



United States Census Records
September, 2023

Where To Find The Information On Census

- **United States Census Site** gives an explanation of the details of each census: <https://www.census.gov/history/>
- **National Archives maintain the census records:** <https://www.archives.gov/research/census>
- **Ancestry, Family Search, My Heritage, Find My Past, and Heritage QuestOnline (Library) have searchable indexes and images.**



Timeline

- 1787** The newly ratified Constitution requires a population count every 10 years.
- 1790** The first US census counts 3.9 million people.
- 1830** The census is first conducted on pre-printed forms.
- 1850** The census records the names of all free people for the first time. Slave states list slaveholders on a separate schedule, with the age and sex of each enslaved person.
- 1868** The 14th Amendment ends the three-fifths counting rule for African Americans.
- 1870** The census first counts American Indians, excluding those on reservations.
- 1880** Congress establishes a census office in the Department of the Interior.
- 1890** Census officials first use punchcards and electronic tabulation to compile data.
- 1900** The census enumerates military personnel living abroad.
- 1903** The census office is transferred to the Department of Commerce and Labor.
- 1919** Individuals may request copies of census records for genealogical purposes.
- 1921** A fire in the Commerce Department severely damages 1890 census records. Sometime before 1935, they're destroyed.
- 1930** The first post-Black Tuesday census asks about unemployment and income.
- 1960** Census questionnaires are first mailed to urban households, to be completed and returned to the Census Bureau.
- 1999** The US Supreme Court rules that statistical samplings can't be used for congressional apportionment.
- 2000** The Census Bureau runs its first nationwide advertising campaign to encourage census participation.
- 2001** The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints releases a searchable, every-name index to the 1880 census on a \$49 set of 56 CD-ROMs.
- 2010** The American Community Survey replaces the census "long form."
- 2012** The 1940 census is the first released only as digital images, not microfilm.
- 2022** The 1950 census is released, alongside an index created by artificial intelligence.

How To Search

- 1. Search online collections by entering at least a name, birth year, and place. Don't mark search terms as exact in case of unexpected spellings and details. Use year ranges for birth dates.
- 2. If you can't find a person, try a household member or neighbor. Leave out the name and enter other information you know such as birth year, birthplace, place of residence, and family members' names.



How To Search (Cont.)

- 3. Many people had the same name and age. Look at all the details in the record, especially other household members, to determine whether this is in fact your ancestor.
- 4. When you find a matching record always look at the census record itself. Everything is not always indexed. Look at adjacent pages for families that lived nearby.



How To Search (Cont.)

- 5. Search for every person in your tree in each census that occurred during their lifetime. It was taken every ten years.
- 6. Ages in the census are often as off the official census date for that enumeration and they changed from census to census. (Example: 1790 was August 2nd, 1900 was June 1st, and 1930 was April 1st. The ages are considered accurate as of that date.



What Is In A Census?



DETAILS IN THE CENSUS

Subject	Information/census year
Place of residence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> state, county, township, town and/or census ward: 1790 forward residential institution (if any): generally, 1850 forward house number and street name for most places: 1880 forward residence in 1935: 1940 residence in 1949: 1950 (select respondents only)
Name	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> head-of-household only: 1790-1840 all free household members: 1850 forward
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> age ranges for free white men: 1790 age ranges for free white men and women: 1800-1840 ages of all free household members: 1850 forward birth month if born within the last year: 1870, 1880, 1950 birth month and year: 1900
Color/Race	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1850 forward
Relationship to head of household	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1880 forward
Birthplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> person's state or country of birth: 1850 forward person's parents are "of foreign birth": 1870 person's parents' state or country of birth: 1880-1930, 1950 (select respondents only)
Marriage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> marital status: 1880 forward whether married within the past year: 1850-1880 number of years of current marriage: 1900, 1910, 1950 (select respondents only) if married more than once: 1950 (select respondents only)
Child mortality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> number of children born to a woman/still living: 1900, 1910, 1950 (select respondents only)
Immigration and citizenship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> number of aliens in the household: 1820-1840 year of immigration: 1890-1930 whether a citizen (men age 21 or older): 1870 number of years in the United States: 1890, 1900 language spoken: 1890 mother tongue of person and parents: 1920 naturalization status: 1890-1950 year naturalized: 1920
Occupation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> number of persons in agriculture, commerce and manufacturing: 1820 type of job: 1850 forward number of months/weeks unemployed in past year: 1890-1910, 1950 (select respondents only) whether employed/assigned to public employment March 24-30: 1940 whether seeking work: 1940-1950 number of hours worked/duration of unemployment: 1940-1950 wages/salary/other income: 1940, 1950 (select respondents only) work activity in the previous week: 1950 whether has a job or owns a business: 1950 how many weeks spent looking for work: 1950 (select respondents only)
Military service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> names and ages of military pensioners: 1840 whether a Civil War veteran or widow: 1890 whether a veteran and which war: 1930, 1950 (select respondents only)
Health and education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> school attendance: 1850-1940, 1950 (select respondents only) highest grade completed: 1940, 1950 (select respondents only) able to read/write: 1850-1930 number of blind, deaf, and/or "dumb" household members: 1830, 1840 whether disabled/pauper/convict: 1850-1890
Property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> value of real property owned: 1850-1870 value of personal estate: 1870

Getting Over the 1890 Census Gap

More than 99 percent of 1890 census records were destroyed after a Jan. 10, 1921, Commerce building fire. Water soaked the 1890 census forms, which then sat, unrestored, in storage. Despite public protests, the records were destroyed sometime between 1933 and 1935. These tips will help you deal with this brick wall:

- Search fragments of the 1890 census with 6,160 names on Ancestry.com and FamilySearch.
- Look for indexes that “reconstruct” the 1890 census with tax records and city directories from the time, or consult these substitutes yourself.
- If your relative was a Union Civil War veteran or his widow, check the 1890 schedules. They survive for half of Kentucky and states alphabetically after. Some enumerators also included Confederate veterans.
- Watch other records for overlooked children who were born and died or left their parents’ home between the 1880 and 1900 censuses.

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DECIPHERING CENSUS TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Household members

- **Ad.:** adopted
- **Ap:** apprentice
- **Bo, Bds, Board:** boarder
- **Bboy, Bgirl:** bound boy, bound girl
- **FI, MI:** father-in-law, mother-in-law
- **HH:** hired hand
- **Hs, Hb:** half-sister, half brother

Race

- **B:** black
- **Ch** or **Chi:** Chinese (included all East Asians in 1870 and 1880)
- **Fil:** Filipino
- **Hin:** Hindu
- **Jp** or **Jap:** Japanese
- **Kor:** Korean
- **I, In** or **Ind:** American Indian
- **M, Mulatto:** of mixed African ancestry
- **Mex:** Mexican
- **N, Neg, Negro:** Black
- **Octoroon:** one-eighth black

- **Ot:** other races
- **Quadroon:** one-fourth black
- **W** or blank: white

Marriage

- **D:** divorced
- **S:** single
- **Sep:** separated
- **M:** married
- **M1** or **1:** first marriage
- **M2** or **2:** second marriage
- **Nev:** never married
- **Sep:** separated
- **W** or **Wd:** widowed

Immigration

- **AB:** Born abroad or at sea to American parents
- **Al:** alien
- **Am Cit:** American citizen
- **Na:** naturalized
- **Nr:** not recorded
- **Pa:** first papers filed

Occupation

- **Dom:** domestic (maid)
- **E:** employee

- **Fa.W:** farm worker
- **G:** works for a branch of government
- **Housekeeper:** takes care of a house for pay
- **H** or **Keeping house:** takes care of her/his own house full-time
- **Lab:** laborer
- **Meth:** Methodist clergy
- **NP:** works for no pay for family member
- **O:** "own account" (self-employed)
- **O.S.P.:** Old School Presbyterian clergy
- **P:** Works for private employer
- **Por:** porter
- **P.E.:** Protestant Episcopal clergy
- **R.C.:** Roman Catholic clergy
- **Telph:** telephone
- **Trav:** traveling
- **U:** unable to work
- **W** or **Wk:** wage or salary worker

Military

- **Box:** Boxer Rebellion
- **Civ:** Civil War
- **CSA:** Confederate Civil War service
- **Mex:** Mexican expedition
- **Ot:** other war or expedition
- **Phil:** Philippine Insurrection
- **R:** peacetime service only
- **S** or **SP:** Spanish-American War
- **SW:** both Spanish-American War and World War I
- **USA:** Union Civil War service
- **W** or **WW:** World War I

Property

- **F:** free of mortgage
- **M:** mortgaged
- **O:** owns
- **R:** rents

What If The Census Records Conflict With Other Records?

- Census takers didn't ask for name spellings. They recorded what they heard and spellings may be affected by educational levels and accents.
- Census takers didn't ask for proof of name, age, immigration year or other data. Accuracy depended on the respondents memory.
- If no one was at home at your relative's house, the census taker might ask a neighbor or another person less familiar with the family.
- Indexers who transcribe the information to make the census searchable may misinterpret the handwriting.



US CENSUS, STATE BY STATE

State	First US census	Colonial, territorial, state and other censuses
Alabama	1830	1706–1819 (various years); 1820 (eight counties); 1850, 1855, 1866, 1907 (Confederate veterans); 1921 (Confederate pensioners)
Alaska	1900	1878 (Aleutian Islands); 1879, 1881 (Sitka); 1885 (Cape Smith, Point Barrow); 1890–1895 (Pribiloff Islands); 1904–1907, 1914, 1917 (St. Paul and St. George islands); 1890 (Naval veterans)
Arizona	1870	1801, 1852 (Pimeria Alta); 1831 (Santa Cruz Co.); 1860; 1864; 1866; 1882 (several counties); 1883 (pensioners on the roll)
Arkansas	1830	1686–1804, 1823, 1829 (fragments)
California	1850	1793, 1796, 1797, 1798 (various areas); 1834 (Santa Barbara); 1852; 1870 (San Francisco Co.)
Colorado	1860 (as four territories)	1870 (as Colorado Territory); 1880 (as a state); 1861, 1866 (fragments), 1885; 1898 (volunteers for the Spanish American War); 1904–1908 (Ute census of Navajo Springs)
Connecticut	1790	1917 (males of military service age, some women)
Delaware	1800	1671, 1782
District of Columbia	1800	none known (see listings for Maryland and Virginia)
Florida	1830	1783; 1784–1786; 1790; 1793; 1813; 1814; 1815; 1820 (Pensacola and Escambia River areas); 1824 (fragments); 1825 (Leon Co.); 1837; 1840 (military); 1845; 1855 (Marion Co.); 1867 (several counties); 1875 (Alachua Co.); 1885; 1895 (Nassau Co.); 1945
Georgia	1820	1787–1866 (various years; fragments survive); 1835 (military pensioners); 1864 (Census for Re-organizing the Georgia Militia)
Hawaii	1900	1847 (foreigners); 1866; 1878 (Hawaii, Maui, Oahu); 1890; 1896 (Honolulu)
Idaho	1850 (as Oregon Territory)	none known
Illinois	1820	1810 (Randolph Co., as Indiana Territory); 1818; 1820–1845 (every five years, various counties); 1855; 1865; 1880 (Cook Co.)
Indiana	1820	1807; 1816 (postmasters); 1820-on (various years, males older than 21); 1880 (Clark Co.)
Iowa	1850	1836 (in Wisconsin Territory); 1838–1897 (various years and places); 1851; 1852; 1856; 1885; 1895; 1905; 1915; 1925
Kansas	1860	1857 (Shawnee tribe); 1865–1925 (every 10 years); 1873-on (various years and areas); 1855, 1856, 1857, 1858, 1859, 1883 (pensioners); 1941 (veterinarians); 1878–1894 (Institution for the Education of the Blind)
Kentucky	1810	1859 (lawyers)
Louisiana	1810	1699, 1700, 1706, 1711, 1721, 1722, 1724, 1725, 1726, 1727, 1731, 1732, 1766, 1771, 1772, 1774, 1782, 1784–1786, 1788–1790, 1795, 1798, 1799, 1803, 1805 (various communities); 1792–1806, 1809 (Nacogdoches); 1791 (New Orleans); 1812–1815 (War of 1812 pensioners); 1911 (Confederate soldiers and widows)
Maine	1790	1837 (Bangor, Portland, unincorporated towns)
Maryland	1790	1776, 1778
Massachusetts	1790	1855, 1865
Michigan	1820	1710, various through 1792 (Detroit area); 1780 (Fort St. Joseph); 1796 (Wayne Co.); 1827, 1837 (Kalamazoo Co.); 1845, 1854–1894 (every 10 years); 1883 (pensioners); 1894 (veterans)
Minnesota	1820 (in Michigan Territory)	1836 (in Wisconsin Territory); 1849; 1850; 1853 (various areas); 1855 (fragments); 1857, 1865, 1875, 1885, 1895, 1905
Mississippi	1820	1792 (Natchez); 1784, 1787, 1788, 1794, 1798–1817 (various years); 1831 (Choctaw tribe); 1822–1825, 1837, 1841, 1845, 1853, 1866 (various areas); 1790 (Tobacco growers in Spanish Natchez district); 1792, 1805, 1810, 1813, 1815–1818, 1820, 1830, 1850, 1860

State	First US census	Colonial, territorial, state and other censuses
Missouri	1820	1770–1804 (various areas); 1797, 1803 (New Madrid); 1817, 1819 (St. Charles); 1840, 1844, 1852, 1856, 1857–1858, 1868–1869, 1873, 1876 (fragments); 1880, 1881
Montana	1870	1883 (pensioners); 1897–1898 (Blackfeet tribe)
Nebraska	1860	1854, 1855, 1856, 1860, 1865, 1869, 1885; 1893 (veterans)
Nevada	1850	1776, 1862, 1863, 1875
New Hampshire	1790	1732, 1744, 1767, 1776
New Jersey	1830 (Cumberland Co. only in 1800)	1824–1832 (Paterson); 1855, 1865, 1875, 1885, 1895, 1905, 1915
New Mexico	1850	1600; 1750–1845 (various years and areas); 1790, 1788 and 1790 (El Paso del Norte); 1864, 1885
New York	1790	1693; 1700 (militia); 1774–1776, 1825–1875 (every 10 years); 1892, 1905, 1915, 1925
North Carolina	1790	1784–1787; 1838 (Indian removal); 1793–1840 (black craftsmen); 1852 (pensioners)
North Dakota	1900	1857 (Pembina Co.); 1885–1939 (various Indian reservations); 1855, 1915, 1925
Ohio	1820 (Washington Co. only in 1800 and 1810)	1863 (African-American residents arriving between 1861 and 1863)
Oklahoma	1860	1880, 1890, 1896 (Cherokee tribe); 1890; 1907 (Seminole Co.)
Oregon	1850	1842, 1843, 1845, 1846, 1849; 1853–1859 (every year); 1865–1905 (every 10 years)
Pennsylvania	1790	1680 (residents along the Delaware River); 1902 (children in soldier's orphan schools)
Puerto Rico	1900	1900 (Armed Forces—Foreign Countries), 1910, 1920, 1930
Rhode Island	1790	1730 (fragments); 1740–1743, 1747, 1774, 1777 (men age 16 and older); 1782 (partial); 1865, 1875, 1885, 1905, 1915, 1925, 1935
South Carolina	1790	1770 (Tryon Co.); 1779 (96th district); 1781 (unknown counties); 1829 (Fairfield and Laurens districts); 1839 (Kershaw and Chesterfield districts); 1868, 1869, 1875 (several counties)
South Dakota	1900	1836 (in Wisconsin Territory); 1840 (in Iowa Territory); 1850 (Minnesota Territory); 1860, 1870, 1880 (Dakota Territory); 1885–1945 (every 10 years); 1885–1940 (Indian census, various years)
Tennessee	1830 (fragments for 1810; 26 counties only for 1820)	1770–1790 (Cumberland settlements)
Texas	1850	1783–1836 (various years and areas), 1828
Utah	1850 (actually taken in 1851)	1852, 1856, 1872, 1896
Vermont	1790	1785
Virginia	1810 (partial)	1624, 1625, 1782–1786, 1890 (Union veterans census of southwest Virginia)
Washington	1860	1857–1892 (various years and areas)
West Virginia	1870 (earlier censuses as part of Virginia)	see Virginia listing
Wisconsin	1820	1836–1847 (various years and counties); 1855, 1865 (fragments); 1875–1905 (every 10 years)
Wyoming	1870	1855–1905 (every 10 years); 1869; 1878 (Cheyenne)

instead of US marshals.

SPECIAL CENSUSES SCHEDULES

Schedule	Years	Who's in it	Where to find it	Tips & tricks
Agricultural	1850, 1860, 1870, 1880	farmers with production above a minimum threshold	Ancestry.com, in its collection "US, Selected Federal Census Non-Population Schedules, 1850-1880."	You'll learn the type of livestock or crop grown, annual production, value of equipment and more.
American Indian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1880: Indians not taxed are listed in a Special Census of Indians. 1900, 1910: Indians might be on schedules called Inquiries Relating to Indians. 		Ancestry.com and FamilySearch include these in their collections of general population schedules.	You may learn Indian names, tribal status, land ownership status and more.
Defective , Dependent and Delinquent Classes	1880	the sick or disabled, as indicated on lines 15 to 20 of the population census	Ancestry.com has these for 21 states. FamilySearch and state/university archives may have microfilmed versions.	Separate "DDD" schedules list the indigent, blind, deaf and "dumb," and other designations.
Manufacturing	1820, 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880	business owners with production above a minimum threshold	1820 schedules are on NARA microfilm. Ancestry.com has 1850 to 1880 schedules.	You'll learn the type of business, number of employees, wages and more.
Mortality	1850, 1860, 1870, 1880, 1885 (some areas), 1900 (Minnesota only)	those who died in the 12 months preceding the census date	Ancestry.com; FamilySearch has 1850 schedules, as well as some schedules for a few states.	Schedules may give date of death, cause, duration of illness and more.
Slaves	1850, 1860	slaveowners, along with the age and sex (but not the name) of each slave	Ancestry.com and FamilySearch; MyHeritage has 1850 schedules	Find your freedman ancestor's family in the 1870 census and look for nearby white families of the same name. Then find those families in 1860 slave schedules.
Veterans and Military	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1840: Revolutionary pensioners 1890: Union veterans 1900, 1910, 1920: military on bases and vessels (usually included online with the general population schedules) 1930: merchant seamen on vessels 		Search the Revolutionary War pensioners census and 1890 veterans schedules on Ancestry.com. The 1930 merchant seamen schedule is at Ancestry.com, FamilySearch, and MyHeritage.	In 1890, census takers were supposed to enumerate only Union veterans, but some also recorded Confederate veterans. Schedules might have their names lined out, but still legible.

Special Census Schedules



SAMPLE CENSUS RECORDS

1820 CENSUS OF PEASE TOWNSHIP, BELMONT COUNTY, OHIO

Name	0 to 10	10 to 16	16 to 26	26 to 45	45 and older	Total
Andrew Hull	2	1	1	1	1	2
Jacob Kistner	1	1	1	1	1	1
Robert Black	1	1	1	1	1	1
James Johnston	1	1	2	1	1	1
Samuel Johnson	1	1	1	1	1	1
Ebenzer Lister	4	2	1	3	1	6
James Mack	2	1	1	1	1	1

Enumerators during the 1820 census recorded information on homemade forms. They named only the heads of households, and counted free white males and females in age categories: 0 to 10, 10 to 16, 16 to 26, 26 to 45, 45 and older; as well as total slaves.

1880 CENSUS OF CINCINNATI, HAMILTON COUNTY, OHIO

Page No. 30
 Superintendent's Dist. No. _____
 Enumerator's Dist. No. _____

SCHEDULE I—Inhabitants in _____, in the County of _____, State of _____
 enumerated by me on the _____ day of _____, 1880.

Name	Sex	Age	Relationship	Color	Occupation	Value of Real Estate	Value of Personal Estate
Wm. H. ...	M	...	...	...	...	...	...
...	F	...	...	...	...	...	...

The 1880 census, recorded on pre-printed forms, was the first to provide each household member's relationship to the head-of-household. This census also notes the street name in most places, written along the left side of the page.

1910 CENSUS OF MERIDIAN, LAUDERDALE COUNTY, MISS.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND LABOR BUREAU OF THE CENSUS
 THIRTEENTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES: 1910—POPULATION

County: _____
 Name of Incorporated Place: _____
 Name of City: _____

Name	Sex	Age	Marital Status	Color	Occupation	Value of Real Estate	Value of Personal Estate
...	M	...	...	...	...	...	...
...	F	...	...	...	...	...	...

Information on the 1910 census was to be accurate as of April 15, 1910, regardless of the day the census-taker contacted a household. For individuals marked "In" (Indian), look for a listing in the separate Indian population schedules.

Samples of Past Census



Websites

Ancestor Search: Census Abbreviations

<www.searchforancestors.com/records/censusabbreviations.html>

Census Bureau: Census Instructions

<census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/census_instructions>

Census Bureau: Index of Questions

<www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/index_of_questions>

University of Minnesota, Minnesota Population Center: Transcribed Enumerator Instructions

<usa.ipums.org/usa/voliii/tEnumInstr.shtml>

NARA: Census Records

<archives.gov/research/census>

One-step Webpages by Stephen P. Morse: US Census

<stevemorse.org/#us>

Books

The Census Book: A Genealogist's Guide to Federal Census Facts, Schedules and Indexes by William Thorndale (Heritage Quest)

Finding Answers in US Census Records by Loretto Dennis Szucs and Matthew Wright (Ancestry)

Map Guide to the U.S. Federal Censuses, 1790–1920 by William Dollarhide and William Thorndale (Genealogical Publishing Co.)

Measuring America: The Decennial Censuses From 1790 to 2000 (Census Bureau, free download from <www.census.gov/history/www/reference/publications/publications_-_genealogy_1.html>)

State Census Records by Ann Smith Lainhart (Genealogical Publishing Co.)

Your Guide to the Federal Census by Kathleen Hinckley (Betterway)

