



Census Records, City Directories, Maps

This is a very high-level explanation of the complex topic, census records. An excellent source of detailed information can be found in *The Source, A Guidebook of American Genealogy*, Loretto Dennis Szucs, © 1997

Digitized census records have become readily available during the last ten years. Online sites such as Familysearch.org, Ancestry.com and others provide easy access.

Family researchers know the value of tracking their ancestors and their residences through the Federal and State census records. Census records are the “backbone” of family research by creating a framework of the family individuals and how their lives changed. Beyond the names and ages, census records are a gold mine of family information as well as historical information associated with the municipality.

In addition to the basic questions, each census included questions relevant to the time period. One asks whether the household had a radio, another asks how many children a woman has born and how many are still living.

What Census Records Tell Us

- ◆ Address of residence
- ◆ Number of families living at the address
- ◆ Whether they had a radio
- ◆ Occupations
- ◆ Immigration year into the U.S.
- ◆ Citizenship status
- ◆ Ethnic background
- ◆ Homeland of parents
- ◆ Whether they owned or rented their residence
- ◆ Ability to read and write
- ◆ Attendance at school
- ◆ Whether they owned the business where they worked or were an employee
- ◆ How many hours they worked in the past week
- ◆ Value of their home
- ◆ Value of their possessions
- ◆ Military service
- ◆ Disabilities such as blindness, mental, and physical incapacity
- ◆ Neighbors

Tip: We know families often lived next door or nearby each other, particularly in rural areas. But the old saying he married the girl next door can be seen when you find the families of future husbands and wives living nearby also. Always check the neighbors, they may turn out to be relatives.

Census Records—2

NYS Census Years

New York State conducted a census enumeration between each Federal census for the years 1790 (limited), 1825 (limited), 1835, 1845, 1855, 1865, 1875, 1892, 1905, 1915, and 1925. Most asked only the basic questions with the exception of 1865 which included an agricultural listing.

Special Schedules

Agricultural, Industry, and Social information was collected in some census years. You may have learned that a relative gave his occupation as a farmer, but the Agricultural schedule will provide all the details about the farm; crops, animals, and dairy production.

Note: Not every state collected information for these special schedules.

Agricultural Schedules

These schedules include information such as:

- ◆ Acres lying in fallow and acres being worked
- ◆ Bushels of corn, peas, apples, etc. picked
- ◆ Pounds of butter produced
- ◆ Number of animals of each kind on the farm
- ◆ Number of yards and types of fabric produced

Although agricultural schedules were taken from 1840-1910, all but 1% of the 1890 schedules burned and those from 1900 and 1910 were destroyed by Congressional order. NYS took an agricultural census in 1865.

Manufacturers Schedules

Many of the 1810 schedules were incomplete and most have been lost. The 1820 schedules tabulated the owner's name, location of business, number of employees, kind and quantity of machinery, capital invested, articles manufactured, annual production, and general remarks on the state of the business. No manufacturers schedules were compiled in 1830 or 1840. The schedules in 1850 to 1870 were called the Industry Schedule and were done to enumerate statistics on manufacturing, mining, fisheries, mercantile, commercial, and trading businesses with an annual gross product of \$500 or more.

They recorded the name of the owner or company, kind of business, capital invested, quantity and value of materials, labor, machinery, and products.

The 1880 Manufacturer's Schedule only recorded information for large industries in cities with a population of more than 8,000.

Social Statistics Schedules

Compiled from 1850 to 1880, social statistics schedules included cemeteries with details, trade societies, lodges, clubs with officers and other data, and churches.

Slave Schedules

These schedules listed the names of owners, a slave's number, age, sex, and color. In most cases the individual slaves were not named.

Union Veterans Schedules

Veteran's name, name of widow if applicable, rank, company, regiment or vessel, dates of enlistment and discharge and length of service, post office address, nature of any disability, and remarks. The records of Confederate veterans burned in a 1921 fire.

Mortality Schedules

Information for those who died within the preceding 12 months before the enumeration. Deceased's name, sex, age, color, marital status, place of birth, month of death, occupation, cause of death, and in one instance, where the disease was contracted. This schedule helps family researchers learn of familial diseases.

Note: A special enumeration of Native Americans living on reservations was taken by Indian agents. From 1910-1939 an Indian school census was taken. Beginning in 1830 in northern cities an enumeration of African Americans was taken.

Tip: When town minutes and other primary source documents are not available, these schedules can provide a snapshot of the municipality. Combine them with historical maps containing property owner's names, early city directories, and business directories, to reveal the lives of former residents.

Miscellaneous Facts to Keep in Mind:

- ◆ Census takers were not chosen for ability to spell or write
- ◆ Each census was to be completed with a specified time; 1810 was due in 9 months which was extended to 10 months, 1860 was to be completed in 5 months.
- ◆ The 1800-1820 census each began on August 1, 1830-1900 began on June 1, 1910 began on April 15, 1920 began on January 1, and 1930-1940 on April 1.
- ◆ The ink used in 1910 has faded on many returns
- ◆ Instructions given the enumerators varied
- ◆ Pages were to be dated on the day they were begun, but might not have been completed for several days.
- ◆ If a family was not home, the enumerator was to return but often did not.
- ◆ It wasn't always the head of the family who provided the information.
- ◆ People lied for any number of reasons.



City Directories

City Directories, published annually, existed from the mid-1800's for larger towns and cities. Partial business directories were sometimes published for smaller towns and villages or prominent businesses were included with a larger municipality. In some rural directories were issued for less populated areas. City directories were replaced by the phone book.

A city directory provides:

- ◆ Names (including wife),
- ◆ Street address
- ◆ Name of employer
- ◆ Marital status (wife or widow/er
- ◆ Whether someone listed was the owner of the property.

Here are three examples of city directory entries:

- ◆ John Jones (Mary), plumber, J&K Plumbing, h 387 Main
- ◆ Donna Baker, wid Henry, 42 Brown Street,
- ◆ J. Crane, grocer, 10 Main, h. same



Beginning in the late 19th century, city directories began containing a street cross reference which listed all the addresses on a street along with the employed residents at that address.

Miscellaneous Facts to Keep in Mind:

- ◆ A directory was prepared at the end of the year for the following year so the 1903 directory was prepared in 1902.
- ◆ Some information was simply carried forward from the previous year without being substantiated.
- ◆ As populated areas expanded in some municipalities, properties were renumbered. Knowing the year allows you to find the new property address by comparing the city directory before/after renumbering took place.
- ◆ In some cities, competing publishing companies printed city directories...and they did not always the same information.
- ◆ Trying to figure out which church an ancestor attended? Check the city directory to find the closest church, of their denomination, to their residence.
- ◆ City directories also included maps.

Maps

Technology has replaced printed maps with online versions but we still rely on the printed historical maps for locating people and places in the past.

Where to Look for Maps

This is a partial list of places to look for maps:

- ◆ In City Directories, later Phone Books
- ◆ In Gazetteers and Atlases
- ◆ Municipal Archives
- ◆ Published Histories
- ◆ Censuses
- ◆ Land Records—such as Deeds and Grants
- ◆ Assessor's Offices
- ◆ Engineering Offices
- ◆ Insurance Offices—Sanborn Maps
- ◆ Department of Transportation (DOT)
- ◆ Military Groups
- ◆ Railroad Archives
- ◆ Municipal Highway Departments
- ◆ Cemeteries
- ◆ Geologic Offices—Topographic
- ◆ Universities
- ◆ Various surveys
- ◆ New York State and National Archives

Early Land Maps

The earliest land maps simply outlined tracts of land, rivers, and streams. By the mid 19th century, municipal maps showed property lines, location of residences, mills, schools, cemeteries, canals, railroads, and churches. Detailed city maps included businesses, parks and much more. Early twentieth century maps added street names.

These maps are excellent aids when researching your municipality or conducting genealogical research.

