

Parsons Paper Register #7

Anna Zhou & Sarah Edelson

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Introduction - Parsons Paper Register

The Parsons Paper Register contains over 300 pages of employee and payroll records from January 1861 to April 1869 from Parsons Paper Company in Holyoke, Massachusetts. Founded in 1853 by Joseph Parsons, Parsons Paper Company was the oldest and largest manufacturer of cotton-based high quality writing papers in Holyoke. The original pages of the register were scanned and screenshots are included in the analysis below. Pages contain information such as employee name and signature, role, days worked, and total wages earned, and are organized by separate pay periods.

The goal of this report is to explore patterns in employment and different groups of employees over time by analyzing the payroll records in the 1861-1869 time period, both before and after the end of the Civil War. First, we aimed to quantify the length of a single pay period as well as the number of employees working at Parsons Paper Company during the era spanning the register. The 1860s were a time of great growth for the company, and by the beginning of the Civil War in 1861 Parsons Paper Company had already become the largest manufacturer of writing and envelope paper in the United States. We then examined the distribution of different roles within the company, ranging from women who worked in the “rag room” where the raw material for paper was cut and processed, to men who worked in the engine room and repairs. We hope that this report can provide some insight into the different day-to-day operations at Parsons Paper Company, as well as the individuals who worked there, many of whom stayed for several years.

In *History of the Connecticut Valley in Massachusetts: History of Franklin County. History of Hampden County* (1879), accessed [here](#) via Google Books, L.H Everts provides more information about the layout of the mill and the different departments of employment, which helped us determine job names that we could not originally decipher (i.e. “jobber”). Everts writes that

“The buildings of this company are situated on the river-bank near the dam, and were built in 1853. They are two in number,—the **main mill**, where the paper is made, and what is known as the **finishing-mill**, where it is finished. The former is a structure three stories

and a basement high. The upper floor and attic are devoted to **drying** purposes, while the second story contains the **storehouse** and **rag-rooms**. About 175 persons are employed on the two floors. On the ground-floor is the **engine-room**, which contains sixteen 450-pound and fourteen 250-pound engines. The mill has three Fourdrinier machines...The finishing-mill is also situated on the bank of the river, a short distance from the other mill, and, like that, is a brick structure three stories high. The attic and third floor are used for **packing**, and on the second floor the paper is **reeled** and **jogged**. On the first floor are eight 6-roll calendars and three powerful hydraulic presses, and in the basement is a box-factory and plating-machines" (919).

From *Burt's Illustrated Guide of the Connecticut Valley* ([page 79](#)), we also know that at the end of 1867, the Parsons Paper Co. employed 150 people and had "nineteen engines for grinding rags," turning out "800 tons of paper yearly."

How many days in a pay period?

- The Parsons Paper Company register available from the Holyoke (Massachusetts) Public Library History Room comprises monthly pay periods from January 1861-April 1869. See <https://r.amherst.edu/apps/nhorton/Parsons-Paper/> for an interactive display.
- Pay periods appear to be a month long with employees typically getting paid on the 1st of the next (?) month
- Based off the spreadsheet from p. 253, most employees work between 20-30 days each pay period, the average is around 27 so most employees work at least 6 days/week
 - In Chapter IV of Green's book, she writes that male Holyoke paper makers worked 58-72 hours a week
 - * 11.25 hours five days a week + 8.75 hours on Saturday was typical for Holyoke textile mills
 - Women worked slightly shorter hours
- Pgs. 261-263 appear to comprise an entire pay period for the month of April in 1868 (most pay periods span ~3 pages in the register). Page 261 is seen below and pages 262 & 263 are featured in the appendix.
- Pgs. 223-225 and Pgs. 261-263 are exactly one year apart in the register (April 1st 1867 + April 1st 1868). Page 223 is seen below and pages 224 & 225 are featured in the appendix.

Figure 1: p. 261

How many employees during this era?

- Counted 92 employees in April 1861, 122 employees in April 1862, 141 employees in April 1863, 128 employees in April 1864, 159 employees in April 1865, 144 employees in April 1866, 131 employees in April 1867, 153 employees in April 1868, 153 employees in April 1869
 - Average across the measured 9 years = 136 employees between 1861-1869
 - * Subset Pages: 8-10 (1861) 43-45 (1862), 79-81 (1863), 115-117 (1864 - this month also has pay records from the 30th not included in the employee count above), 151-153 (1865), 187-189 (1866) 223-225 (1867), 261-263 (1868), 314-316 (1869)
 - Number of employees generally increased over time
 - * Green mentions that these mills had abnormally high employee retention rates
 - * Boom in employment towards end of Civil War in 1865
- Some pages have a separate section of employees at the bottom under “Repairs” and “Repairs & Watchmen” (April 1862 p.45 - 4 employees under ‘Repairs & Watchmen’) -- we included these names in the counts above

Received of the PARSONS PAPER COMPANY, by their Agent, the sum specified to and Signatures,
being in full of all demands up to 1st April 1869.

NAMES.	No. POUNDS.	No. REAMS.	No. PAGES.	PRICE.	TOTAL AMOUNT.	RENT, OR BOARD.	BALANCE DUE.	DATE.	SIGNATURES.
W. Ordway.	28	1 ^{1/2}	3200	\$2.00	\$32.00	Aprial 1 st	4/14	Ordway	
J. S. Penney	20	2 ^{1/2}	5300	\$2.00	\$40.00				Wm. J. Penney
J. S. Lutes	15	1 ^{1/2}	5167	\$2.00	\$31.00				Jas. S. Lutes
John Thun	35	1 ^{1/2}	35000	\$2.00	\$70.00				John X. Thun
J. H. Allen	20	1 ^{1/2}	24000	\$2.00	\$48.00	19/6/00			J. H. Allen
Sam Rogers	25	4 ^{1/2}	4612	\$2.00	\$52.00	Aprial 1 st			Sam X. Rogers
Patrick Begon	56	2 ^{1/2}	11000	\$2.00	\$112.00	Aprial 1 st			Patrick Begon
John O'Conor	25	1 ^{1/2}	5352	\$2.00	\$53.00				John X. O'Conor
James Vaughan	28	1 ^{1/2}	2325	\$2.00	\$56.00				James X. Vaughan
John Vaughan	25	1 ^{1/2}	2325	\$2.00	\$56.00				John X. Vaughan
Michael Ryan	26	1 ^{1/2}	2950	\$2.00	\$59.00				Michael Ryan
William Perry	28	1 ^{1/2}	3675	\$2.00	\$73.50				William Perry
William Stetson	31	1 ^{1/2}	3675	\$2.00	\$73.50				Wm. Stetson
Lawrence Steele	9	1 ^{1/2}	3675	\$2.00	\$73.50				Lawrence Steele
Patrick Mahoney	29	1 ^{1/2}	2025	\$2.00	\$40.50				Pat X. Mahony
Hector Bishop	22	1 ^{1/2}	5937	\$2.00	\$59.37				Hector Bishop
John W. Frey	26	1 ^{1/2}	3130	\$2.00	\$62.00				John W. Frey
William Hall	53	1 ^{1/2}	36400	\$2.00	\$72.80				Wm. Hall
K. B. Singhaham	25	4 ^{1/2}	2812	\$2.00	\$56.24				K. B. Singhaham
Patrick Vaughan	25	4 ^{1/2}	2518	\$2.00	\$50.36				Pat X. Vaughan
Mary Hayden	26	2 ^{1/2}	1500	\$2.00	\$30.00				Mary X. Hayden
Mrs. Baldwin	22	1 ^{1/2}	1100	\$2.00	\$22.00				Mrs. X. Baldwin
Catharine Fawcett	10	1 ^{1/2}	525	\$2.00	\$5.25				Catharine Fawcett
Mrs. Shunko	14	1 ^{1/2}	700	\$2.00	\$14.00				Laura Shunko
Thomas Blake	10	1 ^{1/2}	900	\$2.00	\$18.00				Thomas Blake
John Caudier	23	1 ^{1/2}	2670	\$2.00	\$53.40	Aprial 1 st			John Caudier
James Esey	19	4 ^{1/2}	1125	\$2.00	\$22.50				James X. Esey
					5000.00	15.00			
						719.40			

Repairs & Watchman.

R. J. Howard	50 ⁰⁰	6,000	6,000	Apr 15 th	R. J. Howard
G. P. Setzer	32 ⁴⁴	3400	5600		G. P. Setzer
Falling Creek	50 ¹⁰	5000	5000		William Kelly
Env. Falling Creek	38 ⁷⁴	2745	2745		E. W. Wellington
		173.65	173.65		

- Presumably employees whose main role was to repair the machines instead of making paper
 - There were 5 people under “Repairs” for April 1st, 1867 (see p. 225 above) and 8 under April 1st, 1868 (see p. 262 above)

What types of jobs are there?

We are listing the roles and the page # where it is first introduced

- ? (001) - looks like “MFC” but we can’t decipher it
- repairs (001)
- rag room (002)
- finishers (002)
- ? (005) - looks like something and then “MFC Mill” → we googled and found that this is actually the name of a machine
- foreman (005)
- machine room (005)
- engine room (005)
- soft hands (005)
- fireman (005)
- size hands ? (005)
- jobbers ? (005)
- watchmen (005)
- overseer (006)
- day hands (007)
- sorters (007)
- stamp & sealer (007)
- count & folder (007)
- engineers (009)
- machine hands (009)
- stamper (011)
- sealer (011)
- sorter (011)
- extra (011)
- borders (013)

- linen ? (021)
- cotton (021)
- cutter (023)
- ? repairs + something else (25)
- repair & watchmen (030)
- ? SN (034)

**Spreadsheet tracking employment by job type for first 6 months of the register
(Jan-Jun 1861)**

[Spreadsheet LINK](#)

```
employment <- read.csv("parsons_jobs.csv")
kable(employment)
```

MonthYear	Job	Coun	Page	Monthly	Total
January 1861	MFC	25	1	77	
January 1861	repairs	4	1	77	
January 1861	rag	25	2	77	
	room				
January 1861	finishers	23	2	77	
February 1861	MFC	25	3	75	
February 1861	repairs	4	3	75	
February 1861	rag	24	4	75	
	room				
February 1861	finishers	22	4	75	
March 1861	foreman	1	5	85	
March 1861	machine	3	5	85	subgroup of MFC - looks like they broke out subgroups within the MFC
	room				
March 1861	engine	7	5	85	subgroup of MFC - looks like they broke out subgroups within the MFC
	room				
March 1861	soft hands	4	5	85	subgroup of MFC - looks like they broke out subgroups within the MFC
March 1861	fireman	2	5	85	subgroup of MFC - looks like they broke out subgroups within the MFC
March 1861	size hands	2	5	85	subgroup of MFC - looks like they broke out subgroups within the MFC

Month	Year	Job	Coun	Page.	Monthly	Notes	\$
March	1861	joggers	3	5	85	subgroup of MFC - looks like they broke out subgroups within the MFC	
March	1861	watchmen	4	5	85		
March	1861	rag room	23	6	85	the count includes the overseer	
March	1861	repairs	4	6	85		
March	1861	finishers	21	7	85		
March	1861	sorters	5	7	85		
March	1861	stamper & sealer	2	7	85		
March	1861	count & folders	2	7	85		
March	1861	sorter	2	7	85		
April	1861	rag room	6	8	93		
April	1861	cutters	17	8	93	subgroup of rag room - looks like they broke out subgroups within the rag room	
April	1861	repairs	4	8	93		
April	1861	MFC	1	9	93	might be the overseer?	
April	1861	machine hands	3	9	93	within MFC?	
April	1861	engineers	7	9	93		
April	1861	soft hands	3	9	93		
April	1861	size hands	2	9	93		
April	1861	joggers	5	9	93		
April	1861	fireman	4	9	93	says "firemen" here, changing for consistency with previous job label, which said "fireman"	
April	1861	finishers	25	10	93		
April	1861	stamper & sealer	2	10	93		
April	1861	count & folders	3	10	93		
April	1861	sorters	11	10	93		

Month	Year	Job	Coun	Page.	Monthly	Notes
May	1861	no label	25	11	105	I think these people are finishers though - many of the same people that were labeled finishers for the previous month
May	1861	stamper	1	11	105	
May	1861	sealer	1	11	105	
May	1861	count & folders	2	11	105	
May	1861	sorter	9	11	105	
May	1861	extra	1	11	105	
May	1861	no label	34	12	105	
May	1861	repairs	3	12	105	
May	1861	no label	25	13	105	
May	1861	borders	4	13	NA	
June	1861	no label	17	14	95	
June	1861	repairs	3	14	95	
June	1861	borders	6	14	95	
June	1861	no label	24	15	95	
June	1861	sorters	8	15	95	
June	1861	count & folders	2	15	95	
June	1861	stamper	1	15	95	
June	1861	sealer	1	15	95	
June	1861	no label	33	16	95	

- Role labels become very sporadic after first year
 - ‘Repairs’ and ‘Repairs and Watchmen’, however, remain in their own section at the bottom
 - * All males
- The sorters, stampers, sealers, count&folders, rag room/cutter roles remain throughout 1861-1869, although there are much fewer of them compared to the unlabeled names
 - These roles were held by almost all women

Quotes from Hickey thesis that may be of relevance to employment from 1861-1869

- “In 1861, after a period of severe readjustment just prior to the Civil War, twenty-one of the thirty-six manufactures of fine papers met at Pittsfield...to organize a protective association. They desired to raise prices which had fallen drastically as the result of a decrease in demand. They agreed to reduce output by about one-third for about three months. This was the first trade association established in the paper industry of the United States....The Parsons Paper Company and the Carew Manufacturing Company were charter members of this organization” (108)
- “Since the discovery of how to utilize wood for the manufacture of paper in 1867, this raw material has been in increasing demand” (84)
- “several of the local mills were quite large, employing 200 or more workers” and there were “about 3700 workers employed in the local paper industry at the turn of the century” (4)
- “Repairs, if necessary, are undertaken on Sundays” (94)
- “In replacing a wire on a Fourdrinier paper machine, workers in the Holyoke mills receive half a day’s pay besides their regular pay during the hours they work on the replacement. This acts as an incentive to the workers to get the machine back in operation as soon as possible” (94)

Appendix

