

US FEDERAL CENSUS RESEARCH – 1850-1940

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CENSUS FAMILY RESEARCH FORM

It is very important to locate your family on every possible census. As you begin your research, one of the first public documents you will use for people born before 1940 is the United States Federal Census. The federal census has been taken every 10 years since 1790. Because of federal laws a census can not be open to public record for 72 years. The last census records made public were the 1940 census in 2012. A copy of the Federal Census Records are available for public research free of charge from any National Archives Records Office. They are also available online at several sites and at some libraries. In general, most large Mormon Family History Centers have a full copy of these records free of charge and all others can have the film sent to their library for your review for a small fee. Most online sites, such as <http://www.ancestry.com> charge to access these records, so check around for free sites that may be available.

It is very important to use these records throughout your search on any individual or family group. From 1850 to 1940 these records identify family units by name where the family is living in one residence. From 1790 to 1840 only the head of the family is recorded, with the other individuals living at the residence listed by age group. These records don't necessarily prove that someone was the son/daughter/spouse/other relation of the head of the family, but it can help identify the number of children and if the grandparents or older persons are in the home. If your relatives claim that an ancestor was from a foreign country and the census records list a state in the US, check it out carefully starting with the state listed. Don't forget to check the state censuses, where available.

The Census Family Research form in particular will help you identify which records you have researched and what you found. It will help you organize the data you have gathered and help prove or disprove the information you are seeking. Keep one of these forms for each family unit.

When researching in the census records, you may wish to record the people living near your research family, especially if the persons have the same last name or a last name you recognize. Many times family members lived close to each other. This is very true if a large acreage was divided between family members.

SURNAME: _____		CENSUS FAMILY RESEARCH FORM														
Full Name	Birth Date	1790	1800	1810	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940

CENSUS INDEXES

It wasn't long ago that not all censuses were not indexed. Today they are indexed on several websites. However, since each website used different individuals to index the censuses you may get different results when you search their individual sites. Therefore, it may be to your advantage to try every website you can to locate your family.

Before the Internet, the US Federal Censuses were indexed in a couple of formats. The 1880 census has been indexed using the Soundex system. A similar system was used for the 1900, 1910, 1920 and 1930 indexes. This system uses a coding system for the last name to group all similar sounding

names of various spellings together. It is explained in the document "GUIDE TO THE SOUNDIX SYSTEM". The Soundex is on cards which must be researched using microfilm.

Not all names will appear in the index and names were often recorded wrong. If you do not find the person you are looking for, search all possible spellings. One Smittkamp family shows up in a census record as Smith because the census taker did not take the effort to find out how the name was spelled. You should be aware of some of the instructions that the census takers were given:

- Anybody could answer the census questions - a child, a neighbor, a boarder.
- Whatever the family said you put down even if it didn't make sense or sound right.
- You were to list the family as it was on the date the census was supposed to be taken even if it wasn't taken that day. If a person had died since that date you still were supposed to include him. If a person had been born since the date, you were supposed to leave him out.
- The date of the census was:

1850 - 1900	June 1st
1910	April 15 th
1920	January 1 st
1930	April 1 st

When looking for an individual, check for the use of the middle name as the first name and all forms of nicknames or initials.

When researching census records it is necessary to have a map of the state/county for the period being researched. State and County lines changed often. You may be looking in the wrong place.

STATE CENSUS

Many states took a state census every 10 years, between the federal censuses. In most cases these census were in years ending in 5, such as 1865, 1875, 1885, etc. It is really important to use these censuses where available. In general, you can only locate a copy of a state census in the state of interest. They are not in the National Archives. If you are lucky enough to find an 1885 and 1895 census for a state, you can fill in the gap of the missing 1890 federal census.

1850/1860 CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES

The 1850 census is one of the most useful census's you will work with. Starting with the 1850 census, each person was listed in the census. This can help you identify a complete family unit, placing the children with the parents at the earliest date for the census. The 1850 and 1860 census's also indicate the state or country where each person was born, their age at the time of the census and if they were married in the census year. Other information that gives a view of the family is their education and value of the property they owned.

1870 CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES

The 1870 census expands on the information of the 1850/1860 census by adding information on the possible location of the birth of the persons parents. If their parents were foreign born you now know that the person or their parents were the immigrant ancestor. If they were born in the census year, the month of birth is listed. If they were married in the year, the month of marriage is listed. The index for the census, in general, only lists families where there are children age 10 years and younger. You might need to research the entire county in question page by page.

1880 Census of the United States

The 1880 census is important because of the addition of several columns which include: Single, Married, Widowed, Divorced and the birth place of Father and Mother. Using the Soundex indexing

system it is possible to research for everyone with a similar sounding name very easily. The Soundex for the census, only lists families where there are children age 10 years and younger. You might need to research the entire county in question page by page.

There is no 1890 census since the entire national census was burned before it was microfilmed. This adds great importance to the 1880 and 1900 census for piecing together a family. Some of the records have been recreated for a very small portion of the country.

1900 CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES

The 1900 census adds the information of relationship to head of family and can help piece together persons of different last name to the head of household. The month of birth of the person is also listed. To add to the information you can tell how many children a woman had and how many were living at the time of the census. It also tells number of years married, which will help you locate the marriage date. Using the Immigration and Naturalization data, you have a lot of data to work from to locate the naturalization and ships passengers list for your ancestor.

1910 CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES

The 1910 census adds a lot of data to our search to make the person seem more real to us. There is expanded data on occupation, education and home ownership. Using the home ownership information, you may be able to locate property deeds for the family. It also tells about the sight and mental status of the individual. If the person was in the Civil War either Union or Confederate Army or Navy it should be noted. With this information you can get the persons war records from the National Archives.

1920 CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES

The 1920 census does not provide near the information of the 1910 census, but there is sufficient information to correctly identify the family unit and identify the immigrant ancestor, where listed.

1930 CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES

The 1930 census expands on the 1920 census and provides the age at first marriage, language spoken, trade or profession and lists if the individual was a veteran and of which war.

1940 CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES

During 1940 the government was concerned about the economy of the county. Therefore, they added more intensive information concerning where they individual had lived in 1935 and their employment status. The individuals enumerated on lines 4 and 40 on each sheet were asked more questions at the bottom of the page. This information referred to the place of birth of the individuals parents, veterans status, Social Security and occupation.

You can find the Federal Censuses online at the following websites and possibly others:

Ancestry – www.ancestry.com

Family Search - www.familysearch.org

My Heritage - www.myheritage.com

Fold3 - www.fold3.com

The following pages refer to locating the US Federal Censuses on microfilm for 1880 to 1920.

1880 SOUNDEX RESEARCH FORM AND GUIDE TO THE SOUNDEX SYSTEM

Since 1880, all census's have been indexed using the Soundex system. With this system families with children under 10 years in the household are index by a system of coding the last name to include all similar sounding names in the same index group. In 1900 the Soundex included *all* households. In 1910 the Soundex includes all households, but only for the states of Alabama, Arkansas, California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.

To use this system, you must first establish the code for the last name of the family in question. Use the following guide to determine the code. You will then locate the microfilm reel number for the code number for the state the family lived in at the time. Locate the family in the Soundex. Use the 1880 SOUNDEX RESEARCH FORM to record the Soundex information. Make sure you record all information on the card, as you will need it to locate the actual census record. The Soundex will provide the county, town or city, enumeration district, sheet and line of the census record.

The Soundex filing system was developed to provide a filing system for the 1880 census index cards. These index cards have been microfilmed and are available to everyone researching in the Nationals Archived Records offices throughout the United States. It is alphabetic for the first letter of the surname and numeric thereunder as indicated by the divider cards on the film. It keeps together names of the same or similar sounds but of variant spellings.

To search for a particular name, you must first work out the code number for the surname of the individual. No number is assigned to the first letter of the surname. If the name is Kuhne, for example, the index card will be in the *K* segment of the index under the state of interest. The code number for Kuhne, worked out according to the system below, is 500. It is important to remember that names can have various spellings, and that includes the first letter. The name Kuhne might also be located under Cuhne.

SOUNDEX CODING GUIDE

Code Key Letters and Equivalentents

1	b,p,f,v
2	c,s,k,g,j,q,x,z
3	d,t
4	l
5	m,n
6	r

The letters *a, e, i, o, u, y* are separators and are not coded, and *w*, and *h* are not coded.

The first letter of the surname is not coded.

Every Soundex number must be a 3-digit number. A name yielding no code number, as Lee, would thus be L-000 one yielding only one code number such as Kuhne, coded as K-500; and one yielding two code numbers would have one zero added, as Ebell, coded E-140. Not more than three digits are used, so Ebelson would be coded as E-142, *not* E-1425.

When two key letters or equivalentents appear together, or one key letter immediately follows or precedes an equivalent, the two are coded as one letter, by a single number, as follows: Kelly, coded as K-400; Buerck, coded as B-620; Lloyd, coded as L-300; and Schafer, coded as S-160. [Note: it is possible that you may find names like Lloyd where the first and second letters are of the same value coded using both instants of the letter. i.e. L430.]

The letters *a, e, i, o, u,* and *y* act as separators between letters with the same Soundex code. So Shannon is coded S550. The first two *n*'s are adjacent, so they are only coded once, but the last *n* is separated by a vowel from the other *n*'s, so it is coded, too.

The letters *h* and *w* do not count as separators, so that the *s* and *c* in Ashcraft are considered adjacent letters and get one code. Thus Ashcraft is under A261 not A226. [To make sure you don't miss something check both codes.]

Note: when using PAF or other Soundex Coder Software feature, enter the name with and without any *h*'s an *w*'s to see if there are different results. Passenger arrivals and Social Security Death Index records may not follow the *h* and *w* exceptions.

Whenever any two or more letters with the same code number immediately follow one another, the two or more letters are coded as if they are one letter. Those letters that "immediately follow one another" include those letters that are separated by *h* and *w*, but not those separated by a vowel (*a, e, i, o, u,* and *y*). Thus *shc* is coded as 2 while *soc* is coded as 22.

If several surnames have the same code, the cards for them are arranged alphabetically by given name. there are divider cards showing most code numbers, but not all. For instance, one divider may be numbered 350 and the next 400. Between the two divider cards there may be names coded 353, 350, 360, 365, and 355, but instead of being in numerical order they are interfiled alphabetically by given name.

Such prefixes to surnames as: "van," "Von," "Di," "de," "le," "D," "dela," or "du" are sometimes disregarded in alphabetizing and in coding.

The following names are examples of Soundex coding and are given only as illustrations.

Name	Letters Coded	Code No.
Allricht	l,r,c	A-462
Ashcraft	s,r,f	A-261
Eberhard	b,r,r	E-166
Engebrethson	n,g,b	E-521
Heimbach	m,b,c	H-512
Hanselmann	n,s,l	H-524
Henzelmann	n,z,l	H-524
Hildebrand	l,d,b	H-431
Kavanagh	v,n,g	K-152
Lind, Van	n,d	L-530
Lukaschowsky	k,s,s	L-222
McDonnell	c,d,n	M-235
McGee	c	M-200
O'Brien	b,r,n	O-165
Opnian	p,n,n	O-155
Oppenheimer	p,n,m	O-155
Reidemanas	d,m,n	R-355
Shannon	n,n	S-550
Zita	t	Z-300

NATIVE AMERICANS, ORIENTALS, AND RELIGIOUS NUNS

Researchers using the Soundex system to locate religious nuns or persons with American Indian or oriental names should be aware of the way such names are coded. Variations in coding differed from the normal coding system.

Phonetically spelled oriental and Indian Names were sometimes coded as if one continuous name, or, if a distinguishable surname was given, the names were coded in the normal manner; for example, the American Indian name Shinka-Wa-Sa may have been coded as "Shinka" (S-520) or "Sa" (S-000). Researchers should investigate the various possibilities of coding such names.

Religious nun names were coded as if "Sister" were the surname, and they appear in the Soundex indexes under the code "S-236." Within the code S-236, the names may not be in alphabetical order.

LOOKING FOR PEOPLE OF COLOR

When your research involves families of various nationalities the U.S. Census's can leave you wondering where all the Chinese, Indians (American Natives and persons from India), Polynesians, and persons of Arabian descent or anyone with a skin tone and features other than Caucasian or white, you might have difficulty identifying them in the Federal Census records. For the most part there were only three (sometimes two) classifications in the race/color column of the census. People were listed as white (W), black (B), or mulatto (M). Occasionally you might find someone listed as Indian (I), but that is rare. Most of the time (not all of the time) Indians were listed as mulatto. One family I am researching was listed as black in the 1860 census and mulatto in the 1870 census and they were Indian. I had no idea that they were anything other than Negro until I corresponded with a descendant of this branch of the family on the Internet.

UPDATE TO SOUNDEX CODING:

An article by Tony Burroughs appeared in the National Genealogical Society Quarterly, Vol. 80, No. 4, December 2001 showing that the National Archives (NARA) has been issuing instructions in their documentation that is different from *The Original Soundex Coding System*. An excerpt follows:

Only *one genealogy program* uses both the NARA and the Clayton Library coding systems. (Don't know which program).

The problem is in the *NARA* rule where *h* and *w* are treated as vowels, and are not coded. They are separators. "Disregarding the first letter, omit the remaining letters *a, e, i, o, u, w, y*, and, *h*."

In the *Original* rule *h* and *w* are not considered as separators of letters equivalent numbers. Disregarding the first letter, vowels (*a, e, i, o, u, and, y*) are separators of letters of equivalent numbers and *h* and *w* are not considered. at all.

SEPARATORS AND NON-SEPARATORS

DOUBLES AND EQUIVALENTS, when not separated by a vowel or a letter of a different value, are coded as one letter, regardless of how many equivalents may be coded together. [For example:]

Spinner = S156; Sumner = S560

Vowels, while not coded, serve as separators of equivalents, or like consonants. Equivalents so separated by a vowel, or a consonant of a different value, are treated as two letters or two groups, and are coded on each side of the separator. [For example:]

Statton = S335; Buckeskin = B225

The letters *h* and *w* are completely disregarded except as initial letters. In any other part of a surname the letters *h* and *w* are treated as if they are not there. They are not recognized as separators of like or equivalent consonants. [For example:]

Hughgill = H240; Zodwt = Z300; Ashcroft = A261

EQUIVALENTS OF INITIAL LETTERS

Equivalents of an initial letter, when not separated from the initial letter by a vowel, or by a consonant of a different value are not coded. The initial letter and all equivalents of it not separated from it by a vowel or by a consonant of a different value are treated as one letter. Such a group is not coded, but is covered by the initial letter itself, which appears in the code. The same is true of doubles of the initial letter. [For example:]

Lloyd = L300; Llewelyn = L450; Skinner = S560; Czar = C600; Cyzar = C260; Schmidt = S530;
Schwzi = S000; Schultz = S432

PREFIX & COMPOUND NAMES

In **prefix names** you code right on into the second or third part of the name until you get three figures in the code. Completely ignore the break in prefix names, and treat them as though they were one word instead of in sections. Nevertheless coded as though spelled out in all cases. [For example:]

St. Daniel = S535 (or coded as *Saint Daniel*)

COMPOUND NAMES are *two surnames combined* to make one surname. Such names are coded *just to the end of the first part of the name*. [For example:]

Duff-Jordan, James = D100 (*James* is clearly a given name)

Schumann Heinck, Madam = S550 (*Heinck* is treated as a given name)

RELIGIOUS ORDERS

In the case of *Sister*, *Mother*, or *Brother*, where it is clearly indicated that the title is religious, they are coded as though the surname were *Sister*, or *Mother*, or *Brother*. [For example:]

Sister Theresa Agnes = S236 (given name *Theresa Agnes*)

Finn, Anne Margaret (Sister) = S236 (given name *Anne Margaret*, surname *Finn* ignored)

Agnes Theresa (Mother) = M360 (given name *Agnes Theresa*)

Indian, Alaskan and Hawaiian Names

Names which are sections, are coded to the first break, or the end of the first section, and the second sections is used as the given name. [For example:]

Ta-na-sa = T000 (given name is *na*)

E-Tom-Ki = T000 (given name is *Tom*)

WORDS NOT CODED

The following six words - *the*, *of*, *a*, *an*, *and*, *for* - when used as English words are not coded.

The Deer Hunter - D600 (given name *Hunter*)

An Old Chieftain = O430 (given name is *Chieftain*)

CHINESE NAMES

Chinese names are coded as the first name shown and alphabetized by the second name.

Chi Su = C000 (given name is *Su*)

It has been found that this coding system did not always occur, so try every variation until you have success.