


Macculloch Hall Historical Museum

Morristown, New Jersey



More Than Numbers: Why the Census Matters

 Explore	Age 9-17	Topic HISTORY	Time 30-60 minutes
	Skills Making Observations Critical Thinking		

Overview for adults

This activity shows how museums use primary sources to learn about everyday life and identify patterns and comparisons in history. It involves using two primary sources: a photograph of the Macculloch-Miller family from May 1878 and one page from the 1850 census. Both documents provide an original snapshot, one moment in time, of this New Jersey family.

What is a primary source?

A primary source is an original source of information from a specific time period. It is written or produced by a person who lived during that time period. Examples of primary sources are letters, diaries, maps, paintings, music lyrics, and objects made by people.

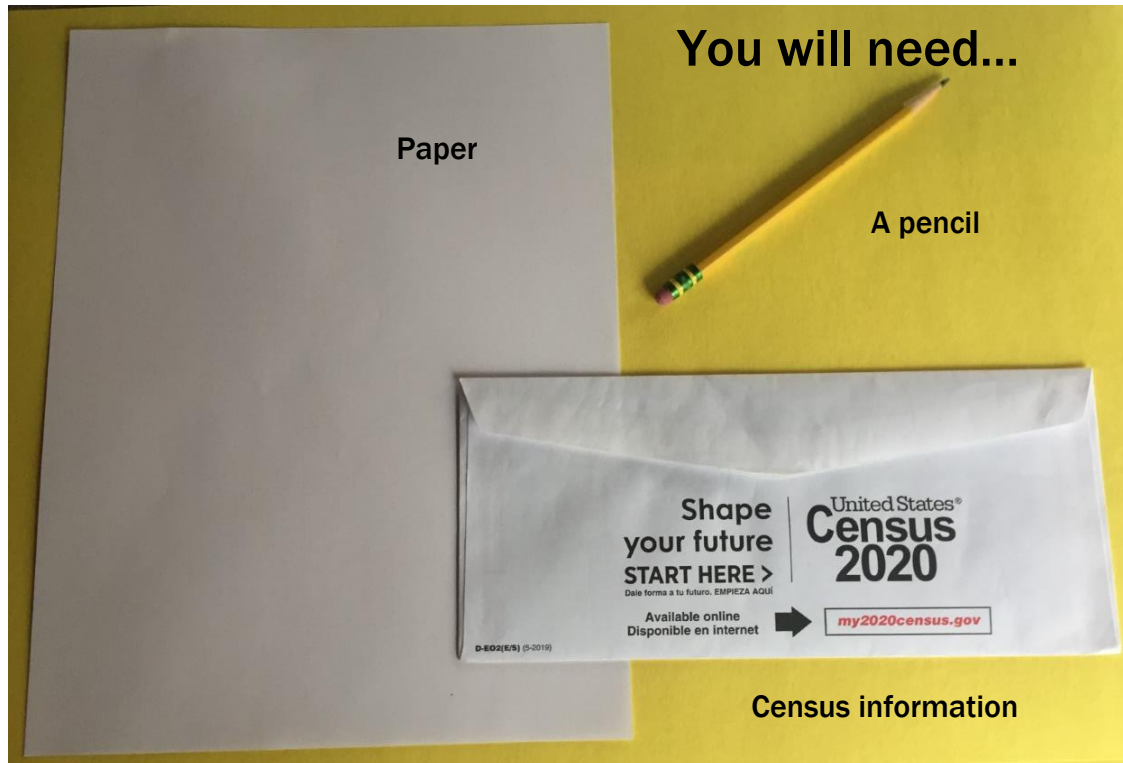
Did you know...?

In 1790 the first census was taken in the United States. During the census, people were counted from the thirteen original colonies plus the districts of Kentucky, Maine, Vermont, and the Southwest Territory (Tennessee). The census determined that 3.9 million people lived in the United States.

The United States Constitution requires that a census is taken every ten years. The website, www.census.gov, lists information from the 1790 to 2010.

Census results determine funding for education and services and even affects the number of representatives in the U.S. House of Representatives.

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Think and talk about...

- Complete the census online with your family at my2020census.gov.
- Find out how many people lived in your county in 2010. Do you think this number has increased or decreased in 2020?
What age group do you think will be the largest in the 2020 census?

Investigate...

- While looking at the family photograph from 1878 on page one:
- Find the oldest female in the photograph. You have found Mary Louisa Macculloch who lived from 1804 to 1888.
 - Can you find someone your age in the photograph? How is the clothing similar of different to what we wear today?

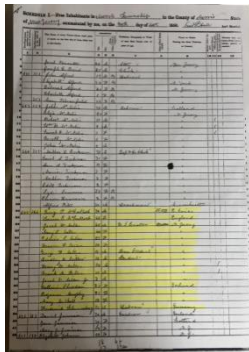
Answers for Discussion Questions: 1. 15 people; No, some were servants. 2. 3-23 years old; answers will vary. 3. John Alfred was born in 1777 in New Jersey. 4. George Macculloch 74 years old; 7 children ages 5 and under. 5. Answers will vary. About These Documents: 6. 122,423 (39.5%).

Document-Based Questions

While looking at the transcribed copy of the 1850 census page, answer the following questions. Answers are at the bottom of page 3.

1. How many people were living in Macculloch Hall (highlighted in yellow)? Were all the people listed part of the Macculloch Miller family?
2. Three generations of the Macculloch Miller family are listed (grandparents, parents, and grandchildren). What is the age range of the children living at Macculloch Hall? Is there anyone your age listed?
3. Several listings have the letter “B” in the sixth column (from the left) on the census form. The letter “B” represents ethnic background and means the person was a person of color. What year was the oldest person of color born? Where was the person born?
4. In the fourth column (from the left), each person’s birth year and age are listed. How old is the oldest person listed? How many children ages 5 and under are listed?
5. Which person on this census page would you like to know more about?

About these documents



The image shows a portion of a 1850 census form. The form is a table with multiple columns and rows. Several rows are highlighted in yellow, indicating the Macculloch Miller family. The columns contain names, birth years, ages, and other demographic information.

The 1850 census was the seventh census taken. The census listed 23,191,876 people in the United States. The previous census in 1840 listed the total population at 17,069,453 people. How much had the population changed and by what percentage? (Answers at the bottom of page 3).



This photograph was taken in May 1878 on the front porch of Macculloch Hall. Family members (many of whom were listed as children and teenagers on the 1850 census) returned to Morristown to celebrate Mary Louisa Macculloch’s 74th birthday together.