

# Census Gap Alternatives

*LaDonna Garner, M.A.*

Leafseeker Consulting

Historic Consultant  
PO Box 124, French Village, MO 63036

[leafseeker.com](http://leafseeker.com)

*While your ancestors may have been migratory or stationary, the intervals between the census years can be challenging. Consider alternative records that aid the census gaps!*

*The loss of the 2 June 1890 census schedule begins a 20-year dilemma!*

The U.S. government's recording of families each decade has long been the foundation of genealogical projects. Census schedules offer an opportunity to glean data collected from many U.S. regions since 1790.

**Identify types of records that share information useful for alternative uses are similar to the census. Maybe better!**



United States. Bureau of the Census. Rural visit by a U.S. Census taker in connection with the 16th decennial census of 1940. 1940. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

**Common information that may be on a census schedule (population):**

- Residence
- Name
- Relationship to the Head of Household
- Age
- Race
- Date of Birth
- Place of Birth
- Marriage
- Place of Births for Parents'
- Citizenship
- Occupation
- Disability
- Military Service
- Education
- Land Ownership

**Where do you start?**

1. Review and determine the family information that is known and unknown.
2. Consider the use of a timeline assisted by a brainstorming map.
3. Realize there may be alternative records available for evaluation.

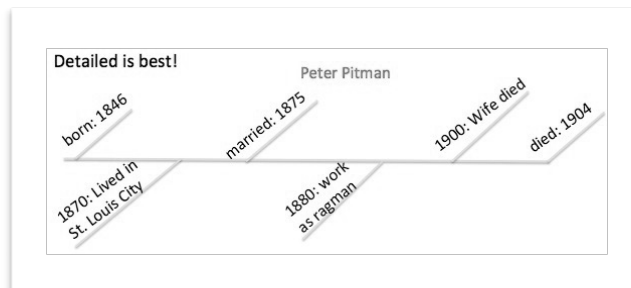


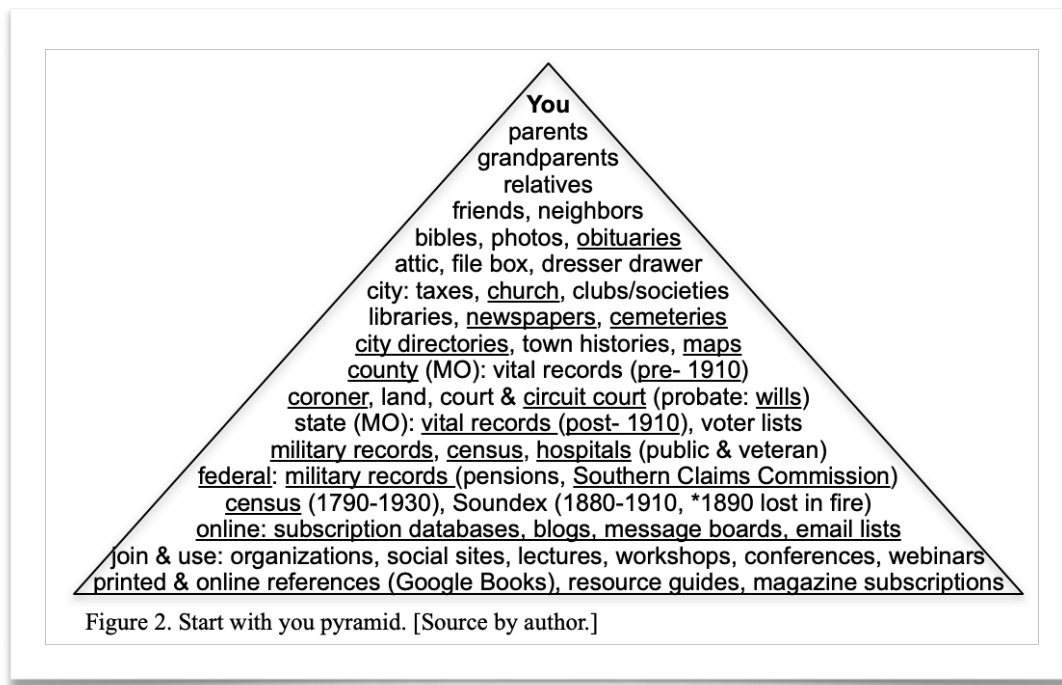
Figure 1. Example of detailed timeline. [Source by author.]

## Migration

*Does the family emerge in the 1900 census far from their 1880 place of origin?*

Consider sources which may note reasons for a family's departure from their previous location.

1. Occupation & Other Opportunities
2. Migration Waves
3. State Statutes (Laws)



### Verification of Residence(s)

*Is there a question of the family's whereabouts between the decades?*

The census may not be the only record of their existence within a community.

1. Citizenship & Social Records
2. Indigent Records
3. Residential Records

- ❖ *California State Library - Sacramento Co, Sacramento, California, Pioneer Index File (1906–1934); A–Z.* Sacramento, California: California State Library.
- ❖ “California, U.S., Voter Registers, 1866-1898.” Ancestry. <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2221/> : accessed 12 August 2023.

### Identifying Family Relationships

*Are the vital records that link generation to generation missing or no longer survive?*

Families left trails not easily locatable or digitized online.

- |                                  |                                 |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Alternatives to vital records | 3. Name Changes and Alterations |
| 2. Organizational Records        | 4. Newspaper Chatter            |

### Record Loss

*Did the courthouse in your ancestral locality have a record loss?*

First, start with understanding what damage was done and what was reconstructed.

- ❖ “Burned Counties Research,” *FamilySearch*. [https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Burned\\_Counties\\_Research](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Burned_Counties_Research)

### *Staggering through the lost census of 1890?*

Consider which records survived and what records may aid as a replacement for the time-period.

\* The 1890 population schedule was damaged by fire on 10 January 1921. The following states have select schedules that have survived: AL, DC, GA, IL, MN, NC, NJ, NY, OH, SD, and TX.

- ❖ United States Census Bureau. “Availability of 1890 Census.” [https://www.census.gov/history/www/genealogy/decennial\\_census\\_records/availability\\_of\\_1890\\_census.html](https://www.census.gov/history/www/genealogy/decennial_census_records/availability_of_1890_census.html) : accessed 12 August 2023.
- ❖ “1890 Census Substitute.” Ancestry. <https://search.ancestry.com/search/group/1890census> : accessed 12 August 2023.
- ❖ “United States Census, 1890.” FamilySearch. <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1610551> : accessed 12 August 2023.

### **Additional Resources**

Garner, LaDonna. “Resources.” Leafseeker Consulting. <https://leafseeker.com/resources>

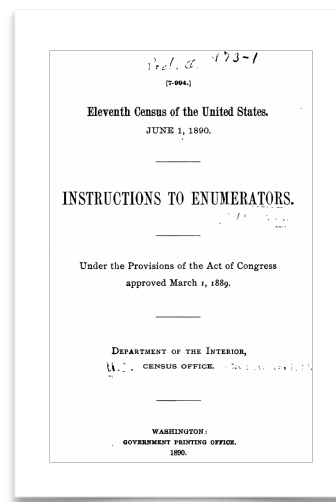
Hinckley, Kathleen W. *Your Guide to the Federal Census for genealogists, researchers, and family historian*. Cincinnati, Ohio: Better Way Books, 2002.

Quillen, W. Daniel. *Mastering Census & Military Records*. Cold Spring Harbor, NY: Cold Spring Press; 3rd ed. edition, 2014.

Sperry, Kip. *Reading Early American Handwriting*. 2nd ed. Baltimore, Maryland: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2001.

Szucs, Loretto Dennis. *Finding Answers in U.S. Census Records*. Orem, UT: Ancestry Publishing Co., 2002.

United States Census Bureau. “1890 Census Instructions to Enumerators.” Washington, D.C. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/technical-documentation/questionnaires/1890/1890-instructions.html> : accessed 12 August 2023.



United States Census Bureau. “Decennial Census by Decade: 1890.” Washington, D.C. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/decade.1890.html#list-tab-693908974> : last revised 4 August 2022.