

U.S. Census Research

From The United States Census Bureau's Decennial Census History webpage:

The decennial census has been conducted in years ending in "0" since 1790, as required by the U.S. Constitution. Article I, Section 2 states that:

"Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers . . . The actual Enumeration shall be made within three Years after the first Meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent Term of ten Years, in such Manner as they shall by Law direct."

Accordingly, a census is taken every 10 years. U.S. marshals conducted the enumeration between 1790 and 1870, and specially trained enumerators carried out the census beginning in 1880. The earliest decennial censuses were conducted under the authority of the Secretary of State. The Department of the Interior assumed responsibility in 1849. Finally, upon its creation in 1902, the Department of Commerce and Labor's permanent U.S. Census Bureau oversaw the census.¹

Overview

- Available every 10 years beginning in 1790. Remember, most of the 1890 U.S. Census burned. Population schedules of seventeen counties from eleven states did survive. Only the supplemental schedule for Union veterans of the Civil War and their widows still exists.
- Released 72 years after it was taken. The next census, the 1950 U.S. Census, will be released in 2022.
- Don't forget to check the special schedules (agriculture, industry/manufacturer, mortality, slave, Indian, and social statistics)! If your ancestor was a farmer, there is great information about the farm. If your ancestor worked in industry, you can learn about the place your ancestor worked.
- Remember that county and state boundaries changed as the country was settled. Refer to maps if you cannot find your family in a place they, "should be in."
- Make sure to note the "as of" date. The interviewees were asked for information about the family as of a specific date. That date is not uniform for all censuses.
- Cautions
 - The person who answered questions about the family was not noted and may or may not be a family member.

- The enumerators could have recopied the information they gathered when they were home for the night. Transcription errors could have been made.
- Misspelled names are not uncommon. The interviewee may not know how to spell or the enumerator may have just guessed by what was heard.

Census Substitutions

If you cannot find your ancestor in a U.S. Census, but you know exactly where they lived, try these records to find him or her:

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|----------------------|-----------------------|
| ▪ State Censuses | ▪ School Records |
| ▪ Tax Rolls | ▪ Military Records |
| ▪ Voter Registration | ▪ Immigration Records |
| ▪ City Directories | ▪ Passenger Lists |
| ▪ Land Records | |

Summaries of Information Gathered on Each Census

Factfinder for the Nation, June 2008, p. 3. <http://www.census.gov/prod/2000pubs/cff-2.pdf>

What You'll Learn in the Census, Year by Year (chart p. 6 & 7).

<http://c.mfcreative.com/email/campaigns/2012/allcensus/AncestryCensusGuide.pdf>

Cooke, Lisa Louise. What's Special about U.S. Special Census Schedules?

http://lisalouisecooke.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Whats-Special-about-US-Special-Census-Schedules_Morton.pdf

Blank US Census Forms for Transcription

https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/United_States_Census_Forms

<http://www.ancestry.com/download/charts>

Fillable Excel file for censuses <http://www.us-census.org/info/templates2.htm>

Sources:

1. "Decennial Census." United States Census Bureau. *History*.

https://www.census.gov/history/www/programs/demographic/decennial_census.html : accessed 13 September 2016.

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