

# How to Find a US Census Record When All You Have is an Address?

by the Jewish Genealogical Society of Brooklyn (JGSoB)

This article will describe a step-by-step method for finding the people living at a specific address in US Census records.

There is good news and bad news. The good news is that it is possible to locate a specific address in a US census and see who was living there at that time. Also, you can do it from the comfort of your own home; no need to hire someone or go to your local NARA office. The bad news is that there is no website that will do all the work for you automatically – once you determine which census file you need, you have to scan through the pages of that enumeration yourself.

To begin, you first need to understand one key point. The US government, via its Bureau of the Census, had census takers that walked through specific areas and were tasked with the job of collecting all the data on the local inhabitants. These census takers were known as enumerators and the area assigned to them was called a district. Each enumerator then had an enumeration district, or “E.D.” for short.

Specific E.D.’s varied in size and location over the course of decades, as



Section of 1940 Enumeration Districts for Brooklyn, NY populations and streets changed. An address in an E.D. in one census period was not necessarily

in the same E.D. in the next census period. Also, the actual numbering of the E.D.’s changed each census. Steven Morse has a webpage<sup>1</sup> for viewing maps of the 1940 Census E.D.’s.

Take as an example, the address 4600 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Brooklyn, NY. The 1940 E.D. for that address was 24-1648C and covered the following city blocks:

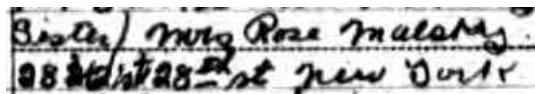
- 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue
- 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue
- 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue
- 46<sup>th</sup> Street
- 47<sup>th</sup> Street

In the 1930 census, the same address was in E.D. 24-1334 and covered a much larger area; the following city blocks:

- 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue
- 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue
- 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue
- 46<sup>th</sup> Street
- 47<sup>th</sup> Street
- 48<sup>th</sup> Street
- 49<sup>th</sup> Street

Steven Morse has created various tools for locating the appropriate E.D. within the state, county and city of interest, for a given census. However, the 1920 census is different. To obtain the 1920 E.D. for a given address you must first determine what the 1930 E.D. is for that address, regardless of whether the family lived at that address in 1930 or not. This is currently the only way to obtain 1920 E.D.’s.

## Example



To illustrate with an example, consider the ship manifest of the SS Saturina, sailing from Glasgow on 11 October 1919. The ship arrived in Quebec on 20 October 1919. On board was Abraham Keller, age 22, from Russia, going to his sister, Mrs. Rose Malksy (or Mulsky),

residing at 28 West 128<sup>th</sup> Street in (the Harlem neighborhood of) New York City. The manifest indicates that Abraham was in the US before, in 1913, and that his place of birth was Ross, Russia. Interestingly, the entire page of passengers on the manifest list shows all of them with a last place of residence as the Royal British Army. Abraham was part of the 38<sup>th</sup> Battalion. According to David R. Brill of Cherry Hill, NJ, the name of the unit was actually 38<sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Fusiliers, within the larger British Army regiment called the Royal Fusiliers. Historically, the 38<sup>th</sup> Battalion was one of a group of four battalions collectively known as the Jewish Legion. The 38<sup>th</sup> was mostly British Jews, but the Legion grew to include the 39<sup>th</sup> Battalion (mostly Americans and Canadians), and the 40<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Palestinian Jews).

Rose was not listed in the Keller family tree. Was she really his sister and if so, who were her family members? Was Abraham living at her address several months later, during the 1920 census of her district?

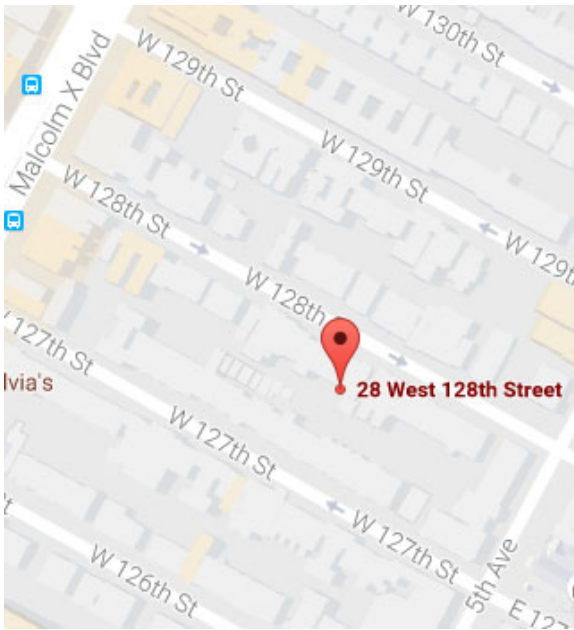
The 1920 census on Ancestry lists 321 possibilities for Rose Malsky, with 258 residing specifically in New York City. That is a lot of records to go through. There are 16 Abraham Kellers in the 1920 census in New York City, none of whom are residing with a Rose Malsky and none of whom seem to be in the Harlem section of Manhattan where Rose was recorded as living in 1919.

### Approach

One way to approach this research is to find out who was living at that address in 1920.

**Step 1:** Look up the address using MapQuest, Google maps or any other mapping utility. On the map it is apparent that the address is bound on the south side of West 128<sup>th</sup> by 127<sup>th</sup> Street. It lies between 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Malcom X Boulevard. Obviously, in the early 20th century, the street was not called Malcolm X, who lived 1925 – 1965. Google “*old name for malcolm x blvd*”. The results show that it was known as both Lenox Avenue and Sixth Avenue.

The screenshot shows the website [stevenmorse.com](http://stevenmorse.com). The left sidebar contains a navigation menu with categories like 'Ellis Island & Castle Garden', 'Other Ports', 'US Census', 'Phonetic Matching', 'Canada/UK Census', 'New York Census', 'Vital Records', 'Calendar, Maps, etc', 'Foreign Alphabets', 'Holoc & East. Europe', 'Genetics (DNA)', 'Create Search Application', 'Publications', 'Awards', 'Biographies/Interviews', and 'Miscellaneous'. The main content area features a header 'Step One-Step Webpages by Stephen P. Morse' and a search box for Ancestry.com with fields for 'FIRST NAME', 'LAST NAME', and 'LOCALITY'. Below the search box are several links and text blocks, including 'Public Appearances', 'List of Lectures', 'About this Website and how to use it', and 'Searching for Ellis Island Passengers in One Step'.

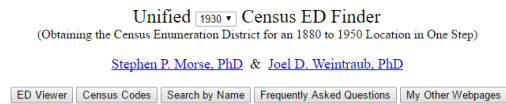


**Step 2:** Go to <http://www.stevemorse.org/> and click on **US Census** for the sub-menu.

**Step 3:** Click the **Unified 1880-1950 Census ED Finder** to use the tool for "Obtaining the Census Enumeration District for an 1880 to 1950 Location in One Step". This brings up this page:  
<http://www.stevemorse.org/census/unified.html>

**Step 4:** For 1920, the houses addresses do not automatically match an ED, so first find the address in the 1930 census ED finder. On the resulting page, input the criteria to use for the search. In this case the criteria were:

- Unified: Change top dropdown to **1930** (as mentioned above, 1920 E.D.'s can not be determined



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO HELP WITH THE 1950 CENSUS UTILITIES.  
 CLICK [HERE](#) FOR MORE INFORMATION.

Enter as much of the 1930 location as you know

*If you select your city from the list of cities displayed, you will be able to enter street-level information  
 If you select "other" from the city list, you will be able to type in your city or town name*

State  County  City or Town

House Number  Street

Cross or back street on same city block

Cross or back street on same city block

Cross or back street on same city block

Cross or back street on same city block

*You can reduce the number of EDs by selecting cross streets and back streets that complete the city block*

based on street addresses alone, but also require the 1930 E.D. as well)

- State: **New York**
- County: **New York**
- City or Town: **Manhattan**
- House Number: **28**
- Street: **128th W**
- Cross or back street on same city block is **127th W**
- Cross or back street on same city block is **Lenox Av**
- Cross or back street on same city block is **5th Av**

and it displays:

**1930 ED numbers corresponding to your location:**

[31-918](#)

**Step 5:** Change top-dropdown to **1920** and skip to the section: **If you know the 1930 ED for this location, enter it here.** Enter the criteria:

- State: **New York**
- ED: **31 (New York)**
- -: **918** (from 1930 ED result)

to see the resulting:

**1920 ED numbers corresponding to your location**

[new york-1333](#)

- 1920 ED numbers corresponding to your location
- [new york-1333](#)

**Step 6:** Click on **new york-1333** on that page. That yields a Viewing Census Images page.

Viewing Census Images for the  Census in One Step  
[Stephen P. Morse, PhD](#) [Joel D. Weintraub, PhD](#) [David R. Kehs, PhD](#)

[Overview](#) [1910/20/30/40 EDs](#) [Name Search](#) [FAQs](#) [My Other Webpages](#)

1a. Select State and ED or 1b. Select Microfilm Roll

State  is on

County  ED:

2. View Census Images

Viewing Pages in Selected ED Page  of

Viewing Frames on Selected Roll Frame  of    first few frames of roll are usually unavailable

(Except for the FREE DISPLAY, You must have an [ancestry.com subscription](#) before you can view these images)

**Step 7:** click **Free Display all years**

button: and all 48 pages of the 1331 E.D. are displayed, starting with page 1.

**Step 8:** Now, the tedious part; page through all pages, looking sideways at the left-most part of the page which contains the street address. Magnify the page until the address is visible.

**Step 9:** This is a lucky example. The first page is already on West 128<sup>th</sup> and the house addresses are even numbers. Page 1 starts with 4 W 128<sup>th</sup> Street.

**Step 10:** Page forward, reviewing the house numbers as they increase. On page 3, in the middle on line 29, is house address 28.

28	9	42	Butsch	Norman	Head	1	R	27	W	44	20	1862	Pa
30				Emma	Daughter			F	W	26	2		
31				Miriam	Head	2	R	27	W	48	21	1867	Pa
32				Rosie	Wife			F	W	46	21	1867	Pa
33				Thomas	Head	3	R	27	W	20	2		
34				Elizabeth	Head	4	R	27	W	45	2		
35				Judith	Head	5	R	27	W	49	21	1914	Pa
36				Beatrice	Wife			F	W	34	21	1902	Pa
37				Henry	Head	6	R	27	W	32	21	1862	Pa
38				Mable	Wife			F	W	34	21	1902	Pa
39				Kappy	Head	7	R	27	W	6	2		
40				Al	Head	8	R	27	W	27	21	1890	Pa
41				Willy	Wife			F	W	23	21		
42				Neil Bruce	Daughter			F	W	36	2		
43				Harry	Head	9	R	27	W	38	21	1891	Pa
44				Stella	Wife			F	W	29	21		
45				Helena	Daughter			F	W	36	2		
46				Samuel	Head	10	R	27	W	32	21	1907	Pa
47				Rosie	Wife			F	W	28	21	1911	Pa
48				Harold	Son			F	W	5	2		

**Step 11:** On lines 46 – 48 are the family members of the MALSKY family: Samuel, Rosie and Harold. This family is not found in Ancestry as they have the family indexed erroneously as MADSKY.

**Step 12:** To prove that Rosie was Abraham Keller’s sister, search available resources looking for records that might identify Rosie’s maiden name. There is the marriage record of Samuel Malsky under the Rhode Island, Marriages, 1851-1920 – Ancestry.

### Simon Malsky in the Rhode Island, Marriages, 1851-1920

Name:	Simon Malsky
Spouse:	Rose Keller
Marriage Date:	19 Mar 1913

There is also the United States Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936-2007 – Ancestry for Samuel Malsky:

### Samuel Malsky in the U.S., Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936-2007

Name:	Samuel Malsky
Gender:	Male
Spouse:	Rose Keller
Child:	Joe Malsky

Both these records offer reasonable proof that Rosie Malsky was born Rose Keller and is a sister to Abraham Keller.

1

<http://stevemorse.org/census/xml1940edmaps.html>