

# US Census

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- I. Availability of the Census
  - A. All census schedules have been digitized and are available for research at the National Archives, at [familysearch.org](http://familysearch.org) and HeritageQuest and at other subscription websites.
  - B. Census schedules available for each of census years 1790 through 1940 with following exceptions
    1. Some 1790 - 1820 schedules not available for some states
    2. The 1870 census results were so bad that a second census was done for New York, Philadelphia, Indianapolis and St. Louis See <https://stevemorse.org/census/1870secondenumeration.html> and <https://www.mkrgenealogy.com/searching-for-stories-blog/1870-second-enumeration>
    3. 1890 schedules were destroyed as a result of a fire in the Commerce Department with a few exceptions - see <https://www.archives.gov/research/census/1890>
    4. Bits and pieces of other schedules missing or not filmed
  - C. Some 19<sup>th</sup> century census schedules that were digitized were copies of the original. For details see <https://www.genealogyblog.com/?p=24002> and <https://www.genealogyblog.com/?p=41858>
- II. Why do Census Research
  - A. Puts individual in a certain place at a given time.
    1. Won't know where to look for land, probate, church records without this information.
    2. Can trace migration across the country.
  - B. Especially after 1850, gives us the family unit.
    1. Often can extend family one or two generations just with census information.
    2. Provides names of siblings.
  - C. Learn the names and family members of the neighbors
    1. Neighbors were often related to our ancestor.
    2. Neighbors often migrated together.
    3. Neighbors often married each other.
    4. Lodgers or borders may be relatives
  - D. Learn other information that will be useful in tracking our ancestors.
- III. Are they really neighbors?
  - A. Before 1880 census, enumerator instructed to "make the enumeration by actual inquiry at every dwelling house, or by personal inquiry of the head of every family"
    1. May have enumerated household when met the head at the general store or post office
    2. National Genealogical Society Quarterly March 2019 - page 55
      - a. Analysis found some households listed sequentially that were several miles apart
  - B. From 1880 forward the duty of each enumerator was "to visit personally each dwelling in his subdivision, and each family therein, and each individual living out of a family in any place of abode"
- IV. Citing Census Data
  - A. See *Evidence Explained* for detailed information on how to cite census data
  - B. Should include the census year, state, county, civil division, enumeration district and/or page, dwelling number, family number, name of head of household, NARA microfilm number, reel number, where and when viewed and the URL although it may change
- V. How To Get Started
  - A. Before do census work, should gather all the information you can about your family.
    1. Names of direct ancestors, birth, death and marriage info.
    2. Names of other family members.
  - B. Start with the 1940 census and work back.
- VI. Deciphering Handwriting
  - A. Look for similar letters in names or words that are familiar to you on the page
  - B. If contrast bad on microfilm, put buff colored page on screen.
  - C. With on-line images, trying magnifying the image to better interpret the handwriting.
- VII. HeritageQuest - available through MD public libraries  
<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/library/>

- A. From the Montgomery County Home Page click on the following: Guides and Research, Genealogy, HeritageQuest Online. Then enter your library card number and click Proceed to HeritageQuest
  - B. In HeritageQuest, select census year and then name of person wish to search
- VIII. FamilySearch - familysearch.org
- A. Search - Records - Enter name searching - login
  - B. Click on Collections - Scroll down to Census & Lists - Show all
  - C. Click on year of interest - click on camera icon to see image
  - D. Can also browse the images if know where living and can't find in index
- IX. Ancestry.com - subscription service - free at Family History Centers and while closed at Fairfax County Library website
- A. Search - Census and Voter Lists
  - B. U.S. Federal Census Collection (on right)
  - C. Scroll down
  - D. Select Census year - only way to search the Slave Census
  - E. Enter name searching
  - F. Remember to get the NARA film and reel number from the "View Record" screen
- X. Your initial search
- A. Start with a broad search - given name, surname
  - B. If too many hits, narrow your search - birth year (always +/- 2), birth place, spouse first name
  - C. If enter too much information, may not get any hits
  - D. Remember to search for married or maiden name of females
- XI. If can't find your ancestor in an on-line index
- A. Try alternate searches
    1. Try another web site which may use different indexers
    2. Other spellings, think how the name would sound to someone not familiar with the name
    3. Search for neighbors or relatives living near your ancestor
    4. Search for the wife or children or siblings of your ancestor
    5. If in a small town, search for the given name in that town
    6. Look in city directories for address and then search for the address
  - B. Do a page by page search in the area you think the person may be living
- XII. Limitations of the Census
- A. Who provided the information?
  - B. How well did the census taker understand what he was told or the informant understand the questions asked?
  - C. Did the Census taker follow the rules or explain the rules when asking the questions?
  - D. Will find that information changes with census years. Must confirm all information in the census from more reliable documents.
- XIII. Slaves and Free Persons of Color
- A. Part of regular census 1790 - 1840
    1. 1790, 1800 and 1810 listed by total number - no age breakdown
    2. 1820 - age breakdown on same page
    3. 1830 and 1840 - enumerated on second page with age breakdowns
  - B. 1850 and 1860
    1. Separate Slave Schedules
    2. Usually not named - just male or female and age
    3. Person listed as slave owner may be the overseer
  - C. When do a search at Ancestry for a possible slave owner, does not show a hit in the slave schedule. You must search specific census. For details see <https://www.aahs.org/beyond-romantic-advertisements-ancestry-com-genealogy-and-white-supremacy/>
- XIV. 1890 Special Census
- A. For all intents and purposes 1890 census does not exist
  - B. Also did a special census to enumerate Civil War veterans and their widows

1. Schedules for part of Kentucky and all states L - W including Washington D. C. exist
2. Good place to find information about Civil War ancestors military service
3. Only supposed to enumerate Union veterans, but sometimes did both Union and Confederate

XV. Nonpopulation Census Schedules

- A. Types and Years Taken
  1. Agricultural 1850-1880
  2. Defective, dependent and delinquent - 1880
  3. Manufacturing 1810, 1820, 1880 and Industrial 1850-1870
  4. Mortality 1850-1880
  5. Social Statistics 1850-1880
- B. All but Social Statistics have names

XVI. State and Territorial Censuses

- A. Taken in years between the federal census
- B. Some states never took - others done regularly
- C. [https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/United\\_States\\_Census\\_State\\_Censuses](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/United_States_Census_State_Censuses) - Information on state and territorial censuses for each state - scroll down on state page for online links

XVII. Getting the Most from the Census

- A. Look at all the information available for all the censuses a family appears in. See <https://familyhistorydaily.com/genealogy-help-and-how-to/get-to-know-us-census/>
- B. Remember county boundaries change - see <http://publications.newberry.org/ahcbp/>
- C. Check the visitation date
- D. Analyze the information
  1. If information is not consistent, can you explain.
  2. Use consistent information as clues for where and when to conduct further research

XVIII. Conclusion

- A. Census records are very valuable in tracing our ancestors across the country, putting them in a particular place at a particular time and fleshing out their family.
- B. Remember that census records are not always reliable. The information listed provides clues, we must verify the information through other sources.

### Census Citation Examples

1840 U. S. Census, Williams County, Ohio, population schedule, Bridgewater Township, page 215 (stamped), Daniel Smith; digital image, Ancestry.com (<http://ancestry.com> : accessed 26 Mar 2009); imaged from Family History Film 0020179, citing National Archives microfilm publication M704, roll 433.

1850 U. S. Census, Williams County, Ohio, population schedule, Bridgewater Township, page 48 (stamped, back) dwelling 658, family 660, Reuben Depiew; digital image, Ancestry.com (<http://ancestry.com> : accessed 9 Oct 2008); citing NARA microfilm publication M432, roll 741

1850 U. S. Census, Alleghaney County, Maryland, slave schedule, Bridgewater Township, page 155 (penned), Joshua Johnson, owner or manager; digital image, Ancestry.com (<http://ancestry.com> : accessed 9 Oct 2008); citing NARA microfilm publication M432, roll unknown.

1880 U. S. Census, Williams County, Ohio, population schedule, Bridgewater Township, enumeration district 2, page 10 (penned), page 453 (stamped), dwelling 85, family 88, Michael Haines; digital image, Ancestry.com (<http://ancestry.com> : accessed 26 Mar 2009); imaged from Family History Film 1255077, citing National Archives microfilm publication T9, roll 1077.

1900 U. S. Census, Boyle County, Kentucky, population schedule, Mitchellsburg, enumeration district 10, page 4B, dwelling 68, family 69, George W. Breeding; digital image, FamilySearch (<http://familysearch.org> : accessed 26 Mar 2009); imaged from Family History Library microfilm number 1240509.

1920 U. S. Census, Boyle County, Kentucky, population schedule, Danville, enumeration district 42, page 11A, dwelling 240, family 301, George W. Breeding; digital image, ProQuest, HeritageQuest Online (access at participating libraries : accessed 26 Mar 2009); imaged from National Archives microfilm publication T625, roll 558.

## Immigration Information Available in the US Census

	Census Year								
	1850	1860	1870	1880	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940
Place of Birth	X	X	X	X	X	X	X5	X7	X9
Whether Mother and/or Father Foreign Born			X						
Place of Birth of Mother and Father				X	X	X	X5	X7	X10
Year of Immigration					X	X2	X2	X2	
Number of Years in the US					X				
Naturalization Status					X1	X3	X6	X8	
Year of Naturalization							X		
Mother Tongue						X	X		X10
Mother Tongue of Mother and Father						X	X		
Language in Home Before Coming to the US								X	
Speaks English					X	X4	X	X	

1. Only asked of foreign-born men age 21 or over. Responses: Na - Naturalized, Pa - Filed first papers, Al - Taken no action to become a citizen
2. If been in US more than once, give year of first arrival
3. See 1 above except list as Na foreign-born men age 21 or over whose father was naturalized before the person was 21
4. If does not speak English, what language spoken
5. Enumerators were asked to list city or province if foreign born in Austria Germany Russia or Turkey- usually not done
6. Foreign-born male or foreign-born unmarried female age 21 or over - same as 3 above. Foreign-born child under 21- report as same citizenship as the father unless has taken out papers (must be 18) Married women reported with same citizenship as husband.
7. Enumerators were asked to list city or province if foreign born in Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, Germany, Russia or Turkey- usually not done
8. Foreign-born male - same as 3 above. Foreign-born child under 21- report as Na if either parent has been naturalized. If parent not naturalized and has taken out papers, report as Pa. Foreign-born females enter Na if taken out final papers, became naturalized through the naturalization of either parent while under 21 or naturalized prior to 1922 by the naturalization of her husband.
9. For eastern European countries, supposed to give the country as named in January 1937 or give province, city or state where born.
10. This question was only asked of those listed on lines 14 and 29 of the census page (5% of the population)

Note on naturalization: Prior to September 22, 1922, a foreign-born woman became a citizen when her husband was naturalized or when she married a citizen. After that date a foreign-born female was required to file for citizenship in her own name. Children became citizens if the parent was naturalized.

### Official Census Dates

2 Aug 1790	1 Jun 1830	1 Jun 1870	15 Apr 1910
4 Aug 1800	1 Jun 1840	1 Jun 1880	1 Jan 1920
6 Aug 1810	1 Jun 1850	1 Jun 1890	1 Apr 1930
7 Aug 1820	1 Jun 1860	1 Jun 1900	1 Apr 1940

### Census Forms

If you are having trouble reading the column headers on the census forms, download a census extraction form from Ancestry.com: <https://www.ancestry.com/cs/census-forms> No subscription needed.

## Census Bibliography

Dollarhide, William.. *The Census Book: A Genealogist's Guide to Federal Census Facts, Schedules and Indexes*. Heritage Quest, 1999.

*Guide to Genealogical Research in the National Archives*. third ed. Washington, D. C.: National Archives Trust Fund Board, 2000. Good overview of census including list of nonpopulation census schedules available at National Archives in Washington, D.C.

Hinckley, Kathleen W. *Your Guide to the Federal Census: For Genealogists, Researchers and Family Historians*, Cincinnati: Betterway Books, 2002.

Lainhart, Ann S. *State Census Records*. rev. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1997.

Mills, Elizabeth S. *Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace 3rd Edition*. Genealogical Publishing Company, 2015. Also available for download.

Szucs, Loretto Dennis and Sandra Hargreaves Luebking, editors. *The Source. A Guidebook of American Genealogy*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Salt Lake City: Ancestry, 2006.

Thorndale, William and William Dollarhide. *Map Guide to the U.S. Federal Censuses, 1790-1920*. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 1987.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. *200 Years of U.S. Census Taking: Population and Housing Questions, 1790-1990*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1989. On FHL film 1697660, item number 33 also reprinted 1996 by AGLL, Bountiful, Utah. For the same information in different format including the 2000 census see <http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/pol02-ma.pdf> or <http://usa.ipums.org/usa/voliii/tEnumInstr.shtml> [https://www.census.gov/history/www/through\\_the\\_decades/census\\_instructions/](https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/census_instructions/)

**Note:** Valuable census resources are available on-line at the National Archives Website: <http://www.archives.gov/research/census/resources.html>

<https://www.archives.gov/research/census/1850-1930.html>

See the link below for a comparison chart showing what information available in each census year [https://wiki.rootsweb.com/wiki/index.php?title=Template:USCensusComparison&cj=1&netid=cj&o\\_xid=0001029688&o\\_lid=0001029688&o\\_sch=Affiliate+External](https://wiki.rootsweb.com/wiki/index.php?title=Template:USCensusComparison&cj=1&netid=cj&o_xid=0001029688&o_lid=0001029688&o_sch=Affiliate+External)