

Finding Clues in the 1900 – 1930 Census

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What information can you find in the census, and where can it lead you? What other sources are available for that time frame, and in that locality?

Hopefully, we are going to ask a lot of questions today that can help you to get to know your ancestor better. If we realize why some of these questions were asked on the census, you will know where to look for further answers.

Locality

Not only do these census enumerations list the State and County, but may contain divisions of the cities if they are very large. At the end of the states enumerations, you will find a microfilm that gives the boundaries of the enumeration districts. This can help identify where your family lived so that you can locate them on a city map. This can help locate church records, cemeteries used by the family, schools attended, etc.

Look for street names (usually written sideways, first column), and house numbers (second column). Do these houses still exist? Who were the neighbors? Were all the neighbors listed on the same page, or several pages apart?

You may want to create a “map” of the area where you ancestor lived, and add in the names of everyone who lived close. After all, who did the kids marry? Probably someone who lived quite close to your family!

Marital Status

Married, Single, Widowed, Divorced, numbers of years married, age at first marriage. Lots of clues given here.

1900 & 1910 – Number of children born alive, and number now living? These questions are very important because of the loss of the 1890 census.

Nationality

Where was your ancestor born? His parents? What language did they speak in the home? Did they speak English? What language was their newspaper printed in? (Many ethnic newspapers written in the Mother Tongue are available on microfilm) Did they immigrate? If so, what year? What language did they speak before they came? What is their status – AL (alien), PA (Papered, or applied for citizenship) or NA (naturalized, or received citizenship)?

If they emigrated, check for more information at:

- Ellis Island – www.ellisland.org
- Castle Gardens – www.castlegarden.org
- Atlantic seaports - <http://www.archives.gov/genealogy/immigration/port/atlantic-gulf-great-lakes.html> (most of these microfilm can be ordered from Salt Lake)

Employment

What was their occupation, profession, or trade? Did they own their own business, employed others, or worked for someone else? What was the type of business or trade? How many months in the last year were they employed? Did they work yesterday?

Education

Can they read and/or write English? This extends out to – can they sign their name, or just make a mark?
Can they read a contract?

Home Status

Do they own a home, or rent? Is it a farm, or a house? Is it mortgaged, or owned free and clear?
Homesteaded? How much is the mortgage payment or the rent? Most of these questions were asked in the 1930 census, after the 1929 stock market crash, and about the time of the dust bowl problems in the mid-west. Would the farms be able to make it through the next ten years? Were enough of the farms & houses nation-wide owned free and clear, or what would be the mortgage situation coming up? What government programs would be needed soon? What was your ancestor's financial situation? Step inside his shoes and see what he thought and felt.

Military

1910 – Veteran of Civil War? How many pensions did they have to pay?

1930 – Veteran of any war?

Other Questions

1920 – If blind or mute

1930 – If they own a radio set. Enough did that Pres. Roosevelt started his weekly “Fireside Chats.”

Other hazardous occupations

Occupation	Potential Toxic Agent
Hatter	Mercury
Animal Handlers	Anthrax bacteria
Art & glass handlers	Lead
Asbestos miners & workers	Asbestos
Barometer makers	Mercury
Book binders	Arsenic lead, methanol, oxalic acid
Cigar makers	Nicotine, lead
Cobblers	Anthrax bacteria, benzol, xylo, carbon tetrachloride
Dairy workers	Anthrax and brucella bacteria
Dentists	Mercury amalgam
Gold & silver refiners	Arsenic, formaldehyde, lead, mercury
Watch dial painters	Radium
Photographers	Acids, alkalis, metals, organic solvents
Coin makers	Nickel, silver
Candle makers	Arsenic, chromium, sulfuric acid