


# ***Timelines: The Straight Line Between You and Your Ancestor***



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## ***Why We Should Use Timelines in Our Research***

### **Analysis:**

- Timelines are a visual aid that help you see your research information in a new light.
- Timelines make it easy to see gaps between years that help you focus and may lead you to look for new records for that time period.
- Timelines can help point out errors in calculating dates and ages for people, and other discrepancies, particularly when working with a timeline for an entire family.
- Timelines for individuals, when compared side-by-side with timelines for other individuals in a family, can show you where differences might be that help you pinpoint them in records. When there are two individuals with the same names a timeline can help you sort out the two people.
- Notes can be made within the grid of a timeline to indicate questions you have and research follow-up ideas you want to try.
- Viewing your timelines in progress can help you troubleshoot over time as you learn more about the people and the places in which you are researching.
- Timelines help you remind yourself of what you've already done, giving you the opportunity to review research findings from the past. In the same way, they also help show you which research avenues you haven't yet followed.
- Timelines are companions to your research plan and your research log. They are a planning tool, an evaluation tool, and a display tool, all of which help propel your research forward.

### **Context**

- Timelines help to determine migration from one point to another within specific time periods. Timelines placed onto a map, particularly a topographical or migration map, can help you determine when, where, and how someone migrated from a point of origin or to a point of arrival.
- Timelines that include local or global historical events help you put your ancestor's life into proper historical context.

# Creating Timelines

Timelines can be created in a variety of applications:

- Paper and pen/pencil
- Word processing document
- Spreadsheet
- Evernote, OneNote or similar
- Genealogy software
- Timeline software

## Timeline Formats:

- Table or grid
- A chronological line covering a specific set of years, either horizontal or vertical
- Graphics and pictures
- Plain text
- Color-coded entries to differentiate people, families, or events
- For an individual, several people, a family, a community, a topic, or a specific range of years

## Timeline Fields:

- Age
- Year in a column by itself for quick visual analysis
- Date in the next column to help sort chronologically
- Place name
- Event
- Source
- Notes

## Historical Context

- Economics
- Industry
- Epidemics
- Weather and natural disasters
- Immigration, emigration, and migration
- Military events
- Politics
- Religions
- Local history and/or world history

## Software & Online

- Family Tree Maker  
<https://www.mackiev.com/ftm/>
- Family Historian  
<https://www.family-historian.co.uk>
- Genelines  
<https://progenygenealogy.com/products/timeline-charts>
- HistoryLines  
<https://historylines.com>
- Legacy Family Tree  
<https://legacyfamilytree.com>
- RootsMagic  
<https://www.rootsmagic.com>
- TimelineJS,  
<https://timeline.knightlab.com>
- Treelines  
<https://www.treelines.com>

## Templates and Forms

- ❑ Cyndi's Timeline Template for Evernote, <https://bit.ly/2RI4dLz>
- ❑ FamilySearch Wiki – Blank Time Line for My Ancestor  
[https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/File:Blank\\_Time\\_Line\\_for\\_My\\_Anccestor.pdf](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/File:Blank_Time_Line_for_My_Anccestor.pdf)
- ❑ FamilySearch Wiki – Blank Time Line for a Specific Record for a Possible Match  
[https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/img\\_auth.php/2/27/Blank\\_Time\\_Line\\_for\\_a\\_Specific\\_Record\\_for\\_a\\_Possible\\_Match.pdf](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/img_auth.php/2/27/Blank_Time_Line_for_a_Specific_Record_for_a_Possible_Match.pdf)
- ❑ How to Create a Timeline in Excel,  
<http://www.vertex42.com/ExcelArticles/create-a-timeline.html>
- ❑ The Shy Genealogist – Timeline in Excel (Part 1), (Part 2), (Part 3)  
<https://theshygenealogist.wordpress.com/2010/04/21/working-it-wednesday-timeline-in-excel-part-1/>  
<https://theshygenealogist.wordpress.com/2010/04/23/timeline-in-excel-part-2/>  
<https://theshygenealogist.wordpress.com/2010/04/28/timeline-in-excel-part-3/>
- ❑ Canva, <https://www.canva.com/templates/s/timeline/>

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