

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS of the 1850 Census of LEWIS COUNTY, MISSOURI

By Jim Morriss

The USGenWeb project consists of a group of dedicated people who are transcribing historical data into computer files that may be accessed by anyone with a PC and an Internet connection. Among the data that are archived in the USGenWeb files, are census records from various sections of the country. A small part of this ambitious project is the census history of Lewis County, Missouri. The Census records from this county are being digitized by Rickie Sue Riggs of Greenwood, Louisiana from microfilm records. This mammoth task has made available the 1850 census records to all kinds of computer analysis tricks that were probably not intended as a part of the USGenWeb project.

Eventually when all of the census records are recorded into one big database, genealogical research will be much easier to do. For now, statistical analysis can be performed on the few census records that are available, to bring out all kinds of interesting facts that were buried in this census data. Below are some of these facts.

First of all the magnitude of the project of recording page after page of 150 year old scribbling into computer format can be better appreciated when the computer files are examined. The 1850 census records for Lewis County took **130 pages** to record. This was transcribed by Mrs. Riggs into six text files. There were **5,373 records** or lines of data, each one representing an individual who lived in the county in 1850. This information was put into the six computer files and represented **55,261 words** or **567,671 characters** of data. With this information captured in "machine readable" form, it was ported into Microsoft's EXCEL, where successive searches were made to reveal information on the age, gender, first and last names, birth places and occupations of the 5,373 people¹ who called Lewis County home, in 1850.

There are 5,350 of the people listed in the census, who have their ages given. Twenty-four had nothing listed in the column for age. The oldest person was an **87** year old farmer named William Stowers who appeared on page 341B, line 13 of the census. The average age was 20.0 years old. The median age was **16.0** which means there were just as many people who had not reached the age of 16 as there were people who had celebrated their 16th birthday. The population of Lewis County in 1850 was very different in many ways than the way we are now. One of the biggest differences was that it seemed to have a lot more young people than we have now.

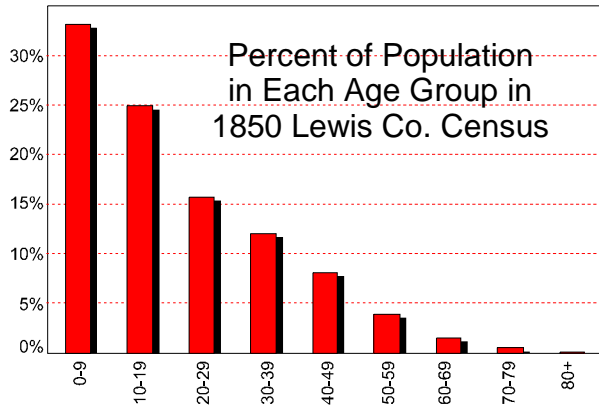
The youngest citizens of Lewis County were the **178** infants who had not yet reached their first birthdays; they are listed in the table below:

Number of Babies	Months Old	Month Born
7	0	Aug. 1850
24	1	July 1850
7	2	June 1850
20	3	May 1850
20	4	April 1850
19	5	March 1850
22	6	Feb 1850
9	7	Jan 1850
14	8	Dec 1849
20	9	Nov 1849
12	10	Oct 1849
4	11	Sept 1849

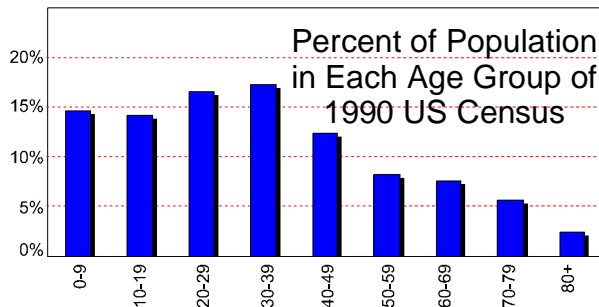
Table 1. Lewis County Residents Less Than 1 Year Old in 1850

These 178 babies amount to **3.3%** of the total population. In 1990 the census of the United States showed that 1.3% of our citizens were less than one year old. Thus the percentage of newborns in Lewis County was more than twice as much as what we would expect now. The census records also show more school-aged children than we might expect today.

The graph below divides the individuals listed in the 1850 Lewis County census, into age groups of ten years. By far the greatest percentage of people were in the 0 to 9-year-old decade. There are more people represented in the first two decades (0 – 19) than all of the rest combined!



Below is another graph which shows the percent of the people who belonged in each age group of the 1990 US census.



It is easy to see that in our times there are not as many children and adolescents as there used to be. Now the middle and older age groups are larger. There were only five people in 1850 in Lewis County who were 80 years old or more. Now we have 2.8% of the population in this age group. Our percentage of octogenarians is nearly 30 times what it was 150 years ago.

It is perfectly normal to wonder why there were so many young people around in 1850. The answer is that there was not an over abundance of kids, but a deficiency of adults. The brutal facts are that many of the children listed in the 1850 census were sick and destined to die. They

would never reach middle age, thus to our way of thinking, the distribution of age was distorted. Table 2 below gives the actual count and percentages of the two census records:

Age at Time of Census	Number Present in 1850	% of Total Lewis Co. in 1850	% of Total USA in 1990
0-9	1774	33.2%	14.7%
10-19	1335	25.0%	14.0%
20-29	841	15.7%	16.2%
30-39	646	12.1%	16.8%
40-49	434	8.1%	12.7%
50-59	206	3.9%	8.8%
60-69	82	1.5%	8.3%
70-79	27	0.5%	5.7%
>80	5	0.1%	2.8%

Table 2. Comparison of the Number of People in Each Age Group in 1850 and in 1990

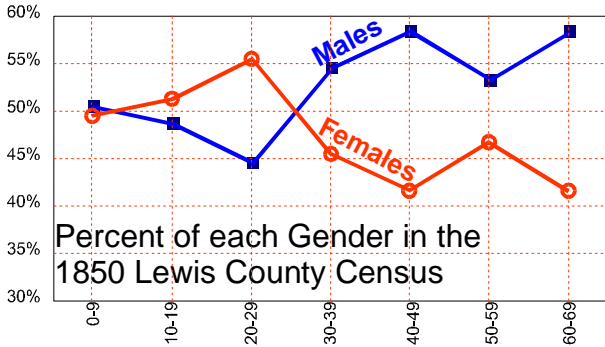
The much larger relative number of children in the community also meant that the average family size had to be bigger 150 years ago. The 5,374 people in Lewis County constituted a total of 907 different families. The **Average Family Size was 5.92**. In the 1990 census the Census Bureau listed the average family size in America as 3.16.

The gender of the people listed in old census records is also interesting. The 1850 census showed that there were **2,704 males and 2,666 females**. It represents a somewhat higher ratio of males to females in that community than we would expect in the USA today.

Gender	1850 Lewis Co. Census	1990 USA Census
Male	50.4%	48.7%
Female	49.6%	51.3%

Table 3. Gender of Census Listees

The total number of men is about the same as the total number of women in both cases. Now we have slightly more females than males. In 1850 there were slightly more males. In the graph and in Table 4 on the next page, the percent of each sex is shown for each ten-year age group.



Age Bracket	Total Males	Percent Males	Total Females	Percent Females
0-9	896	50.5%	877	49.5%
10-19	651	48.8%	684	51.2%
20-29	375	44.6%	466	55.4%
30-39	353	54.6%	293	45.4%
40-49	254	58.5%	180	41.5%
50-59	110	53.4%	96	46.6%
60-69	48	58.5%	34	41.5%
70-79	9	33.3%	18	66.7%
>80	3	60.0%	2	40.0%

Table 4. Gender of Each Age Group in The 1850 Lewis County Census

In the 0 - 9 year old age group there is no significant difference between the number of males and females. In the 10 – 19 and especially in the 20 – 29 year old categories there is a significant decrease in the ratio of males to females. The most probable reason is the tendency of young males to move west. It could be that some of the influx of gold seekers in California came from Lewis County. The older decades of life seemed to affect the female population more than the males. The logical explanation for the drop in the percentage of women in the over 30 age groups, is the cumulative effect of bearing so many children. In 1850 the process of childbirth was dangerous. The more babies a woman had, the greater was the chance of a serious complication. Pregnancy also left women more vulnerable to diseases like tuberculosis and typhoid fever. Adult women probably had a greater role in tending to their sick children which also put them at a greater risk of catching a contagious disease.

There is also useful information in the census about the names that people used. The 5,373

people listed in Lewis County in 1850 had 759 different family names. The most popular name in the census report was SMITH. There were 72 people with that last name. There were 146 people whose last name appeared only once in the census. Table 5 below shows the twenty most popular last names in Lewis County in 1850.

#	Name	Qty	#	Name	Qty
1	SMITH	72	11	ANDERSON	35
2	JONES	71	12	DAVIS	35
3	WILLIAMS	70	13	ROBERTS	35
4	BROWN	62	14	HAMILTON	33
5	BOURN	48	15	GRAVES	32
6	JOHNSON	48	16	JOB	31
7	THOMPSON	48	17	LEWIS	31
8	BRISCOE	44	18	WILSON	31
9	LILLARD	42	19	BURCH	30
10	WRIGHT	37	20	ALLEN	29

Table 5. Last Names in Lewis Co. 1850 Census

Tables 6 and 7 show the first names that were used by the people living in Lewis County. The most popular name for males written in the first name column was John; there were 324 of them in the census. If the 318 Wm.'s and 25 William's were added together, that would be the most commonly used man's first name.

#	Name	Qty	#	Name	Qty
1	John	324	11	Robt	43
2	Wm	318	12	Henry	36
3	James	205	13	Benj	32
4	Thos	125	14	J	32
5	Joseph	103	15	Jacob	27
6	George	88	16	William	25
7	Samuel	70	17	Edward	23
8	Daniel	57	18	A	20
9	Charles	50	19	Francis	18
10	Geo	44	20	Andrew	17

Table 6. 20 Most Popular Men's Names in the 1850 Lewis County Census

Female first names are listed in table 7 on the next page. Mary was the most common woman's name.

# Name	Qty	# Name	Qty
1 Mary	388	11 Jane	51
2 Sarah	252	12 Lucy	41
3 Elizabeth	208	13 Louisa	38
4 Martha	146	14 Rebecca	37
5 Nancy	123	15 Amanda	30
6 Margaret	85	16 Caroline	29
7 Susan	81	17 Frances	28
8 Ann	78	18 Matilda	27
9 Catharine	69	19 Emily	25
10 Eliza	69	20 Harriett	23

Table 7. 20 Most Popular Women's Names in the 1850 Lewis County Census

In the "Occupation" column of the 1850 Lewis County census report, 1,146 of the people listed had identifiable vocations. There were 73 distinct lines of work. Table 8 below gives the 20 most frequently listed occupations and gives the number of times that occupation was listed.

# Occupation	Qty	# Occupation	Qty
1 Farmer	716	11 Wagonmaker	12
2 Laborer	56	12 Peddler	10
3 Carpenter	54	13 Clk of Circuit Ct	8
4 Merchant	31	14 Judge of Cir C	7
5 School Teacher	27	15 Tailor	7
6 Depty Wk	26	16 Grocer	6
7 Blacksmith	21	17 Livery Stable	6
8 Millwright	18	18 Plowstichen	6
9 Pilot	17	19 Clerk of County	5
10 Stone Cutter	13	20 P M	5

Table 8. Top 20 Occupations in 1850 Lewis County Census

Place of Birth is another parameter listed on census forms. The people who were listed in the 1850 Lewis County census came from 29 different states and from 10 foreign countries. Ninety-five percent of them came from the ten places listed in Table 9.

Birth # Place	Qty	Percent of Total
1 MO	2182	40.7%
2 KY	1370	25.6%
3 VA	755	14.1%
4 O	202	3.8%
5 IA	169	3.2%
6 MD	103	1.9%
7 ILL	88	1.6%
8 PA	86	1.6%
9 TE	85	1.6%
10 Germany	48	0.9%

Table 9. Most frequent places of birth of the citizens of Lewis County in 1850

This census information can be sorted and interpreted in many other ways but as more and more data become captured in computer readable formats, additional statistical treatments will become possible.

¹ The data on the 1850 Census only lists the "Free Citizens" of the County. The US Census Bureau has a web site at: www.census.gov where some historical data are published. They state a Free White population of 5,357, with 15 Free Non-Whites and 1,206 Slaves in Lewis County, Missouri in 1850.