# A Timeline of Census History

## Census Supervisors

**Thomas Jefferson**
(U.S. Secretary of State)

**Population**
3,929,214

Under the leadership of the Secretary of State, U.S. Marshals conduct the nation's first census, which asks six questions.

New York is the nation's largest city with a population of 33,131.

**John Marshall**
(U.S. Secretary of State)

**Population**
5,308,483

Temporary census headquarters moves from New York City, NY, to Washington, DC.

**Robert Smith**
(U.S. Secretary of State)

**Population**
7,239,881

U.S. Marshals collect data on U.S. manufacturers while conducting the 1810 Census.

**John Quincy Adams**
(U.S. Secretary of State)

**Population**
9,638,453

U.S. Marshals make the first agriculture inquiries by collecting data on families' "agricultural pursuits."

**Martin Van Buren**
(U.S. Secretary of State)

**Population**
12,860,702

U.S. Marshals use uniform, printed schedules to collect census data. They do not collect manufacturing data due to its poor quality in 1810 and 1820.

## 1790

**JANUARY 8, 1790** President George Washington gives the first State of the Union Address.

**FEBRUARY 20, 1792** Establishment of U.S. Post Office Department

**MARCH 14, 1794** Eli Witney patents the cotton gin.

**JULY 10, 1797** The United States launches its first naval ship, the frigate *USS United States*.

## 1800

**APRIL 30, 1803** The United States purchases 828,000 square miles from France for the price of $15 million.

**MAY 14, 1804** Lewis and Clark Expedition begins.

**1806** Noah Webster publishes the *Compendious Dictionary of the English Language*.

**AUGUST 17, 1807** Robert Fulton makes the first steamboat journey up the Hudson River from New York City, NY, to Albany, NY.

## 1810

**OCTOBER 11, 1811** Steam-powered ferry service between New York City, NY, and Hoboken, NJ, begins.

**JUNE 18, 1812–FEBRUARY 18, 1815** War of 1812

**SEPTEMBER 13–14, 1814** Francis Scott Key writes *The Star-Spangled Banner*.

**APRIL 4, 1818** Congress adopts twenty stars and thirteen stripes configuration of the U.S. flag, with a star added for each new state.

## 1820

**NOVEMBER 20, 1820** A whale sinks the whaling ship Essex inspiring Herman Melville's 1851 novel, Moby Dick.

**DECEMBER 2, 1823** President James Monroe's "Monroe Doctrine" considers future European attempts to recolonize North America as hostile.

**OCTOBER 26, 1825** The first boat leaves Buffalo, NY, en route to New York City, NY, via the Erie Canal.

**FEBRUARY 28, 1827** The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad becomes the first to provide rail transportation for people and goods.

## 1830

**MARCH 19, 1831** Edward Smith commits the first bank robbery in the United States when he steals $245,000 from the City Bank of New York.

**JULY 24, 1832** The first wagon train crosses the Rocky Mountains at Wyoming's South Pass.

**FEBRUARY 23–MARCH 6, 1836** The Battle for the Alamo waged in San Antonio, TX.

**FEBRUARY 11, 1839** University of Missouri in Columbia, MO, becomes the first college west of the Mississippi River.

## 1840

**William Augustus Weaver**
**(1840–1842)**

Population
**17,063,353**

**AUGUST 9, 1842** The Webster-Ashburton Treaty formalizes the U.S.-Canadian border east of the Rocky Mountains.

**1849**
Congress establishes a census board to oversee data collection.

**MAY 24, 1844** Samuel B. Morse sends the message, "What hath God wrought" over the first telegraph line from Washington, DC, to Baltimore, MD.

**SEPTEMBER 1845** The "Great Potato Famine" begins, resulting in a surge of Irish immigration to the United States.

U.S. Marshals resume collection of manufacturing data, as well as data on mining and fisheries.

**1849**
The U.S. Department of the Interior assumes control of census operations from the Department of State.

**JANUARY 24, 1848** A worker discovers gold at Sutter's Mill in California.

## 1850

**Joseph C. G. Kennedy**
**(1850–1853)**

Population
**23,191,876**

The census records the names of all free persons in the household.

**MARCH 20, 1852** Harriet Beecher Stowe publishes the anti-slavery master-piece, Uncle Tom's Cabin.

**J. D. B. DeBow**
**(1853–1855)**

**1854**
Superintendent J. D. B. DeBow publishes the first map in a census publication.

**JULY 8, 1853** Commodore Matthew Perry lands in Edo Bay, Japan, and nego-tiates a trade agreement.

Six questionnaires collect population, slave, mortality, agriculture, manufacturing, and government data.

**MARCH 23, 1857** Elisha Otis installs the first elevator in a building at 488 Broadway in New York City, NY.

**OCTOBER 16, 1859** John Brown leads a raid on the armory at Harper's Ferry, VA (now WV).

## 1860

**Joseph C. G. Kennedy**
**(1860–1865)**

Population
**31,443,321**

**APRIL 3, 1860** The first Pony Express riders leave St. Joseph, MO, heading west and San Francisco, CA, heading east.

**APRIL 12, 1861–MAY 9, 1865** U.S. Civil War

The census enumerates American Indians not living on tribal lands in own racial category.

**MARCH 30, 1867** The United States buys Alaska from Russia.

**DECEMBER 10, 1869** Wyoming becomes the first state to give women the right to vote.

## 1870

**Francis Amasa Walker**
**(1870–1872)**

Population
**38,558,371**

The census records the name of every person living in a household.

**1872**
Charles W. Seaton introduces a mechanical tallying machine to speed tabulation of census data.

**MARCH 30, 1870** The 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution gives the right to vote to all men, regardless of race.

**OCTOBER 8–10, 1871** A fire kills 300 people, destroys more than 3 square miles, and leaves 100,000 homeless in Chicago, IL.

**MARCH 1, 1872** Yellowstone Park, which covers parts of Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho, becomes the first national park.

**1874**
Census Office publishes first Statistical Atlas of the United States.

**JUNE 25–26, 1872** Sioux and Cheyenne Indians defeat George Custer and the 7th U.S. Cavalry at the Battle of the Little Big Horn.

**1878**
Census Office publishes the first annual Statistical Abstract.

## 1880

**Francis Amasa Walker**
**(1879–1881)**

Population
**50,189,209**

**JULY 4, 1881** Booker T. Washington opens the Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University) in Tuskegee, AL.

**Charles W. Seaton**
**(1881–1885)**

**SEPTEMBER 4, 1882** Thomas Edison's Pearl Street Station in New York City, NY, begins generating electricity for public use.

**JUNE 17, 1885** The Statue of Liberty arrives in New York Harbor from France.

Specially trained supervisors and enumerators replace U.S. Marshals to collect census data.

**MAY 31, 1889** A flood in Johnstown, PA, kills more than 2,200 people after rain destroys the South Fork Dam.

## 1890

**Robert Percival Porter**
**(1889–1893)**

Population
**62,979,766**

**JANUARY 1, 1892** The Ellis Island Immigration Station in New York Harbor opens as the main immigration center on

**Carroll D. Wright**
**(1893–1897)**

Herman Hollerith's electric tabulator speeds tabulation of data.

First use of administration records to collect data on the recorded indebtedness of private corporations and individuals.

the east coast.

**MAY 1–OCTOBER 30, 1893** More than 25 million people visit the World Columbian Exposition in Chicago, IL.

**NOVEMBER 5, 1895** George B. Selden received the first U.S. patent for the automobile.

**APRIL 25–AUGUST 12, 1898** The Spanish-American War

## Census Directors

**William Rush Merriam**
**(1899–1903)**

**Simon Newton Dexter North**
**(1903–1909)**

### 1900

Population
**76,212,168**

**1902**
The U.S. Census Bureau becomes a permanent agency within the U.S. Department of the Interior. The next year it moves to the U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor.

**1905**
First inter-decennial census of manufacturing establishments

**SEPTEMBER 8, 1900** The deadliest natural disaster in U.S. history strikes Galveston, TX, when a hurricane kills 8,000.

**DECEMBER 17, 1903** The Wright Brothers successfully fly a controlled, powered, and sustained heavier-than-air airplane at Kitty Hawk, NC.

**APRIL 18, 1906** An earthquake kills 3,000 people and destroys 80 percent of San Francisco, CA.

**OCTOBER 1, 1908** Ford Motor Company begins production of the Model T.

**Edward Dana Durand**
**(1909–1913)**

**William J. Harris**
**(1913–1915)**

**Samuel Lyle Rogers**
**(1915–1921)**

### 1910

Population
**92,228,496**

Questions about "Mother-Tongue" and Civil War veteran status asked.

**1913**
The Census Bureau stays in the Department of Commerce after its split from the Department of Labor.

**1917–1918**
Census Bureau conducts "emergency censuses" of vital industries, including steel, wool, leather, and explosives to support the war effort.

**APRIL 14–15, 1912** RMS Titanic strikes an iceberg and sinks in the North Atlantic Ocean.

**AUGUST 15, 1914** The SS Ancon makes the first official transit of the Panama Canal.

**APRIL 6, 1917–NOVEMBER 11, 1918** United States involvement in World War I.

**JANUARY 16, 1919** Ratificaton of the 18th Amendment which prohibits the "manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors."

### 1920

Population
**106,021,537**

First time majority of U.S. population lives in urban areas.

**1921–1927**
Economic growth and need for economic data result in biennial censuses of manufacturing in 1921, 1923, 1925, and 1927.

**William Mott Steuart**
**(1921–1933)**

**AUGUST 18, 1920** Ratification of the 19th Amendment which gives women the right to vote.

**FEBRUARY 14, 1924** IBM Corporation founded, in part from Herman Hollerith's Tabulating Machine Company.

**MAY 21, 1927** Charles Lindbergh lands his airplane "Spirit of St. Louis" in Paris, successfully completing the first trans-Atlantic flight.

**OCTOBER 29, 1929** Crash of the stock market signals the beginning of the Great Depression.

### 1930

Population
**123,202,624**

**1933**
Census of selected service industries conducted as part of the New Deal programs.

**1937**
The Census Bureau studies the use of statistical sampling and conducts a census of unemployment.

**William Lane Austin**
**(1933–1941)**

**MARCH 3, 1931** The Star-Spangled Banner designated as the national anthem.

**DECEMBER 5, 1933** The 21st Amendment repeals the prohibition on the sale of alcohol.

**MAY 6, 1937** The German airship Hindenburg bursts into flames over Lakehurst Naval Air Station, NJ.

**JUNE 25, 1938** The Fair Labor Standards Act establishes a minimum wage, overtime pay, and regulates employment for minors.

### 1940

**James Clyde Capt**
**(1941–1949)**

Population
**132,164,569**

First use of statistical sampling during a decennial census.

**1942**
Census Bureau headquarters moves to Suitland, MD.

**1945**
Introduction of the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) manual for classifying industries.

**SEPTEMBER 28, 1941** Ted Williams is the last player to end the season with a .400 batting average.

**DECEMBER 7, 1941–SEPTEMBER 2, 1945** United States involvement in World War II.

**JANUARY 10, 1946** First meeting of the United Nations General Assembly.

**OCTOBER 14, 1947** Chuck Yeager becomes the first man to break the sound barrier while flying the experimental Bell X-1 at Mach 1.

### 1950

Population

Roy Victor Peel

**Roy Victor Peel**
**(1950–1953)**

**151,325,798**

First enumeration of Americans abroad, including U.S. armed forces and federal civilian personnel.

**1951**
Census Bureau receives UNIVAC I, the first nonmilitary computer.

**1953**
The Census Bureau develops the Film Optical Sensing Device for Input to Computers (FOSDIC) to replace punch cards.

**JUNE 25, 1950–JULY 27, 1953** United States involvement in Korean War.

**APRIL 15, 1955** Ray Kroc opens the first franchised McDonald's in Des Plaines, IL.

**MAY 31, 1955** U.S. Supreme Court orders the integration of all public schools.

**Robert Wilbur Burgess**
**(1953–1961)**

**1958**
The Data Processing Division opens in Jeffersonville, IN.

**APRIL 9, 1959** NASA selects seven military pilots to be the first astronauts.

### 1960

**Population**

**Richard M. Scammon**
**(1961–1965)**

**179,323,175**

Populations in urban areas receive questionnaires by mail before enumerator visits.

**1963**
First census of transportation

**A. Ross Eckler**
**(1965–1969)**

**1967**
Congress changes economic census years to those ending in "2" and "7."

**1967–1968**
Development of Dual Independent Map Encoding (DIME) to enable computerized geography

**AUGUST 13, 1961** The Berlin Wall isolates West Berlin from surrounding Communist-controlled East Germany.

**OCTOBER 1, 1962** James H. Meredith becomes the first black student to attend the University of Mississippi.

**FEBRUARY 9, 1964** The Beatles make their U.S. debut on "The Ed Sullivan Show."

**JULY 20, 1969** Astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin are the first men to land on the moon.

### 1970

**Population**

**George Hay Brown**
**(1969–1973)**

**203,302,031**

Hispanic-origin asked of 5 percent of U.S. population.

**1972**
Introduction of the Survey of Minority-Owned Businesses

**Vincent P. Barabba**
**(1973–1976)**

All data products are available on magnetic computer tape.

**Manuel D. Plotkin**
**(1977–1979)**

**1977**
Introduction of the Survey of Women-Owned Businesses

**OCTOBER 1, 1970** Walt Disney World opens in Orlando, FL.

**JUNE 9, 1973** Secretariat wins the first Triple Crown of horse racing since 1948.

**APRIL 30, 1975** The last American combat personnel—10 U.S. Marines—depart Vietnam.

**JULY 20, 1976** *Viking I* space probe lands on Mars and sends back color photos of the surface.

### 1980

**Population**

**Vincent P. Barabba**
**(1979–1981)**

**226,542,199**

Hispanic-origin asked of all households.

**Bruce Chapman**
**(1981–1983)**

**John G. Keane**
**(1984–1987)**

95 percent of U.S. households receive mailout/mailback questionnaires.

**APRIL 12, 1980** The United States Olympic Committee votes to boycott the Summer Olympics in Moscow in response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

**AUGUST 12, 1981** IBM introduces the first personal computer, the IBM 5150.

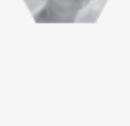**JANUARY 28, 1986** The Space Shuttle *Challenger* explodes 74 seconds after liftoff.

**NOVEMBER 9, 1989** East Germany opens the Berlin Wall, allowing its citizens to move freely between East and West Germany.

### 1990

**Population**

**Barbara Everitt Bryant**
**(1989–1993)**

**248,709,873**

Topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing (TIGER) system creates a digital geographic database of the nation.

**Martha Farnsworth Riche**
**(1994–1998)**

First CD-ROMs containing census data released.

**1997**
The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) replaces the Standard Industrial Classification System.

**1998**
The Data Processing Division in Jeffersonville, IN, changes its name to the National Processing Center.

**AUGUST 1, 1990–FEBRUARY 28, 1991** U.S. participation in Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm.

**DECEMBER 25, 1991** Dissolution of the Soviet Union.

**APRIL 19, 1995** Domestic terrorists explode a bomb outside the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, OK, killing 168 people.

**JULY 5, 1996** In Scotland, Dolly the sheep is the first cloned mammal.

### 2000

**Population**

**Kenneth Prewitt**
**(1998–2001)**

**281,421,906**

Multiple responses to the race question permitted. First use of a paid advertising campaign.

**Charles Louis Kincannon**
**(2002–2008)**

**2005**
The annual American Community Survey replaces the decennial census long form.

**Steve H. Murdock**
**(2008–2009)**

**2007**
Publication of first statistical atlas of the United States since 1920.

**SEPTEMBER 11, 2001** Hijacked airliners crash into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and a field in Shanksville, PA. In response, United States and allies invade Afghanistan.

**OCTOBER 23, 2001** Apple Computer debuts a digital music device called the "iPod."

**MARCH 19, 2003** The Iraq War begins.

**AUGUST 25–29, 2006** Hurricane Katrina, the costliest hurricane in U.S. history, hits the Gulf coast from Florida to Texas.

**Robert M. Groves**
**(2009–2012)**

**John H. Thompson**
**(2013–2017)**

**Steven D. Dillingham**
**(2019–)**

Population
308,745,538

2010

Releases of 5-year American
Community Survey estimates

Releases of first same-sex
household data.

**MAY 7, 2012** Nevada grants the first testing license for a
driverless car.

**FEBRUARY 2013** Scientists at Cornell University grow
a living human ear using cow cells and a 3-D printer.

**NOVEMBER 2, 2016** The Chicago
Cubs win the World Series for
the first time since 1908.