

### **What you can expect to find:**

The 1790 census instructed the marshals to identify, by age brackets, free white males sixteen years of age or older and those under sixteen. It was designed to determine the country's industrial and military capabilities. Additionally, the first census was to count the number of free white females; all other free persons regardless of race or gender; and slaves. A twenty-dollar fine, to be split between the marshals' assistants and the government, would be levied against anyone who refused to answer the enumerator's questions.

The 1800 census asked the name of family head; number of free white males and females in age categories: 0 to 10, 10 to 16, 16 to 26, 26 to 45, 45 and older; number of other free persons except Indians not taxed; number of slaves; and town or district and county of residence.

The 1810 census asked the name of family head; number of free white males and females in age categories: 0 to 10, 10 to 16, 16 to 26, 26 to 45, 45 and older; number of other free persons except Indians not taxed; number of slaves; and town or district and county of residence.

The 1820 census asked the name of family head; number of free white males and females in age categories 0 to 10, 10 to 16, 16 to 18, 16 to 26, 26 to 45, 45 and older; number of other free persons except Indians not taxed; number of slaves; and town or district and county of residence. Additionally, the 1820 census for the first time asked the number of free white males 16 to 18; number of persons not naturalized; number engaged in agriculture, commercial, or manufacture; number of "colored" persons (sometimes in age categories); and number of other persons except Indians.



**The 1830 census was the first for which the government provided uniform, printed forms to enumerators for the purpose of recording answers to census questions.**

The 1830 census asked the name of head of household; number of free white males and females in age categories 0 to 5, 5 to 10, 10 to 15, 15 to 20, 20 to 30, 30 to 40, 40 to 50, 50 to 60, 60 to 70, 70 to 80, 80 to 90, 90 to 100, over 100; number of slaves and free ""colored"" persons in age categories; categories for deaf, dumb, and blind persons and aliens; town or district; and county of residence.

The 1840 census asked the name of head of household; number of free white males and females in age categories 0 to 5, 5 to 10, 10 to 15, 15 to 20, 20 to 30, 30 to 40, 40 to 50, 50 to 60, 60 to 70, 70 to 80, 80 to 90, 90 to 100, over 100; number of slaves and free ""colored"" persons in age categories; categories for deaf, dumb, and blind persons and aliens; town or district; and county of residence.

Note:

Additionally, the 1840 census, asked for the first time, the ages of revolutionary war pensioners and the number of individuals engaged in mining, agriculture, commerce, manufacturing and trade, navigation of the ocean, navigation of canals, lakes and rivers, learned professions and engineers; number in school, number in family over age twenty-one who could not read and write, and the number of insane.

The 1850 census asked the name; age; sex; color; territory or country of birth; whether the person attended school or was married within the year; whether the person could read or write if over age twenty; whether the person was deaf-mute, blind, insane, or ""idiotic""; whether or not a fugitive from the state; and real estate value. The census also asked the occupation of males over age fifteen.



Note:

Separate slave schedules for 1850 asked the name of each slave owner, the number of slaves owned, and the number of slaves manumitted (released from slavery). While the schedules, unfortunately, do not name individual slaves, they asked the age, color, sex, and whether or not slaves were deaf-mute, blind, insane, or idiotic; and whether or not a fugitive from the state.

The 1860 census asked for all free persons: name; age; sex; color; occupation of persons over age fifteen; value of real estate; value of personal estate; name of state, territory, or country of birth; whether the person was married during the year; and whether the person was deaf-mute, blind, insane, an "idiot," a pauper, or a convict.

Note:

The information in the slave schedules is the same as those for 1850.

The 1870 census form called for dwelling houses to be numbered in the order of visitation; families numbered in order of visitation; and the name of every person whose place of abode on the first day of June 1870 was with the family. The census further asked the age of each individual at the last birthday. If a child was under one year of age, months of age were to be stated in fractions, such as 1/12. Additionally, the census asked the sex, color, profession, and occupation or trade of every male and female. There were also columns for disclosure of value of real estate and personal property. The 1870 census asked for the place of birth, specifically in which state or territory of the United States, or in which country if foreign born (including the province if born in Germany). The schedule provided space to indicate whether or not the father and the mother of the individual was foreign born, and if an individual was born or married within the year, the month in which the event occurred was to be entered.



The census also asked for those who had attended school within the year; those who could not read; those who could not write; and the deaf and dumb, blind, insane and the "idiotic" to be identified. Finally, the schedules had space to identify any male citizen of the United States of age twenty-one and older, and any male citizen of the United States age twenty-one and older whose right to vote was denied or abridged on grounds other than rebellion or other crime.

Note:

The 1870 census may identify survivors of the Civil War, thus suggesting that military records may be found. Conversely, if an individual does not appear in the 1870 census as expected, it may be a clue that the person was a casualty of the war. In the absence of so many other records from the South for this era, information from the 1870 census can be especially important. A caveat, however, is found in Map Guide to the U.S. Federal Censuses 1790--1920, in which it is stated that "The 1870 census in the Southern States omits a great many persons."

The 1870 census is the first census in which parents of foreign birth are indicated—a real boon in identifying immigrant ancestors. Immigrants who were naturalized and eligible to vote are identified, suggesting follow-up in court and naturalization sources. Indications of a person's color that were intended to be more precise—white (W), black (B), Chinese (C), Indian (I), mulatto (M)—may be helpful in determining individuals' origins.

The 1880 census asked for each person in every household, the census asked name; whether white, black, mulatto, Indian, or Chinese; sex; age; month of birth if born within the year; relationship to the head of the household; whether single, married, widowed, or divorced; whether married within the year; occupation and months unemployed; name of state, territory, or country of birth; parents' birthplaces; school attendance within the year; whether unable to read if age ten or older; and whether sick or temporarily



disabled on the day of enumeration and the reason therefore. Those who were blind, deaf-mute, "idiotic," insane, or permanently disabled were also indicated as such.

Note:

In addition to identifying the state, county, and other subdivisions, the 1880 census was the first to provide the name of the street and house number for urban households. The 1880 census was also the first to identify relationship to the head of household; illness or disability at the time the census was taken; marital status; number of months unemployed during the year; and the state or country of birth of every individual's father and mother. Individuals who were born or died after 1 June 1880 were not to be included in the 1880 census, even though the enumerator may not have questioned them until well after that date. Indians not taxed are not in regular population schedules. Some may appear in special Indian schedules.

The 1900 population schedules provide the name of each person in the household; address; relationship to the head of the household; color or race; sex; month and year of birth; age at last birthday; marital status; the number of years married; the total number of children born of the mother; the number of those children living; places of birth of each individual and the parents of each individual; if the individual was foreign born, the year of immigration and the number of years in the United States; the citizenship status of foreign-born individuals over age twenty-one; occupation; whether the person could read, write, and speak English; whether the home was owned or rented; whether the home was on a farm; and whether the home was mortgaged.

Note:

The 1900 census is the only available census that provides columns for including the exact month and year of birth of every person enumerated. Previous censuses, and even the 1910 and 1920 censuses, include only the



ages. The 1900 census is also the only census to include space to record the number of years couples were married, the number of children born to the mother, and how many were still living. This census was also the first to indicate how long an immigrant had been in the country and whether naturalized; whether a home or farm was owned or rented and whether the owned property was free of mortgage.

The 1910 census schedules record each person's name and relationship to the head of household; sex; color or race; age at last birthday; marital status; length of present marriage; if a mother, number of children and number of living children; birthplace and parents' birthplaces; if foreign born, year of immigration and citizenship status; language spoken; occupation; type of industry employed in; whether employer, employee, or self-employed; number of weeks unemployed in 1909 if applicable; ability to read and write; if attended daytime school since 1 September 1909; if home was rented or owned; if owned, whether free or mortgaged; if home was a house or a farm; if a veteran of the Union or Confederate army or navy; if blind in both eyes, and if deaf and dumb. The Indian schedule also recorded the tribe and/or band.

#### Note:

The quality of the microfilming of the 1910 census seems especially poor when compared to other census schedules. Overexposure in microfilming schedules for Mississippi, for example, rendered hundreds of pages illegible. Additionally, the omission rate in the 1910 Miracode/Soundex appears to be greater than in most other indexes. In many cases, individuals not indexed are indeed present in the census schedules, so it is especially advisable for researchers to continue a search in the actual schedules even though a name fails to show up in an index.

The 1910 census, while not providing as much precise information as the 1900 census (such as exact birth month, years married, and number of children born to the mother), is still a good tool for determining approximate dates and places to search for marriage



records, birth and death records of children, and the marriages of children not listed. The 1910 census sometimes makes it possible to verify family traditions, identify unknown family members, and link what is known to other sources, such as earlier censuses, naturalization records (especially declarations of intent to become citizens), school attendance rolls, property holdings, and employment and occupational records. These records will also verify Civil War service, trace and document ethnic origins, and locate military and naval personnel in hospitals, ships, and stations and those stationed in the Philippines, Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico.

The 1920 census asked: name of street, avenue road, etc.; house number or farm; number of dwelling in order of visitation; number of family in order of visitation; name of each person whose place of abode was with the family; relationship of person enumerated to the head of the family; whether home owned or rented; if owned, whether free or mortgaged; sex; color or race; age at last birthday; whether single, married, widowed, or divorced; year of immigration to United States; whether naturalized or alien; if naturalized, year of naturalization; whether attended school any time since 1 September 1919; whether able to read; whether able to write; person's place of birth; mother tongue; father's place of birth; father's mother tongue; mother's place of birth; mother's mother tongue; whether able to speak English; trade, profession, or particular kind of work done; industry, business, or establishment in which at work; whether employer, salary or wage worker, or working on own account; number of farm schedule.

Note:

The date of the enumeration appears on the heading of each page of the census schedule. All responses were to reflect the individual's status as of 1 January 1920, even if the status had changed between 1 January and the day of enumeration. Children born between 1 January and the day of enumeration were not to be listed, while individuals alive on 1 January but deceased when the



enumerator arrived were to be counted.

The 1930 census began on 2 April 1930 for the general population of the United States. (The enumeration in Alaska began on 1 October 1929.) Regardless of when an individual was contacted, all responses were to reflect the status of the individual as of 1 April 1930.

Enumerators (census takers) collected the following information for each household:

Address (name of the street, avenue, or road; house number) Occupant (name of each person and their relationship to head of family) Residence (whether home is owned or rented; value of home; whether home is farm residence; whether home has a radio)

Personal (sex, race, age, marital status, college attendance, ability to read and write, birthplace, and birthplace of parents)

Citizenship (language spoken before coming to the United States; year of immigration; whether naturalized or alien; ability to speak English)

Occupation (trade or profession; industry or business working in; class of worker; whether worked the previous day; line number of unemployment schedule)

Military (whether veteran or not; war or expedition participated in)

Note: Individuals in Alaska, and Indians were asked slightly different questions. For example, Indians were not asked about their mother's country of origin, but which tribe she belonged to.

## Unique Features

Servicemen were not recorded with their families in the 1930 census; they were treated as residents of their duty posts. If you're looking for someone in the military, you should not assume they will be listed in their home town.

Children that were born between the official start date of the census and the actual day of enumeration were not included. Individuals that were alive on the official start date of the census but deceased by the



actual day of enumeration were included.

Indians were included in the enumeration of the general population, though they were asked different questions than the general population.

The 1940 census was split into enumeration districts—geographic areas designed to allow a census taker (enumerator) to visit every house in the district within a two-week period (in rural areas, the time allowed was one month). When the census enumerators came to the door, they counted anyone "whose usual place of residence on April 1, 1940, was in this household." "Ab" was the abbreviation written after names of people who belonged to the household but were absent on April 1. Because the official cutoff for the census was 12:01 a.m. on April 1, babies who were born later that day should not have been included.

#### What You May Find in the Records

Questions on the following topics were included in the 1940 census:

- address
- number of household in order of visitation
- home owned or rented
- value of home
- whether household lives on a farm
- name of each person whose usual place of residence on 1 April 1940 would be in the household ("Ab" written after names of people absent)
- relationship to head of household
- sex
- color or race
- age at last birthday
- marital status
- education
- place of birth
- citizenship
- residence on 1 April 1935
- employment status for those 14 and older (several questions)



occupation, industry, class of worker, number of weeks  
worked full-time in 1939  
income in 1939