

People, Farms, Railroads, and Everything in Between: A Brief History of the Census Bureau's Role in Collecting and Different Types of Data.

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Overview

- Early Census History: 1790-1840
- Redefining the Census: 1850-1900
- Transition: 1902-1930
- Modernization: 1940-1950
- Unreleased Schedules: 1960-2020
- Telling the Story

Disclaimers

- Historic census records are maintained and released by the National Archives and Records Administration, not the U.S. Census Bureau
- Historical content on the Census Bureau history site and in historical census documents may contain outdated terminology or views which, reflecting the authors' attitudes or that of the period in which the item was written, may be considered to be inappropriate or offensive today

Why Take a Census?

- Mandated by Constitution (Article I, Section 2, Clause 3)
- Apportionment of representatives
- Not used for conscription or punitive taxation
- Supreme Court has ruled that this covers other statistical collection as needed for “intelligent exercise of other powers enumerated in the Constitution”

Early Censuses: 1790-1830

- 1790 – US Marshals conduct enumeration
- 1800 – Only whites tallied by age
- 1810 – Census of Manufactures added
- 1820 – Foreigners not naturalized added
- 1830 – Uniform printed schedule

346

Schedule of the white number of Persons with their Names

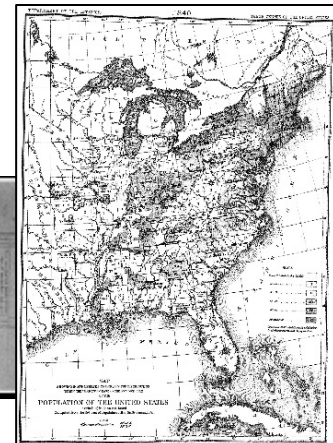
Newport County
R. I.

Names of heads of Families

NAME	MALES	FEMALES	TOTAL
John Howland	1	2	3
Thomas Haygood	1	2	3
William Martin	1	3	4
...

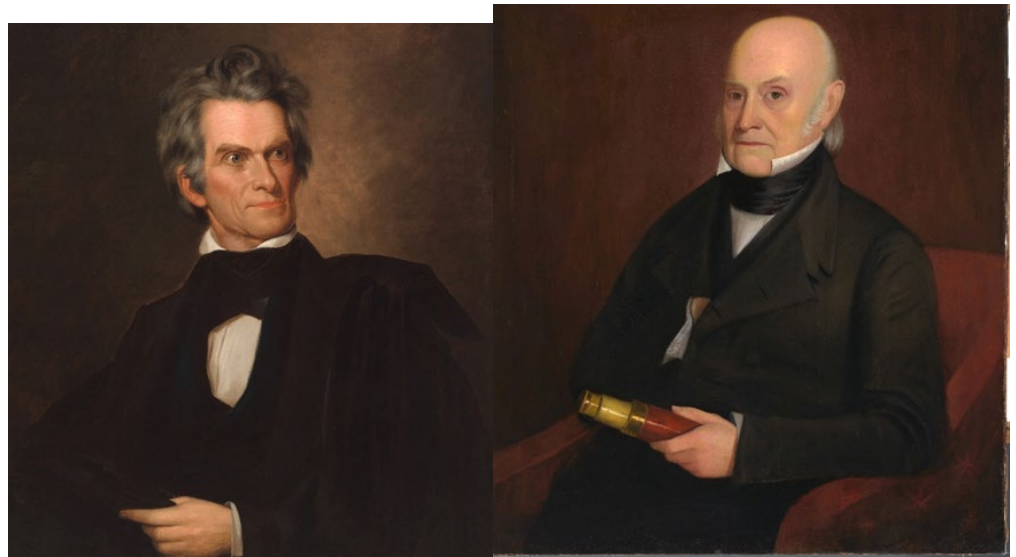
by the Marshal of the District (or Territory) of ...

SEX	SLAVES	FREE COLORED PERSONS	TOTAL
...



Early Censuses con.: 1840

- Introduction of Superintending clerk of the Census
- Return of Manufacturing Data
- Data about Revolutionary War Pensioners
- 1840 Census Controversy

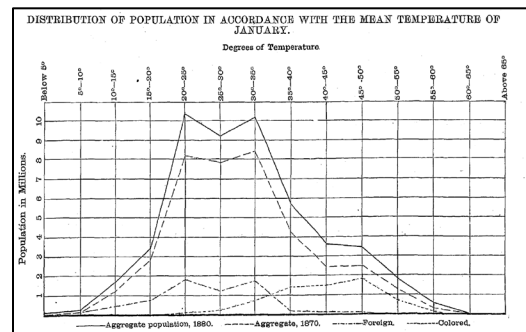
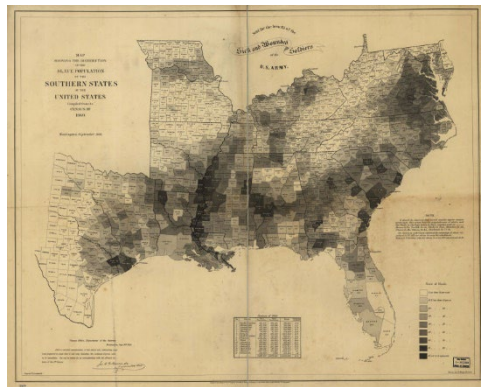


Southern congressmen like John C. Calhoun (left) defended the accuracy of the 1840 Census's data, while John Q. Adams (right) argued on behalf of Dr. Edward Jarvis and other members of the American Statistical Association for correcting the 1840 Census data.

Both Images of Courtesy of the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery.

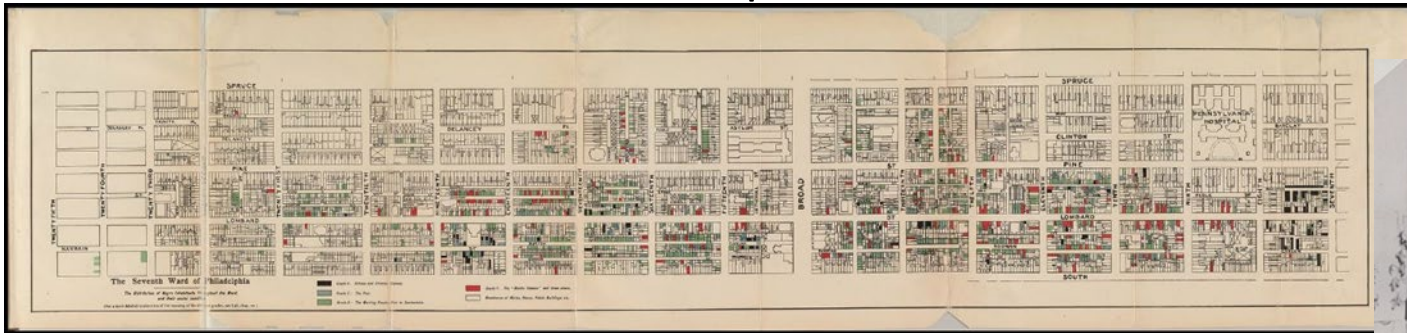
Redefining the Census: 1850-1890

- 1850 – Individual becomes unit of data collection
- 1860 – American Indian added to list of races
- 1870 – Beginning of modern statistical analysis
- 1880 – Professional enumerators
- 1890 – Hollerith tabulating machine



Becoming a Permanent Federal Agency: 1900-1905

- The 1900 Census represented an important watershed moment in the history of Census Bureau for a couple of important reasons.
- 1902 – Permanent Census Bureau established
- 1905 – Economic census separated from decennial census



Above: This color-coded map from Dubois's *The Philadelphia Negro* shows distribution and social conditions of the African-American population living in Philadelphia's 7th Ward in the later 1890s.

Image Courtesy of Harvard University's Library.

Right: Alexander Graham Bell making a telephone call on a line from New York to Chicago, while an audience looks on. Because of his interest in helping the deaf community, Bell served as a special agent for the 1900 Census and was responsible collecting and analyzing the data associated with the blind and deaf communities.

Image Courtesy of the Library of Congress.



Transition: 1910-1930

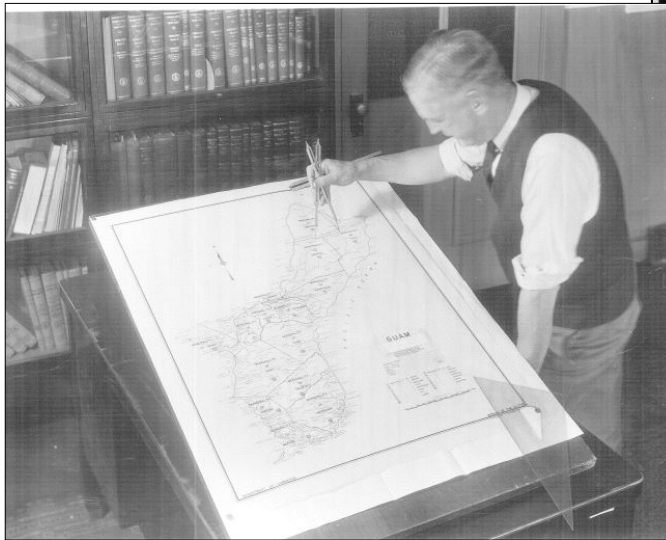
- 1910 – Usual place of abode become basis
- 1911 – Number of seats in House of Representatives set at 435
- 1920 – No apportionment after census
- 1930 – Congress only specifies subjects, not questions

A detailed census form titled "THIRTEENTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES: 1910 - INDIAN POPULATION". The form is filled with handwritten data and includes a section for "SPECIAL INQUIRIES RELATING TO INDIANS". The table has multiple columns for various demographic and social indicators, and the bottom section contains instructions for filling out the form.

THIRTEENTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES: 1910 - INDIAN POPULATION									
SPECIAL INQUIRIES RELATING TO INDIANS									
INSTRUCTIONS FOR FILLING THIS SCHEDULE									

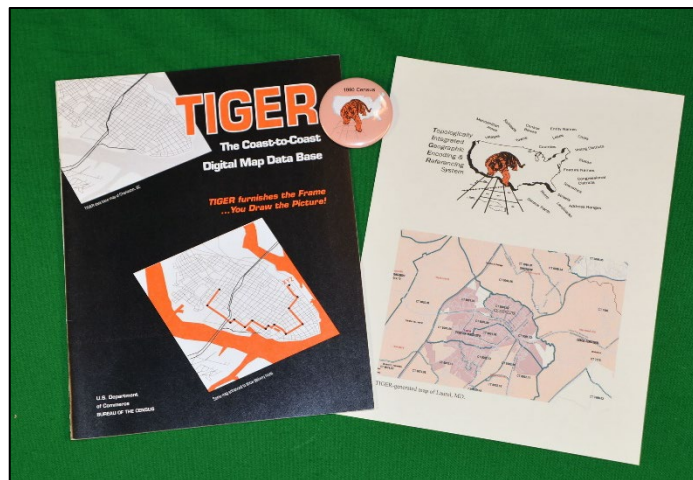
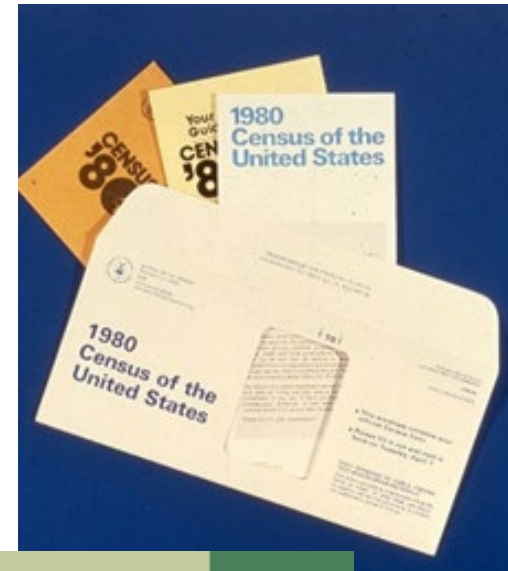
Modernization: 1940-1950

- 1940 – Introduction of statistical sampling
- 1950 – American abroad enumerated



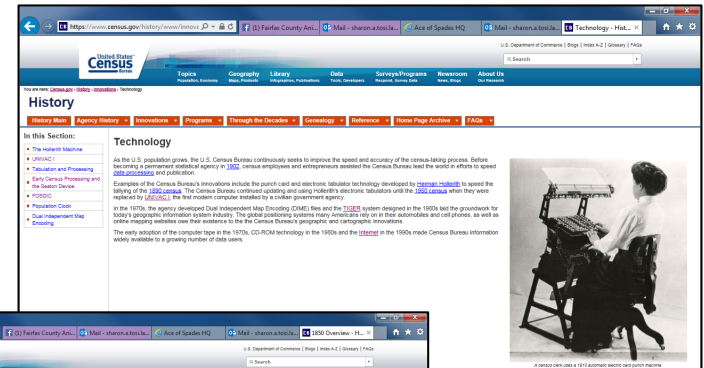
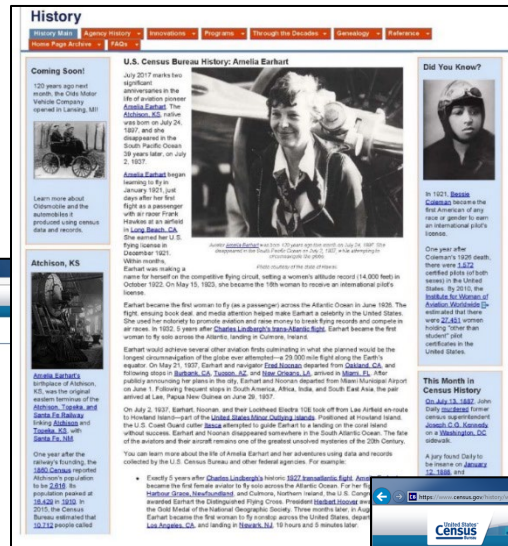
Unreleased 1960-2020

- NARA will release schedules 72 years after the census.
- All final reports are available at https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/overview/

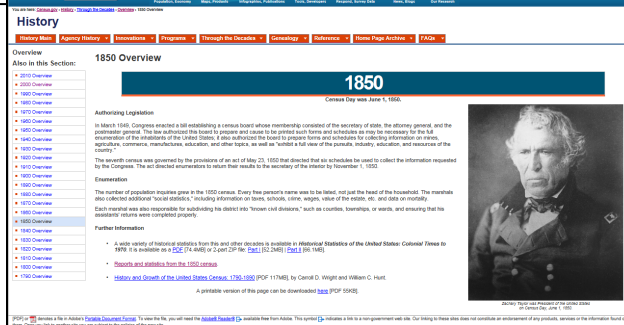


Telling the Story

History Web Site: <https://www.census.gov/history>



U.S. Department of Commerce
Economics and Statistics Administration
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU
[census.gov](https://www.census.gov)



Where to find further resources?

A Majority of the Census Bureau's Final Reports and Other Publications:

<https://www.census.gov/library/publications.html>.

1940 Census Records: <https://1940census.archives.gov/>

1950 Census Records: <https://www.archives.gov/research/census/1950>

Other Census Records:

Ancestry.com, FamilySearch.org, Genealogy.com or MyHeritage.com

Your local library most likely has one of these available to use for free!

Questions?



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