



PANNEBAKKER FAMILY NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE PANNEBAKKER FAMILY ASSOCIATION

1950 Census	1-2
Cost comparison	3
Obituary	3

Countdown to the Release of the 1950 U.S. Census

On April 1, 1950, some 150,000 census workers, armed with pencils and thick pads of census schedules, set out to visit every residence in the country. They canvassed neighborhoods on foot or by car. Their goal was to enumerate every person in the country, and that meant some would need dogsleds, canoes, and even rowboats to reach out-of-the-way citizens. It took about a month for census workers (called enumerators) to finish the tally, then additional time for the government to tabulate the results. After completing the census, federal law mandated a 72-year restriction on the records to protect individual privacy. On April 1, 2022, the 1950 U.S. Census will be released to the public, providing a snapshot of history and new insights for genealogical research.

The first decennial census took place in 1790, and the population was nearly 4 million. The population of the city and county of New York was 30,022. By the time the 1950 Census rolled around, the population ballooned to more than 151 million. The Framers of the Constitution wanted population, not wealth, to be the basis for sharing political power, and censuses helped apportion Congressional seats. Over the years, it became evident that gathering additional data while enumerating citizens was useful. It could help community leaders allocate funding for transportation, education, health care, and more. Each census has asked slightly different questions. The 1940 standard census forms had lines for 40 persons. In 1950, this was reduced to 30 lines, allowing enumerators space to take notes on additional sample questions answered by every fifth person. These questions refer to residence one year ago, country of birth of father and mother, whether attending school and highest grade attended. Also, the number of weeks worked in 1949, income in 1949, veteran status (men only) and duration of unemployment.

To prepare for the 1950 Census, the government created detailed aerial maps to identify every dwelling. In January 1950, the call went out for census workers. Requirements included a high school education and the ability to fill out complex census schedules with efficiency and courtesy. Applicants needed to be between 21 and 65 years old, and veterans received preference. Census workers interviewed about 30 families each day, enumerating about 1,110 persons in total. They earned 7 cents for each line of information filled out – or about \$8 a day. At the time, the average family income was \$3,300. Each interview took about 10 minutes, and the job sometimes presented challenges. One census worker reported being hit over the head with a frying pan when the interviewee didn't like her questions. Others reported being bitten by dogs or chased by a swarm of bees. One census worker climbed a 60-foot flagpole to enumerate an ex-paratrooper trying to set a new world record as a flagpole sitter. Sometimes residents hid from census workers or slammed the door in their face. This behavior was illegal and could result in a fine or jail time.

PANNEBAKKER FAMILY NEWS

Census takers uncover many strange things – among them are jobs of unusual nature. There was the woman who gave her trade as “egg-breaker.” For eight hours a day she broke eggs, to be used in bakeries. Another highly specialized job was that of the man who measures the distance of the flight of pigeons. One man ran a “fishworm ranch.” Another worked for a tanner as an “unhairer.” Two others reported as “tooth pick flavorer” and “whistle tester.” In the food industry were found “potato peeler,” in a potato chip factory, a man who spent his days as a “ham sniffer” and one who shot cereal out of a gun.

In 1940, the enumerators sometimes found the question of occupation touchy. One sensitive young girl, when asked the occupation of the head of the household, replied emphatically, “electrician.” When asked as to the kind of business in which he plied his trade, she said reluctantly, “Well, he lights the red lanterns on a sewer construction project.”

While every census is important to genealogists, that of 1950 has its own significance for what it will show about life in the economically expansive post-World War II America.

Between 1945 and 1950, a growing economy and the unparalleled education benefits of the GI Bill resulted in lots of marriages, new households, establishment of families, new employment opportunities and moves to new communities or new states. Census records offer the proof that a genealogist needs to trace family.

In particular, it was in those years that millions of Americans moved south and west, leaving communities where kin had lived for generations. Those years also saw the development of planned communities on what had hitherto been huge plots of empty land. In other words, America was on the move in pursuit of new employment and new housing.

Census schedules will also show segregated neighborhoods and separate and “inherently unequal” circumstances that led to the Civil Rights Movement. Using new, proprietary Artificial Intelligence (AI) handwriting recognition technology, Ancestry® announced that it will deliver a searchable index of the 1950 Census faster than ever before. Volunteers will evaluate census extraction records to ensure accurate results. We anticipate the 1950 U.S. Census will be fully indexed and available to search online this summer.

“The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has digitized and will provide free online access to the 1950 Census population schedules for U.S. states and territories, enumeration district maps, and enumeration district descriptions,” says the archives in a recent release. This free access will be via a link to a dedicated website. For the link, available on April 1, go to www.archives.gov/research/census1950.

However, there is a hitch, and the National Archives is asking the public’s help to clear things up and make the census fully useful. NARA is using a character recognition tool to extract handwritten names and turn them into something more readable.

But this tool is imperfect and will produce results that “will not be 100 percent accurate,” says NARA. So, the public is being asked to go into the census and submit name updates for relatives by using a transcription tool that will be available on the website. For a more complete explanation, visit the National Archives website. Also, on that website will be instruction in how to make a bulk download. Additionally, you’ll find articles of interest for getting the most out of the census, including a list of the questions asked.

PANNEBAKKER FAMILY NEWS

How much your relatives were paying for typical items in 1950 compared to today

	1950	Today
Gallon of gas	\$0.27	\$3.31
Loaf of bread	\$0.14	\$1.50
Can of tomato soup	\$0.10	\$1.00
Hotel room	\$5.90	\$180.00
New car	\$1,300.00	\$25,000.00

Obituary

Daniel L. Pennypacker, 61, of Pottstown, PA, passed away on January 31, 2022, at Pottstown Hospital. Born in Pottstown, PA, Daniel was the son of the late Leonard High Pennypacker and Irene May (Henry) Pennypacker.

Dan graduated from Pottstown High School in 1979, and then worked for Bassett Bedding in Stowe, PA, until the plant closed in 1998. Dan then began working for Superior Metal Products Co., Inc., in Pottstown, PA. In his early years, Dan was an avid bowler and participated in leagues at Jay Lanes and Limerick Bowl, where he successfully bowled several 300 games. He was a devoted sports fan who enjoyed cheering on the Philadelphia Phillies and Dallas Cowboys. Dan also loved spending time with animals and collecting vinyl records.

Dan is lovingly remembered by his siblings, Susan (& Daniel) Costantini, Leslie Pennypacker, David Pennypacker (& Mary Davenport), Beverly (& Mark) Smith, Diane (& Randy) Hartman, Donald (& Debra) Pennypacker, Douglas Pennypacker, Lisa Pennypacker, Theresa Dengler, Roberta (& Douglas) Patrick, and Holly Hubbard; his 15 nieces and nephews; and his 4 great-nephews.

In addition to his mother and father, Dan is predeceased by his sister-in-law, Cynthia Pennypacker.

Officers

President: Ron Pennypacker
520 Loch Alsh Ave.
Ambler, PA 19002
(484) 302-6842
r.pennypacker@yahoo.com

Vice President: Linda Millerick
751 Monterey Salinas Hwy.
Salinas, CA 93908-8953
(831) 484-2834
lmcnealmillerick@yahoo.com

Secretary: Marcea P. Kligman
4170 Summit Way
Marietta, GA 30066-2346
(770) 928-9055
mpklig@bellsouth.net

Treasurer: Ed Pennypacker
271 Hafner Rd.
Royersford, PA 19468
ed@jepcosales.com
Tel 610 948-7867

Membership/ Newsletter/WebMaster/ Genealogy:

Bruce Pennypacker
201 Shady Brook Drive
Langhorne, PA 19047
(215) 380-1748
throwcoach@gmail.com

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Tom Armstrong, Branchburg, NJ
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Pannebakker Family Association



The Pannebakker Family Association is an outgrowth of the family reunion held at Pennypacker Mills, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania on July 2-4, 1999. The reunion celebrated the 300th year wedding anniversary of Hendrick Pannebecker and Eve Umstat, in Germantown, Pennsylvania in the year 1699. In the words of the Steering Committee of the reunion, "We hope that the 1999 Pfannebecker-Umstat Reunion will lead to the growth of a family association, which will provide a forum for conversation, collection and preservation of information, and a sense of lasting community among the heirs of this rich cultural heritage."