



# Follow your family using census records

Census records are one of the best ways to discover details about your family — and how that family changed every 10 years. You'll discover names, addresses, what people did for a living, even which ancestor fought in the Civil War or was first to arrive in America.

Start with the most recent census available: 1940. Then work your way back using details you pick up in more recent censuses to help you locate your family in censuses from earlier years.

## 1930 and 1940

Begin your search for family in 1940 — the most recently released U.S. census. (Because of privacy laws, census records aren't released until 72 years after the census was conducted.) The 1940 census includes standard questions about names, ages, and residences; however, the form was also influenced by the Great Depression. New questions were added to see who was unemployed and how much income people earned. Individuals were also asked where they were living in 1935. Use this information to help you pinpoint your family in the 1930 census as well.

State: <u>New York</u> <b>A</b>	County: <u>Bronx</u>	Incorporated place: <u>Bronx</u>	Ward of city: <u>15</u>	Unincorporated place: _____	S. D. No. <u>24</u>	E. D. No. <u>3813</u>	Sheet No. <u>12A</u>																																																																									
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**A. Location (1940 and 1935)**  
State, county and city are listed in the header; combine column 2 and column 1 to get street address. Next step: Include these details in a search on Ancestry.com — adding location and birth year will make your search results even more accurate.

**B. Household and Relationships**  
Look for in-laws, siblings and other extended family members who may have been living in the home. Next step: Follow household members over the age of 10 back to the 1930 census.

**C. Personal Description, Place of Birth**  
Note the ages of children — a large gap in ages may indicate another child was born during that period. The place of birth of the oldest child could indicate where the parents were married. Next step: Use ages and place of birth to search for birth records. A foreign birthplace points to a passenger arrival record in the passenger lists on Ancestry.com.

**D. Education**

Average number of grades completed by the adult population in 1940 was 8.6. "H" indicates years of high school completed; "C" indicates years of college. Next step: Search for a photo in yearbooks on Ancestry.com.

**E. Citizenship of the Foreign Born**

*Na* (naturalized) or *Pa* (filed first papers) indicates an immigrant had either already become a citizen of the U.S. or was in the process of becoming one. Next step: Search for natural-

ization records in the Immigration and Travel collection on Ancestry.com.

**F. Employment**

Types of jobs, weeks worked and wages earned can shed light on the family's situation coming out of the Great Depression. Note that reported income on the census was capped at \$5,000. Next step: See your family member's job history by reviewing earlier census records and city directories on Ancestry.com.

**G. Supplemental Information**

Two individuals on each page were asked additional questions, the answers to which can provide more clues about everything from ethnicity and marriages to military service and employment. Next step: Each answer can point to additional records on Ancestry.com, including draft registration cards, newspapers, birth and marriage records and more.

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## What to Look For

You've found your family in the 1940 census. So what do you do next? Start looking for the same family in the 1930 census — and then the 1920, and so on. Also, pay careful attention to the following details. They'll help you compare census documents to ensure you've found the right family.

**Do family members match up?**

Match up names of family members you already know with names in the new census record. Keep in mind these lists will rarely be exactly the same. In the 10-year span between censuses, babies are born, older children marry and leave home and grandparents move in or pass away. Don't ignore seemingly unrelated people living in the same household; you may discover that they are cousins or in-laws.

**How similar are birth dates and birthplaces?**

Once you've determined that the two families have similar household members, compare birth years and birthplaces. If the birth years differ by a few years, don't worry. The person answering the question may have been guessing or estimating. However, birth years that are a decade apart from one census to the next could indicate you're looking at a different person entirely. The more census records you gather for an individual, the easier it will be to determine actual birth details.

**Does the location make sense?**

In the past, it wasn't as common for families to move across the country or pull up stakes every few years. Many families lived in the same areas for decades. And if they did migrate, they often settled near other family members or people with similar religious and ethnic backgrounds. If a census shows your family in an unexpected location, make sure you take a second look at all the facts.

**Are occupations the same?**

While most people have a family tree full of farmers or laborers, you may be lucky enough to find an ancestor with a unique occupation, which can help you quickly identify that individual in another census.

**LOOKING BACK —  
10 YEARS AT A TIME**

*As you follow your family from census to census, you'll need to take a minute to review one census record and then figure out what the family would have looked like 10 years earlier. For example, say you find a census record that shows a husband (age 26), wife (age 24), and son (age 4) living together in 1920. If you want to find each family member in 1910, you should take certain things into account. Because the child is only four years old, he will not appear in the previous census. And because both the husband and wife would be teenagers in 1910, they will probably be listed as children living in their parents' homes. The wife may be harder to track down if you don't know her maiden name, but if you find the husband, you may find the future wife living nearby.*

**DO IT YOURSELF**

To search for census records, click on the **Search** button on the main toolbar. On the right side of the next page, click on **U.S. Federal Census Collection** under **Census & Voter Lists**.

**Recently viewed collections** See More

U.S. School Yearbooks  
 Library of Congress Photo Collection, 1840-2000  
 African American Photo Collection, 1850-2000

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**Special Collections** Card Catalog

**Historical Records**

**Birth, Marriage & Death**  
 Birth, Baptism & Christening  
 Marriage & Divorce  
 Death, Burial, Cemetery & Obituaries

**Census & Voter Lists**  
 U.S. Federal Census Collection   
 UK Census Collection  
 Canadian Census Collection  
 More...

**Immigration & Travel**  
 Passenger Lists  
 Citizenship & Naturalization Records

## 1900 to 1920

Censuses created in the early 1900s are much more detailed than earlier census records. In addition to names, ages and genders, you'll discover relationships between family members, street names, marital statuses, immigration years, parents' birthplaces and so much more.

**EACH CENSUS ALSO ASKED UNIQUE QUESTIONS:**

- 1920 — The year a respondent was naturalized (became a citizen)
- 1910 — If a man was a veteran of the Civil War
- 1900 — The number of children a woman had given birth to

**TWELFTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES.**

**SCHEDULE No. 1.—POPULATION.**

State Kentucky } Supervisor's District No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 County Washington } Enumeration District No. \_\_\_\_\_

Township or other division of county Mearnsboro Precinct No. 8 Mag. Dist. Name of Institution, \_\_\_\_\_  
(Insert name of township, town, precinct, district, or other civil division, as the case may be. See instructions.)

Name of incorporated city, town, or village, within the above-named division, \_\_\_\_\_

Enumerated by me on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of June, 1900, Safeguth J. Bern, Enumerator.

LOCATION.		NAME		RELATION.		PERSONAL DESCRIPTION.					NATIVITY.			CITIZENSHIP.			OCCUPATION, TRADE, OR PROFESSION				
IN CITY.	Street.	House Number.	Number of dwelling house, in the order of enumeration.	Number of family, in the year of enumeration.	Relationship of each person to the head of the family.	Color or race.	DATE OF BIRTH.		Age at last birthday.	Whether single, married, widowed, or divorced.	Number of years married.	Number of how many children.	Number of those children living.	Place of birth of each person and parents of each person enumerated. If born in the United States, give the State or Territory; if of foreign birth, give the Country only.			Year of immigration to this country.	Naturalized.	Year of naturalization.	Occupation.	Months not employed.
							Month.	Year.						Place of birth of this person.	Place of birth of Father of this person.	Place of birth of Mother of this person.					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20		
														Kentucky	Kentucky	Kentucky				Farmer	
					wife	W	30	Aug	1870	23	6	2	2	Kentucky	Virginia	Virginia					
					daughter	W	5	Aug	1890	5				Kentucky	Kentucky	Kentucky					
					daughter	W	7	Aug	1876	4				Kentucky	Kentucky	Kentucky					
					head	W	40	Aug	1849	36	4	34		Kentucky	Kentucky	Kentucky				Farmer	
					wife	W	36	July	1861	36	6	1	1	Kentucky	Kentucky	Kentucky					
					son	W	16	June	1874	5				Kentucky	Virginia	Kentucky					
					son	W	10	June	1890	20	0	0		Kentucky	Kentucky	Kentucky					
					head	W	40	Oct	1846	34	4	4		Kentucky	Kentucky	Kentucky				Farmer	

- A. Street name and house number
- D. Number of years married
- F. Citizenship
- B. Name and relationship
- E. Birthplace
- G. Occupation
- C. Month and year of birth



## 1890 – Where Is It?

Unless you're incredibly lucky, you won't be able to find family in the 1890 census. All of the census records — except those for 6,160 individuals — were destroyed by a fire and subsequent water damage. So how do you close the 20-year gap between 1900 and 1880? Fill in with other records, like city directories available on Ancestry.com, which may include addresses and other details. Or look for regional censuses, which many states conducted in 1885 and 1895. You can also look for clues in birth, marriage or death records.

## 1880 to 1850

During this time period, censuses were continually revised and refined. The 1850 census is the first to list the name of every individual in a household and include age, gender, race and birthplace. (Remember, relationships between individuals aren't recorded, so you can't assume everyone in a household is related.) In 1870, questions were added to indicate whether an individual's parents were born outside the U.S. and whether an individual had been born or married within the year. And in 1880, the census asked for relationships of household members and for parents' birthplaces.

## 1870

Page No. 7 } Inquiries numbered 7, 16, and 17 are not to be asked in respect to infants. Inquiries numbered 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 19, and 20 are to be answered (if at all) merely by an affirmative mark, as /.

SCHEDULE 1.—Inhabitants in Smyrna Landing Village Dist. No. 11, in the County of Delaware, State of Delaware, enumerated by me on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of June, 1870. 339

Post Office: Smyrna Delaware Frederic P. ... Ass't Marshal

1	2	3	B			7	E		10	F				18	19	20				
			4	5	6		8	9		11	12	13	14				15	16	17	
Dwelling-house, numbered in the order of visitation.		Family, numbered in the order of visitation.		A			C		D		E		F				G			
		The name of every person whose place of abode on the first day of June, 1870, was in this family.		DESCRIPTION.			PROFESSION, OCCUPATION, OR TRADE OF EACH PERSON, MALE OR FEMALE.		VALUE OF REAL ESTATE OWNED.		PLACE OF BIRTH, NAMING STATE OR TERRITORY OF U. S.; OR THE COUNTRY, IF OF FOREIGN BIRTH.		PARENTAGE.		EDUCATION.				CONSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS.	
				Age, Sex, Race, Color, and whether deaf, dumb, blind, insane, idiotic, pauper, or convict.	Male (M.), Female (F.).	Free (F.), Slave (S.).	Profession, Occupation, or Trade of each person, male or female.	Value of Real Estate.	Value of Personal Estate.	Place of Birth, naming State or Territory of U. S.; or the Country, if of foreign birth.	Father of foreign birth.	Mother of foreign birth.	If born within the year, state month (Jan., Feb., &c.).	If married within the year, state month (Jan., Feb., &c.).	Attended school within the year.	Cannot read.	Cannot write.	Whether deaf and dumb, blind, insane, or idiotic.	Male Citizens of U. S. of 21 years of age and up.	Male Citizens of U. S. of 21 years of age and up, who are unable to read or write, or are deaf, dumb, blind, insane, or idiotic.
1	40	42	Bernagiff John	26	M	W	Working in yard	500		Pennsylvania	1	1							/	
2			Anna	6	F	W	Keeping House			Delaware										
3	41	43	Syona William	55	M	W	Retired Farmer	400		Delaware									/	
4			Rebecca	57	F	W	Keeping House			Delaware										
5			Thomas	36	M	W	Short Dealer			Delaware									/	

- A. Name
- B. Age, gender and race
- C. Occupation
- D. Birthplace
- E. Foreign-born parents
- F. Born or married within the year
- G. Sick or disabled

### SEARCHING

Each time you make a census discovery, note what you found in the record. Then use those details to search an earlier census. You can also save census discoveries to your Ancestry.com family tree, which allows you to search for the same person in other documents on Ancestry.com using all of the information you've saved about that person. Click **Search records** from the person page to get started.

## 1790 to 1840

On the surface, these early censuses don't appear to contain much helpful information; you'll see names only for the head of each household (generally men) and tally marks for other individuals. But by carefully comparing the number of individuals in a household with what you already know about a family, you may be able to determine which family is yours. Although family members aren't listed by name, age ranges can help you zero in on possible birth years. And if a head of household disappears between censuses, it may be a clue that he or she died.

### 1840

A NAMES OF HEADS OF FAMILIES	B MALES														C FEMALES									
	Under 5	5-10	10-15	15-20	20-30	30-40	40-50	50-60	60-70	70-80	80-90	90-100	100 and up work	Under 5	5-10	10-15	15-20	20-30	30-40	40-50	50-60	60-70		
Charles Daniel	/	/	2	2										2	/	/			/	/				
Marion Jay		2	/			/															2			

- A. Name of head of household
- B. Males by age range
- C. Females by age range

## Next Steps

The clues you find in census records can lead you to a variety of other discoveries.

- **Find birth records.** Names, ages and birthplaces help you know where to start looking for birth records, which typically include a mother's maiden name, unlocking another branch of the family.
- **Locate marriage records.** You can estimate a couple's marriage date (and location) using the birth dates and birthplaces of their children. Marriage records often list a woman's maiden name and parents' names.
- **Track your immigrant ancestors to their homeland.** Citizenship status and foreign birthplaces can help you find an ancestor in passenger lists and naturalization papers.
- **Uncover military pasts.** Information about military service can pinpoint where to start searching for service and pension records for the veterans in your tree.

### CAN'T FIND THEM? TRY THESE TRICKS

#### Switch up names.

If you can't find an ancestor using his or her expected name, try searching using middle names or nicknames. You can also try searching without a first name and then filtering your results by location, gender and age.

#### Look for a family member.

Can't find a specific individual? Try searching for someone living in the same household, such as a brother, sister or parent. Family members with uncommon names can be particularly useful; it's easier to comb through the search results for an Oswald than a James.

#### Follow a neighbor.

When you find your family on a census record, don't forget to look at who's living next door. You may find siblings, parents or in-laws living in the same neighborhood. If you can't find your family, try searching for their neighbors; your family may still be living nearby but have been indexed incorrectly.

#### Explore new places.

Did your relative disappear from the state where they were living in previous census years? Broaden your search to states where his or her children, spouse or parents were born.

# What You'll Learn in the Census, Year by Year

Questions Asked	1790	1800	1810	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940
<b>Personal Information</b>															
Name of family head only	x	x	x	x	x	x									
Headcount by age, gender, ...	x	x	x	x	x	x									
Names of all individuals							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Age							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Sex							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Color							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Place of birth							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Year of birth											x				
Month of birth											x				
Relationship to family head										x	x	x	x	x	x
Marital status										x	x	x	x	x	x
Married that year							x	x	x	x	x				
No. of years present marriage											x	x			
Age at first marriage														x	
Mother how many children											x	x			
Number of children living											x	x			
Father's birthplace										x	x	x	x	x	
Mother's birthplace										x	x	x	x	x	
Deaf, blind, insane, idiotic, ...							x	x	x	x		x			
Real estate value							x	x	x						
Personal estate value								x	x						
Male citizen over 21 years									x						
Male over 21 denied vote									x						
<b>Residency</b>															
Visitation number of dwelling							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Visitation number of family							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Street name in city										x	x	x	x	x	x
House number in city										x	x	x	x	x	x
House owned or rented											x	x	x	x	x
Value of home if owned														x	x
Monthly rental if renting														x	x
House free or mortgaged											x	x	x		
Farm or house / Lived on farm											x	x		x	x
Residence 5 years earlier															x

What You'll Learn....cont.

Questions Asked	1790	1800	1810	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940
<b>Employment</b>															
Profession or occupation							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Employer, employee, self												x	x		
Weeks / months employed										x	x	x			x
Income															x
Public emergency worker															x
<b>Education</b>															
Attended school that year							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Attended college that year														x	x
Months attended school											x				
Highest grade attained															x
Can read or write							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Can speak English											x	x	x	x	
<b>Military Service</b>															
Civil War veteran												x			
Military veteran / Which war														x	
<b>Nativity and Citizenship</b>															
Naturalization status											x	x	x	x	x
Year of immigration to U.S.											x	x	x	x	
No. of years in U.S.											x				
Year of naturalization													x		
Native language												x	x	x	
Native language of father													x		
Native language of mother													x		
Father of foreign birth									x						
Mother of foreign birth									x						