

Effective US Census Research

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Constitution of the US, Article I, Section 2

“Representatives and direct taxes shall be apportioned among the several states which may be included within this union according to their respective numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole number of free persons, including those bound to service for a term of years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three-fifths of all other persons. The actual enumeration shall be made within three years after the first meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent ten years, in such manner as they shall by law direct.”

Constitutional Law

- **Congress writes Law**
- **Who is counted**
 - **Free whites – counted**
 - **Indentured whites – counted**
 - **Indians**
 - **Off reservations – taxed, could vote, counted, not citizens**
 - **On reservations – not taxed, could not vote, not counted**
 - **Slaves – 3/5 counted**

Citizens in 1800's

- **Primary Concerns – Food, Shelter & Clothing**
- **Secondary Concerns – Extended family, friends, religion and education**
- **People shared labor with neighbors**
- **Neighbors – close friends and/or relatives**
- **Neighbors, friends and families moved together**
- **Neighbors frequently became relatives**
- **Education**
 - **Few could read or write**
 - **Few kept any kind of record**
 - **Standardized spelling in infancy – first dictionary published about 1828**
 - **Spelling was performed by sound**
 - **Ages were not important**
 - **Names changed from time to time**

Enumerators

- **Not required to consult household members**
- **Did question neighbors, small children or from own “knowledge”**

- Not motivated to do quality job
- Frequently semi-literate
- Wrote names as sounded

Informants

- Some Non-English speaking
- Lack of knowledge
- Assumptions
- Not home
- Gave information from memory
- Did not always understand questions

1790 – 1820 Census

- Name of head of household, number of dependents by sex, age groups and slaves
- No printed forms (except for Massachusetts)
- Enumerators – Assistant US Marshals
- Enumeration date: first Monday in August of census year (information on census *should* be as it was on this date)
- Repository of original (no copies)

Clerk of District Court prior to May, 1830

Washington, DC after May, 1830

1830 - 1840 Census

- Name of head of household, number of dependents by sex and age group, and slaves
- Printed forms for first time
- Enumerators – Assistant US Marshals
- Original and one copy made by Assistant Marshal
- Enumeration date June 1 of census year
- Original held by Clerk of Dist Court, copy to DC
- Microfilm made from copy sent to DC

1850 – 1870 Census

- Census Bureau established every 10 years to handle census tabulation
- Name of each member of household with identifying information
- Occupations of older members of household
- Value of real and personal property
- Enumerators – Assistant US Marshals
- Enumeration date – June 1 of census year
- Copies – County, State Secretary of State, DC
- Microfilm made from third copy

1880 Census

- **Census Bureau in control of census**
- **Enumerators hired by Census Bureau, 500% more**
- **Enumeration Districts (ED) established**
- **Birth state/country of parents; month of birth of infants; relationship to head of household**
- **One copy made under direction of ED supervisors**
- **Original held in county; copy to DC**
- **Enumeration date: 1 June 1880**
- **Microfilm made from copy**

Non-Population Schedules

- **Agricultural Schedules, 1850-1880**
- **Defective, Dependent, Delinquent Classes for 1880**
- **Products of Industry Schedules, 1850-1870**
- **Manufactures Schedules, 1880**
- **Mortality Schedules, 1850-1860, 1870, 1880 (3 separate forms used)**
- **Slave Schedules, 1850-1860**
- **Social Statistics Schedules**
- **1885 Non-population Schedules – CO, Dakota Territory, FL, NE, NM Territory**

Pensioners Census

- **1840 – Revolutionary War Veterans or their widows**
- **1890 – Civil War Veterans or their widows**
(States A-Kansas and part of Kentucky lost)

1890 Census

- **Each family on separate sheet**
- **One copy, state had to pay for making a copy**
- **Burned in Commerce Building, 1921**
- **1% (6,160 persons) of total enumeration salvaged**

1900 – 1950 Census

- **Census Bureau permanently established in 1902**
- **Enumeration dates: 1 Jun 1900; 15 Apr 1910; 1 Jan 1920; 1 Apr 1930-50**
- **1900-month and year of birth, 1910-50-age**
- **1900-1910 number of years married; 1930 age at marriage**
- **1900-1910 mothers – number of children born, number alive**
- **One copy of census in DC**
- **1900-1950 censuses microfilmed, census burned before quality of film checked**

1940 Census

Understand the Historical Time Period

- Depression was in 11th year
- Very few people were employed by commercial businesses
- Federal Programs, WPA (Works Projects Administration), CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) & NYA (National Youth Administration), employed citizens
- War had erupted in Europe
- European country boundaries had changed
- There was a threat of war in the near future

1950 Census

Understand the Historical Time Period

- United States President Harry S. Truman orders the development of the hydrogen bomb, in response to the detonation of the Soviet Union's first atomic bomb in 1949.
- Senator Joseph McCarthy accuses the United States Department of State of being filled with 205 Communists.
- Korean War
 - North Korea invaded South Korea 25 June 1950
 - US entered war 27 Jun 1950
 - War ended 27 July 1953
- Several International Treaties and Disagreements
 - Finland, Russia form diplomatic relationship with China
 - Poland expels all Germans and takes control of Catholic properties
 - Stasi (secret police) organized in East Germany

1940 & 1950 Census

- Both affected by world events and threats of war
- Census includes more detailed questions for head of household & over 14 year-olds
- Fewer individuals on each page, due to extra questions for more people on each page
- Greater focus on type of households: institutions or type of households
- Additional income questions, to be mailed in, not given to enumerator
- *Detailed* housing questions in 1950
- Income questions mailed in, not given to enumerator in 1950

Analyze the Census

- Find the census for each person being researched
- *Never* just use the information in the index
 - All census information will not be indexed
 - Some *will* be incorrectly indexed

- Check each column for data that will put flesh on the bones of the people listed and provide clues for further research, both descendant & ancestral
- Look at the birth locations of the children and parents for migration route

Understand the Census

- Read the enumerator's instructions
- Examine each column in the census
- What national and world events caused each item of information to be requested
- What clues does it provide for further research

Bibliography

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- Clues in Census Records 1850-1940: <http://www.archives.gov/research/census/1850-1930.html>
- <http://1940census.archives.gov/>
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