

1940 census offers snapshot of 'Greatest Generation'

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Every 10 years, the United States census is released from its 72-year privacy restriction. On April 2, the U.S. Census Bureau provided the National Archives Records Administration with microfilmed copies of the 1940 census. NARA digitized these 3.9 million images which recorded the lives of 132.2 million people living in the 48 states at the time.

This census provides a snapshot of people who survived the Great Depression, those who soon would fight in World War II and women who soon would join the workforce as men went off to war. This was a time when hard work, conservative values, thrift, innovation in technology and growth in industry, created a society fondly nicknamed "The Greatest Generation."

The release of this census was historic because for the first time the census was made immediately available via the Internet. Much interest was generated about the debut of this long awaited, genealogical resource as was evidenced by the volume of traffic received by the website on Monday

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morning. Archives.com Internet servers were overloaded as more than 100,000 requests per minute gridlocked the website for most of the day. It only took a few days for other companies such as, MyHeritage, FamilySearch and Ancestry to add the 1940 census images to their websites.

This immediate online release did not allow time for any of these companies to create a searchable name index. Therefore, the census has been searchable by location only. If you know where your people lived you can find the enumeration district using Stephen Morse's website: <http://stevemorse.org/census/unified.html>.

Stephen Morse and many others have worked tirelessly to provide us with information about this census, and some states now have searchable name indexes. If the state you want to search is not one of them, follow the directions and fill in the blanks at the Morse website. This will enable you to search by location. As you reach the bottom of the Morse webpage, a list of "census

viewers" will appear after you have selected the ED you wish to browse.

The first choice of viewer, or website, is NARA. At this website you have the ability to download and save the ED to your computer. Saving it to your documents file will allow you to view or print it without being on the internet. If this is the ED where your family lived it will list their neighbors and extended family.

The next choice of viewer, or website, is FamilySearch and can be used to browse the images. FamilySearch is also a nonprofit organization and has sponsored the 1940 Census Community Project, <https://the1940census.com/>. Here more than 100,000 people have volunteered to index the 1940 census making it available as a free searchable index at FamilySearch.org. Recently, reports show the 1940 census project has completed and made available name indexed records for the following states: Delaware, Colorado, Kansas, Oregon, Virginia and New Hampshire. Many others states are near completion. Join the census indexing progress at <https://www.familysearch.org/1940census/>.