

BUT WHICH FAMILY IS MINE?

Written in 2005 so information has probably changed somewhat.

Following the Census Trail from all names to head of household and numbers Published in the Wisconsin State Genealogical Society Newsletter Vol. 51, Number 3, January 2005.

Census records are one of the most valuable tools for locating ancestors and others. Now available on the Internet and typically available with an all name index, the search is easier than in the past. However, locating people in earlier censuses, (1790-1840) when other than the head of the households name and numbers in age and sex categories are used, can be very time consuming and frustrating. The age category can be quite broad on older censuses. A person needs to be persistent to do this work, especially when researching common names. Knowing something about the family you are researching is important. i.e. names, approximate ages, and sex when looking for a family using the early census records. Relationships were not recorded until the 1880 U.S. Census and those are to the head of the household. It also gave the birthplace of the parents. The 1850 U.S. Census is important because it is the first to list everyone in the household, their ages, and where they were born. If you know more about the family than what is on the census it can be very helpful. There may have been more children in the family who have left home to start their own family or for other reasons. Some members may have died. There may be people in the household who are not immediate members of the family or not related at all, such as a servant, laborer, or boarder. The following examples are from research I conducted.

Example 1

The first example, Abner Doty was found on the 1850 U.S. Census for Dubuque County, Iowa. He was 25 years old, born in Ohio, and a farmer. I did know the names of his children because I was working backward from the known to the unknown. They were (according to the 1880 census for Richland, Labette County, Kansas), Olive, Ephraim, George, John, and Cora. I searched the 1840 census for Ohio for Dotys with the same names as his male children. I also searched for any Doty family that had a male between the age of 10-20. The age range Abner would have been in 1840. This actually covers two age categories on the 1840 census, 10-15 and 15-20, but because he was 25 I wanted to have a little leeway. I found several possibilities that had to be researched to rule them out. There were also three Ephraim Dotys and an Abner Doty. While on a research trip to Salt Lake City I searched indexes in all the counties where I had found possible Dotys in Ohio. Nothing was found that tied our subject, Abner Doty, to any of them. After doing another census search using the soundex I found an Eph Dotey in Williams County, Ohio with 2 males 5-10, 1 male 15-20 (possibly Abner), 1 male 40-50, 2 females under 5, 2 females 10-15, 1 female 20-30 and 1 female 40-50. Using the Internet I searched for Williams County's genealogical site. This was a very nice site that fortunately had a probate index that showed Ephraim Dotys probate followed by administration concerning minor children with Abner listed. After getting this record I was able to match the Abner I was looking for with this Abner Doty. Abners birth date 24 May 1824 was given in the probate record and he did not appear in later census records in Ohio. He had two children

with names from his family, Ephraim from his father and George from his brother, his son John may have been named after his grandfather, who was easier to find, having located Ephraim. In 1830 Ephraim was in Defiance Township, Williams County, Ohio with 1 male 5-10 (Abner) 1 male 30-40 (Ephraim), 2 females under 5, 1 female 5-10, 1 female 10-15, and 1 female 30-40 (Mary Ann, his wife). He was hard to find on the 1820 census, but again using the soundex capability on ancestry.com he was found listed under Ephraim Datey. He was in Salem Township, Monroe County, Ohio with 1 male 16-26 (Ephraim), 1 female under 10, 1 female 16-26 (Mary Ann), 1 person engaged in agriculture.

From here I was able to link (using ancestry.com again to find clues), Ephraim to Edward Doty of the Mayflower going back five generations. I verified this information in the book *Mayflower Families through Five Generations*, Vol. 11, Part II compiled by Peter B. Hill, published by General Society of Mayflower Descendants, 1996.

Example 2

My next example is Daniel Osborn, age 60 found in Winnebago County, Illinois in 1860 living next to his probable son, Daniel aged 36, both born in New York. The 1850 census has Daniel Osborn, Jr. in Ogle County, Illinois. In 1850 Daniel Osborn, Sr. was in Kenosha County, Wisconsin with Drusilla age 62, born in Connecticut. Probably a second or third wife. Using Daniel, Sr's and Jr's ages in 1830 when they would have been 30 and 6 year old males, I was able to easily find Daniel Osborn, Sr. in Almond Township, Allegany County, New York. He was listed with 1 male under 5, 2 males 5-10, 1 male 30-40, 1 female 10-15, and 1 female 30-40. However I was unable to find him in New York in 1840, I believe he was in Geauga County, Ohio by that time. I found a Daniel Osborn with 2 males 10-15, 1 male 15-20, 1 male 40-50, 1 female 5-10, and 1 female 30-40, he may have remarried by this time. You have to be somewhat flexible with the information from censuses. You don't know who supplied it. Searching deed records for Allegany County I found that Daniel had bought his land in Almond in 1820 and he and his wife Margaret sold it in 1835. There was another record in the deeds in 1838 where the creditors of Daniel Osborn sold some of his land. At that time he was living in Otsego County. I thought I had found two possibilities for his parents. One in Suffolk County, New York and one in Delaware County. The Delaware County prospect looked the best because I did not find him there in 1850. I have since found him in the neighboring county of Chenango on the 1850 census. I also found Daniel Osborn of the right age in the 1850 U.S. Census for Suffolk County. We are back to square two, square one being the 1830 census in Allegany County. You really need high speed Internet service or a lot of time to uncover all the possibilities for locating Daniel with a name as common as Osborn/Osborne/Osburn. One year before Daniel was born there were 78 soundex matches in 1790, 12 in 1800, 14 in 1810, and 238 in 1820 using ancestry.com. Ancestry.com's index is not perfect; if I still can't find someone I go to Milwaukee Central Library and look at the indices in book form. I also try to think of what handwritten letters might look like the ones in the name I'm researching, and which the indexer might have mistaken for another, such as: a y and a z or g, l and s can also be mistaken for each other. I tried matching the possible hits from the 1790 through the 1820 U.S. Census using a spreadsheet. It didn't work to well. The Osborn families moved a lot

or the census takers missed them. I would find them in a certain county on one census and not on the next census, but again on the next one. These were not necessarily the same people, however. As you know genealogy is not an exact science. There is a lot of guesswork involved. In 1860 Daniels possible wife was Lucy M. and in 1870 Martha J. We can be reasonably sure they were his wives. The online marriage records for Illinois State Genealogical Society (<http://www.rootsweb.com/~ilsgs/projects/marriage-report.html>) show Daniel married to Lucy M. Storro in January 1860 and Martha Jane Stoneking on 28 Aug 1863. His age and birthplace is consistent in the 1850, 1860, and 1870 census. He lived in a different place each time. In 1860 he was living next to Daniel Osborn, Jr. and John Osborn and their families. John Osborn was a year younger than Daniel and born in Canada (another possible son). Daniel, Sr. had two males 5-1 in his household in 1830. They all need to be researched to see if there was a male of the right age to be Daniel.

Next I tried to narrow the search reasoning that if Daniel was still in New York and not in a household headed by himself I should look for Osborn families with at least 2 males in the category of 26-45 or one male 26-45 and one male in the over 45 age category. Since Daniel should have been married by this time (the 1830 census lists a daughter between 10-15), I also looked for a female in the under 1 age group. I could have narrowed the search even further by using the approximate age of his wife from the 1830 census. I did not want to be quite that inflexible. It is also possible he was in a household with a name other than Osborn. They could have been living with a member of his wife's family or his mother may have remarried so the head of household would have had a different name. He could have been in Canada or in transit. One of the possible households was found in St. Lawrence County across the river from Canada. I liked this possibility because Daniel may have had a son born in Canada. This narrowed the search remarkably. You have to continuously analyze information to find new ways of finding a person. I am working on the several more possibilities now and hope to get a breakthrough soon.