

NON-POPULATION CENSUS SCHEDULES: DESCRIPTION, ACCESSIBILITY AND DISPOSITION

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INTRODUCTION

Numerous articles emphasize the value of the federal population schedules of the decennial census as a source of family and community history. While a few publications of the National Archives and histories of the Census Bureau describe both the population and non-population schedules, many researchers remain unaware of the existence of the non-population or economic census schedules. Probably the most recognized work which used both types of schedules exists in the samples completed by Robert Gallman and William N. Parker¹. Using the Agricultural Census schedules and population schedules, Gallman and Parker studied farming practices in the South, pairing information on

farms as reported on the agricultural and population schedules. As researchers make increasing use of census data and become aware of the existence of schedules, both the population and non-population, questions arise about their content, availability and use.

The non-population schedules are similar in both limitations and usefulness. Census officials designed the population schedules to measure the demographic status of the population while they devised the non-population schedules to determine its social and economic condition. The non-population schedules collected data on industrial, agricultural, and social development of the nation. By finding and exploring the extant non-population schedules, congressional documents, depart-

mental reports, instruction to census enumerators and through correspondence with National Archives and Census Bureau staff, a description can be given on the content and accessibility of the non-population schedules. In addition, this paper will examine the federal document disposal policies which play an important role in the availability of the non-population census schedules.

DESCRIPTION OF THE NON-POPULATION SCHEDULES

Until 1950 when the laws concerning the census were codified², acts of Congress prescribed what aspects each decennial census should address. These laws included provision for a temporary office responsible for designing the schedules (questionnaires), collecting the data, and publishing the statistical results. Not until 1902 did Congress establish a permanent Census Bureau.

In 1790 and 1800, the census collected only population data, but in 1810 a special law directed the Secretary of the Treasury to collect information on the several manufacturing establishments. The Treasurer's Office did not design or

use printed schedules. Census agents asked different questions and recorded the information in a variety of ways. The statistical report issued received considerable criticism. The "count of products of industry," in 1820 received similar criticism although enumerators used fourteen uniform questions concerning the nature and names of items made, market value, kind of product, quality of machinery, capital investment, wages, expenses and general observations. Unfortunately, the count did not use printed forms, and enumerators often recorded the data on small note tablets or whatever they happened to have at hand. Some enumerators collected information by individual establishment; most recorded it by local area or county. The 1830 census collected only population data because of the disappointing results of the manufacturing counts in 1810 and 1820. In 1840, the census did include a set of printed schedules entitled "Schedules of Mines, Agriculture, Commerce, Manufacturers, etc", but the methods used to collect the data caused more criticism and complaints of inaccuracy. Data remained only at the county level³.

The 1850 Census used

improved statistical methodology and printed schedules by individual establishment. The Census Bureau has since made additional improvements, revised and expanded the questions, and enlarged the scope of coverage, but use of schedules remain basically unchanged. Carroll Wright, in his History and Growth of the United States Census describes the items covered in the schedules through 1890. Wright details the content of each census and provides a facsimile of each schedule used. Wright also describes census coverage by subject. For instance under education, Wright states "at the census of 1840, the population schedule contained four inquiries to schools, etc.....The schedule for Social Statistics called for a return concerning colleges, academics and schools of 8 details at the censuses of 1850 and 1860 and of 10 details at the census of 1870."⁴

The term Manufacturers (or industry as used in most of the early censuses) should be interpreted broadly. The instructions to enumerators stated for the 1850 Products of Industry:

"all kinds of mercantile, commercial or trading business, where no specific

article, is produced or manufactured but which are not confined to dealing and exchange of articles of merchandise or manufacture are to be included in this schedule."⁵

These instructions to enumerators, included in Wright through 1890, help in determining the usefulness of the particular schedule. Notes in the 1880 and 1890 censuses explain that the schedules are to include mechanical trades, such as blacksmithing, coopering, and carpentering. It is also helpful to look at the topics covered. The Table below summarizes the questions asked manufacturers between 1850 and 1880:

Table #1:

**SUMMARY OF
MANUFACTURING
INQUIRIES
1850-1880⁶**

Name of corporation, company or individual producing articles to the annual value of \$500.

Name of business, manufacture of product.

Capital invested in real or personal estate in the business.

Raw materials used, including fuel quantities, kinds, values.

Kind of motive power, machinery, structure or resource.

Average number of hands employed male, female, children and youth.

Wages and hours of labor.

Production: kinds, quantities, values.

Months of active operation.

The 1880 manufacturer's survey also included additional special schedules which analyzed ten industries: boot and shoe factories, cheese and butter factories, flouring and grist mills, salt works, lumber mills and sawmills, brick yards and tile works, paper mills, coal mills, agricultural implement works, and quarries.

The schedules for Agriculture from 1850 to 1880 surveyed farms for a variety of data: the number of

livestock by type; bushels of cereal grain and various crops including wools, hops, potatoes, hay and tobacco, cotton, silk and sugar; information concerning use of land, value of farm, machinery, and livestock. In 1880, the Agricultural Census included several special questionnaires concerning the production of cereals, cotton, forestry products, fruit growing and meat products. The special schedules included in the 1890 surveyed agricultural organizations, irrigation and viticulture.

The census takers gathered data on mortality in 1850, 1860, and 1870 through the use of questionnaires but in 1880 and 1890 this information was deduced from registration records for vital events in most states. The mortality schedules asked for name of persons who had died within the past 12 months. These surveys also reported the month and cause of death which has been used by some researchers to investigate the spread of certain diseases. However, many researchers have questioned the reliability of the mortality schedules.

The census included surveys for social statistics in 1850, 1860 and 1870, inquiring into the number of

schools by type, students, libraries, and prisoners, among others. The Census Office gathered the data by correspondence in 1880 and 1890 from these institutions. Surveys recorded the information by county.

Supplemental schedules of 1880 provided a count of criminals, paupers, and other dependent classes. Much of this data had been covered in early censuses but in either the social or general population schedules.

A compilation such as Wright's does not exist for enumerations after 1890, but sample schedules appear in the statistical volumes published by the Census Bureau, as do, for the most part, the instructions to enumerators. For example the 1900 Census of Manufacturers instructions provided a hypothetical case with an illustrated schedule. The sample schedule for Irrigation in 1930 is concise enough to include directions and an explanation and is included here⁷.

ACCESSIBILITY

While microfilming some of the later schedules, the National Archives staff found that most of the raw data gathered in 1820 had been bound in the volumes for 1840 and

included it on the microfilm for 1840. Fragments of the 1810 manufacturing appear on the microfilm of the 1810 population schedules.

The Census Bureau offered the original non-population schedules for 1850 through 1880 to non-federal repositories in 1919 in an effort to lessen the accumulation of papers in the Census Office. Many have not been microfilmed, but as the National Archives obtains microfilm copies, they will be made available through the NARS microfilm program.

Non-population schedules for the 1890 census no longer exist. Fire badly damaged the schedules for "mortality, crime, pauperism (deaf, blind, insane, etc.) and a portion of the transportation and insurance" in March, 1896 and, according to Carrol Wright, what remained was destroyed by order of the Department of the Interior⁸. A fire in the Commerce Building on January 10, 1921 destroyed the manufacturers and social schedules as well as nearly all of the population schedules for 1890. The Census Bureau had transferred the schedules for veterans, to the Pension Bureau before the fire; that transfer saved them. The Census Bureau also transferred the

Agricultural schedules for 1890 to the Department of Agriculture but apparently the USDA disposed of them at a later date⁹.

Generally, the non-population schedules for 1900 and later are not available for use. Non-population manuscript schedules are not part of the arrangement between the Bureau of the Census and the National Archives which permits the release of population schedules after 72 years. A summarized inventory of the major non-population schedules and their location, and any restrictions placed on their availability or use appears below:

Table #2

**LOCATION OF
NON-POPULATION
SCHEDULES 1900-**

Agriculture

1900	Destroyed
1910	Generally destroyed, but some schedules (e.g. tobacco) in NARS <NNFG paper>
1917	Virgin Islands in NARS <NNFG paper>
1920	Generally destroyed, but some schedules in NARS (mostly territories) <NNFG paper>
1925	Destroyed

1930	General schedules destroyed except for territories, but some special schedules and those for drainage and irrigation are in NARS <NNFG paper>
1935	Destroyed
1935	Puerto Rico in NARS <NNFG paper>
1940	Destroyed
1950	Destroyed
1950	Destroyed
1954	Destroyed
1959	Agriculture Division (special surveys)
1961	Tax and Mortgage Survey <FRC>
1964	<FRC>
1969	<FRC>

Manufacturing

1900-27	Manufactures and Mineral Industries Destroyed
1929	Census of Distribution (part of the 15th Decennial Census) in NARS <NNFG paper>
1931/2	Census of Manufactures in NARS <NNFG paper>
1935	Business in NARS <NNFG paper> Business in NARS <NNFN micro film> Manufactures in NARS <NNFG paper>

- Manufactures in NARS
<NNFN microfilm>
- 1937-39 Destroyed
- 1947 Manufactures in
NARS <microfilm>
- 1951 Annual Survey of
Manufacturers
<EPC>
- 1954 Destroyed
- 1956 Annual Survey of
Manufacturers
<EPC>
- 1958 Manufactures
<FRC>
- 1963 Business <FRC>
Manufactures <FRC>
- 1967 Business <FRC>
Manufactures <FRC>
Transportation <FRC>
- 1972 Business <FRC>
Manufactures <FRC>
Transportation
<FRC>

HOUSING

- 1940 Destroyed
- 1950 SCARF <FRC>
- 1960 <FRC>
- 1970 <FRC>
- 1980 <FRC> Jeffersonville

MINERAL INDUSTRIES

- 1900-27 Manufactures and
Mineral Industries

- Destroyed
- 1939 (bituminous Coal
only) NARS microfilm
- 1954 <FRC>
- 1958 <NARS Industry Division>

RELIGIOUS BODIES

- 1906 Destroyed
- 1916 Destroyed
- 1926 NARS <NNFG paper>

ABBREVIATIONS

- NNFG = General Branch, NARS.
- NNFN = Scientific, Economic, and
Natural Resources Branch,
NARS.
- FRC = Federal Records Center
(Materials in FRC are still
under control of the Census
Bureau. 13 USC 8 & 9 makes
no provision for release).

DISPOSITION

The extant schedules represent a small portion of those designed and used by the Census Bureau. Congress first enacted disposal legislation on February 16, 1889 establishing procedures whereby agencies could prepare lists of accumulated files no longer needed or having no "permanent value of historical interest"¹⁰. Agencies could sell these papers as waste

upon approval of the Joint Committee on the Disposition of Useless Executive Papers. An amendment of March 3, 1895 applied the procedure to any papers located in government buildings.

By 1912, agencies realized that additional oversight of the disposal process was necessary. President Taft issued Executive Order 1499 which required an appraisal of the disposal lists by the Librarian of Congress to assure that documents of value were preserved. Congress, however, passed numerous laws between 1889 and 1934 which gave specific agencies authority to dispose of records directly and made it possible to bypass any list-making or review by the Librarian of Congress. Even with the passage of the National Archives Act in 1934, some confusion persisted between the new law and previous legislation.

Congress, revised the law on August 5, 1939 and specified that federal agencies submit lists to the National Archivist, who would appraise the material and submit a descriptive list to the Joint Committee for final approval at the beginning of each session of Congress. Although revised and amended, the law retained the Joint Committee's

role until 1970, when the General Services Administration in collaboration with the National Archivist gained authority to approve disposition of useless papers. The law required the administrator of GSA to file an annual report describing the records to be disposed of and to consult with the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration concerning any uncertainties. Below appears a sampling of non-population schedules disposed of under the provisions of these laws and the citation to the congressional documents authorizing the action.

Table #3

DISPOSAL DOCUMENTS OF NON-POPULATION CENSUS SCHEDULES

Schedule	Census Record (Serial set) & Date	Date Disposal
	Agricultural	
1900	H. Doc 62-460 [6325]	1-17-1919
1910	H. Rept 6-750 [7653]	3-19-1920
1920	H. Rept 6-2300 [8689]	3-2-1927
1925 & 1935	H. Rept 81-3180 [11385]	12-8-1950

1930 H. Rept 8-301 [11496]
4-9-51

1940 H. Rept 8-1467 [11739]
4-1-1954

Manufacturers

1900 H. Doc 62-460 [6325]

1910 [7447]

In retrospect, the decision to discard these records seems regrettable. The storage of governmental records had become a serious problem by the turn of the century but discussion concerning the need for records management and a centralized archives barely had started. In discussing Taft's Executive Order 1499, the Librarian of Congress in his 1912 annual report emphasized the need for an archives by saying "The problem of disposing of the bulk of Government archives (i.e.—the administrative records proper) can be solved only by the erection of a centralized archives building¹¹."

The Director of the Census repeatedly emphasized in his annual report the drastic need for better storage conditions to avoid "irreparable loss" of the records. His 1915/16 report clearly illustrates the problems of housing the schedules, both population and non-population.

"At present these schedules are stored in four places—

the eighth floor of the Commerce Building; the fireproof vault in the basement; a portion of the basement outside the vault; and the old Armory Building at the corner of Fifteen and E Street NW.

One end of the vault is next to the boiler room, and all the steam pipes for one side of the building pass through it. For this reason, the temperature—although the windows are left open and the steam kept shut off from the radiators—cannot be brought below 90 F while the heating plant is in operation. It is, therefore, almost impossible for a clerk to work in the vault, and particularly in the end next to the boiler room, for more than a few minutes at a time; and the records are rapidly deteriorating because of the heat, in spite of the fact that a large number of buckets of water are kept standing in the vault in order to moisten the atmosphere. The roofs and walls of the old Armory Building are leaky, and some

of the records there have already been so badly injured by the rain that portions of them are obliterated¹²."

The problem was not illusory: the 1900 Agricultural Census schedules consisted of 100 tons of paper. The 1910 Agricultural Census contained 6 million schedules; the 1900 Manufacturers Census, 500,000 schedules; and the Irrigation Census of 1900, one million schedules. These represent a small portion of the records which would have had to be stored if not discarded.

The 1921 annual report of the Director of the Census Bureau illustrates the conflict between the preservation of records and the problem of storage:

"The census schedules contain a vast amount of unpublished information that is of great value in study the agricultural, industrial and social conditions in various states and cities¹³."

In the next paragraph the report states:

"At the same time the accumulation of papers which have very little or no probable value should be avoided;

and the Bureau, endeavoring to carry out this policy with due discrimination, obtained from Congress authority for the destruction of the agricultural schedules of the 1910 census¹⁴."

According to the Frederick Bohme, historian at the Census Bureau, the Bureau apparently adopted a practice of keeping "the records for which there was demand" (population schedules, used heavily to verify age and citizenship) and to "destroy the rest as a space-saving measure." Thus the Census Bureau resolved their problem. Even so when Congress authorized the disposal of the schedules for 1850-1880, the Daughters of the American Revolution and other organizations prevented their destruction, forcing the Bureau to offer these records to other repositories. In particular, Alexander Graham Bell "protested strenuously against a proposal in the House of Representatives to destroy or sell for wastepaper all census population schedules, past, present, and future¹⁵."

With the increasing use of the manuscript population schedules, the historical value of census schedules is questioned only rarely. The dis-

posal of many of the non-population schedules may increase the value of those remaining or lessen it since no time series would be available.

Because many early non-population schedules remain difficult to access, historians may want to encourage completion of microfilm programs especially for 1850- 1880. The larger question remains as to what practices should be sought for the future and what the historical community will do to encourage funding for preservation of those still extant schedules from the early 1900's. It is clear some action is necessary if these documents, either located in state repositories for 1850-1880 or in the federal centers for 1900 to present, are to be preserved and microfilmed.

REFERENCES

1. Gallman, Robert and William N. Parker. Parker-Gallman sample. This sample was conducted under the support of the National Science Foundation. See Wright, Gavin. "Note on the Manuscript Census Samples Used in These Studies." Agricultural History, Vol. 44 (January 1970): 95-100.
2. 63 Stat 441.
3. Note: All three statistical reports are available on microfilm of the Census Bureau, National Archives Microfilm Reel M-11.
4. Wright, Carroll D. History and Growth of the United States Census. Prepared for the Senate Committee on the Census. Senate Document 194. Serial set 3856. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office. 1900. p. 117.
5. Wright, p. 313.
6. Created from Wright, appendix.
7. U.S. Census Bureau. Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930. Agriculture. Vol. IV. General Report. Statistics by subjects. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1932. p.483-4.
8. The Census Office was assigned to the president for 1790; to the Secretary of State for 1800, 1810, 1820, 1830, and 1820; to the Secretary of Interior for 1850-1900; and to the Secretary of commerce for 1903- .

9. An act passed March 4, 1907 authorized "the Secretary of Agriculture to sell as waste paper or otherwise to dispose of, the accumulation of department files..." The Secretary was not required to record the items disposed of so verification cannot be made but the schedules are no longer extant.
10. Office of the National Archives announced the accession of the schedules for the Census of Manufactures for 1929 and 1935 in Prologue, Spring 1989, p. 94. Arranged by state, thereunder by industry classification number, these records are open and available for research on 833 rolls of microfilm.
11. U.S. Library of Congress. Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress, 1912. Washington, DC: Library of Congress. 1913.
12. U.S. Commerce Department. Report of the Director of the Census, 1915/16, in Annual Report of the Commerce Department, 1915/16. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1916.
13. U.S. Census Bureau. Annual Report of the Director of the Census, 1920/21. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1921. p. 24-25.
14. Ibid.
15. U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Post Office and Civil Service. Regulations for use and transfer of population census records to the National Archives: hearing before the Subcommittee on Census and Population on H.R. 10686. 94th Congress, 1st Session. November 17, 1975. p.11.

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