

Census Records and Census substitutes

In this class we will discuss the following:

1. What years were census records kept?
2. What information can you find in a census?
3. Tips and clues
4. Census Substitutes.

Census Record Definitions:

Census – An official periodic population count

Decennial census – A census conducted every ten years

Enumerator – A census taker

Mortality schedule – A census record of individuals that died within twelve months of the enumeration date

Population schedule – A census record of individuals living within designated areas

Return – Another name for a census document

Schedule – A list of people or items

The Census:

Since 1790, the United States government has conducted a federal population count every ten years.

Congress specified an official date for each census and gave a time limit for the information to be gathered. The enumerators were to record the data even if they didn't visit the homes until weeks later.

Census Years and what information you can expect to get from them:

1790 to 1840, only household heads were named. While the 1790 census recorded the number of free white males and females in each household, the 1800 census added columns under each gender in order to capture the number of free white males and females within specified age ranges. In 1830, a column was added for individuals over 100 years old, and in 1840 the names and ages of Revolutionary War or other military pensioners were noted.

1850 - Each free person's name was included, and information about each individual was given, such as age, profession, value of real estate, place of birth, school attendance, could they read, and whether he or she had been married that year. Districts were subdivided into "known civil divisions" such as counties, townships, or wards. Social statistics were collected, including information about taxes, schools, crime, wages, value of estate, and mortality.

1860- asked for the value of their personal estate in addition to their real estate. In 1870, the census contained a special column for those born during the census year. Additionally, the 1870 census was the first census to list ex-slaves by name, thus making it especially important for researchers looking for African-American families. Prior to 1870, slaves were reported only by their sex and age. The 1870 census also recorded the month of birth for children born within the last year.

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1880 - recorded the place of birth of each person's parents and the relationship of each person to the head of household. Individual's street address and house number was also recorded.

1890 - was the first to record the number of children born to each female and how many of them were still living.

1900 - recorded the month and year of each person's birth, the length of an individual's present marriage, and each immigrant's year of immigration.

1910 - asked whether an individual had been married before.

1920 - recorded an immigrant's year of naturalization.

1930 - was the first to record a person's age at his or her first marriage.

1940 - recorded an individual's residence in 1935 as well as in 1940.

1950 – census recorded an individual's address, whether house is on a farm, employment status, hours worked in week and if foreign born, whether naturalized.

Strategies for Using Census Records

Spelling:

- 1. The same surname may have been spelled in a variety of ways in censuses.**

EX- Van Noy and Vannoy are the same surname.

- 2. An immigrant's name may change after he or she arrives in America.**
- 3. An individual's first name may be listed in census records as initials, a**
- 4. nickname, or a middle name.**
- 5. The enumerator may have spelled the name phonetically**
- 6. The indexer couldn't read the enumerator's handwriting and indexed incorrectly.**

Inaccurate information:

- 1. You don't know who provided the information.**
- 2. If the family didn't speak English the enumerator may not have understood what they were saying. He may have spelled names phonetically.**
- 3. People may have lied about their name or age.**

Solution-

- 1. Do a Census survey. Look at all the available census records for the family.**
- 2. Look for siblings and parents of the family as families often lived near each other.**
- 3. Look on the page before and after. Your family' may continue onto the next page or started on the previous page. Look in the bordering county or state for additional records.**
- 4. Go back to census records whenever you find new information about your family. For example, if you learn a mother's maiden surname or who a child married, go back to the census and see if you can find extended family members with the mother's maiden surname or the child as an adult in later census years.**

CLUES

- If a census gives an individual's immigration date, then you know to check immigration records.
- If a census indicates an individual was naturalized, then you know to check naturalization records.
- If a census says an individual owned land, then you know to check land records.
- If a census says a female had a certain number of children but fewer than that number were then living, then you know to check death and burial records for those children.

Once you have completed your census survey for an ancestor, create a timeline for that individual. get a good map, plot where the family was living every ten years. By finding a family on the census every ten years, you will be able to visualize where the family lived and traveled over a period of decades. This will help you know where to look for additional types of records at different periods of the family's lives.

Other types of census records and non-population schedules

Special Census Schedules vary from state to state, census year, and content. Other federal schedules usually taken at the same time as the population schedules may include:

State Censuses-- State and territorial censuses were created by state and federal governments between decennial census years. These censuses were often taken every ten years on the year ending in 5, as in 1855 and 1865.

Mortality--Persons who died during the 12 months prior to the census, from 1850 to 1885

Veterans--Mostly Union veterans and their widows in 1840 and 1890

Slaves--Slave owners and the number of slaves they owned, in 1850 and 1860

Agricultural--Data on farms and the names of the farmers, from 1850 to 1880

Manufacturing--Data on businesses and industries, 1810 (fragments only), 1820, and 1850 to 1880

Defective, Dependent, and Delinquent--handicapped, paupers, or criminals in 1880

Indian Schedules--Special questions after the 1910 county population schedules

Institutions--jail, hospital, poor house, or asylum usually after county population schedules

Merchant seamen--on U.S. flag merchant vessels in 1930

Military and Naval Forces--forts, bases, and Navy ships after population schedules, or from 1900 to 1930 on separate films for overseas

Social Statistics--real estate, annual taxes, cemeteries, school statistics, libraries, newspapers, churches.

Census Record Substitutes

City directories provide a listing of heads of household, somewhat similar to the pre1850 federal censuses. Annual directories can indicate the year an individual died or left the area, and possibly reveal the spouse's name.

Annual tax lists can help establish ages, residences, relationships, and the year an individual died or left the area. They can be used in the place of missing or destroyed

Land and census records because they can indicate when a person may have died or moved, and the number of children in the family.

Some missing census records have been "reconstructed" using census substitutes such as the so called "1787 Census of Virginia" that was developed using tax records. This 1787 "census" is an accounting of the names of every tithable white male over 21 years and includes the number of white males between 16 and 21, the number of slaves over 16, and the number of slaves under 16.

Enumeration district maps –

show names of political jurisdictions (counties, cities, townships, and so forth), roads, waterways, and large properties, such as parks, cemeteries, prisons, golf courses, and so forth. In cities, maps may indicate boundaries of Wards and other subdivisions.

The Census Bureau annotated the maps with red, orange, yellow, and green pencil to show enumeration district and various political boundaries. Enumeration District numbers were usually written in orange pencil. Enumeration District numbers had two parts, such as 48-69, where 48 prefix was typically for the county and 69 suffix was for the specific area within the county. Independent cities and very large cities (such as Chicago) had their own prefixes instead of using the county prefix. Thus, although Chicago is within the boundaries of Cook County, enumeration districts in Chicago had a prefix was 103 instead Cook County's prefix of 16.