



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.

And whether you're searching for information about a specific person from 1900 or a family legend from 1723, the best place to uncover your family history is by starting in the present. Here's why:

First, chances are you know the names of certain family members who will appear in the 1940 U.S. Census, the newest census publicly available for family history research. Census records contain the names and other details about everyone in a household. You'll also learn ages, addresses, and occupations, all of which you can use to locate your family in earlier records.

Second, gathering modern details before you research earlier generations allows you to pick up facts about your family along the way. Names, places, stories, and events can help you know if you're following the right people. So when you finally do reach 1723, you'll know when you've found the right John A. Smith.

Getting started – 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.)

1. Select the Search tab from the main menu bar
2. Search for someone who was living in the U.S. in 1930 for 1940
3. Add the names of any family members who were likely living in the same household
4. When you've filled out your form, select Search

The screenshot shows the Ancestry.com search page. At the top, the navigation bar includes 'Home', 'Family Trees', 'Search' (highlighted with a red circle and '1'), 'DNA', 'Collaborate', 'Learning Center', 'Publish', 'Shop', and 'Hire An Expert'. Below the navigation bar is the search form. The form has a 'Search' header and several input fields: 'First & Middle Name(s)' (containing 'Meredith'), 'Last Name' (containing 'Wilson'), 'Name a place your ancestor might have lived' (containing 'Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA'), and 'Estimated birth year' (containing '1932'). There are also links for 'Add life events' and 'Calculate It'. Below these fields is a 'Family Member' section with a dropdown menu set to 'Father', and input fields for 'First Name' (containing 'Chuck') and 'Last Name' (containing 'Wilson'), with a 'Remove' link. At the bottom of the form is a 'Search' button (highlighted with a red circle and '4') and links for 'Show Advanced', 'Clear Form', and 'Help'. On the right side of the page, there are sections for 'Recently viewed' (listing '1940 United State', 'U.S. Civil War Pho', 'Abraham Lincoln f') and 'Special Collection' (listing 'Historical Re', 'Birth, Marriage, Birth, Baptism & Marriage & Divor', 'Death, Burial, C', 'Census & Voter', 'U.S. Federal Cer', 'UK Census Colle', 'Canadian Censu', 'More...').

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.

Bronx Borough

State New York Incorporated place New York City Ward of city 15-A-D Unincorporated place _____
 County Bronx Township or other division of county 640 Block Nos. H Institution _____

NSUS S. D. No. 24 E. D. No. 3813 Sheet No. 12A
 1940 Enumerated by me on April 11, 1940
 Curtis Lawson Enumerator.

Line No.	LOCATION			HOUSEHOLD DATA			NAME	RELATION	PERSONAL DESCRIPTION	EDUCATION	PLACE OF BIRTH	RESIDENCE, A	RESIDENCE, B	OCCUPATION, INDUSTRY, AND CLASS OF WORKER	YEARS OLD AND OVER—EMPLOYMENT STATUS
	Street, avenue, etc.	Number of household in street	Number of persons in household	Married (M) or single (S)	Value of home, ground, or equity	Value of household furniture									
1	1440	R	35				Phillips, Frank	head	H W 31	M	No H	New York	Home house		
2							Minnie	wife	F W 30	M	No H	New York	Home house		
3							Regis	son	F W 5	S	D	New York	Home house		
4							Boscaia, Mary	MOTHER	F W 10	W	No A	Italy	Home house		
5			0 2,000				Di Grimo, Victoria	head	F W 74	W	No A	Italy	Home house		
6			0 2,000				Falumbo, Josephine	wife	F W 76	W	No A	Italy	Home house		
7							Peltri, Joseph	head	F W 35	M	No A	Italy	Home house		

Supplementary Questions

Line No.	NAME	PLACE OF BIRTH OF FATHER AND MOTHER		MOTHER TONGUE (OR NATIVE LANGUAGE)	VETERAN	SOCIAL SECURITY	FOR PERSONS 14 YEARS OLD AND OVER		FOR ALL WORKERS WHO ARE OR HAVE BEEN WAGES		FOR OFFICE USE ONLY—DO NOT WRITE IN THESE COLUMNS																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																															
		FATHER	MOTHER				USUAL OCCUPATION, INDUSTRY, AND CLASS OF WORKER	USUAL INDUSTRY	WEEKLY WAGES	WEEKS WORKED	W	X	Y	Z	AA	AB	AC	AD	AE	AF	AG	AH	AI	AJ	AK	AL	AM	AN	AO	AP	AQ	AR	AS	AT	AU	AV	AW	AX	AY	AZ	BA	BB	BC	BD	BE	BF	BG	BH	BI	BJ	BK	BL	BM	BN	BO	BP	BQ	BR	BS	BT	BV	BW	BX	BY	BZ	CA	CB	CC	CD	CE	CF	CG	CH	CI	CJ	CK	CL	CM	CN	CO	CP	CQ	CR	CS	CT	CU	CV	CW	CX	CY	CZ	DA	DB	DC	DD	DE	DF	DG	DH	DI	DJ	DK	DL	DM	DN	DO	DP	DQ	DR	DS	DT	DU	DV	DW	DX	DY	DZ	EA	EB	EC	ED	EE	EF	EG	EH	EI	EJ	EK	EL	EM	EN	EO	EP	EQ	ER	ES	ET	EU	EV	EW	EX	EY	EZ	FA	FB	FC	FD	FE	FF	FG	FH	FI	FJ	FK	FL	FM	FN	FO	FP	FQ	FR	FS	FT	FU	FV	FW	FX	FY	FZ	GA	GB	GC	GD	GE	GF	GG	GH	GI	GJ	GK	GL	GM	GN	GO	GP	GQ	GR	GS	GT	GU	GV	GW	GX	GY	GZ	HA	HB	HC	HD	HE	HF	HG	HH	HI	HJ	HK	HL	HM	HN	HO	HP	HQ	HR	HS	HT	HU	HV	HW	HX	HY	HZ	IA	IB	IC	ID	IE	IF	IG	IH	II	IJ	IK	IL	IM	IN	IO	IP	IQ	IR	IS	IT	IU	IV	IW	IX	IY	IZ	JA	JB	JC	JD	JE	JF	JG	JH	JI	JJ	JK	JL	JM	JN	JO	JP	JQ	JR	JS	JT	JU	JV	JW	JX	JY	JZ	KA	KB	KC	KD	KE	KF	KG	KH	KI	KJ	KL	KM	KN	KO	KP	KQ	KR	KS	KT	KU	KV	KW	KX	KY	KZ	LA	LB	LC	LD	LE	LF	LG	LH	LI	LJ	LK	LL	LM	LN	LO	LP	LQ	LR	LS	LT	LU	LV	LW	LX	LY	LZ	MA	MB	MC	MD	ME	MF	MG	MH	MI	MJ	MK	ML	MM	MN	MO	MP	MQ	MR	MS	MT	MU	MV	MW	MX	MY	MZ	NA	NB	NC	ND	NE	NF	NG	NH	NI	NJ	NK	NL	NM	NN	NO	NP	NQ	NR	NS	NT	NU	NV	NW	NX	NY	NZ	OA	OB	OC	OD	OE	OF	OG	OH	OI	OJ	OK	OL	OM	ON	OO	OP	OQ	OR	OS	OT	OU	OV	OW	OX	OY	OZ	PA	PB	PC	PD	PE	PF	PG	PH	PI	PJ	PK	PL	PM	PN	PO	PP	PQ	PR	PS	PT	PU	PV	PW	PX	PY	PZ	QA	QB	QC	QD	QE	QF	QG	QH	QI	QJ	QK	QL	QM	QN	QO	QP	QQ	QR	QS	QT	QU	QV	QW	QX	QY	QZ	RA	RB	RC	RD	RE	RF	RG	RH	RI	RJ	RK	RL	RM	RN	RO	RP	RQ	RR	RS	RT	RU	RV	RW	RX	RY	RZ	SA	SB	SC	SD	SE	SF	SG	SH	SI	SJ	SK	SL	SM	SN	SO	SP	SQ	SR	SS	ST	SU	SV	SW	SX	SY	SZ	TA	TB	TC	TD	TE	TF	TG	TH	TI	TJ	TK	TL	TM	TN	TO	TP	TQ	TR	TS	TU	TV	TW	TX	TY	TZ	UA	UB	UC	UD	UE	UF	UG	UH	UI	UJ	UK	UL	UM	UN	UO	UP	UQ	UR	US	UT	UU	UV	UW	UX	UY	UZ	VA	VB	VC	VD	VE	VF	VG	VH	VI	VJ	VK	VL	VM	VN	VO	VP	VQ	VR	VS	VT	VU	VV	VW	VX	VY	VZ	WA	WB	WC	WD	WE	WF	WG	WH	WI	WJ	WK	WL	WM	WN	WO	WP	WQ	WR	WS	WT	WU	WV	WW	WX	WY	WZ	XA	XB	XC	XD	XE	XF	XG	XH	XI	XJ	XK	XL	XM	XN	XO	XP	XQ	XR	XS	XT	XU	XV	XW	XX	XY	XZ	YA	YB	YC	YD	YE	YF	YG	YH	YI	YJ	YK	YL	YM	YN	YO	YP	YQ	YR	YS	YT	YU	YV	YW	YX	YY	YZ	ZA	ZB	ZC	ZD	ZE	ZF	ZG	ZH	ZI	ZJ	ZK	ZL	ZM	ZN	ZO	ZP	ZQ	ZR	ZS	ZT	ZU
14	DeLardi, Frank	Italy	Italy	Italian	No	Yes	Plumber	Building Construction	RU	11.00	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																											

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 naturalization 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.

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.

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

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**.

[See More](#)

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Early 20th-century censuses, like this one from 1900, include unique details. Read the names of the columns so you know what each number or abbreviation means.

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, for instructions.)

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

Enumerated by me on the _____ day of June, 1900, Safeguth J. Berr Enumerator.

LOCATION.		NAME	RELATION.	PERSONAL DESCRIPTION.				NATIVITY.			CITIZENSHIP.			OCCUPATION, TRADE, OR PROFESSION.	
IN CITIES.	IN RURAL DISTRICTS.			Color or race.	DATE OF BIRTH.	Whether single, married, widowed, or divorced.	Number of years married.	Number of how many children.	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.	Place of birth of FATHER of this person.	Place of birth of MOTHER of this person.	Year of immigration to this country.	Whether naturalized.	Whether alien.	Whether naturalized.
Street.	House Number.	Enter surname first, then the given name and middle initial, if any. Insert every person's living on June 1, 1900. Omit children born since June 1, 1900.	Relationship of each person to the head of the family.	Sex.	Month.	Year.	Age at last birthday.	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1	1	Fudge A. Monahan	head	M.	Mo.	Nov.	1860	40	4	5	Kentucky	Kentucky	Kentucky		Farmer
		Teary M.	wife	W.	Pr.	Aug.	1876	23	16	6	2	2	Kentucky	Virginia	Virginia
		Stella	daughter	W.	F.	Aug.	1896	5	1	1				Kentucky	Kentucky
		E. L. A.	daughter	W.	F.	Aug.	1896	4	1	1				Kentucky	Kentucky
	2	Davis Alfred G.	head	M.	Mo.	Aug.	1849	50	4	34				Kentucky	Kentucky
		Mary L.	wife	W.	Mo.	July	1861	38	16	6	1	1		Kentucky	Kentucky
		Reggie B.	son	M.	Mo.	June	1894	5	1	1				Kentucky	Virginia
		Paul L.	son	M.	Mo.	June	1890	20	1	1				Kentucky	Kentucky
	3	Davis Sumner G.	head	M.	Mo.	Oct.	1846	54	4	34				Kentucky	Kentucky

- A. Street name and house number
- B. Name and relationship
- C. Month and year of birth

- D. Number of years married
- E. Birthplace

- F. Citizenship
- G. Occupation

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.

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.

elp **Save** Save this record about Mary H Croas to your family tree, your shoebox, or computer.

Report Problem

Image: 26 of 30 Go

Roxie MAPLE
 Birth 1867 in Ohio
 Death 26 Aug 1955 in Ca
 Edit this person

Search records View her family tree

The 1870 census was a little less detailed than later censuses but still reveals key details including birthplace and occupation. Plus it's the first census that lists African Americans emancipated during the Civil War.

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 I.—Inhabitants in Smyrna Landing Village Dist. No. 11, in the County of Sweet, State of Delaware, enumerated by me on the 14th day of June, 1870. 339

Post Office: Smyrna Delaware Frederic Sammarly, Ass't Marshal.

1	2	3	B			7	D		E		F			18	19	20			
			4	5	6		8	9	11	12	13	14	15				16	17	
Dwelling-houses, numbered in the order of valuation.		Facilities, enumerated in the order of valuation.		A			C			D		E		F					
				The name of every person whose place of abode on the first day of June, 1870, was in this family.			Profession, Occupation, or Trade of each person, male or female.			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, insane, or idiotic. Male Children of U. S. of 15 years of age and upwards. Male Children of U. S. of 15 years of age and upwards. Years of age and upwards. Deaf or idiotic or afflicted with some other physical or mental defect or disability.		
1	40	42	Borngriff	John	26	M	W	Work in the yard	500	Pennsylvania	1	1				1			
2			—	Anna	6	F	W	Keeping House		Delaware						2			
3	41	43	Syon	William	55	M	W	Retired Farmer	400	Delaware						3			
4			—	Rebecca	57	F	W	Keeping House		Delaware						4			
5			—	Thomas	36	M	W	Short-trailer		Delaware						5			

- 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

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.

4.) SCHEDULE of the whole number of persons within the division

A	B														C													
	FREE WHITE PERSONS, INCLUDING HEADS OF FAMILIES.																											
	MALES														FEMALES													
NAMES OF HEADS OF FAMILIES	Under 5		5 to 10		10 to 15		15 to 20		20 to 25		25 to 30		30 to 35		35 to 40		40 to 45		45 to 50		50 to 55		55 to 60		60 to 65		65 to 70	
	Charles Daniel	1	1	2	2																							
Sharon Boy																												

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

Early census records list only heads of households but you may be able to trace other family members by comparing the tick marks from census to census.

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
Personal Information															
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						
Residency															
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
Employment															
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
Education															
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	
Military Service															
Civil War veteran												x			
Military veteran / Which war														x	
Nativity and Citizenship															
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						