Soundex Code

In all cases, a Soundex Code was given at the top of the index card, followed by the name of the head of the household, the names and ages of each member of the family, and a citation to the census schedules on which they appeared. The cards were then arranged by the Soundex codes for each census index,   A000-Z600, and after that by the first name of the head of the household.

The code consisted of an alpha character for the surname, removing all vowels and any doubled letters, and coding up to three consonants with similar sounds:

    1 = b, p, f, v
    2 = c, s, k, g, j, q, x, z
    3 = d, t
    4 = l
    5 = m, n
    6 = r

To code the surname MARBUTT, start with the letter M, eliminate vowels and doubled letters, thus, M-R-B-T codes as M613. If less than 3 coded letters use 0's; e.g., LEE would code as L000.

Personal Census Search

The Age Search Group of the Census Bureau is still in operation. The services of this group can be used for a personal census search to locate one person in a census 1910-2010. The request must be for yourself, a deceased ancestor, or for any person alive today who provides written permission. The fee for the search is $65.00 plus $10.00 for a "genealogy" search (which adds the full details for one person on a particular census schedule). The application for a search must be on a Bureau of Census form BC-600. A downloadable form is available, see **www.census.gov/history/pdf/bc-600-2013.pdf.** For a GenealogyBlog article with detailed information, *The U.S. Census Bureau's Age Search Service,* see **www.genealogyblog.com/?p=42239.**

County Boundary Changes

When using census records for genealogical research, it is important to understand how the old county boundaries changed over the years. Since the basic census enumeration unit in all censuses, 1790-2010, was a county, understanding the genealogy of counties is part of locating the place where an ancestor lived.

For example, if a genealogist knows that an ancestor lived in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania in 1790, the county courthouse there today is a resource for old deeds, marriages, probates, and other court records, and a place where an ancestor's name may be mentioned. But in 1800, due to the formation of counties taken from Allegheny, there were nine counties covering the same area: Allegheny, Beaver, Butler, Mercer, Crawford, Erie, and parts of Armstrong, Venango, and Warren Counties.

Take the example of county boundary changes in Oregon. Any marriage for a couple in the little town of Linkville in Linn County in 1850 would have been recorded in Albany, the county seat; but in 1860, due to the formation of new counties in Oregon, all marriages performed in Linkville, now in Wasco County, were recorded in The Dalles. In 1870, a marriage performed in Linkville was recorded in Jacksonville, the county seat of Jackson County (but later the county seat was moved to Medford). In 1880, a marriage performed in Linkville was recorded in Lakeview, the county seat of Lake County;   and in 1890, for the first time, a marriage performed