

# Becoming a Census Sensei

Tina Beard [tinab@tamarackgenealogy.com](mailto:tinab@tamarackgenealogy.com)



- **United States Federal Census**
- **Non Population Schedules**
- **State/Territorial Census**
- **School Census**
- **Military Census**
- **Native American Census**

## U.S. Federal Census

- Federal Law requires the U.S. to conduct a decennial census of its people every ten years.
- The first census began August 2, 1790 and ended May 1, 1791, recording nearly 4 million Americans.
- Federal Law requires census data be sealed for 72 years. The 1950 census will be available in April 2022.
- The current 2020 census is the first to be collected electronically.
- 1850 is the first “every-name” census recording all members of a household including servants, guests and family.
- Not all census records are complete. Census data for various years is missing. 1790 is missing the following states: DE, GA, KY, NJ, TN and VA.
- The 1890 census was largely destroyed by fire in Washington D.C. in 1921. A handful of fragmented county records remain for Alabama, Washington D.C., Georgia, Illinois (McDonough Co. only), Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, South Dakota and Texas.
- The Federal Census was not conducted in one day, but over several weeks, typically over the summer months. Children and farm workers could be recorded multiple times.
- Some census takers added additional notes in the margin including addresses, relationships, length of residency etc...
- Some census takers did not return to homes if no one answered on the first pass, but would rely on neighbors or friends for more information.

- Information provided in the Federal Census is incorrect an estimated 50% of the time! Most often incorrect- Ages.
- Institutions (jails, poor farms, hospitals, orphanages, institutions etc...) can be at the end of the regular census volumes, but a handful are separate.
- Census non-population schedule books were also recorded during the census survey process. The following schedules were recorded:
  - Mortality (1850-1880)
  - Agriculture (1850-1880)
  - Manufacturing/Industrial (1810-1920 but most are missing)
  - Defective (1880 only)
  - Slave (1850-1860)
  - Military (1890)
- Schedules are separate books recording additional questions pertaining to dedicated subjects (e.g. agricultural census asked about the type and quantity of crops and livestock).
- Most existing specialized schedules have been digitized. Some non-digitized schedules are still available on-site at the state archives in the state you are researching.

## State Census

- States often conducted their own censuses at statehood and as needed-typically on the 5 year mark (e.g. 1855, 1885 etc.).
- Censuses could range from a single sheet to multiple page forms. Questions included, place of birth, parent's names, military service and more.
- Not all states conducted a census. There are no censuses for Texas or Wyoming.
- Many state censuses are online and are a great substitute for the destroyed 1890 Federal Census. See list of online resources at the end.
- Ask your state archives or state library about original records.
- FamilySearch has an index to territorial censuses:  
[http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/United\\_States\\_Census\\_Territorial](http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/United_States_Census_Territorial)

## School Census

- Censuses (schedules) assessed all children of 'school age' within a district, not always by township or county.

- Typically, “children” up to the age of 21 are recorded regardless of their school attendance. The record would include the head-of-household, potentially spouse for women under the age of 21.
- The Head of Household would verify the number of children of school age.
- These records are a great way to find remarried mothers!
- Information that may be included:
  - Date of birth
  - Name of parent or guardian
  - Siblings
  - Year in school

### **Illinois Regional Archives Depository**

- There several counties who have school census and schedules available on microfilm through the Illinois IRAD system.
- Will County records for Frankfort and Mokena Schools are not filmed, but are available to view at the Illinois State Archives in Springfield.

### **Native American Census**

- Native American censuses were conducted sporadically until 1884 when the Bureau of Indian Affairs began collecting census data for reservations. Information was then collected annually from 1884-1930s.
- Records collections are incomplete
  - Not all Bureau officers were diligent in collecting the data.
  - Some tribes were exempt from the law.
- Original copies are available through the National Archives and Records Administration Regional Archives and at Archives I, Washington D.C.
  - [http://www.census.gov/history/www/genealogy/decennial\\_census\\_records/censuses\\_of\\_american\\_indians.html](http://www.census.gov/history/www/genealogy/decennial_census_records/censuses_of_american_indians.html)
- FamilySearch [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) has digitized a number of microfilm and print resources for locating Native American Census Rolls.
- Search within the Catalog under United States-Native Races-Census Search Books by United States- Native Races
  - AGENCY CENSUS & ANNUITY ROLLS Vol. 1: Ponca Head of Household Names & Clans in Dakota Territory & Indian Territory, 1860-1878. Joy Tibbitts. 2013.

## Dawes Rolls and Applications

- The Dawes Rolls, also known as the "Final Rolls" and list individuals who were accepted as eligible for tribal membership in the "Five Civilized Tribes."
  - Cherokees
  - Creeks
  - Choctaws
  - Chickasaws
  - Seminoles.
- Contain more than 101,000 names from 1898-1914 (primarily from 1899-1906). Searchable by enrollee's name, sex, blood degree, and census card number.
- Census cards may provide additional genealogical information or contain references to earlier rolls, such as the 1880 Cherokee census.
- A census card was generally accompanied by an application jacket. The jackets may contain additional supporting documentation, such as birth and death affidavits, marriage licenses, and correspondence.
- The Dawes Rolls do not include those whose applications were stricken, rejected or judged as doubtful.
- Those found eligible in the Final Rolls were entitled to a Federal Land Patent. Search approved patents through the Bureau of Land Management [www.glorerecords.blm.gov/search/default.aspx](http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/search/default.aspx)

## Military Census

- 1862 Illinois Civil War Military Census is available on microfilm from the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and digitally through an LDS affiliate: <https://bit.ly/2kjRKiv>
- 1818 U.S. Pensioners (Revolutionary War)
  - *Census of Pensioners for Revolutionary or Military Service* Internet Archive [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org)
  - <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=1116>
  - <https://familysearch.org/search/collection/2069831>
- 1840 Federal Pensioners (published indexes available)
  - <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=7678>
  - U.S. Roots.org [www.usroots.org/colonialamerica/census/1840](http://www.usroots.org/colonialamerica/census/1840)
- 1890 Veteran's Schedule (Alabama-Kansas destroyed in fire)
  - [https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/United\\_States\\_Census\\_Veterans\\_Schedules](https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/United_States_Census_Veterans_Schedules)
  - <http://search.ancestry.com/search/DB.aspx?dbid=8667>
  - National Archives [www.civilwarsoldiersearch.com/veteran-census.html](http://www.civilwarsoldiersearch.com/veteran-census.html)

- 1930 Federal Census Includes field for veteran status
- 1940 extra census field asked if you, spouse or parent served

## Online Resources

- Places to find these records online:
- <http://ancestries1.blogspot.com/2009/12/state-census-records-online.html>
- Ancestry [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) \*
- Census Finder [www.censusfinder.com/indian-census.htm](http://www.censusfinder.com/indian-census.htm)
- FamilySearch [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
  - [https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/United\\_States\\_Census](https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/United_States_Census)
  - [https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/United\\_States\\_Census\\_Forms](https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/United_States_Census_Forms)
- Fold3 [www.fold3.com](http://www.fold3.com) \*
- HeritageQuest: available through your library's webpage
- Internet Archive [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org)
- National Archives [www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov)
  - 1940 Federal Census: <http://1940census.archives.gov>
- Rootsweb State Census Index: [www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~census/states.htm](http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~census/states.htm)
- World Vital Records: [www.worldvitalrecords.com](http://www.worldvitalrecords.com) \*
- U.S. Census Bureau
  - [www.us-census.org/inventory](http://www.us-census.org/inventory)
  - [www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html](http://www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html)

\* Subscription websites

## Published Books

- Thorndale, William and William Dollarhide. *Map Guide to the U.S. Federal Censuses 1790-1920*. Baltimore. Genealogical Publishing Co. 1987.
- Kemp, Thomas J. *American Census Handbook*. Wilmington, DE. Scholarly Resources Co. 2001.
- Lainhart, Ann S. *State Census Records*. Baltimore. Genealogical Publishing Co. 1992.