

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 6). See [here](#) 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 8)

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.

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 9)

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 10)

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 11)

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.

In 1869, the Holyoke city directory shows that the Allen family lived on Dwight Street.

Ancestry.com showed that the Allen family lived in dwelling 42 with no street name reported in 1870.

(see Figure 4)

We were able to follow Lucy's places of residence in several years after 1870 until her death on May 11, 1893 in Holyoke, MA. See Figure 12 for Lucy's places of residence.

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 in this period. Lucy also appears to have continued working in the PPC mill until her death.

It is difficult to determine if the Allen family's literacy 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 multiple people could have been signing for them.

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

(see Figure 7)

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.

The screenshot shows the Amherst College Library website. The main 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, Tip: What are primary sources?, Writing and Citing, Find Related Guides, and Research Librarian. The main content area discusses primary sources for American Studies, mentioning North American Indian Thought and Culture, Ancestry Library Edition, Archives of Sexuality & Gender, and Sixties: Primary Documents and Personal Narratives 1960-1974.

Figure 1: 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:

The screenshot shows the Ancestry.com search interface. At the top, there are links for Home, Search, Message Boards, Learning Center, Charts and Forms, and New Collections. The "Search" tab is selected. Below the tabs, there are fields for First & Middle Name(s) and Last Name, and a dropdown for Place your ancestor might have lived (City, County, State, Country). A "Search" button and a "Show more options" link are also present. To the right, there are sections for "Explore by collection" (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...) and "Explore by location" (a map of the United States and Canada with pins indicating various locations). Further down, there are sections for Immigration & travel (Passenger lists; Citizenship & naturalization records; Border crossings & passports; More...), Military (Draft, enlistment and service; Casualties; Soldier, veteran & prisoner rolls & lists; More...), and Schools, directories & church histories.

Figure 2: 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 guesses to select the most appropriate person.

The screenshot shows the Ancestry.com search interface with the query "Joseph Clark Parsons". The search results page displays 1-20 of 123,945 results. The results are categorized by collection, with the top result being the "U.S. Find a Grave™ Index, 1600s-Current" entry for Joseph Clark Parsons, showing his birth date (6 Feb 1814), death date (12 Mar 1886), and residence (Holyoke, Massachusetts). Below this are entries from the 1880 and 1870 United States Federal Censuses, and a record from the 1870 United States Federal Census for Joseph C. Parsons.

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. Here is what Lucy and Eliza Ann's profiles looked like on Ancestry.com

We then compiled these results into a spreadsheet linked below.

Photo References

Map of Lucy Allen's places of residency

```
#library(leaflet)
#m <- leaflet() %>%
  #addTiles() %>% # Add default OpenStreetMap map tiles
# addMarkers(lng=-72.610583, lat=42.208699, popup="Lucy's residence in 1869, Dwight Street")
# addMarkers(lng=-72.60885324421784, lat=42.207205320691806, popup="Lucy's residence in 1870")
# addMarkers(lng=-72.59690708839962, lat=42.2048726160808, popup="Lucy's residence in 1871")
# addMarkers(lng=-72.59879076909023, lat=42.20659749781258, popup="Lucy's residence in 1872")
# addMarkers(lng=-72.61248214421803, lat=42.199421732536955, popup="Parsons Paper Company")

#m # Print the map
```

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 4: 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 5: Eliza Ann Allen's Profile

NAMES.	No. Pounds.	No. REAMS.	No. DAYS.	PRICE.	TOTAL AMOUNT.	RENT, OR BOARD.	BALANCE DUE.	DATE.	SIGNATURES.
Geo Papillion	22 ³ / ₄	154	59 07		59 07			March 14	George Papillion
James P. Dowd	19 ⁴ / ₄ 106		33 67		33 67				James P. Dowd
W. J. Lord	24 ² / ₄ 141		57 16	725	4991				Walter J. Lord
Eus A. Day	25 ⁴ / ₄ 157		58 75	725	51 50				Eus A. Day
O. D. Wheler	22 ⁴ / ₄ 142		51 93	16 57	35 36				Orin D. Wheler
A. L. P. Sykes	25 106		48 75	16 57	27 18				A. L. P. Sykes
J. Faull	25 ² / ₄ 151		58 75	857	50 18				George Faull
Chas Robertson	25 76		31 25			31 25			Charles W. Robertson
Chas H. Morgan	25 87		21 83			20 83			Charles H. Morgan
Ellen Donohue	23 67		28 00			23 00			Ellen Donohue
Johannah Stack	25 "		25 00			25			Johannah Stack
H. Casy	24 "		24 00			24			H. Casy
Fannie Strong	25 "		25 00			25			Fannie Strong
Geo Whittimore	25 "		25 00	12 42	12 58				George Whittimore
Maria Brown					00 00				
Sarah Slater	24 "		24 50	12 42	12 08				Sarah Slater
Clara Woodworth	25 ³ / ₄ "		28 75	12 42	11 33				Clara Woodworth

Figure 6: Page 259 of the Registry

[Print](#)

Joseph Clark Parsons

in the U.S., Find a Grave™ Index, 1600s-Current



Want to get involved? [Click here.](#)

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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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 7: Joseph C. Parsons' Profile

Larah Camp	22	\$1	18.75
Mary Smith	22	4	22.00
M. Brown	36	14	18.92
E. Davis	4	3.50	
Lucy Allen	3	5.80	
H. Brown	3	2.84	8.56
Mary J. Davis	3	4.98	
E. A. Allen	3	12.84	
C. B. Lind	3	10.72	
Martha Wright	3	11.29	34.94
E. Emilinson	3	6.81	
S. Beauregard	3	5.64	23.33
Mary Davis	4	9.95	
Mary Holland	4	3.87	12.03
	Sum		
	1034	3	20.68
	797	2	15.94
	758	2	15.16
	1108	2	22.16
	902	2	18.04
	1515	2	30.10
	810	2	16.20
	560	2	14.00

Figure 8: Lucy and Eliza Ann Allen in the Registry page 259

Figure 9: Job Allen in the Registry page 3

Adele Burnham		14
Ellen M. Perry		11
Zuey Allen	Sorties	756
Lucia M. Crandall	"	603
Emma. Perry	"	306
S. E. Morey	"	624

Figure 10: Lucy Allen in the Registry page 2

Frances Lopez	10	80	11.50			
Mary Murphy	16	79	10.00	10.00	1	Mary J. Murphy
Susan Cram	5	2	3.00	3.00	1	Susan Cram
Emma Guy	15	9	9.57	9.57	1	E. Ma. Perry
Betty Allen	12	2	9.07	9.07	1	Betty Allen
E. A. Allen	20	1	12.50	12.50	1	E. A. Allen
W. Sammie Cotton	24	2	10.52	15.52	1	W. Sammie Cotton
Betty Camping	18	7	12.96	12.96	1	L. M. Campi
			105.70			
Dated						
Emma Guy	361	2	6.82	6.82	Jan 11 th	E. Ma. Perry
Betty Allen	516	1	1.38	1.38	1	Betty Allen
E. A. Allen	361		7.22	7.22	1	E. A. Allen
Betty Cram	492	1	9.84	9.84	1	Susan M. Cram
Ella S. Cram	307	1	7.74	7.74	1	Ella S. Cram
E. A. Perry	160	1	20.00	20.00	1	E. A. Perry
Betty Bush	527	1	10.54	10.54	1	Betty Bush
E. A. Stroob	861	1	17.28	17.28	1	E. A. Stroob
E. A. Guy	750	1	15.00	15.00	1	E. Ma. Perry
Ada Buckham	509	1	6.80	6.80	1	Ada Buckham
	6381		107.62			
Same Date						
C. M. Perry	34	10.50	80.4			
	12	165.58	1	29.12	29.12	Jan 11 th
Sarah E. Haynes	556					
	12	165.68	1	80.25	80.25	1
Angie Rimer	244	1				
	12	165.68	1	10.50	10.50	1

Figure 11: Lucy and Eliza Ann Allen on page 34

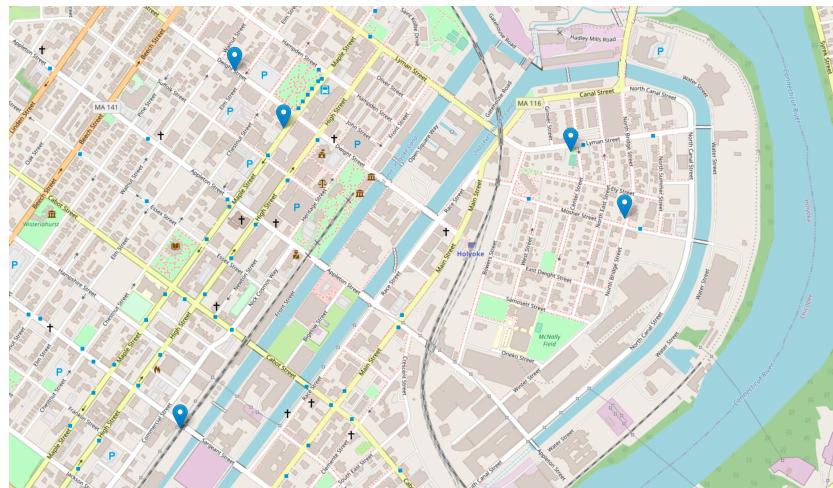


Figure 12: Lucy Allen Residency between 1869-91

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", "N/A", "Yes", ~
```

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