

THE 1790 FEDERAL CENSUS

OBJECTIVES - Students will :

- examine data compiled from the 1790 Federal Census;
- compare and contrast the slave populations of various towns in Ulster County;
- demonstrate an understanding of which towns in Ulster County had the most slaves and make assumptions why.

LEARNING STANDARDS – See chart

MATERIALS

- Analyzing the County Sheet
- 1790 Federal Census Population of Ulster County Sheet
- Excerpt from 1790 Census

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The United States was the first country to call for a regularly held census. The Constitution required that a census of all "Persons...excluding Indians not taxed" be performed to **determine the collection of taxes and the appropriation of seats in the House of Representatives.** The first nine censuses from 1790-1870 were organized under the United States Federal Court system. Each district was assigned a U.S. marshal who hired other marshals to administer the census. Governors were responsible for enumeration in territories.

(Taken from Chapter 5: Research in Census Records, The Source: A Guidebook of American Genealogy by Loretto Dennis Szucs; edited by Loretto Dennis Szucs and Sandra Hargreaves Luebking)

Enumerators of the 1790 census were asked to include the following categories in the census:

- ✚ name of head of household,
- ✚ number of free white males and females,
- ✚ number of other free persons,
- ✚ number of slaves,
- ✚ town or district and sometimes town or district of residence.



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TEACHING SEQUENCE

1. CLASS DISCUSSION
 - a. Discuss the history of the Census with the class. Pose the questions:
 - When do you think the first census was taken?
 - Why do you think our country needed a census at that point in time?
 - When do you think the last census was taken?
 - Census information is not released until 70 years after the date it was taken. Why do you think that is so?
 - b. Share the excerpt from the 1790 Census with students. Create an overhead or make a few copies to hand out.

2. ANALYZE A DOCUMENT
 - a. Divide students into pairs.
 - b. Distribute the Analyzing the County Sheet and the 1790 Federal Census Population of Ulster County Sheet.
 - c. Students share responses with the class.

3. EXTENSION ACTIVITY
 - a. Distribute the Slave Population in Ulster County Chart. Students can answer the questions on the sheet for homework or additional class time
 - b. Discuss how few emancipated slaves had the skills necessary to provide for a reasonable standard of living. Even though it was mandated for masters to educate the children of their slaves, many did not as evidenced in the data compiled on the federal censuses. According to the 1850 Census, approximately one in seven black males (141 out of 737) and approximately one in eight adult black females (140 out of 848) could not read or write. In comparison, approximately one in 30 (1,015 out of 30,090) white males and approximately one in 27 (1,102 out of 27,709) adult white females could not read or write. Many freed slaves were forced to relocate from the rural areas of the county to the cities where there were more job opportunities. (*Kinston and Poughkeepsie*)