

# What the Census Tells

Old censuses are valuable resources for those doing genealogical research. But there are gaps in census data resulting from changes in the questions asked from one census to another. For example, foreigners were noted in 1820 and 1830 but not 1840. Below is a list of questions asked in each decennial census since 1790†.

## 1790

Name of family head; free white males of 16 years and up; free white males, under 16; free white females; slaves; other persons.

## 1800 and 1810

Names of family head; if white, age and sex; race; slaves.

## 1820

Name of family head; age; sex; race; foreigners not naturalized; slaves; industry (agriculture, commerce, and manufactures).

## 1830

Name of family head; age; sex; race; slaves; deaf and dumb; blind; foreigners not naturalized.

## 1840

Name of family head; age; sex; race; slaves; number of deaf and dumb; number of blind; number of insane and idiotic and whether in public or private charge; number of persons in each family employed in each of six classes of industry and one of occupation; literacy; pensioners for Revolutionary or military service.

## 1850

Name; age; sex; race; whether deaf and dumb, blind, insane, or idiotic; value of real estate; occupation; birthplace; whether married within the year; school attendance; literacy; whether a pauper or convict. Supplemental schedules for slaves, and persons who died during the year.

## 1860

Name; age; sex; race; value of real estate; value of personal estate; occupation; birthplace; whether married within the year; school attendance; literacy; whether deaf and dumb; blind, insane, or idiotic; pauper, or convict; number of slave houses. Supplemental schedules for slaves, and persons who died during the year.

## 1870

Name; age; race; occupation; value of real estate; value of personal estate; birthplace; whether parents were foreign born; month of birth if born within the year; month of marriage if married within the year; school attendance; literacy; whether deaf and dumb, blind, insane, or idiotic; male citizens 21 and over, and number of such persons denied the right to vote for other than rebellion. Supplemental schedules for

persons who died during the year.

## 1880

Address; name; relationship to family head; sex; race; age; marital status; month of birth if born within the census year; occupation; months unemployed during the year; sickness or temporary disability; whether blind, deaf and dumb, idiotic, insane, maimed, crippled, bedridden, or otherwise disabled; school attendance; literacy; birthplace of person and parents. Supplemental schedules for persons who died during the year.

## 1890

General schedules — destroyed. Supplemental schedules for Union veterans of the Civil War and their widows.

## 1900

Address; name; relationship to family head; sex; race; age; marital status; number of years married; for women, number of children born and number now living; birthplace of person and parents; if foreign born, year of immigration and whether naturalized; occupation; months not employed; school attendance; literacy; ability to speak English; whether on a farm; home owned or rented and if owned, whether mortgaged.

## 1910

Address; name; relationship to family head; sex; race; age; marital status; number of years of present marriage; for women, number of children born and number now living; birthplace and mother tongue of person and parents; if foreign born, year of immigration, whether naturalized, and whether able to speak English, or if not, language spoken; occupation, industry, and class of worker; if an employee, whether out of work during year; literacy; school attendance; home owned or rented; if owned, whether mortgaged; whether farm or house; whether a survivor of Union or Confederate Army or Navy; whether blind, deaf and dumb.

## 1920

Address; name; relationship to family head; sex; race; age; marital status; if foreign born, year of immigration to the U.S., whether naturalized, and year of naturalization; school attendance; literacy; birthplace of person and parents; mother tongue of foreign born; ability to speak English; occupation, industry, and class of worker; home owned or rented; if owned,

whether free or mortgaged.

## 1930

Address; name; relationship to family head; home owned or rented; value or monthly rental; radio set; whether on a farm; sex; race; age; marital status; age at first marriage; school attendance; literacy; birthplace of person and parents; if foreign born, language spoken in home before coming to U.S., year of immigration, whether naturalized, and ability to speak English; occupation, industry, and class of worker; whether at work previous day (or last regular working day); veteran status; for Indians, whether of full or mixed blood, and tribal affiliation.

## 1940

Address; home owned or rented; value or monthly rental; whether on a farm; name; relationship to household head; sex; race; age; marital status; school attendance; educational attainment; birthplace; citizenship of foreign born; location of residence 5 years ago and whether on a farm; employment status; if at work, whether in private or nonemergency government work, or in public emergency work (WPA, CCC, NYA, etc.); if in private or nonemergency government work, hours worked in week; if seeking work or on public emergency work, duration of unemployment; occupation, industry, and class of worker; weeks worked last year; income last year.

## 1950

Address; whether house is on farm; name; relationship to household head; race; sex; age; marital status; birthplace; if foreign born, whether naturalized; employment status; hours worked in week; occupation, industry, and class of worker.

## 1960 and 1970

Address; name; relationship to household head; sex; race; age; marital status.

## 1980

Address; name; household relationship; sex; race; age; marital status; Spanish/Hispanic origin or descent.

## 1990

Address; name; household relationship; sex; age; marital status; race; Hispanic origin or descent; type of building occupied; owner or renter; size and value of property; rent cost.

† Includes only questions for which data are still in existence; excludes questions asked on a sample basis. Sources: National Archives, Bureau of the Census.