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The following is an article submitted to us by Tim Bennett. As many of our readers/members enjoy researching, we have periodically published tip/articles by Tim on how to research different topics. Tim Bennett is a member of the historical society and a sixth generation owner of the Warner Homestead farm, located on Buno Road in Brighton Township.

Research Tip: Census Records

The Federal Census for 1950 is now available and with it a wave of new information on the names, ages, occupations, and locales of U.S. residents. The census began in 1790 and have been compiled every ten years. Most census information is available online through searchable indexes with the exception of 1890 that was largely destroyed by fire.

Census records listing residents are one of the most common types of documents known to historical/genealogical researchers. Family groups include not only the head of household, spouse, and children but also other relatives and even hired hands. As census takers went from home to home, these records can sometimes be used in conjunction with plat maps to determine the previous residence of a family by cross referencing census "neighbors" with matching names on the plats.

While these types of records provide an amazing amount of detail, the integrity of the information directly depends on the knowledge of the informant. Not surprisingly, "anomalies" are often found especially when comparing a series of census records for the same family. For example, data provided on the birthplace may differ from census to census depending on who the informant was for the family at the time of each census. In one case, the calculated birth year of an area resident was different in every census from 1850 to 1880.

Other parts of censuses not as well known are the non-population schedules for agriculture, industry, mortality, and social statistics. These schedules were compiled mostly from 1850 to 1890. For researching pioneer ancestors, the agricultural schedule is particularly interesting as it contains details regarding acreage, land use, types and number of livestock, and even crop yields down to the bushel. Taken over a series of decades, researchers can glean the fortunes of a family over time. Those that owned businesses appear in the industry/manufacturing schedule providing similar data related to production and costs during the previous year. Mortality schedules list deaths that occurred during the prior year and may provide data not found elsewhere such as how long the decedent had resided in the state and county. The social statistics schedules include information on residents boarded at asylums or poor-houses.

While censuses in the territory of Michigan began as early as 1710, state censuses didn't start until 1837 after admission to the union. Many of the early records for most counties, though, were unfortunately destroyed. Part of one surviving 19th century state census, conducted in 1894, provides detailed information on veterans of the Civil War.

(Thanks to Tim Bennett for supplying this article to us.)

TABLE 1.—FREE INHABITANTS in the County of _____, St. _____, Assista
enumerated by me, on the _____ day of _____, 1850.

visitation.	Name of every person whose usual place of abode on the first day of June, 1850, was in this family.	DESCRIPTION.									
		Age.	Sex.	Color. White, black, or mu- latto	Profession, occupation, or trade of each male person over 10 years of age.	Value of real estate owned.	Place of birth, naming the State, Territory, or country.	Married within the year.	Attended school within this year.	Persons over 20 years of age who cannot read and write.	
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	

1850 Census Form