

# FIND YOUR STORY IN THE US CENSUS

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A census is a count and description of the population of a country, state, county, or city. Census lists are also called “schedules.” In the United States a nationwide census has been taken every ten years since 1790.

The census is one of the easiest ways to locate where an ancestor lived and when they lived there. Since records are found **first by place then by date**, additional records can be found with less time and effort.

Census records give valuable information about your ancestors including: names of family members, residence, birthplace by state, and occupation. Some censuses also include parent’s birthplace by State. A Census can help you follow a family through time and determine family relationships. You can use the census to find additional records such as birth, marriage, death, immigration, naturalization and land records.

Finding ancestors in all the available censuses during their lifetimes can be an important step to building a more complete picture of the lives they lived. Each census asks for different information. You could overlook an important fact if you only use one or two of the census they can be found in.

## United States Census Searching

If at first you don't find who you want in a census, **do not give up!** Your ancestor is almost surely listed, however hard they may be to find.

**Start the search again** after making changes like the following:

- Change the website. There is often more than one index for a census.
- Change the spelling, before 1900 spelling was not considered as critical as today. On many documents the name was written by a clerk or census taker. They wrote the name as it sounded to them. The name could be spelled several different ways in the same document.

! Search for names of the people in the same household, search for neighbors.

For better results use a name that is the least common. !

- Search using fewer fields. Put as little information as possible in the search. Repeat the search several times and slowly add or delete one or more pieces of information in each new search as needed to narrow the search.
- Search by surname only, especially if you can narrow the search to a state or county.
- Search by given name only, especially if you can narrow the search to a state or county.

- Search using "wild cards". Three letters and an \*. Replace one or more letters with ?.
- Search by parent name.
  - If you know a rural county, search the census going line-by-line without using the index.
  - If you know the city street where they lived (from other census or city directories), search the census for that street, then search line-by-line on that street.
- Change the place.
  - Search for the ancestor in a different state or county they may have lived in.
- Search surrounding rural towns or counties going line-by-line, page by page. Rural locations have a much smaller number of pages to search through. You may also find other family members.
  - Change who you search for. Search for elderly people in the household or near to each of their children or grandchildren.
  - Search for other relatives, neighbors, who may be living near the person you seek.
  - If you still cannot find someone on a census, first find that person on a previous (or subsequent) census. Second, note several people who are living with or near your ancestor on the census you have found. Then return to the original census and find those
- Search for your ancestor, his brothers and sisters, and parents in each available census during each of their lifetimes. Be sure to list the census information for each census on your research log.
- An Excell spreadsheet works well for recording and analyzing data. Use first column for questions from the census. Use additional columns for each census year and add additional information to your worksheet as you find them.
- Family Tree magazine has a form to list people you are looking for and what census you have found them in. [familytreemagazine.com/info/censusforms](http://familytreemagazine.com/info/censusforms) Choose Census checklist PDF
- Note questions that arise on your research log. You can look for the answers later after you have found all the census years you need for an ancestor.

**NON-POPULATION CENSUS 1850-1880** – schedules for a number of counties did not survive. AGRICULTURE- MORTALITY-MANUFACTURING AND INDUSTRY- SLAVE, INDIAN, 1890 FRAGMENTS OF VETERANS AND WIDOWS SCHEDULE. Most of these schedules can be found on [familysearch.org](http://familysearch.org), [ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com), and some are on [fold3.com](http://fold3.com)

### **Other Countries with Census**

Great Britain-1841, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901, 1911

Ireland-fragments of 1749, 1901, 1911

Scotland-1841, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901

Wales-1841, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891

Canada-1866, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901, 1906, 1911 , 1916 not in all regions