

Counting the People: Using Vermont Census Records

By Scott Andrew Bartley

The earliest known census records are found on clay tablets that date back to 3800 B.C. in Babylon. They were largely used for taxation purposes until the colonial period in America when they served to identify able-bodied men for military service and later representation in government. Vermont was settled late in the colonial period and never took any state census. New York, however, took a census in 1771, a time in which it claimed all of the area now known as Vermont.

In 1771 the New York counties covering Vermont on the east were Gloucester in the north and Cumberland in the south. The western half of Vermont was a part of Albany County. The New York census provided an age distribution for both Gloucester and Cumberland counties. The heads of household for the Gloucester County towns of Newbury, Thetford, Moretown, and Stafford were given separately. The towns of Barnet, Ryegate, Lunenburg, and Guildhall were combined as one list. The vast majority of the population lived in Cumberland County. This information was published in *The Documentary History of the State of New-York* by E. B. O'Callaghan (Albany: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1849-1851), 4: 708-709 [F122/D63/1849 CD + rare book + loan]. *The Semi-Weekly Eagle* newspaper in Brattleboro published the heads of household for Cumberland from January 17 to March 7, 1851. These were abstracted in a W.P.A. manuscript though thirty-two names were missed in the process. All these names were included as part of *Vermont 1771 Census* by Jay Mack Holbrook (Oxford, Mass.: Holbrook Research Institute, 1982) [F48.H7]. This lists people residing in Vermont from 1766 to 1775 from a variety of sources. The researcher needs to check the source for each entry to see if the name is included in the census of 1771.

The United States decennial census (taken in the years ending in "0") is mandated by Article I, Section 2, Part 3, of the U.S. Constitution that stated "[r]epresentatives and direct taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole number of free persons, including those bound to service for a term of years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three-fifths of all other persons." The Fourteenth Amendment ratified in 1868 changed the language to read "counting the whole number of person in each State, including Indians not tax." The three-fifths compromise between the states was the method used to count slaves.

The marshals of the U.S. judicial districts carried out the enumeration through 1840. By 1800, they reported to the Secretary of State. The Interior Department, created in 1849, assumed jurisdiction to 1900. Up to this point, the law created a temporary work force to count the people. Once the job was finished, the group was dissolved. The Bureau of the Census was established as a permanent office by act of Congress on March 6, 1902. Its major function was to carry out the decennial enumeration. The law also provided that the information collected by the Bureau from individual persons, households, or establishments was to be kept strictly confidential and used only for statistical purposes.

Vermont researchers are fortunate that all federal censuses since 1790 have survived (except for the obvious gap in 1890). It should be noted that the "1790" census for Vermont was actually taken on the first Monday in April 1791, after it was admitted as the first new state. There is an ongoing study of those covered in the 1791 census in *Vermont Families in 1791* by Scott Andrew Bartley (Vol. 1, Camden, Me.: Picton Press, 1992; Vol. 2, St. Albans, Vt.: Genealogical Society of Vermont, 1997). A third volume will likely be out in 2004 or 2005. [F48.V47 + loan]

Vermont census indexes between 1791 and 1870 were published in book form. The first two – 1791 and 1800 – are full abstracts of the census. The 1850 book is missing parts of the following towns:

Grand Isle County – Isle La Mott,

Rutland County – Clarendon, Mt. Holly Shrewsbury, Tinmouth

Washington County – Barre, Berlin, Plainfield, Roxbury

Windham County – Athens, Brattleboro (households 77/79 – 583/667), Brookline, Newfane, Townshend, Stratton, Wardsboro

HeritageQuestOnline.com is another paid service that has census images online, although their indexes only cover 1791 to 1820, 1860 to 1870, and 1900 to 1920. HeritageQuest created their indexes from scratch and these have proved to be better than Ancestry's. They also have a more sophisticated search engine for their indexes. *Genealogy.com* has the following indexes and images available online for a fee: 1791 to 1820, 1860 to 1870, and 1900 to 1910. CD-ROM indexes are available for 1791 to 1880, 1900 (in Ancestry/Broderbund's New England 1900 index), and 1920 from various vendors. The Family Tree Maker's Family Archive CD for 1850 (which includes New Hampshire and Maine, too) has images of the original census linked to the index. This is the fastest way to access data for this year.

The closest census copy taken from the enumerators' notes was the one given to the state of Vermont. These copies were never microfilmed and are only available at the State Law Library in Montpelier. They are not open for general browsing, but can be accessed under special circumstances. In this version the enumerator for Springfield and Baltimore noted the exact place of birth in most cases. Information on these two towns were extracted from the state copy and published as *Transcription of the state copy of the 1850 Federal Census for Springfield and Baltimore, Vermont* (Boston: Scott Andrew Bartley, 1993) [F59.S7.B38 + loan].

It is important to note that there is more to the census than the population statistics of which we are all most familiar. Statistical data was gathered starting in 1810. Some of this data might help with research that requires more in-depth investigation. The mortality schedules of 1850 to 1870 are a frequent help. The number of types of census forms expanded greatly in 1880. By then, there were five schedules, seven supplemental schedules, and twelve special schedules. Abstracts of criminal dockets, Justice's return for statistics of court trials, and police department data were also collected.

The largest undertaking by the census took place in 1890, with four schedules, eight supplemental schedules, twenty-seven special schedules, six special agent schedules, and thirty special schedules sent to businesses, cities, schools, courts, etc. Each of these topics could have several schedules. The total number of schedules for all topics is two hundred thirty-three. A fire in the Commerce Department Building on January 21, 1921 destroyed nearly all of the schedules – including all Vermont population schedules (though the Veteran schedules survive).

Number of schedules, 1790 to 1870

[illegible]

mining,										
fisheries)	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	
Social statistics										
(crime, schools,										
taxation, wages,										
pauperism, etc.)	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	
TOTAL	1	1	2	2	1	2	6	6	5	

(1) Including questions concerning “schools.”

(2) One schedule for free inhabitants and one for slaves.

Total Number of Questions relating to each subject, 1790 to 1890

<u>Subjects</u>	<u>1790</u>	<u>1800</u>	<u>1810</u>	<u>1820</u>	<u>1830</u>	<u>1840</u>	<u>1850</u>	<u>1860</u>	<u>1870</u>	<u>1880</u>	<u>1890</u>
Population	4	4	4	6	7	14	22 ⁽¹⁾	24 ⁽²⁾	23	24	45
Insanity											
Individuals	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14	34
Institutions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	54
Feeble-minded	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	31
Deafness											
Individuals	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	36
Institutions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	28
Blindness											
Individuals	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	35
Institutions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	28
Physical disabilities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	27
Crime											
Individuals	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4	5	19	32
Institutions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	139	37
Pauperism	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	5	6	24	42
Benevolence	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13	42
Mortality	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	11	11	14	17
Agriculture											
General sch.	-	-	-	-	-	37	46	48	52	108	255
Special sch.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1572	837
Manufactures											
General sch.	-	-	3	14	-	5	14	14	18	29	88

Special sch.	-	-	-	-	-	-	4 ⁽³⁾	4 ⁽³⁾	4 ⁽³⁾	705	2779
Mines & mining	-	-	-	-	-	6	(4)	(4)	(4)	1619	313
Fish & fisheries	-	-	-	-	-	5	(4)	(4)	(4)	87	248
Commerce	-	-	-	-	-	11	-	-	-	-	-
Education	-	-	-	-	-	4	8	8	10	907	76
Insurance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5779	3921
Libraries	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3	3	196	-
Real est. mortgages	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	26
Farms & homes											
Proprietorship &											
indebtedness	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Religious org.	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4	5	372	13
Seasons & crops	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3	-	-	-
Social statistics											
of cities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	299	222
Trade societies,											
strikes & lockout	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	101	-
Transportation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	466	1464
Wages & prices	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	6	6	167	-
Wealth, debt, &											
taxation	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	8	13	105	1970
Alaska	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	123
Indians	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	221	283
Surviving soldiers,											
widows, etc.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50
TOTALS	4	4	7	20	7	82	138	142	156	13,010	13,161

(1) Including four questions on schedules for slaves not common to “free inhabitants.”

(2) Including five questions on schedules for slaves not common to “free inhabitants.”

(3) Questions relating to newspapers and periodicals.

(4) Questions same as given for manufactures, being applicable to products of industry generally.

Congress passed legislation in 1899 limiting the census to four topics: population, agriculture, manufactures, and vital statistics. Congress also ordered the destruction of all non-population schedules from 1890 on since the statistics were published.

The 1900 census added some important genealogical information. Month and year of birth is listed for each member of the household. Each mother was asked how many children were born to her and how many were living at the time of

enumeration. Married couples were asked how many years they had been married (a question first asked in 1890). From 1910 through 1930 the questions were virtually identical. The only notable differences are: month and year of birth dropped after 1900; naturalization year given in 1920; year of immigration given in 1920 and 1930; number of years in marriages dropped after 1910; mother's children information dropped after 1910; and age at first marriage given in 1930.

Though the first six decades are just statistics beyond the head of householder's name, they can provide key information. It is a snapshot of the entire country for one day every ten years. Below is a chart of the questions asked in each census.

	1790	1800	1810	1820	1830	1840
Taken as of this date	1 st Mon.	1 st Mon.	1 st Mon.	1 st Mon.	1 June	1 June
	August	August	August	August		
Head of household name only	X	X	X	X	X	X
White males with age groups	X	X	X	X	X	X
White females with age groups	-	X	X	X	X	X
Slave owners name and number						
of male and females slaves	-	X	X	X	X	X
Males and female slaves by age						
group by owner	-	-	-	X	X	X
Number of foreigners not naturalized	-	-	-	X	X	-
Number of deaf, dumb, & blind	-	-	-	-	X	X
Name & age of federal pensioners	-	-	-	-	-	X
Number of persons attending school	-	-	-	-	-	X
	1850	1860	1870	1880	1885	1890
Taken as of this date	1 June	1 June	1 June	1 June	1 June	1 st Mon.
						June
Name & age of everyone	X	X	X	X	X	X
Street & house number	-	-	-	X	X	X
Relationship to head of house	-	-	-	X	X	X
Month of birth if within year	-	-	X	X	X	X
Month and year of birth	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sex, color, birthplace & occupation	X	X	X	X	X	X
Naturalized or declaration of intent	-	-	-	-	-	X
Year of naturalization	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of years in U.S.	-	-	-	-	-	X
Year of immigration to U.S.	-	-	-	-	-	-

Value of personal estate	-	X	X	-	-	-
Value of real estate	X	X	X	-	-	-
Home or farm mortgaged / rented	-	-	-	-	-	X
Marital status	-	-	-	X	X	X
Married within year	X	X	X	X	X	X
Month of marriage within year	-	-	X	-	-	-
Temporarily or permanently disabled	-	-	-	X	X	-
Acute or chronic disease	-	-	-	-	-	X
Crippled, maimed, or deformed	-	-	-	X	X	X
Time unemployed in year	-	-	-	X	X	X
Deaf, dumb, blind, or insane	X	X	X	X	X	X
Pauper or convict	X	X	-	-	-	X
Prisoner or homeless child	-	-	-	-	-	X
Able to speak English	-	-	-	-	-	X
Able to read & write / attend school	X	X	X	X	X	X
Birthplace of parents	-	-	-	X	X	X
Whether parents of foreign birth	-	-	X	X	X	X
Native tongue of person & parents	-	-	-	-	-	-
Soldier, sailor, marine in Civil War						
or widow of same	-	-	-	-	-	X
Number of years in present marriage	-	-	-	-	-	X
Age at first marriage	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mother's # of children born / living	-	-	-	-	-	X

	1900	1910	1920	1930
Taken as of this date	1 June	15 April	1 Jan.	1 April
Name & age of everyone	X	X	X	X
Street & house number	X	X	X	X
Relationship to head of house	X	X	X	X
Month of birth if within year	-	-	-	-
Month and year of birth	X	-	-	-
Sex, color, birthplace & occupation	X	X	X	X
Naturalized or declaration of intent	X	X	X	X
Year of naturalization	-	-	X	-
Number of years in U.S.	X	X	-	-

Year of immigration to U.S.	-	-	X	X
Value of personal estate	-	-	-	-
Value of real estate	-	-	-	X
Home or farm mortgaged / rented	X	X	X	X
Marital status	X	X	X	X
Married within year	-	-	-	-
Month of marriage within year	-	-	-	-
Temporarily or permanently disabled	-	-	-	-
Acute or chronic disease	-	-	-	-
Crippled, maimed, or deformed	-	-	-	-
Time unemployed in year	X	X	-	X
Deaf, dumb, blind, or insane	-	X	-	-
Pauper or convict	-	-	-	-
Prisoner or homeless child	-	-	-	-
Able to speak English	X	X	X	X
Able to read & write / attend school	X	X	X	X
Birthplace of parents	X	X	X	X
Whether parents of foreign birth	X	X	X	X
Native tongue of person & parents	-	X	X	X
Soldier, sailor, marine in Civil War or widow of same	X	X	-	X
Number of years in present marriage	X	X	-	-
Age at first marriage	-	-	-	X
Mother's # of children born / living	X	X	-	-