



## The Census Taker Said What? – Basic Census Research

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### What is the Federal Census?

- Why the census was taken and who took the census?
  - Government needed a enumeration of inhabitants to determine the number of seats each state would have in the House of Representatives; State's tax assessments for the Revolutionary War expenses. (1787 – Article 1, Section 2 of the Constitution)
  - Census act (March 1790)
  - As the nation grew so did the questions the government asked

### Who was the Census Taker?

- Who was he?
  - Political appointed
  - Low wages – 1790 highest \$1 per 50, 1920 about 1 to 4 cent per person (urban or rural)
- His challenges
  - Landscape & modes of travel available
  - Materials needed
  - Handwritten – legible, educated
  - Locating the dwelling – isolated, not home (visit another day, ask help or child or neighbor)
  - Foreign & difficult to understand or spell Names – use of nicknames or partial names.
  - Individuals not answering the questions truthfully – not authorized to request any proof, but citizens required by law to answer truthfully. Misdemeanor & subject of a fine (1790 - \$20 split Marshall/government)
    - Not trust the governments motives
    - Refusal to answer the questions
    - Some lied – women secretive about their age
  - Instructions were given to him by the Marshal

### Why Use the Census?

- Places an ancestor in a specific location at a specific time frame
- Clues in finding other records – vital, land, court, military & naturalization
- Can show migrations
- Shows the nature of neighbors and neighborhoods

### **What kind of information can be found in the Census?**

- Forms with information that can be found on each census and blank census forms can be found on the Mid-west Genealogy Center website.

### **Where are my ancestors? / I have him in two locations?**

- Required to respond as if it was a certain date
- Reasons duplicated
  - Frontier areas anxious for statehood
- Reasons not included
  - Dwelling not known by the census taker
  - Refused to respond to the census taker
  - Jurisdictions faced with increased taxes – understate populations to keep overall per capita taxes lower.
  - 1990 U.S. population at 248.7 million missed an estimated 5 million people ranging from 1.7% of whites to 5.2% of Hispanics (Chicago Tribune, Tuesday, 17 March 1992, sec. 2, page 4)

### **Database searches, Indexes & Other aids**

- Know the limitations of the entries found
  - How are they arranged – every name, head-of-household, etc
  - What page did the indexer use? (stamped or handwritten)
  - Variant spelling
- Always look at image if provided to verify
  - Interpret the handwriting correctly
  - Type the information correctly

### **Where can I find the Census?**

- Printed Indexes - Soundex, Miracode
- Internet
  - FamilySearch – [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
  - National Archives - [www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov)
  - Ancestry.com - [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)
  - MyHeritage – [www.myheritage.com/census/records](http://www.myheritage.com/census/records)
  - GenealogyBank - [www.genealogybank.com/explore/census/all](http://www.genealogybank.com/explore/census/all)
  - Many other sites
- On Location
  - Mid-Continent Public Library – Genealogy and Local History Branch - [www.mcpl.lib.mo.us/genlh/](http://www.mcpl.lib.mo.us/genlh/)
  - National Archives Record Administration – Kansas City, MO Branch - [www.archives.gov/central-plains/kansas-city/](http://www.archives.gov/central-plains/kansas-city/)

### **Other Censuses**

- Federal Special Schedules (non-population schedules)
  - Agricultural, Mortality, Products of Industry & Manufacturing, Slaves, Native American, Veterans\DDD, Special
- State Census

- Local (county or city)
- Substitutes
  - City Directories
  - Tax Records
  - State and Local Census

### Research Strategies

- Start with the known and work backward.
- Choose an individual to research and gather all the information known about them.
- Prepare a research plan
- Using maps identify the place and time period you will most likely find them in the census.
- Use finding aids & indexes
- Determine what repository (internet, library, etc.) you will look for the census
- Locate and copy the census page that your individual is on and several pages before and after.
- Cite the source on the front of each photocopy or in the name & metadata of the digital image.
- Analyze information and using a research log keep track where searched and the results you found – positive & negative results
- Transfer information found into your computer program or genealogical forms.
- Start the process again on another individual
- Periodically revisit the same census records with new understanding of the people.

### Resources:

Mid-west Genealogy Center “Census Data 1790-1950 U.S. Population Schedules” - a list with what is contained on each census. <https://www.mymcpl.org/genealogy/resources/family-history-forms>

FamilySearch, *United States Census*, FamilySearch Wiki  
[https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/United\\_States\\_Census](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/United_States_Census))

Dollarhide, William, *The Census Book: Facts, Schedules & Worksheets for the U.S. Federal Censuses* (Orting, WA: Family Roots Publishing Co., LLC, 2019).

Dollarhide, William, *Substitutes for the Lost 1890 U.S. Federal Census* (Orting, WA: Family Roots Publishing Co., LLC, 2019)

Dollarhide, William, *Census Substitutes & State Census Records, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Volume One – Northeastern States & U. S. Territories* (Orting, WA: Family Roots Publishing Co., LLC, 2020).

Dollarhide, William, *Census Substitutes & State Census Records, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Volume Two – Southeastern States* (Orting, WA: Family Roots Publishing Co., LLC, 2020).

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Eales, Anne Bruner, and Robert M. Kvansnicka, eds. *Guide to Genealogical Research in the National Archives*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Washington, D.C.: National Research in the National Archives and Records Administration, 2000).

Dolan, Allison, *The Genealogist's Census Pocket Reference: Tips, Tricks and Fast Facts to Track Your Ancestors* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Family Tree Books, 2012).

Greenwood, Van D., *The Researcher's Guide to American Genealogy*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 2017).

Hinckley, Kathleen W., *Your Guide to the Federal Census for genealogists, researchers, and family historians*, (Cincinnati: Betterway Books, 2002).

Meyerick, Kory L., *Printed Sources A Guide to Published Genealogical Records*, (Salt Lake City: Ancestry, Inc., 1998).

Szucs, Loretta D and Sandra Luebking. *The Source: A Guidebook of American Genealogy*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., (Salt Lake City: Ancestry, Inc., 2006).

Szucs, Loretta D and Matthew Wright, *Finding Answers in U.S. Census Records*, (Orem, Utah: Ancestry Publishing, 2002 )

Thorndale, William and William Dollarhide, *Map Guide to the U.S. Federal Censuses, 1790-1920* (Baltimore: Genealogical Pub. Co., 1997, © b 1987).

### **Reading Old Handwriting Resources**

Search Google & YouTube for online resources

Paleography Tutorial [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/palaeography/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/palaeography/)

Sperry, Kip. *Reading Early American Handwriting*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2008)

Sperry, Kip. *Reading Early American Handwriting*. DVD (Hurricane, Utah : The Studio, 2001)