naturalization records", "Border crossings & passports", "More...", "Military", "Draft, enlistment and service", "Casualties", "Soldier, veteran & prisoner rolls & lists", and "More...". Below the sidebar is a map of the United States and Canada with pins indicating search results.

Figure 3: 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.

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

Figure 4: 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	6	22/11
H. Brown	34	30	1892
Lola Dow	3	981	
<b>Lucy Allen</b>	2	28449	2868
Lucy Brown	10	22	
Eliza Dow	11	2949	2836
<b>E. A. Allen</b>	6	86	
E. Dow	3	23%	1373
Martha Thigpen	2	5	
E. Franklin	1	204	1203
S. Beaman	2	2	
Mary Dow	1	834	2068
Mary Holland	7	97	
	2	"	1594
	2	"	1516
	2	"	2216
	2	"	1804
	2	"	3010
	2	2	6211
	2	2	14111

Figure 5: Lucy and Eliza Ann Allen in the Registry

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

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

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

Figure 6: Lucy Allen's Profile

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

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

Figure 7: 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 264.

John Lynn	27	19	17.00
E. H. Wellington	27	19	67.50
Martin Moran	27	19	87.75
Wm McKey	27	9	14.70
John King	31	19	48.31
J. S. Allen	27	19	58.50
Nich. P. Dunn	27	9	40.50
Sam T. Regan	31	19	56.83
Richd. Mayhew	31	9	46.50
Edward W. Wolf	29	19	53.17
Cat. Maynard	25	9	40.63
Cat. O'Hare	28	19	44.62
Jos Beaudear	27	9	48.88
Joe Beaudear Jr	6	9	9.75
John Vaughan	28	9	44.60
	27	19	49.25

Figure 8: Job Allen in the Registry

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.

Figure 9: 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~  
$ 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", "N/A", "Yes", ~
```

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