



Preparing for the Release of the 1950 Census

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Until there is an accurate index, to find your relatives you have to know their Enumeration District number!

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Background

- The Federal Census has been conducted every ten years since 1790 as specified in Article I, Section 2 of the Constitution. The date of the 1950 census was 1 Apr 1950.
- During April 1950 nearly every residence in the (then) 48 states, the territories of Alaska, American Samoa, Guam, Hawaii, Panama Canal Zone, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, was visited by an enumerator.
- The 1950 census form was two sided. Side 1 contained questions regarding individuals; Side 2, questions regarding housing. Unfortunately, only Side 1 was microfilmed.

Who was Enumerated?

- All persons living in the United States on 1 Apr 1950 were to be enumerated where they usually lived. Babies born after that date were not to be counted.
- On two specified "T-nights" a concerted effort was made to enumerate transient individuals living in places such as hotels, YMCAs/YWCAs, tourist courts, missions and so-called "flophouses."
- For the first time, in 1950 provisions were made to count members of the armed forces, crews of both military and civilian vessels at sea or in foreign ports, and employees of the United States government and their family members living in foreign countries. In total 481,545 people were enumerated. However, with very few exceptions, the records of those individuals were never microfilmed.
- Others who were temporarily living abroad on a vacation or in connection with their work were to be reported by their families or neighbors as living at their permanent address in the United States and should be included in the 1950 census release.
- Beginning in 1950, college and nursing students were enumerated where they lived at, or in the vicinity of, the college/nursing school. Students below the college level living at boarding schools were to be enumerated at their family home.

The Sample Questions

- The 1950 Census had only 20 questions for all persons 14 years of age or older; fewer than the 34 questions on the 1940 Census. Otherwise, changes were minimal.
- Additional questions at the bottom of the schedule (Nos. 21-33c) were asked of six persons whose names fell on one of the highlighted lines labeled "Sample."
(There were five versions of the form to vary the location of the sample lines.)
- The person on the last sample line on each page was asked seven additional questions.

Indexing the 1950 Census Images

- The National Archives & Records Administration (NARA) is developing an initial name index using Amazon Web Services' artificial intelligence / optical character recognition Textract tool to extract the handwritten names from the digitized 1950 Census population schedules. ***Both the census images and the name index will be released on 1 April 2022 on Web servers under NARA's control.***
- Because the initial name index will not be 100% accurate, NARA will provide a transcription tool on the 1950 Census Web site to allow the public to submit name updates to the index. For more information, please see:
<https://www.archives.gov/research/census/1950>
- In addition, Ancestry® has been developing a separate initial automated index using machine learning algorithms to power their proprietary artificial intelligence handwriting recognition technology, once the images are released on 1 April. ***Ancestry® anticipates their indexing of the 1950 Census to be completed and made available on Ancestry.com this summer, with the individual states released in real time upon completion.***
- Ancestry and FamilySearch have formed a partnership to organize a volunteer effort to manually evaluate and correct Ancestry's initial index. Those interested in volunteering to help should visit <https://www.familysearch.org/en/blog/indexing-1950-census> to learn more.

Finding Your Family in the 1950 Census Images

- Until an accurate name index becomes available, you should look for your family based on the location of their residence.
 - Determine the street address/physical location where they were living.
 - Determine the Enumeration District in which their residence was located.
 - Once the census images are released, page through all the images for that Enumeration District to locate your family.

Determining the Address/Location Where Your Family Was Living

- Conduct an exhaustive search of available records.
 - City directories and telephone directories
 - Vital records: birth, marriage, death registers/certificates/notices
 - Military Records (draft, discharge, bonus)
 - Employment Records, Social Security applications
 - Tax and Land Records
 - Immigration: passenger lists, naturalization records
 - Wills and probate records
 - Letters, diaries, address books
 - Newspapers, family recollections
 - 1940 Census Location (if they didn't move)

Census Enumeration Districts

- Since 1880, the Bureau of the Census has divided counties, cities, towns, villages, Indian reservations, and even hotels, hospitals and jails into Enumeration Districts (EDs).
- An Enumeration District is the area for which an enumerator could complete a count of the population within the allotted time for that particular census year. It may vary in size from just a few city blocks in densely populated urban areas to a large part of a county in sparsely populated rural areas.
- Enumeration Districts change with each census year. For example, you cannot use the number of the ED in which you family was living in 1940 to find them in 1950.
- Enumeration districts are assigned two-part numbers, separated by a dash. A few heavily populated EDs are further separated into parts labeled A, B, C, D.
- Each county within a state, in alphabetical order, is assigned a number. Any major cities in the state are also assigned numbers.
- Each ED within each county or major city is then numbered consecutively.
- Heavily populated areas may have dozens, or even hundreds, of Enumeration Districts, while rural counties may only have a few.
- Once you have the 1950 ED number, you will be able to successfully search the 1950 census pages when they become available.

The Steve Morse & Joel Weintraub One-Step Web Site

- During the past decade Stephen P. Morse and Joel D. Weintraub have led a team of approximately 70 volunteers in developing a set of tools to allow you to easily find the Enumeration District and, eventually, the census pages where your family can be found.
- These tools have been added to Stephen's so-called One Step Web Site: stevemorse.org
- Perhaps the best way to use the site is to start with the Census menu option:

[1950 Tutorial Quiz: How to Access the 1950 Census in One Step](#)

That link will lead you through a process to efficiently find the correct ED number.

- In some cases, you may have to refer to the Enumeration District maps and/or descriptions to determine in which ED your family resided.
 - Enumeration District maps, which were obtained locally, show the boundaries and the numbers of the Enumeration Districts.
 - The maps vary greatly in terms of source, content, scale, size, and physical quality. Examine them closely before use!
 - The basic Enumeration District map is often a county map.
 - The handwritten orange boundaries and numbers on the maps indicate the Enumeration Districts.

References

National Archives, 1950 Census Web Page. <https://www.archives.gov/research/census/1950>

National Archives, Claire Kluskens 1950 Census “History Hub” Blog:

<https://historyhub.history.gov/docs/DOC-1481>

National Archives, 1950 Census Video Series:

(Five videos, with PowerPoint slides and handouts to be released on Mar2 – May 18):

<https://www.archives.gov/calendar/genealogy-series/2022>

Once they are published, the videos will be available on this YouTube page:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLugwVCjzrJsXFn9KliguHFDLm8l-S5Vo9>

FamilySearch 1950 Census Wiki Page:

https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/United_States_Census_1950

FamilySearch. How Indexing the 1950 Census Will Be Different.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/blog/indexing-1950-census>

Ancestry’s Learning Hub 1950 Census Page: <https://www.ancestry.com/lp/family-history/1950-census>

Ancestry® to Apply Handwriting Recognition Artificial Intelligence to Create a Searchable Index of the 1950 U.S. Census.

<https://www.ancestry.com/corporate/blog/ancestry-apply-handwriting-recognition-artificial-intelligence-create-searchable-index-1950-us>

U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1950. Urban and Rural Enumerator’s Reference Manual. Washington DC. 264pp. Available at:

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015081273297&view=1up&seq=1&skin=2021>

and

https://www.google.com/books/edition/_/cVwLiTQ3qY0C?hl=en&gbpv=1

Resources

1950 Decennial Census Reports

https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/library/publications.1950.List_1811921988.html

Blank 1950 Census Forms

Form P1 Housing and Population sides:

https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/questionnaires/1950_1.html

Form P1 – Population Side: <https://stevemorse.org/census/1950JoelProtocols/1950PopSched2.pdf>

Form P1 – Housing Side: <https://stevemorse.org/census/1950JoelProtocols/1950HousingSched.pdf>

Note: The two forms will not display in the Firefox Web browser.

Use Google Chrome or Microsoft Edge browsers to view.

Resources (cont.)

City Directories

Free sites

<https://www.uscitydirectories.com/>
<https://ldsgenealogy.com/city-directories/>
<https://www.google.com/search?tbm=bks&q=City+Directory>
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/3754697>
<https://texashistory.unt.edu/explore/collections/CIT/>
<https://archive.org/search.php?query=City+Directories>

Subscription sites

<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2469/>
<https://www.myheritage.com/research/collection-10705/us-city-directories>
<https://www.fold3.com/search?general.title.content.type=directory:City+Directories&place=rel.148838:United+States+of+America>

Telephone Directories

Free sites

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/united-states-telephone-directory-collection/>
<https://www.google.com/search?tbm=bks&q=Telephone+Directories>
<https://archive.org/search.php?query=Telephone+Directories>

Subscription sites

https://www.ancestry.com/search/categories/dir_telephone/
<https://search.findmypast.com/search-world-Records/united-states-directories-and-almanacs>