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

Presented by Andrew Babin Historian

U.S. Census Bureau





## 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

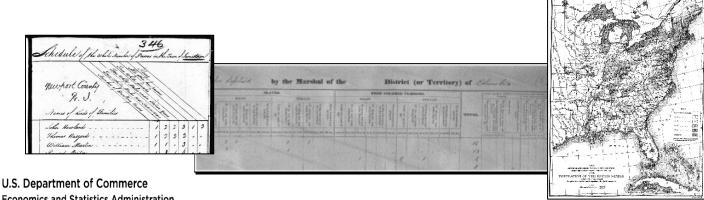
- Historic census records are maintained and released by the National Archives and Records Administration, not the U.S. Census Bureau
- Historical content on the Census Bureau history site and in historical census documents may contain outdated terminology or views which, reflecting the authors' attitudes or that of the period in which the item was written, may be considered to be inappropriate or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

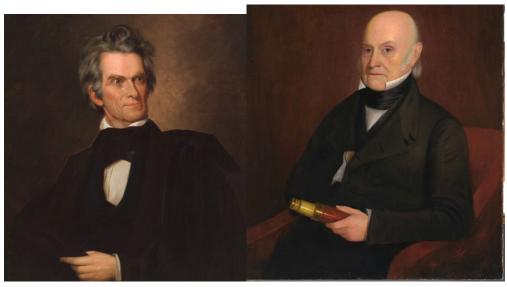
- 1790 US Marshals conduct enumeration
- 1800 Only whites tallied by age
- 1810 Census of Manufactures added
- 1820 Foreigners not naturalized added
- 1830 Uniform printed schedule





## Early Censuses con.: 1840

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

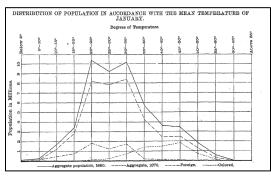




## Redefining the Census: 1850-1890

- 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 7<sup>th</sup> 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.



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### 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





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## Modernization: 1940-1950

• 1940 – Introduction of statistical sampling

1950 – American abroad enumerated



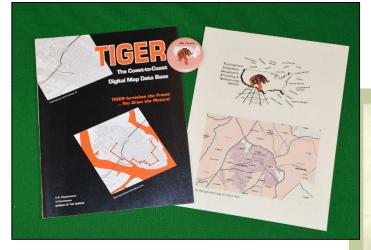


#### Unreleased 1960-2020

 NARA will release schedules 72 years after the census.

 All final reports are available at https://www.census.gov/history/ www/through\_the\_decades/over

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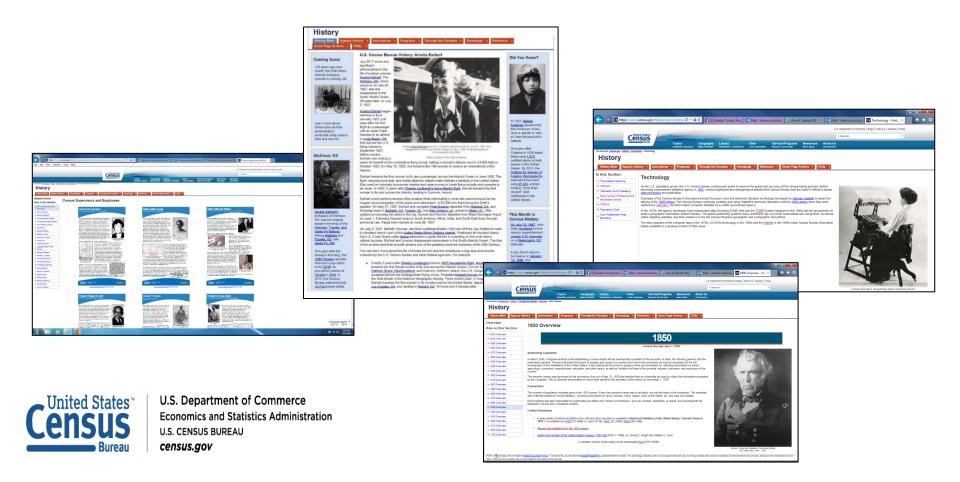






## Telling the Story

History Web Site: <a href="https://www.census.gov/history">https://www.census.gov/history</a>



#### Where to find further resources?

A Majority of the Census Bureau's Final Reports and Other Publications: <a href="https://www.census.gov/library/publications.html">https://www.census.gov/library/publications.html</a>.

1940 Census Records: <a href="https://1940census.archives.gov/">https://1940census.archives.gov/</a>

1950 Census Records: <a href="https://www.archives.gov/research/census/1950">https://www.archives.gov/research/census/1950</a>

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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