

NAVIGATING THE NEW YORK CENSUS WITH FEWER TEARS

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Census schedules are one of the more important resources of genealogists. The best known and most accessible is the United States (US or Federal) census, taken every ten years since 1790. A number of private companies provide digital images of those schedules, name indexes, and online search engines. Those census films are also available from many libraries and all National Archives branches.

Many States have also independently enumerated their populations, including New York State (NY). Those schedules usually are not online, lack name indexes, and are often difficult to access; thus they may be underused as genealogy reference sources. We hope to change that for New York City (NYC). In 1905 there were over 80 million people in the US, and about one in 20 as well as half or more of the US Jewish population were in NYC, so any advances in finding the region's genealogy records is bound to help a large number of researchers.

Because the early 20th century was a time of great immigration into the US from eastern Europe, we decided to limit our research and utilities to just the last three NY State censuses (1905, 1915, 1925) and just to NYC. After discussing some census background, New York geography, the different meanings for "ED," and where to find old addresses, we will turn our attention to the logistics of the 20th century NY State enumerations and what contributed to their demise. Newspaper reports of the time indicated it wasn't always easy to enumerate an immigrant population, distrustful of authority.

Because there was only one (previous) name index (Staten Island 1925) to the NYC census years in question, one has to find the Assembly District (AD) and Election District

(ED) that a family lived within, convert that into the necessary census film number (available from the Family History Library (FHL) and some other libraries), and then finally access the films. Knowing what resources are available, actually getting such resources, and then interpreting them to find the AD/EDs can be a chore. We will discuss those methods, including the single name index, AD/ED maps, address cards filmed by the FHL, address to AD/ED tables, and compilations that past researchers have done to provide tables of street names within AD/EDs. In addition, the borough newspapers may have published boundary descriptions of the Election Districts for at least the 1904 elections, and those also could provide geographical strategies for finding AD/EDs. Finally, it is possible to come up with a list of AD/EDs specific to the different communities of Queens and Staten Island to at least narrow the choices of possible EDs to search.

After discussing these far flung resources, we will show how the One Step Team now provides in one online site databases and search utilities for NYC 1905/1915/1925 AD/ED numbers. Specific examples of searches using One Step utilities will be shown (address, cross street, and Brooklyn 1925 name index). Of interest is the 1925 State Census which asked where and when citizenship was awarded, and we will discuss that aspect of the Census, as well as correlating this approach with New York City Voter Registration information.

Finally, we will discuss two unusual problems we encountered during the database transcriptions: diagonal boundaries of Manhattan EDs and the large number of Queens streets that have been renamed and renumbered. We provide some solutions to both problems.

We expect that researchers attending the lecture will, at the end, have a better idea of what's in the NY State Census, how it was carried out and eventually stopped, how to quickly and (hopefully) painlessly find AD/ED numbers from addresses on the Morse One Step website for NYC for our target years, and how to access those census schedules. Below are the URLs of the utilities, and also the website addresses of the FAQ sections where much of this material is further explained to the researcher.

Website References:

Morse One Step NYC Utilities and FAQs

<http://www.stevemorse.org/nyc/nyc.php>

<http://www.stevemorse.org/nyc/faq.htm>

<http://www.stevemorse.org/brooklyn/brooklyn.html>

<http://www.stevemorse.org/brooklyn/faqb.htm>

Morse One Step NYC Street Changes and Property Searches

<http://www.stevemorse.org/census/changes.html>

NY State Census Information

<http://www.frontiernet.net/~halsey1/ny/ny-census.htm>

<http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/genealogy/nyscens.htm>

1915 State Enumerator Instructions (scanned booklet)

http://www.midyork.org/woodgate/wg_hist_rec/wg_history_1915_enumerators_handbook/index.htm

Family History Library Keyword Film Searches

http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Library/fhlcatalog/supermainframeset.asp?display=keywordsearch&columns=*,0,0

Finding addresses, a help list:

Naturalization Records; Birth, death, and marriage certificates; School and religious records; Employment Records; Letters and other correspondence; Scrapbooks, diaries, photos; City Directories; Federal Census Sheets; WWI Draft Cards, men 18-45 (1917-1918); New York 1917 Military Census for men 18-45, available for Manhattan at the New York County Clerk's Office (Division of Old Records) and for Brooklyn at the Kings County Clerk's Office.

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