

Foreword

All sources lie.
—*Lawrence of Arabia*

T. E. Lawrence's hyperbole is understood by all who seek to reconstruct history. Sources err. Sources quibble. Sources exaggerate. Sources misremember. Sources are biased. Sources have egos and ideologies. Sources jostle for a toehold in the marketplace of ideas.

So why do we invest so much of our own energy into the citation of those sources? Because all sources are not created equal.

History is not a collection of raw facts we simply look up and copy down. The past is still a little-known universe that we explore with curiosity and confusion. As we probe its depths, we appreciate resources that save us time. We crave materials we can confidently trust. Yet historical truths are rarely rooted in either shortcuts or comfort.

In principle, Lawrence was right. There are no historical resources we can simply *trust*. There are no records whose riddles we do not have to thoughtfully decipher. How we react to what we find determines both our success and our credibility. We mine courthouse basements and attics for crumbling files that human hands seem not to have touched since their creation. When we find a diamond among that dust, do we critically examine its setting—or do we treat the dust as a mere distraction? As we spin through microfilmed letters and ledgers, do we consider whether the words used in those ancient documents meant the same as they do today? As we Google our way through cyberspace, where mountains of data offer both gold and garbage, do we seriously ask, *How do we discern the difference?*

At the root of everything we find in history is a source. The information we pull from a source will not likely be any better than the source itself. The conclusions we reach from it can be no better than the effort we have made

to identify that source, to understand its nuances, and to interpret the evidence its information provides.

Evidence Explained is a guidebook for all who explore history and seek to piece together its surviving bits and shards. As a guide, it is built on one basic thought:

We cannot judge the reliability of any information unless we know

- *exactly* where the information came from; and
- the strengths and weaknesses of that source.

As students, when we were introduced to research principles, we may have been taught that identifying sources is important for two reasons. First, it provides “proof” for what we write. Second, it enables others to find what we have used. Both are valid aims, but they miss the most critical point of all:

*We identify our sources—and their strengths and weaknesses—
so we can reach the most reliable conclusions.*

As a guidebook, *Evidence Explained* has two goals. Obviously, it provides citation models for most source types of history—especially original materials that remain largely ignored by classic citation guides. Beyond that, it can help us understand each type of record and identify each in such detail that we and our readers will know not only *where to go to find our source* but, equally important, the *nature* of that source so that the validity of our conclusions can be appraised.

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QuickCheck Model
ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS
LOCAL COPY, FEDERAL CENSUS

Place & year as lead elements in Source List

Source List Entry

<u>JURISDICTION</u>	<u>CENSUS I.D. (GENERIC)</u>	<u>SCHEDULE & COPY</u>
Alabama. Pike County. 1860 U.S. census, population schedule. Local copy.		
<u>REPOSITORY</u>	<u>REPOSITORY LOCATION</u>	
Office of the Probate Judge, Troy, Alabama.		

First (Full) Reference Note

<u>CENSUS ID</u>	<u>JURISDICTION</u>	<u>SCHEDULE</u>	
1. 1860 U.S. census, Pike County, Alabama, population schedule			
<u>COPY ID</u>	<u>CIVIL DIVISION</u>	<u>PAGE</u>	<u>HOUSEHOLD ...</u>
(local copy), Pea River post office, p. 324, dwelling 1034, family 1046,			
<u>PERSON OF INTEREST</u>	<u>REPOSITORY</u>	<u>REPOSITORY LOCATION</u>	
Charles C. Sammonds; Probate Judge's Office, Troy, Alabama.			

Subsequent (Short) Note

<u>CENSUS ID</u>	<u>JURISDICTION</u>	<u>SCHEDULE & COPY</u>	<u>CIVIL DIVISION ...</u>
11. 1860 U.S. census, Pike Co., Ala., pop. sch. (local copy), Pea River			
<u>...</u>	<u>PAGE</u>	<u>HOUSEHOLD ID</u>	<u>PERSON OF INTEREST</u>
P.O., p. 324, dwell. 1034, fam. 1046, Charles C. Sammonds.			

GUIDELINES & Examples



BASIC ISSUES

6.1 “Ancient” vs. “Modern” Censuses

Censuses are among the oldest form of recorded historical information, dating back to Biblical times. In some countries, extant censuses exist from the 1300s and 1400s. These from antiquity are typically random-year documents, held by archives, and are commonly cited in the manner of other archival documents. (See Chapter 3.) Censuses from the 1700s forward are often part of a systematic, geographically broad enumeration effort whose citations may be more complex.

This chapter focuses on enumerations from relatively modern times (ca. 1700 forward) and covers a range of types: civil and church, national and regional, basic population schedules and special enumerations, from the U.S. and elsewhere.

6.2 Arrangement of Elements in Reference Notes

Researchers hold divided opinions as to whether the person of interest should be identified at the beginning or the end of a census citation. The first edition of *Evidence!* followed traditional American-style references that begin by citing the specific item of interest. However, in many data-management programs, data entry is more streamlined if the identities of the individual and household are placed at the end of the citation. This chapter (like its companion *QuickSheet: Citing Online Historical Resources, Evidence! Style*) follows the latter pattern.

6.3 Arrangement of Elements in Source List (Bibliography)

When working with censuses, historical researchers usually organize their Source List in one of two ways:

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CHRONOLOGICAL

In this arrangement, each entry cites first the year, then the locale, with the jurisdictions arranged in largest-to-smallest order. Entries are arranged chronologically, thereunder alphabetically.

For example:

Census. 1815. Italy. Palermo. Gratteri ...
Census. 1831. Canada, Lower. Bellechasse County ...
Census. 1840. U.S. Ohio. Huron County ...
Census. 1840. U.S. Tennessee. Davidson County ...
Census. 1850. U.S. Delaware. New Castle County ...
Census. 1850. U.S. Delaware. Sussex County ...
Census. 1850. U.S. Indiana. Montgomery County ...
Census. 1850. U.S. Louisiana. Bossier Parish ...
Census. 1850. U.S. Massachusetts. Sussex County ...
Census. 1860. U.S. Mississippi. Newton County ...
Census. 1870. U.S. Georgia. Upton County ...
Census. 1880. U.S. Ohio. Washington County ...
Census. 1901. Wales. Monmouthshire ...

GEOGRAPHICAL

This arrangement cites elements from largest to smallest, as with civil and legal records. By using it, you keep together all references that relate to a specific area.

For example:

Canada, Lower. Bellechasse County. 1831 census ...
Italy. Palermo. Gratteri. 1815 census ...
U.S. Delaware. New Castle County. 1850 census ...
___ . Georgia. Upton County. 1870 census ...
___ . Indiana. Montgomery County. 1850 census ...
___ . Louisiana. Bossier Parish. 1850 census ...
___ . Mississippi. Newton County. 1860 census ...
___ . Mississippi. Simpson County. 1860 census ...
___ . Mississippi. Simpson County. 1870 census ...
___ . Mississippi. Simpson County. 1880 census ...
___ . Ohio. Huron County. 1840 census ...
___ . Ohio. Washington County. 1880 census ...
___ . Tennessee. Davidson County. 1840 census ...
Wales. Monmouthshire. 1901 census ...

This chapter follows the traditional geographical arrangement. If you prefer chronological arrangement, feel free to reverse the order of the elements in both the Source List and the Reference Notes. What you emphasize in your Source List is a matter of preference. What is crucial

is that (*a*) you include all the needed data and (*b*) you keep together the citation elements that belong together—that is, those that modify or complement the other, such as CENSUS ID with PAGE NO. or FILM ID with FRAME NO.

Most researchers find that the Source List is *not* the place to list census entries by *household* or *personal name*. That level of detail in a Source List soon makes the list unmanageable.

6.4 Citing Dates of Enumeration

For most national censuses, the *year* of the enumeration is a standard part of the citation. However, the *visitation date* (the specific date on which a census taker visited a particular household) is part of the household data that you record in your research notes. That visitation date is not included in the citation because it is not used to locate an entry on the census. Citing to the page, rather than the visitation date, is the standard method of locating a specific household within a census. As an exception, if multiple censuses are taken of a locale in the same year, as in 6.43, you should include the specific date.

6.5 Citing Dwelling & Family Numbers

From about 1850, most censuses number households by dwelling and family. When these numbers appear, use them. Sometimes both numbers are the same for a household. Regardless, the numbers are useful not only for relocating the family but also because they enable you and your readers to better evaluate your findings, as with proximity and distance between cited households.

6.6 Citing Household Heads or Others of Interest

If, in your text, you identify a household, you do not have to repeat that detail in your citation. If the head-of-household or the person of interest appears in the census under a spelling other than the consistent form you are using, you should use in the citation *the exact spelling used by that census*. (You may, if you wish, show your preferred spelling in square editorial brackets, immediately after the version the census uses.) If you are discussing someone who is a subordinate in a household, and the household head bears a different surname, you will likely want to identify that head, as well as your individual, to assist in finding the entry again. If the household is a large boarding house, hotel, hospital, penitentiary, etc., you would want to note that the household is an institution and note the official capacity of that household head. If the institution is so large that it stretches across

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multiple pages, you should cite inclusive page numbers for the whole household and specify the page on which your person of interest appears.

6.7 Citing Line Numbers

If the census does not identify a household by dwelling and family number (as with the 1790–1840 U.S. decennial censuses, for example), then your citation should include the line number for the household as well as the page number. When you do cite dwelling and family numbers, adding a line number is superfluous.

Note: NARA Style citations, discussed at 6.14 and more extensively in Chapter 11, call for citing line numbers rather than family or dwelling numbers, reflecting an expectation that researchers are interested only in individuals. Census pages, however, do not always have line numbers, and history researchers appraise census data in the context of *households* and *families*, rather than isolating individuals from those with whom they lived.

6.8 Citing Page, Folio, or Sheet Numbers

Census citations should always include the specific page for the item of interest. Across time, you will find censuses paginated in many ways—often multiple ways within the same record. The most common systems are these:

FOLIO NUMBERS (RECTO & VERSO)

Typically, folio numbers appear on just one side of a sheet, usually the right side. When you record a folio number, you will need to note whether you are referring to the front or back side. You may use the classic terms *recto* (front) and *verso* (reverse side) if you choose, or you may cite “folio 32 (front)” or “folio 32 (back).” You could simply say “page 32 (front)” or “page 32 (back),” even though the page is technically a folio. Any of these methods will serve the basic purpose of clearly identifying where you found that census entry.

FOLIO/SHEET NUMBERS (A, B, C, D)

Folios originated as large sheets of paper folded to create four sides, or some other multiple of four, that might later be bound. When these folios were used for census data, all sides of the sheet usually carried the same arabic number, with an added A, B, C, or D, etc., on each individual sheet. When you encounter this situation, you should use both the number and the letter—e.g., page 349-C.