

## 1930

**Object:** Microfilm of 1930 Census Returns



The strong culture of [confidentiality](#) at the Census Bureau has grown over time. In [1790](#), [legislation](#) required U.S. Marshals to post the census returns in two public places for people to check their accuracy. However, as the people's sense of their right to privacy increased, so did Census Bureau protections. In 1810, the U.S. Marshals acting as census takers collected data on manufactures for the first time. Business owners were so reluctant to share that information in [1810](#) and [1820](#), that the data was no considered reliable and Congress removed the question in [1830](#). When it added it back in [1840 Census](#), the [enumerator instructions](#) specifically instructed the marshals that their data was confidential and that no one would be able to identify a specific business from their answers.

By [1850](#), the census responses were no longer posted publicly, and Census Superintendent [Joseph C.G. Kennedy](#) specifically [instructed enumerators](#) to consider all communication "relative to the business of the people" as strictly confidential. In 1880, temporary enumerators replaced U.S. Marshals as the census takers, and everyone involved with the census took an [oath](#) to protect personal information of the respondents. With each subsequent census, these protections grew stronger and by the [1910 Census](#), enumerators who revealed personal information faced jail time. Even the presidential proclamations formally recognized the right to personal information privacy. However, the Census Bureau did have the discretion to share information with other government agencies at his discretion, most specifically during World War I and World War II.

[Title 13](#) of the U.S. Code, enacted in 1954, guarantees that neither the Census Bureau nor anyone ever employed by the Census Bureau will release any personal information from the census returns under penalty of fines and jail time. However, personal information may be released to the individual, their heirs, or legal representatives in certain specific [circumstances](#), such as for age verification.

After a [1921 fire](#) destroyed most of the 1890 Census, Census Bureau librarian [Mary Oursler](#) worked to preserve the records, even as she fiercely safeguarded access to them. Since 1934, all returns are held by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), which has the sole authority to release decennial census records after [72 years](#). It was under NARA's authority that all extant census records were microfilmed and preserved in the 1930s—they have continued to preserve the records in all formats ever since. Currently, all existing records from [1790-1940](#) are available to the public. NARA will release the 1950 records in April 2022.

**Final population count: 123,202,624**

