

# "A Just and Perfect Enumeration:" Genealogy and the Census, 1790-1940

## Value of Census Records

1. Help trace families over multiple generations.
2. Determine relationships.
3. Establish a family's residence over many years.
4. Provide details about everyday lives of family members.
5. Lead researchers to other records.

## Census Access

1. Maintained by the National Archives and Records Administration.
2. Ancestry.com
3. Familysearch.com
4. Released every 72 years.
5. Census records 1950-present are restricted to individual named on the record or his/her legal heir.

## Decennial Population Censuses, 1790-1840

### 1790 Census

- First U.S. Federal Census.
- Enumerators were U.S. Marshals.
- Only head of household listed by name.
- Only white males sorted in age categories.
- All other persons, free or enslaved, were not broken down into age categories.

### 1800-1820 Censuses

- Only head of household listed by name.
- White men and women were sorted into broader age categories.
- Slaves were not broken down into age categories.
- 1820: Number of people engaged in agriculture, commerce, or manufacturing.

### 1830 & 1840 Censuses

- 1830: White men and women sorted into broader age categories.
- 1830: All other persons, free or enslaved, were sorted into age categories.
- 1830: Uniform, printed schedules used for the first time.
- 1840: Names and exact ages of Revolutionary War pensioners listed.

### 1850-1870 Censuses

- 1850: All free persons in each household were listed by name.
- 1850: Age, race, profession, value of real estate, and place of birth were listed for each household member for the first time.
- 1860: Value of personal estate recorded.
- 1870: Former enslaved people were enumerated by name.
- 1870: Recorded whether father or mother was of foreign birth.

### 1880-1890 Censuses

- 1880: Relationship listed between the head of the household and each household member.
- 1880: Recorded birthplaces of parents, marital status, street name, and house number listed.
- 1890: Majority of the census was destroyed in a fire in 1921.
- 1890: 1890 Civil War Union Veterans Census survived.

### **1900-1930 Censuses**

- 1900: Citizenship information recorded: immigration year, number of years in the U.S., and if naturalized.
- 1900: Month and year of birth recorded for all persons.
- 1900: Recorded the number of years married, mother of how many children, and how many children were living by 1900.
- 1910: Native language of household members, trade/profession, and nature of business.
- 1920: Native language of the parents of household members recorded.
- 1930: If a veteran, and if yes, in which war/expedition he served.
- 1930: Recorded whether or not families owned radio sets.

### **1940 Census**

- Residences of household members on April 1, 1935 were recorded.
- Highest grade completed listed for each household member.
- 5% of the population was asked supplemental questions, including birthplaces of parents, native language, and whether or not he/she was enrolled in social security.
- Census informant identified for the first time.

## **Supplemental Population Census Schedules**

### **1850 & 1860 Slave Censuses**

- Enslaved people enumerated on separate censuses, but their names were not recorded.
- Identified by tick marks in the age, gender, and race categories.
- Enslaved people arranged by slave owner and in age order, not family groups.

### **Censuses of Native Americans**

- Decennial Censuses: 1790-1840 not identified, 1860 Native Americans in general population identified, 1900 enumerated on reservations and in general population.
- Special Census, 1880: Native Americans in general population identified on separate census. Included Indian name, dwelling type, tribal ancestry, and languages spoken.
- Indian Census Rolls, 1885-1940: Native Americans living on reservations.
- Dawes Rolls, 1898-1907: Identified Native Americans belonging to the Five Civilized Tribes.
- Enrollment of Eastern Cherokee, 1908-1910: Native Americans eligible for funds under old Treaties between the U.S. and the Eastern Cherokee.

### **1880 Defective, Dependent, and Delinquent Classes**

- Individuals suffering from physical or mental disabilities were recorded on a separate census.
- Identified people living in the general population and in institutions.

### **Mortality Census Schedules, 1850-1880**

- Information about individuals who died within in the previous census year was recorded, including month of death, profession, cause of death, and number of days ill.

## **Non-Population Census Schedules**

### **Agriculture & Industry/Manufacturing Census Schedules**

- Provided statistics on farms, plantations, and businesses.
- Organized by owners.