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## Free Internet Access to Invaluable Indexes of American and Canadian Heritage

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### Two Nations Celebrate in Dozens of Concurrent News Conferences

SALT LAKE CITY — In honor of Family History Month, [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints](#) is making invaluable indexes of American and Canadian heritage available free to the public at the touch of a button. The [1880 United States Census and the 1881 Canadian Census](#), searchable databases of more than 55 million people, are now on the Internet, signifying another great leap forward in online [family history research](#).

The online availability of the two censuses was announced by [President Gordon B. Hinckley](#) in the historic Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir singing "O Canada" and "The Star-Spangled Banner." Dozens of other press conferences were held across Canada and the United States, from Edmonton to Toronto and from Los Angeles to Washington, D.C., making this the largest family history announcement in the history of the Church.

The chances of today's Canadians and Americans finding ancestors in the online databases are extraordinary. If a person's family lived in one of these two nations during the 1880s and was counted in the census, becoming connected to the past is quick and easy. Elder D. Todd Christofferson, executive director of the Family and Church History Department, said: "People used to search through rolls and rolls of microfilm with varying degrees of success. Now with just a few keystrokes, they can search through millions of records from anywhere at anytime."

Genealogist David Rencher, who has spent years researching his family tree, knows what a valuable tool the indexes can be in finding ancestors who were once lost. "You can learn about their lives, who they were and what they did. It's like taking a trip in a time machine," Rencher said. "I used to think that I was looking for other people, someone from the past. Now I realize that through all of the searching for others, what I found was myself."

The censuses paint a portrait of two nations, capturing Canada as a burgeoning nation in its infancy and America embarking on its second 100 years at the beginning of the industrial revolution.

#### DETAILED INFORMATION

- [1880 United States Census Media Kit](#)
- [1881 Canadian Census Media Kit](#)
- [Photos — news conference](#)
- [Radio sound bites — news conference](#)
- [Search the 1880 United States Census](#)
- [Search the 1881 Canadian Census](#)
- [Search the 1881 British Census](#)

Robert Bothwell, professor of history at the University of Toronto said, "The 1880s are a period in which Canada consolidates itself as a transcontinental political entity and in which a group of scattered and disparate settlements are unified into a single, quite successful political constitutional system."

The census makes legendary figures come alive for today's Canadians including the nation's first prime minister, John A. Macdonald; Ojibwa Chief Jacob Berens; painter Robert Harris; *Anne of Green Gables* author Lucy Maud Montgomery; poet and entertainer Pauline Johnson; composer Antoine Gerin-Lajoie; soldier and educator Arthur William Currie; Victoria Cross recipient William Hall; suffragist Emily Howard Stow; and the creator of basketball, James Naismith.

From Wild West legends and influential artists to ambitious industrialists and ingenious inventors, many of the personalities listed in the 1880 United States census are representative of the expansion, innovation and development of the nation. Author Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens), entertainer William "Buffalo Bill" Cody, inventor Thomas Edison, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* author Harriet Beecher Stowe, African-American leader Booker T. Washington, inventor Alexander Graham Bell, the Wright brothers, composer John Philip Sousa, *Little Women* author Louisa May Alcott, human rights advocate Frederick Douglass, and businessmen John D. Rockefeller, Henry Ford and George Westinghouse are just a few of the notable names found in the census.

Columbia University historian Richard Bushman said, "All those people piled together, working their way upward and outward, trying to find a toehold — that's what history is and the history of one ancestor is a microcosm of the whole country."

Members of [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints](#) and others volunteered to do the indexing for the 1880 U.S. Census, which took 17 years, and the 1881 Canadian Census, which took four years. The Minnesota Population Center at the University of Minnesota and the Institute of Canadian Studies at the University of Ottawa were partners with the Church to help "clean" the data — a process of standardizing names and localities, and organizing the data for easy retrieval. The data also is available on CD.

For those with British roots, a searchable index of the [1881 British Census](#) is also online, bringing the total number of census names available for family history enthusiasts to 85 million.

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[Contact a Church public affairs representative \(journalists only\)](#)

Style guide note: When reporting about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, please use the complete name of the Church in the first reference. For more information on the use of the name of the Church, go to our online [style guide](#).

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