



Why are Federal Censuses Done?

- Constitutional Requirement for House of Representatives seats and tax purposes
- Also: public fund distribution, track population changes, information to guide legislation, planning
- Private for 72 years, 1950 released in 2 years.

What Can We Get from Census?

- Location – both general & somewhat specific
- Early – a hint at family composition
- Later – households, then family relationships
- Approximate or nearly exact age and birth date/place
- Later, marriage information
- Ethnicity
- Economic Status
- Confirmation of associates and relatives

What is in Each census?

- 1790 – head of household, household members (males age 16 and older, under 16, free white females, other free persons, slaves)
- 1800-1810 – free white person by gender in 5 age classes, slaves, Indians, free blacks
- 1820 – added male age class of 16-18, number engaged in agriculture, commerce, or manufacturing, slaves in 4 age classes by gender
- 1830 – 13 age classes of free white persons, enumeration of deaf, dumb, and blind
- 1840 – enumerated "insane" and "idiotic" persons, those over 20 who could not read nor write, military pensioners by name and age, expanded occupational categories to seven
- 1850 – all persons listed with age, gender, race, occupation, birthplace, and value of real estate; couples married within the previous year; whether children had attended school; separate slave schedules – NO RELATIONSHIPS GIVEN
- 1860 – value of personal property added - STILL NO RELATIONSHIPS
- 1870 – birth month for those under age 1, month of marriage for newlyweds, whether a parent was foreign-born, whether any male over 21 had their right to vote denied, freed slaves enumerated along with everyone else – STILL NOT RELATIONSHIPS
- 1880 – FINALLY, Relationship to head of household; birthplace of father and mother; marital status; number of months of employment

- 1890 – All but a few pages destroyed; census of veterans has survived
- 1900 – month and year of birth; number of years married; number of children born and surviving for women; home rented or owned and whether mortgaged; year of immigration and naturalization status
- 1910 – lacks month and year of birth, employment, and Civil War veterans
- 1920 – lacks years married and number of children born/surviving; added year of naturalization and mother tongue of individual and their parents
- 1930 – included home ownership, whether family owned a radio set, age at first marriage
- 1940 – added a number of questions regarding employment and income, and indicated which family member was the informant

Enumeration Dates Varied – these allow calculation of a range for birth dates

Mortality Schedules

- 1850-1880
- Those dying in the previous 12 months
- ALSO listed in census if they were alive on the enumeration date
- Information varies – complete ones have name, age, gender, race, marital status, birthplace, month of death, occupation, cause of death
- NO ONE PLACE has ready access to all of them – try Ancestry, FamilySearch (1850), National Archives, state archives, state historical societies, local societies

Agricultural Schedules

- 1850-1880 and in some states for 1885
- Few have been filmed, but Missouri is a nice example where they have been
- Name of owner, agent, or manager; number of acres and cash value of farm; crops and other items produced; number and value of livestock; value of homemade manufactures
- A few at FamilySearch, national archives, state archives
- Missouri: <https://www.sos.mo.gov/records/archives/census/pages/agsup>

Manufacturing Schedules

- 1810 (few survived), 1820, 1850-1880 (1860 & 1870 called “Industrial Schedules”)
- High degree of destruction, and others may be bound with population schedules
- 1820, 1850, 1860 recorded name of the manufacturer; type of business or product; amount of capital invested; quantities, kinds, and value of raw materials used; quantities, kinds, and value of product produced annually; kind of power or machinery used; number of men and women employed; average monthly cost of male and female labor
- Missouri: <https://www.sos.mo.gov/records/archives/census/pages/industrysups>

Missouri Supplemental Schedules:

1890 Veterans: Use “Card Catalog” in Ancestry, then search for name

Mortality: Some are on Ancestry, others on microfilm

Census Search Strategy

- First of all, have the basic facts – birth date, place, residence, who else should be there
- Develop a checklist to point out gaps in knowledge
- Use wildcards (* in ancestry)
- Names: learn nicknames and check middle names
- Find everyone with the same surname
- Check adjacent counties
- Search by initials
- Search for first name only
- Search for other family members, neighbors, friends
- Search for everyone born in a given year/location
- Do a line-by-line search

Common Mistakes

1. Inferring relationships
2. Taking it all at face value
3. Putting faith in spelling
4. Failing to transcribe exactly
5. Failure to cite fully
6. Ignoring the neighbors
7. Same name, different person
8. Failing to confirm with the original

Alternatives When Censuses are Missing or Between Censuses

- State Censuses (some are on Ancestry or FamilySearch; see https://www.census.gov/history/www/genealogy/other_resources/state_censuses.html)
- Tax Lists
- City Directories (see Ancestry for some)
- Plat Maps (1930 for Missouri: <https://dl.mospace.umsystem.edu/mu/islandora/object/mu%3A5220> also: <http://mdh.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/search/collection/mocoplats/order/title/ad/asc/cosuppress/1>)
- Voter Registration Lists

Conclusions

- Federal censuses are a valuable source for genealogy, and establish residence, age, family relationships (1880 and after), economic status, and many other facts
- They are made even more valuable when combined with other records
- Avoid the pitfalls of using census data incorrectly or reading in more than is there
- As with any records, you should question them & attempt to resolve inconsistencies
- You should keep thorough records of your searches in census records

Resources

National Archives Census Forms : <https://www.archives.gov/research/genealogy/charts-forms>

Ancestry Census Forms: <https://www.ancestry.com/cs/census-forms>

FamilySearch Census wiki: https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/United_States_Census

Online Record Compilations:

Ancestry.com (subscription)
Familysearch.org (free, requires registration)
Heritage Quest (subscription)

National Archives Census Resources Page (lots of links!):

<https://www.archives.gov/research/genealogy/census/online-resources>

YouTube Videos

Cowan, Christa. "Finding Missing People in the Census." Ancestry;
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6qblhQ_V_YY, 2012.
Knox, Connie. "U. S. Census Records." Parts 1-3. *Genealogy TV*;
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N5BS2xqlveM>, 2018.
Lee, Devon Noel. "Using State Census Records - Researching AROUND the Missing 1890 Census in Genealogy." Family History Fanatics; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qnlL1xAm3KA>, 2018.
Lisson, Lisa. "Using City Directories to Research AROUND the 1890 US Census in Genealogy." Family History Fanatics; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QyzC2V3vtMU>, 2018.
There are numerous great videos by subscription in the Legacy Family Tree Webinars Library.

Further Reading

Dollarhide, William. *Census Substitutes & State Census Records - Eastern States*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Family Roots Publishing Company, 2007.
Dollarhide, William and James A. Derheim. *The Census Book: A Genealogist's Guide to Federal Census Facts, Schedules and Indexes*. Bountiful, Utah: Heritage Quest, 1999.
Hinckley, Kathleen W. *Your Guide to the Federal Census*. Cincinnati, Ohio: Betterway Books, 2002.
Lainhart, Ann Smith. *State Census Records*. Baltimore, Maryland: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1992.
Mills, Elizabeth Shown. *Evidence Explained: Historical Analysis, Citation, and Source Usage*. Baltimore, Maryland: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2015.
Quillen, W. Daniel. *Mastering Census & Military Records (Quillen's Essentials of Genealogy)* 3rd edition. Cold Spring Press, 2014.
Szucs, Loretto Dennis and Sandra Hargreaves Luebking. *The Source: A Guidebook of American Genealogy*. Provo, Utah: Ancestry, 2006. [Chapter 5 is on the Census]
Thorndale, William and William Dollarhide. *Map guide to the U. S. Federal Censuses, 1790-1920*. Baltimore, Maryland: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1995.