

Conquering the Census "Notes"

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Heritage Quest is an on-line website accessible with a Lincoln Library card. www.LibraryatLincoln.org

These records and more:

U.S. Federal Census Records

City Directories

1850 and 1860 Slave Schedules

U.S. Indian Census Rolls

Revolutionary War Pension Records

Canadian Census

Mortality Schedules

Agricultural and Industrial Schedules

1890 Veterans Schedule

Census Substitutes:

Name lists taken from alternate sources produced by many cities, towns, counties

City Directories

Military Lists

Voter Registration

School census

Sheriff's census

A variety of ethnic Lists

Land Records: Bureau of Land Management (BLM) <https://gloreCORDS.blm.gov/search/default.aspx>

Tax Records:

TAX RECORDS include all the years between censuses

Exempt: children, women (unless widowed), slaves, paupers, ministers, justice of the peace, militia officers, tax assessors

Some before 1790 exist

State Census:

Never taken or none survived: Alaska, Connecticut, Delaware, D.C., Idaho, Kentucky, Montana, New Hampshire, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, Vermont, Virginia and West Virginia

37 states conducted up to 24 censuses

Usually taken at the mid-point between Federal Censuses

Most stopped around 1905

Special Federal Censuses: Agriculture, Mortality, Slave etc.

“1890 Special Census of Union Civil War Veterans and their Widows”

Half were lost. Only surviving records start with 2nd half of Kentucky to end of alphabet
Additional Veterans Schedules: 1840, 1895 and 1900

General Procedures:

Start from the known (present) and work back in time generation by generation (unknown).

Chase down every single census year your ancestor was alive.

Research collateral lines.

RECORD YOUR SOURCE.

If image not clear, look at another site. Each company filmed their own records.

Strategize:

Often spoke with foreign born accents so try searching by writing it phonetically, as it sounds, not necessarily how you know it to be spelled.

Ancestry.com, use the wild cards with the “?” and “*” to find possible spelling or transcription errors (research what and how wild cards are used for each of the sites you are using).

Can't distinguish if an I or a T? Look at other names on the page to compare. Find a word on the page that you know such as the Thomas or Thelma or Indiana.

Try a member of the household with the strangest name: Absalom rather than the father James.

Try by searching for a neighbor from the census before. In early days often entire families and groups of neighbors would migrate together.

Use Google Earth to see if house is still standing.

Check boundaries for the time span you are researching. Boundaries changed a lot in earlier years.

Try in-laws and grown children, wife's maiden name and other collateral lines (common for extended families to live together or close by).

If ancestor at beginning or end of page, look back one or forward one to see that the family wasn't divided onto two pages on the forms.

Vary your search, surname only, initials, abbreviations, location.

If small enough city, look at each page by page to find others with same surnames to find relations or find a transcription error. Often small towns with several families of same surname were related.

Search by spouse's name to pick up widowed.

Households can consist of multiple generations. On census where relationship not included, do not assume all listed children are children of the head of household. Could be nephew, step-child, orphan taken in etc.

If stated on the census that they were farmers or veterans, look for Agricultural schedules, military records.

Try searching by Anglicizing the surname. (Ellis Island did not change surnames. They worked from ship manifests that were created in the county where the sailing originated. Many foreigners changed their own surnames for they felt they would “fit” in better.)

Look at last page for missed families/individuals (Be aware, often blank pages before the last page)

Search by wife's maiden name-could be living with in-laws

Age/Birthplace of oldest child might give a clue to parent's marriage date and place and difference in parent/oldest listed child's age could be a clue to missing older children either married or died

Compare same information given on multiple censuses. Generally, date closest to incident is most accurate.

Search by surname only with a location to find other possible relatives. Search by wife's maiden name.

Analyze everything.

Be cautious with transcriptions

Follow migration routes using place and date of birth of children.

Read each heading carefully to not miss something that is being asked.

Map Guide to the US Federal Censuses 1790-1920 by Thorndale and Dollarhide

Census Substitutes & State Census Records by William Dollarhide

Volume 1-Eastern States

Volume 2-Western States

Substitutes for Lost 1890 US Federal Census by William Dollarhide

1) Information provided by Bob Ringo:

- a. 1790-Washington DC is with Montgomery and Prince George Counties in Maryland
- b. 1820 and 1830 Wisconsin is with Michigan
- c. 1840 Montana is with Clayton County, Iowa
- d. 1860 Colorado is with Kansas
- e. 1860 Montana is with the Nebraska census under "unorganized territory"
- f. 1860 Nevada is with 1860 Utah
- g. 1860 Oklahoma is with Arkansas which was then Indian Land
- h. 1860 Wyoming is with Nebraska
- i. Prior to 1880 "IA" did not mean Iowa but meant Indiana
- j. A reference to a person being born in Virginia could mean that the person really was born in part of:
 - i. Illinois from 1781-1818
 - ii. Indiana from 1778-1816
 - iii. Kentucky from 1775-1792
 - iv. Missouri from 1775-1792
 - v. North Carolina from 1728-1803
 - vi. Ohio from 1728-1803
 - vii. Pennsylvania from 1752-1786
 - viii. Tennessee from 1760-1803
 - ix. West Virginia from 1769-1863

NOTES:

1790

1800

1810

1820

1830

1840

1850

1860

1870

1880

1900

1910

1920

1930

1940

1950