

NewsWeek\_Print Edition\_Nation\_U.S.edition

Newsweek, March 17, 2000

## Censuses Past

Newsweek.com looks at some of the highlights and lowlights of censuses from the last two centuries

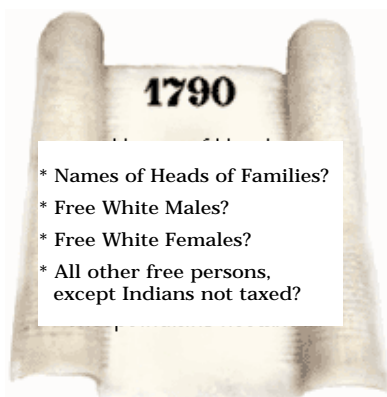
By Arlene Getz

Today it can be completed online. But until a mere 40 years ago, the U.S. Census Bureau did not even use snail mail to send out its questionnaires. Instead, the federal government dispatched officials to visit all households in person so they could record a statistical portrait of the national population. The first headcounters were marshals, and the first census in 1790 involved the original 13 states, the Southwest Territory and the districts of Kentucky, Maine of Vermont. Both the counting methods and questions have changed since then. The separate sections for slaves and Indians are long gone, and enumerators are no longer expected to ask families if there are "idiots" in neighboring households. Fridges and radios hardly symbolize



House calls: A Census Bureau enumerator goes door-to-door to interview residents about the people in their households. The Bureau only began mailing its questionnaires in 1960. (U.S. Census Bureau)

wealth the way they did when the Bureau asked about them in the '40s and '50s; demographic developments have given way to new social trends. "The kinds of issues that were being faced in 1900 were quite different to the issues being faced in 2000," says Census Bureau historian Dave Pemberton. "For example, we used to ask, 'Can you read, can you write, can you speak English.'" Now you need a larger battery of questions to assess education." So what would you have been asked if you'd received your census form in the last century instead of last week? A sampler:



- \* Names of Heads of Families?
- \* Free White Males?
- \* Free White Females?
- \* All other free persons, except Indians not taxed?

### WHAT THEY ASKED IN...

#### 1790

The first "enumeration" began little more than a year after the inauguration of President George Washington and was carried out by marshals expected to visit every household in the nation. Headcounters had to fill in only six sections:

- \* the name of the head of the family;
- \* the number of free white males over 16 (to assess the country's military and industrial potential) and those under 16;
- \* the number of free white females and all other free persons by sex and color;
- \* the number of slaves.

#### 1850 [この年に Census-reform law が成立し、 family-level census から individual-level Census に移行する]

The first time marshals collect "social statistics" like information about taxes, schools, crime, wages and real estate values. A separate form is provided for information about "slave inhabitants," with marshals warning that "numbers are to be substituted for names." Among free inhabitants, enumerators have to note the number of people over 20 who cannot read or write and which family members are "deaf and dumb, blind, insane, idiotic, pauper or convict." The section headed "color" offers only the choices of white, black or mulatto, with marshals being told that the space should be left blank for whites. "It is very desirable that these particulars be carefully regarded," notes the marshals' instructions.

#### 1880 (南北戦争が勃発するが、1860年、1870年のセンサスは行われた。)

By now slavery is abolished and it is Indians who are recorded separately. Among the questions:

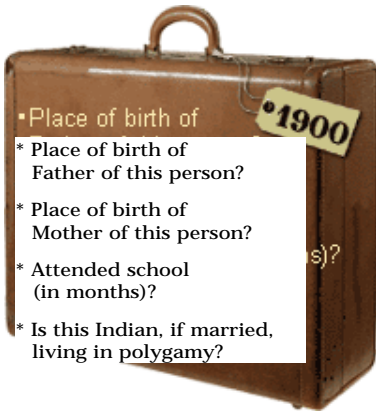
- \* Is this person a chief?
- \* Is this person a war chief?
- \* Number of horses, swine, cattle, sheep and dogs owned.

Instructions for the census takers include the comment that "frequently the head of a family is a woman" and a warning to direct special attention to describing a respondent as a Medicine-man "as it is the only occupation among Indians resembling a profession in civilization." Other listed occupations? Pipe-maker,

**A History of US Census\_Politics of the US 2000 Census**

Arrow-maker and Wood-chopper.

**1900**



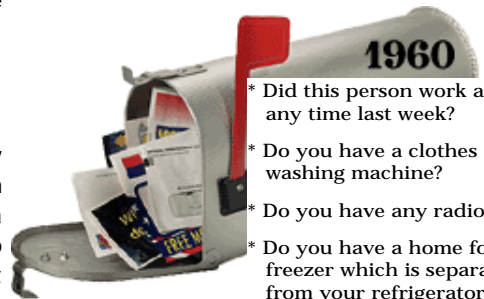
Personal descriptions are broadened to include race as well as color, and options are "W" for white; "B" for black; "Ch" for Chinese; "Jp" for Japanese and "In" for Indian. With the Census Bureau now keen to learn more about immigration, employees are warned to take special care recording the birthplaces of those born outside the U.S. "In case a person speaks German...inquire carefully whether the birthplace was Germany, Austria or Switzerland. In case the person speaks Polish, as Poland is not now a country, inquire whether the birthplace was what is now known as German Poland or Austrian Poland or Russian Poland." Occupations too, have to be precisely recorded. "Return a boarding or livery stable keeper separately from a hostler or other stable employee."

**1940**

Introduces "innovative" statistical techniques such as probability sampling a precursor to the short and long forms currently in use. Responding to the concerns of the Depression years, it asks five percent of those surveyed to answer additional questions to measure unemployment, income and conditions of housing. Asks those over 14 whether they were at work for pay or profit in private or non-emergency work the previous week and all of women who have been married to record their number of live births. Respondents are assured their information cannot be used for "purposes of taxation, regulation or investigation," but allows them to fill in separate, sealed report forms if they do not want to give enumerators verbal information about their incomes.

**1960**

The first time questionnaires are sent to households by mail. Also the first time the Census Bureau uses a computer aided by FOSDIC, a film optical sensing device that eliminates punch cards by "reading" data on the returns for nearly all of its data processing. (A UNIVAC computer was used in 1950, but only to help tabulate some of the statistics.) Questions about commuting patterns are introduced and more information about employment and education is required. Enumerators are told that



Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, or other persons of Latin descent are to be classified white unless they are definitely some other race, and that the husband of a married couple was always to be listed as the head of the household if he was present.

**2000**



The first census that can be completed online as well as the first to use paid, rather than donated, advertising time and space. Respondents of mixed racial heritage may mark more than one racial category. Grandparents are included as possible caregivers and the question asking women about their number of births is omitted. Continues to ask questions about employment, commuting and housing trends.

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**Margo J. Anderson:** In Short, because of the different historic traditions among the former colonies and the varied bases of their economies and social forms, the infant United States faced a series of extraordinarily difficult questions about the proper apportionment of power and representation among the states, among the citizens of the various states, and between the national government and the individual citizen or state. And because much of the land area of the infant nation had no yet been settled, the framers had to determine how to incorporate both new people and new states into the United States and how to accommodate the relative shifting of power and resources within the nation in the future. ... .. The Creation of a periodic national census to measure the relative strength of the population in different parts of the country was one of the mechanisms the framers used to address these problems. (M.J.Anderson, The American Census: A Social History, Yale University press, 1988, pp.8-9)

[ 追加記事 ]

## Census director says Senate amendment could undermine census

By Associated Press, 4/7/2000 21:05

WASHINGTON (AP) Democrats accused Republicans in the Senate of sneaking in an amendment to a budget resolution passed Friday that urged Americans not be prosecuted for leaving certain questions on their census form blank.

Census director Kenneth Prewitt said the amendment introduced by Sen. Bob Smith, R-N.H., would undermine the quality of information being collected on census forms.

The nonbinding "sense-of-the-Senate" amendment, which was accepted without objections, said it assumed that no American will be prosecuted, fined or in "anyway harassed" by the federal government for not answering questions that referred to a "person's race, national origin, living conditions, personal habits or mental and/or physical condition."

Last week, several congressional Republicans criticized the 53-question long form as being too intrusive, pointing out one question which asked what kind of plumbing a house had. A question asking for a person's race is found on both the long and the eight-question short form.

Prewitt said people who do not fill out their form could be fined at least \$100, but that fine has been issued only once in the last 40 years. "Census 2000 is not designed by law as a pick-and-choose exercise," he said.

"The American people should not fear the census; we should fear an incomplete or inaccurate count due to lack of participation," said Sen. Joseph Lieberman, D-Conn., who later added wording to the amendment that urged everyone to fill out and send back their census forms.

Some congressional Republicans recently said they are suggesting to constituents worried about intrusive census questions to leave them unanswered.