

## Kris Williams: The Importance of the 1940 U.S. Census

We should all be aware of what took place in our country leading up to the 1940 census and what followed shortly after. Our country had experienced many ups and downs in just a short span of time. From the prosperity of the roaring 20's till its end in 1929 with the crash of the stock market; resulting in The Great Depression. To the rise of organized crime in 1920 due to prohibition; till it's end in 1933 with the 21st Amendment. Following end of prohibition, there was the Golden Age of Hollywood that made "stars" out of gangsters. Radio was the main source of news and entertainment, like today's Internet. The airwaves were dominated by popular radio shows, Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby, Glenn Miller and The Andrews Sisters.



In Europe, the rise of the Nazi Party and Hitler were tearing countries and families apart. The United States tried to remain distant from the war in Europe. However, it became unavoidable with the bombing of Pearl Harbor by the Japanese in 1941. While the Great Depression taught people to make due and save, WWII sent our young men off to war and changed women's roles in society forever.

I have always found the 1930's -1940's to be one of the most fascinating times in our history. There was so much life altering change, in such a short amount of time, it touched everyone. How were all of these events affecting the everyday American? More importantly, how did they affect your family?

The 1940 census is the first census to be released in the last 10 years. What is different about this census is the amount of information that is included in it. For starters, it shows who in the family filled it out, people living in the household and those who were not home when it was taken. Other details it covers are-the highest level of education completed, employment, income, and where they resided 5 years before in 1935. Along with the standard information, sampling techniques were added to the 1940 census. 1 in 20 people were asked to answer 14 additional questions, which included literacy, income and fertility. So much information was included that 72 years ago when it was put out, there were moves by organizations and senators to have it boycotted completely.

The most fascinating part to me about the 1940 census is that many who were included in it, are still alive today. My grandparents were in their late teens or early twenties when it was taken; for you it may have been your parents who were. Getting a better understanding of the time period that shaped them, will give us a better understanding of how it directly affected the people we are today. The 1940 census can not only tell us about the state our country was in as a whole, but it is also a glimpse at what life was like for our parents or grandparents.

<http://ancestry-stickynotes.tumblr.com/post/20536543431/importance-of-the-1940-us-census>