

New Hampshire Census Records

By John Fipphen

Census records are among the most enlightening sources of information for the genealogist. They can reveal such details as family origins, date and place of birth, education, relationships, occupation, and citizenship status. They also place the family in a particular location at a certain point in time and thereby lead to other key sources, such as church, court, vital, land, military, and immigration records. With many census indexes online, it is easier than ever to search for your ancestors.

Federal censuses for the State of New Hampshire began in 1790 and continued to be taken every ten years thereafter. Except for the 1890 census, which was mostly destroyed, they are currently available through 1920. All except the 1870 and 1910 enumerations are indexed in at least one format.

For the provincial period, enumerations exist for the years 1732, 1744, 1767, and 1776. All are available at the New Hampshire Records and Archives, and, except for 1732, appear in the multivolume set of New Hampshire Provincial and State Papers, copies of which are available at many libraries throughout the state.

The 1800 census does not include the following towns in Rockingham County: Atkinson, Greenland, Hampton, Hampton Falls, Londonderry, Northampton, Pelham, Plaistow, Salem, Seabrook, Stratham, and Windham. In Strafford County the 1800 census is missing for the towns of Alton, Barnstead, Brookfield, Effingham, Gilmanton, Middleton, New Durham, Ossipee, Tuftonboro, Wakefield, and Wolfeboro. Fortunately, researchers now have access to contemporaneous information for residents of all of these Strafford County towns except Barnstead and Gilmanton. The source of this information is the 1798 direct tax list, which I discovered among the uncatalogued holdings of the Wolfeboro Historical Society. This list provides not only the occupant of the property but also the name and residence of the owner of the property, if the owner is not the occupant. This book, entitled *1798 Direct Tax, New Hampshire District #13*, was published in 1989 by Heritage Books and is currently out of print. It is available in many libraries in the State of New Hampshire, including the New Hampshire Historical Society, New Hampshire State Library, Wolfeboro Public Library, New Durham Public Library, and the New Hampshire State Archives. It is also available at the NEHGS library. The original schedule has been given to the New Hampshire State Archives for safe keeping. At this point, it is the only known surviving 1798 direct tax list for any section of New Hampshire.

All of the 1820 census records for Grafton County and parts of Rockingham (Gosport, Greenland, New Castle, Newton, Portsmouth, and Rye) were lost. Only Center Harbor, Gilford, Moultonborough, New Hampton, and Sanbornton records are available for Strafford County for that year.

The division of Records Management and Archives for the State of New Hampshire, located on Fruit Street in Concord, N.H., has original U.S. census schedules for 1850-1880. It also has 1840 records for Rockingham, Merrimack, and Stafford Counties. Microfilm copies of 1800-1880 censuses, and printed copies of 1790 and 1800 censuses, plus printed indexes to later censuses are available at the State Library on Park Street in Concord, N.H.

The New Hampshire Historical Society, also located on Park Street in Concord, has a photostat of the 1800 census, the published 1790 and 1800 censuses, and published indexes to later census years. U.S. census records for New Hampshire (1800-1920) are available from the National Archives, New England Region, 380 Trapelo Road, Waltham, MA 01254. Unfortunately, the contrast on some of the microfilmed census records is so weak that images on many pages are absolutely illegible. This frustrating situation, which is especially prevalent with the 1860 census sheets, is due to the combination of faded ink on the original documents and the inability of the camera and the material used in filming the originals to reproduce what little contrast survives on the written page. Fortunately the original volumes of census records for the year 1860, the year most prone to the output of unreadable microfilm, can be inspected by the researcher at the New Hampshire State Archives. Although the ink on many of the pages in these originals has faded to a faint brown the essential entries are still readable.

The Accelerated Indexing System (AIS) Index appears to be less accurate for the 1860 census records than it is for the 1790 to 1850 census records. Thus, if an entry cannot be found in the 1860 AIS Index or does not locate the person on the indicated page, it is prudent to make a page by page examination of the records of the town or city in which the

ancestor probably lived. The index to the 1880, 1900, and 1920 census records is called the Soundex.

The 1900 federal census in particular has a number of useful features. In column 7 the individual's month and year of birth is given. Column 10 reveals the number of years of marriage for each married person. The number of children born to each woman is given in column 11 -- this can help you determine whether all children in a given family have been identified and whether any were deceased when the census was taken. The year of immigration to the United States is given in column 16--this might help you locate a ship passenger arrival list. An individual's naturalization status is given in column 18 ("Al" for alien, "Pa" for first papers, and "Na" for naturalized). His or her parents' birthplace is indicated in columns 14 and 15. Column 25 tells us whether the individual owned ("O") or rented ("R") the home or farm and column 26 whether the home or farm was mortgaged ("M") or free of mortgage ("F"). These clues can lead a researcher to a county recorder's office or equivalent agency for records of deeds, mortgages, and property tax.

For a complete discussion of the information provided by each federal census, the researcher is referred to two excellent articles by Claire Prechtel-Klusken:

- [Clues in Census Records, 1790-1840](#)
- [Clues in Census Records, 1850-1920](#)