

Why Can't I Find My People in the Census?

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PURPOSE OF THE CENSUS

- Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons. The actual Enumeration shall be made within three Years after the first Meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent Term of ten Years, in such Manner as they shall by Law direct. The Number of Representatives shall not exceed one for every thirty Thousand, but each State shall have at Least one Representative;.

ADDED PURPOSES

- Although designed to determine the number of representatives per state, additional purposes were added as questions arose.
 - Number of foreigners living in US
 - Occupation area of and later specific occupations
 - Number of deaf dumb and blind
 - Number over a certain age that could not read or write
 - Amount of real and personal property owned
 - If foreign born year of immigration and naturalization
 - Years married or age at marriage
 - Did they own their home, if yes was it with a mortgage
 - Did they own a radio
 - Place of birth of person and later place of birth of parents.
 - Number of years of education

HOW THE CENSUS WAS TAKEN?

- According to one social historian studying the undercount problem nineteenth-century censuses were “designed by politicians, enumerated by their hack appointees, and hand-tallied by bored clerks”
- 1790 -1870 taken by Federal Marshalls using judicial districts
- 1880 -1900 Enumerators & Supervisors using specifically drawn census districts
- 1902 Permanent Census Bureau created

SIZE OF US AND POPULATION COUNTED BY EACH MARSHALL

- Territory of United States
 - 1790 864,000 square miles
 - 1810 1,682,000
 - 1850 3,000,000
 - 1870 3,500,000
- How many did each Marshal count
 - 1790 6,000
 - 1830 8,500
 - 1870 5,900
 - 1880 1,600

HOW WERE THEY PAID?

- Enumerators paid per person counted as well as miles traveled.
 - 1850 .02 per person (living or dead), .10 per mile, and .10 per farm
 - 1880 varied depending on difficulty with maximum of \$4 a day east of 100th meridian and \$6 west of the 100th meridian (eastern border of the Texas panhandle with Oklahoma, through Dodge City, Kansas, and Cozad, Nebraska).
 - 2000 ranged from \$8.15 to \$18.50 per hour depending on difficulty.

DID THEY GET EVERYONE?

- No US census has achieved a complete count due to a variety of reasons:
 - objections on religious reasons
 - fear census would lead to taxes
 - enumerator error
 - high rates of internal migration
 - language problems
 - complex living arrangements
- When was this undercount know?

1790 CENSUS

- Official date is 2 Aug 1790
- 650 politically appointed Marshalls
- Took 18 months to complete
- George Washington
 - “real number [of inhabitants] will greatly exceed the official return”
- Thomas Jefferson
 - “making very small allowances for omissions which we know to have been very great, we are certainly above 4 millions, probably about 4,100,000”

WHO DOES THE UNDERCOUNT EFFECT?

- After using to set House of Representatives only official use was statistical analysis
- Who else used it
 - Genealogists
 - Historians
 - Sociologists
 - Economists

METHODS USED TO DETERMINE AMOUNT OF UNDERCOUNT

- Demographic analysis; FOCUS on is national estimates of undercounts
- Record linkage - comparing census to tax lists, voter lists, city directories, state census and genealogies; FOCUS is on local estimates of undercounts

HOW MUCH MISSCOUNT?

- 1870 Administrator of Census stated: "There are statistics in the census of 1870, I am sorry to say, where some of the results are false to the extent of one-half. They had to be published then, because the law called for it; but I took the liberty of branding them as untrustworthy.
- The problems of the 1870 census led to recounts in New York City and Philadelphia. The Philadelphia recount resulted in a 2.5% increase and the New York recount a 2% increase.

WHEN WAS UNDERCOUNT STUDIED?

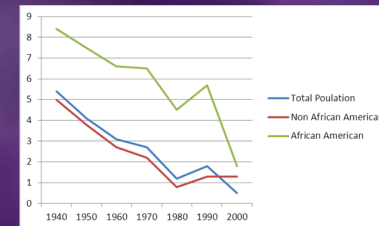
- 1963 Coale & Zelnik estimated 4-5% white male undercount in 1880
- 1969 Historian Peter Knights urged study of Undercounts
- 1971 Boston study estimated undercount of 8-10%
- 1988 Richard Steckel estimated pre Civil War undercounts of 10-15 % of all households
- 2013 Hacker reported undercounts 1850-1930

UNDERCOUNTS 1850 - 1920

	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920
1888	6.3	7.4	6.7	6.4	6.7			
1991	11.7	12.8	11.8	11.0				
2013	15.3	11.3	10.6	8.3	4.0	6.6	8.5	9.6

Undercounts 1930-2000

	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Total	5.3	5.4	4.1	3.1	2.7	1.2	1.8	0.5
Non AA	5	3.8	2.7	2.2	0.8	1.3	1.3	
AA	8.4	7.5	6.6	6.5	4.5	5.7	1.8	



ADDITIONAL REASONS PERSON CAN NOT BE FOUND

- Problems with names
- Problems with age
- Problems with birthplace
- Changes in political boundary
- Problems in ethnic/racial origins
- Problems with relationship

PROBLEMS WITH NAMES

Names changed for a various of reasons

- No standardization of spelling until 20th century.
- Name was spelled by the person writing the record.
- Spelling changed to Americanize a name.
- To fit better with naming fashions of the day
- Name was changed to avoid confusion with someone living in the area with the same name.
- “De facto” adoption .
- Census taker error.
- To hide previous life or disassociate themselves from family

PROBLEM WITH AGE

- Age was not an important consideration for most of US history. Your age was what you said it was.
- Birthdays were not celebrated as milestones and in many cases were not recorded in any document.
- Age reported
 - Depended on why the data was being collected
 - Other events in the person's life.

PROBLEMS WITH BIRTH PLACE

- Place of birth was more likely to be consistent than age BUT there were inconsistencies.
 - Person giving the information did not know true birth place
 - Change reflects political change in location of birth town.
 - Birth place was changed due to ethnic discrimination. If Irish, person may have reported birth place as Scotland or England instead.
 - If born in one place but raised in another, often reported place raised as birth place especially when grown.
 - If raised in the U.S. may report U.S. birth to be able to buy land.

CHANGES IN POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

- Poland
 - 1910 only 258 Henrys born in Poland
 - 1920 there were 3,845
 - Poland ceased to be a political state in 1795 until after end of World War I in 1918.
- Alsace – Lorraine
 - 1639 - 1697 annexed by Louis XII & XIV from HRE
 - 1871 annexed by Germany after Franco Prussian War
 - 1918 returned to France

PROBLEMS WITH RACE/ETHNIC ORIGINS

- Discrimination was evident throughout U.S. history.
- When Irish need not apply, many reported English or Scottish ancestry.
- When Jewish origins were discriminated, families became German Protestants.
- Light skinned African American – White mixed race people moved and claimed White ancestry.
- During WWI and WWII many of German or Italian ancestry changed surname to English equivalent.

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PROBLEMS WITH RELATIONSHIP

- Relations were not even listed until 1880.
- Even then, the relationship was what reported to the census taker.
- Census taker may have assumed relationship.
- Before early 20th century, many “adoptions” were not through court system.

CAN YOU CORRECT THE RECORD

Although there are frequently inaccuracies in census records, the records can not be corrected because they are historic documents. Our advice to genealogists who find inaccuracies is to make a note in their family history that the census record may contain errors. Future generations may benefit from this note. They may also find an interesting story for why the census record is wrong. Sometimes, families deliberately provided inaccurate information to “Americanize” their names, deny the existence of a child born out of wedlock, or not identify their true racial background. These inaccurate responses reflect the era’s feelings about race, ethnicity, and a host of other social conditions that can enlighten future generations.

http://www.census.gov/history/www/faqs/genealogy_faqs/can_inaccurate_information_be_corrected_on_census_records.html

HOW TO USE CENSUS DATA

- Get ALL Census for individual from birth to death (if available)
- Compute age from reported average but most likely the earliest census will be most accurate
- Use place of birth from earliest reported Census entry unless reason to believe otherwise.
- Calculate marriage date for birth child (or number of years married reported in 1900 and 1910; or age at marriage reported in 1930).

FAMILY GROUP INFO IN CENSUS

- 1880 to present we can see families groups with relationship stated but may be incorrect.
- 1850-1870 we can see possible families groups and propose relationships – but we should be very careful.
- 1790 -1840 we can only follow head of household. We can use the information to support we have the correct person but we can make NO positive statements about family compositions.

CAUTIONS

- Only use the census data to prove what is actually stated.
- Do NOT trust a genealogy which states “we can see from the 1840 (or before) census that John (the head of household) was married and had 3 children under 10”.
- Do NOT trust a genealogy which state “ 1850 census proved that John was married to Mary before 1842 and had 3 children the oldest being 7.”

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