

# **Parsons' Paper Company Workers Database**

Lorraine Oloo and Camden Heafitz

2023-02-17

## **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 1<sup>st</sup> 1868.*

NAMES.	NO. POUNDS.	NO. REAMS.	NO. DAYS.	PRICE.	TOTAL AMOUNT.	RENT, OR BOARD.	BALANCE DUE.	DATE.	SIGNATURES.
Geo Papillion	22 <sup>1/2</sup>	154		\$9.07	59.07			March 1 <sup>st</sup>	Geo Papillion
James P. Dowd	19 <sup>4/10</sup>	6		33.69	63.69				James P. Dowd
W. J. Lord	24 <sup>2/14</sup>	1		57.16	72.5	44.91			Walter J. Lord
Geo A. Day	23 <sup>4/15</sup>	1		58.75	72.5	51.50			Geo A. Day
O. E. Wheler	22 <sup>4/14</sup>	1		51.93	16.57	35.36			Oren E. Wheler
A. L. P. Sykes	25	16		48.75	16.57	27.18			A. L. P. Sykes
J. Fairall	25 <sup>2/15</sup>	1		58.75	8.57	50.18			Journal Fairall
Chas Robertson	25	16		31.25		31.25			Charles M. Robertson
Chas H. Morgan	25	8		21.88		20.83			Charles H. Morgan
Elin Donohue	23	6		23.00		23.00			Elin Donohue
Johannah Stack	25	"		25.00		25			John 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					0.00				Sarah Slater
Sarah Slater	24 <sup>2/15</sup>	1		24.50	12.42	12.08			Sarah Slater
Clara Woodworth	25 <sup>3/4</sup>	1		28.75	12.42	11.33			Clara Woodworth

Figure 1: Page 259 of the Registry

Ancestry.com search screen showing search fields, location map, and collection filters.

Search fields: First & Middle Name(s), Last Name, Place your ancestor might have lived (City, County, State, Country), Birth Year, and a Search button.

Explore by location map: Shows locations across the United States and Canada.

Explore by collection filters:

- 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
  - More...
- Schools, directories & church histories**

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
J. Brown	34	1	1872
J. Brown	34	1	1872
Lucy Allen	28	4	28/68
M. Brown	18	22	28/6
M. Brown	18	29	28/6
E. A. Allen	24	3	1873
C. H. Ford	24	3	12/03
Martha Wright	24	3	20/68
B. Donlinson	24	3	18/04
S. Beannegard	24	3	3/10
Mary O'Brien	15	15	3/10
Mary Holland	31	2	6/21
	56	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	19	1750
E. H. Wellington	27	19	6750
Martin Moran	27	19	8775
Wm McKey	27	19	1470
John St. John	27	19	4831
J. S. Allen	27	19	5850
Nich. Quinn	27	9	4050
Sam T. Keegan	31	14	5683
Richd. Mayhew	31	9	4650
Edward W. Wolf	29	14	5317
Cat. Maynard	25	9	4063
Cat. O'Hare	28	14	4462
Jos Beaudear	27	9	4888
Joe Beaudear Jr	6	9	975
John Vaughan	28	9	4460
	27	16	4925

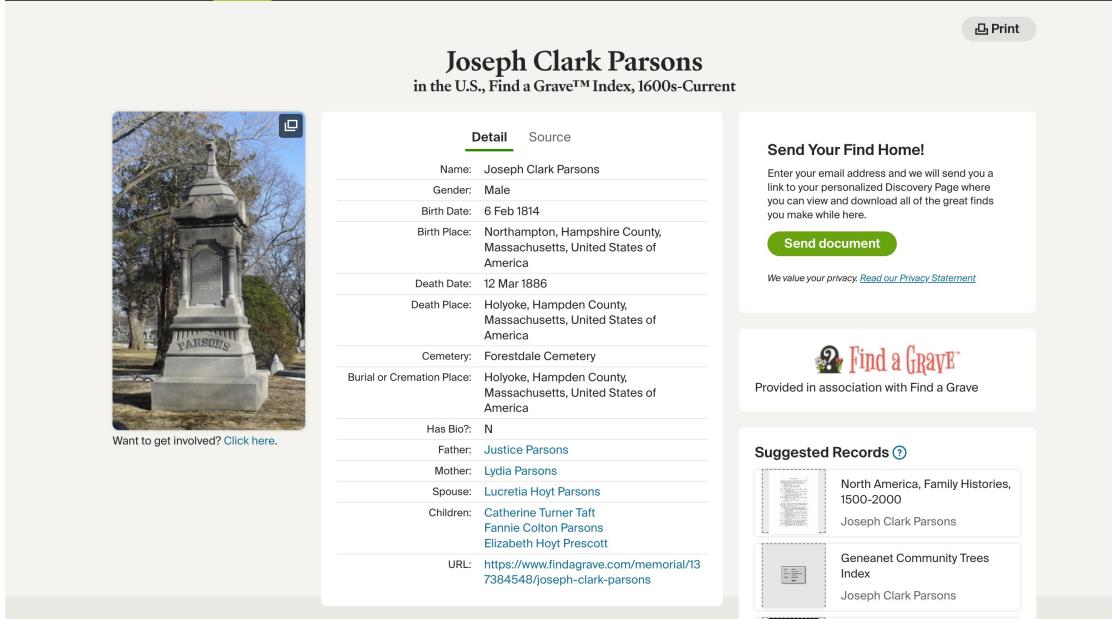
Figure 7: Job Allen in the Registry page 264

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." Eliza and Lucy were paid not by the number of hours they worked but rather the number of reams they finished. Additionally, Eliza's name first appeared in 1862

- 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 centered, with the subtitle "in the U.S., Find a Grave™ Index, 1600s-Current" below it. To the left is a photograph of his granite monument in a cemetery, which is inscribed with "PARSONS". Below the photo is a link "Want to get involved? Click here.". The main content area is divided into two columns: "Detail" and "Source". 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:	<a href="https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/137384548/joseph-clark-parsons">https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/137384548/joseph-clark-parsons</a>

The "Source" column is currently empty. To the right of the detail table is a "Send Your Find Home!" section with a "Send document" button and a note about privacy. Below this is the "Find a Grave" logo. A "Suggested Records" section lists genealogical resources like North America Family Histories and Geneanet Community Trees Index, both associated with 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 header reads "Amherst College Library". Below the header is a navigation bar with links: Library Home, Services & Requests, Find Resources, About the Library, Archives & Special Collections, and Hours & Contact. Underneath the navigation bar, the URL is Library / Research Guides / American Studies Research Guide / Find Primary Sources. The main content area is titled "American Studies Research Guide". On the left, there is a sidebar with links: Home, Find Background Information, Find Articles, Find Books, Find Media, Find News Sources, Find Primary Sources (which is highlighted in blue), Primary Sources (link), Tip: What are primary sources?, Writing and Citing, Find Related Guides, and Research Librarian. The main content area has a dark blue header titled "Primary Sources". It says: "Find primary sources for American Studies in the following collections:" followed by a bulleted list: • North American Indian Thought and Culture (link), • Ancestry Library Edition (link), and • Archives of Sexuality & Gender (link). Below this, it says: "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)." At the bottom of the sidebar, it says: "Sixties: Primary Documents and Personal Narratives 1960-1974 (link)" followed by a description: "Diaries, letters, autobiographies and other memoirs, written and oral histories, manifestos, government".

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

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