

Parsons' Paper Company Workers Database

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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	15 1/2		\$9.07			\$9.07	March 14	George Papillion
James P. Dow	19 4/10	6	33	67			67		James P. Dow
W. J. Lord	24 1/2	14 1/2		5.716	72.8	49.91			Walter J. Lord
Geo A. Day	23 4/15	15 1/2		5.875	72.8	57.50			Geo A. Day
O. G. Whelch	22 4/14	14 1/2		5.193	16.57	3.836			Oren G. Whelch
A. L. P. Sykes	25 1/8	10 1/2		4.875	16.57	27.18			Ade P. Sykes
J. Farrell	23 1/2	18 1/2		5.875	8.57	50.18			Jameson. Brash
Chas Robertson	25	7 1/2		31.25			31.25		Charles W. Robertson
Chas H. Morgan	25	8 1/2		21.88			20.83		Charles H. Morgan
Ellen Dorothy	23	6 1/2		28.00			28.00		Ellen Dorothy
Jehannah Stack	25	"		25.00			25		John & Stack
H. Cussey	24	"		24.00			24		H. Cussey
Fannie Strong	25	"		25.00			25		Fannie Strong
Geo Whitemore	25	"		25.00	12.42	12.58			George Whitemore
Maria Brown					0.00				
Sarah Slater	24	"		24.50	12.42	12.08			Sarah Slater
Clara Woodworth	23 3/4	"		28.75	12.42	11.33			Clara Woodworth

Figure 1: Page XX of the Registry

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American Studies Research Guide

Home	Primary Sources
Find Background Information	Find primary sources for American Studies in the following collections:
Find Articles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> North American Indian Thought and Culture Autobiographies, biographies, publications, oral histories, personal writings, photographs, drawings, and audio files of indigenous people from across North America.
Find Books	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ancestry Library Edition Access to more than 1.2 billion names, primary-source documents, census records, and images, with a variety of genealogical and historical research features.
Find Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Archives of Sexuality & Gender Archives of Sexuality and Gender program spans the sixteenth to twentieth centuries and is the largest digital collection of historical primary source publications relating to the history and study of sex, sexuality, and gender research and gender studies research. Documentation covering disciplines such as social, political, health, and legal issues impacting LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) communities around the world are included, as well as rare and unique books on sex and sexuality from the sciences to the humanities to support research and education. Sources include newsletters, organizational papers, government documents, manuscripts, and pamphlets. Amherst College provides access to three collections within this database: LGBTQ History and Culture Since 1940 (Part 1 and 2) and Sex and Sexuality, Sixteenth to Twentieth Century (Part 3)
Find News Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sixties: Primary Documents and Personal Narratives 1960-1974 Diaries, letters, autobiographies and other memoirs, written and oral histories, manifestos, government
Find Primary Sources	
Primary Sources	
Tip: What are primary sources?	
Writing and Citing	
Find Related Guides	
Research Librarian	

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

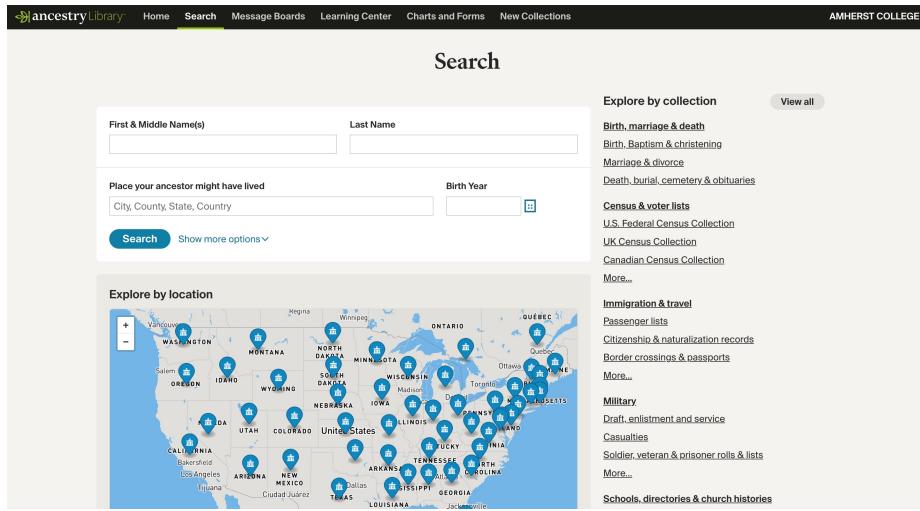


Figure 3: Ancestry.com ‘search’ screen

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!

Larah Camp	22	9	1875
Mary Smith	22	4	22011
H. Brown	3430	14	13921
Joh. Brown	2981	14	2868
Lucy Allen	2284494	58	2836
Eliza Ann	21022	49	"
E. A. Allen	21129	49	"
C. D. Ford	6282	"	1373
Martha Thignt	42333	"	"
E. Robinson	495	"	1203
S. Cummings	327208	"	"
Mary Dower	1034	3	2068
Mary Holland	797	2	1594
	758	2	1516
	1108	2	2216
	902	2	1804
	15115	2	3010
	910	2	620
	560	2	1411

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.

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

Figure 6: 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)	
Job H Allen	Age 64
Anna Allen	Age 48
Eliza Ann Allen	Age 29
Lucy M Allen	Age 28

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.

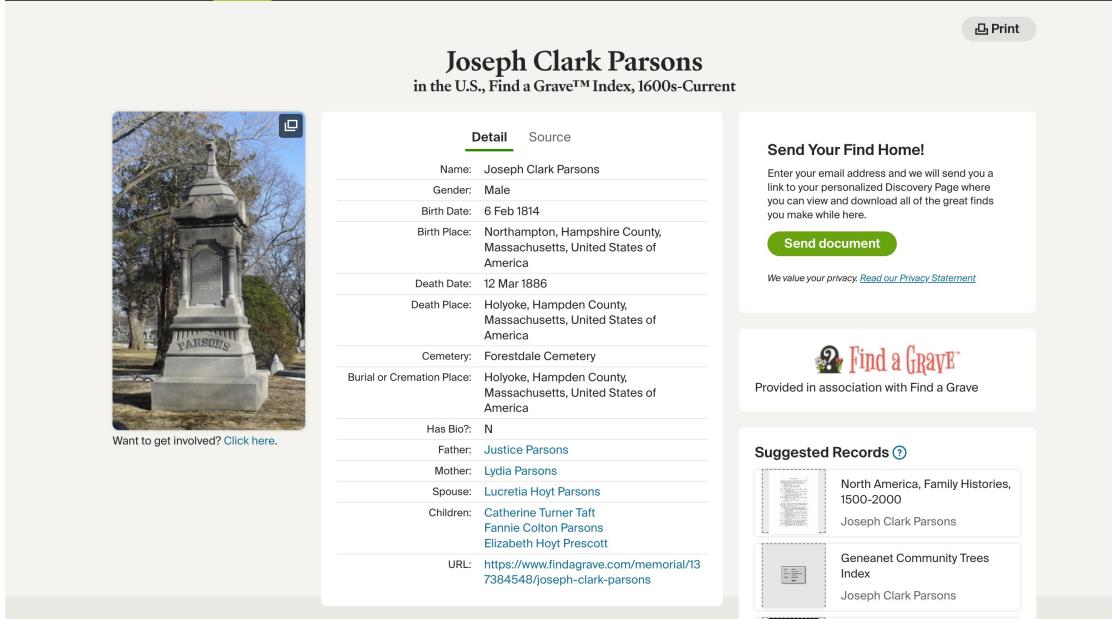


Figure 8: Job Allen in the Registry

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.



The screenshot shows a memorial page for Joseph Clark Parsons. At the top right is a "Print" button. The main title is "Joseph Clark Parsons" with the subtitle "in the U.S., Find a Grave™ Index, 1600s-Current". Below the title is a photograph of his headstone, which is white and ornate, with the name "PARSONS" engraved on it. To the left of the headstone is a link "Want to get involved? Click here.". The central part of the page contains a table with "Detail" and "Source" columns. The "Detail" column lists 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 table is a "Send Your Find Home!" section with a "Send document" button and a privacy statement link. Below this is the "Find a Grave" logo and a note about association with Find a Grave. At the bottom right is a "Suggested Records" section with links to North America Family Histories (1500-2000) and Geneanet Community Trees Index, both listing Joseph Clark Parsons.

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