

Genealogy Timelines – Ancestor and Historic

Most of us are familiar with a genealogy timeline. We often see them in a family history book outlining the major events in an individual's life. Creating timelines for your family history can serve several purposes but firsts lets address at least two kinds of timelines.

1. The Fancy Kind - this is the timeline that you create for a family history book, to help your reader understand the highlights of an ancestor's life, a quick snapshot.
2. The Research Timeline - this timeline is a research tool to organize all information acquired from an ancestor's documents and places it in chronological order.

The main difference between the two, one highlights the major experiences in an ancestor's life, while the research timeline is extremely detailed, and all though the research timeline can be used to create a fancy timeline, it is not meant for your audience, but as a tool for you the researcher.

Today, were going to address the research timeline. The research timeline is useful for a number of reasons.

- It serves to help organize an ancestors' life in chronological order, down to the smallest detail.
- It provides the researcher an opportunity to see gaps in timelines, overlapping events and conflicting data, often revealing opportunities for more research.
- If you have hit a brick wall in your research, a timeline can often show missed research opportunities.
- A research timeline will be your best friend when it comes time to writing a narrative or a biography of an ancestor.

Now let's take the timeline one-step further. When writing a timeline, I encourage you to not only organize your ancestor's life in chronological order but also historical events that occurred during your ancestor's lifetime, including world events, events within the country, district and town and even within their own family. By creating these two timelines in conjunction with each other, they can often provide explanations as to an ancestor's reason for their life choices, perhaps demonstrating a cause and effect.

Once you have finished using your timeline for research, it then becomes a handy tool for writing a narrative or biography. So make sure your notes are clear and concise. The research timeline makes quick work of pulling ancestors information into a life story and incorporating the historical events for a more creative, an interesting narrative rather than just a reconstruction of dry facts.

Your timeline can take many forms, but regardless how you choose to lay it out, you must work through this yourself. No program can convey the knowledge you gain from creating a timeline. Hands on is best. I prefer a column style format. I also prefer to have my ancestors' timeline and the historical timeline on the same sheet.

If you haven't used a research timeline up until now, then I encourage you to look past the pretty timelines and see the value of creating a research timeline for each of your ancestors. It may prove to be very helpful and revealing.

Prepare a Timeline

- 1. Choose an Ancestor - Isaac Fleming**
- 2. Chart Events - Birth, Marriage, Death (when and where)**
- 3. Choose a Format - decide what items should be on your timeline and in what order**

Example: Isaac Fleming Initial Timeline

Born	08 Dec 1817	Halifax, Yorkshire, England
Married	12 Oct 1842	Bellefonte, Centre County, PA
Died	31 Dec 1907	Williamsport, Lycoming, PA

The above information is a simple timeline containing 3 items. You can put it in text form (as above) or create columns for the information

Isaac Fleming


Event	Date	Location
Born	08 Dec 1817	Halifax, Yorkshire, England
Married	12 Oct 1842	Bellefonte, Centre County, PA
Died	31 Dec 1907	Williamsport, Lycoming County, PA

As you come up with more events, you can add to your timeline (go down the page) and/or expand the timeline (add more items at the top of the page). What other information do you have?

4. Add to the timeline - Example: info from census

Born	08 Dec 1817	Halifax, Yorkshire, England
Married	12 Oct 1842	Bellefonte, Centre County, PA
1850 Census		
1860 Census		
1870 Census		
1880 Census		
1890 Directories		
1900 Census		
Died	31 Dec 1907	Williamsport, Lycoming, PA

5. Add to the timeline - Example: info from Books

Born	08 Dec 1817	Halifax, Yorkshire, England
 Settled Centre County, PA	1840	History of Lycoming County, PA Book by Meginness
Married	12 Oct 1842	Bellefonte, Centre County, PA
1850 Census		
1860 Census		
1870 Census		
1880 Census		
1890 Directories		
1900 Census		
Died	31 Dec 1907	Williamsport, Lycoming County, PA

6. Add some more to the timeline - Examples: information from: Newspapers, Bibles, Letters, School, etc...

7. Expand the timeline - Examples: Age, Resources, etc...

You might want more than just the Date, Event, and Location. I wanted to know the age my ancestor was when these events occurred and I wanted to keep track of where I found the information. So I added age and source/reference. I also liked the following order for my timeline:

Date	Age	Event	Location	Source/Reference
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At this point we are still looking at the individual ancestor. After you've decided what other information you need in your timeline and in what order, then we will also add historical background information.

Isaac Fleming Timeline

Date	Age	Event	Location	Source/Reference
Dec 8, 1817		Birth	Halifax, Yorkshire, England	IGI 1985274 Family Bible
1837-40	20/23	Immigrated to America	What Ship??? Dates ~ 1837 - 1840 From Where To Where	DAR Library Author Cole
1840	23	Settled in	Centre County, PA	History of Lycoming Meginnes 1892 Chapter LV
1840-1854	23/37	Worked in Woolen Factory	Centre County, PA	History of Lycoming Meginnes 1892 Chapter LV
Oct 12, 1842	25	Marriage to Margaret	Bellefonte, Centre, PA	IGI 1985315 Family Bible

Isaac Fleming Timeline – What's Missing-What do you notice?

Date	Age	Event	Location	Sources
Dec 8, 1817		Birth	Halifax, Yorkshire, England	IGI 1985274 Family Bible
1837-40	20/23	Immigrated to America	What Ship??? Dates ~ 1837 - 1840 From Where To Where	
1840	23	Settled in	Centre County, PA	History of Lycoming Meginnes 1892 Chapter LV
1840-1854	23/37	Worked in Woolen Factory	Centre County, PA	History of Lycoming Meginnes 1892 Chapter LV
Oct 12, 1842	25	Marriage to Margaret	Bellefonte, Centre, PA Lycoming, PA	IGI 1985315 Family Bible

After identifying missing items, continue to do research to fill in the blank areas.

Further Research:

- What ship Isaac sailed on or what port he left from or where he landed in America.
- He worked in a woolen factory. Why?

8. Apply Historical Information

Isaac Fleming with Historical Findings

Date	Age	Event	Location	Sources	History
Dec 8, 1817		Birth	Halifax, Yorkshire, England	IGI 1985274 Family Bible	Halifax was the Woolen Capital of the World
1837-40	20/23	Immigrated to America	What Ship??? Dates ~ 1837 - 1840 From Where To Where	1880 Census	
1840	23	Settled in	Centre County, PA	His of Lycoming Meginnes 1892 Chapter LV	
1840-1854	23/37	Worked in Woolen Factory	Centre County, PA	His of Lycoming Meginnes 1892 Chapter LV	Woolrich Company only Woolen factory
Oct 12, 1842	25	Marriage to Margaret	Bellefonte, Centre, PA	IGI 1985315 Family Bible	

Using historical information you can start to see how your ancestors lived, possibly why they came to America, and what events affected their lives.

Isaac Fleming came to America with skills in the woolen industry. He and his family lived in Dunstable Township, Clinton County, Pennsylvania where he worked at the Woolrich Woolen Factory for 14 years.

During the Civil War, he and his family moved to Piatt Township, Lycoming County, Pennsylvania. He enlisted in the Army, and was discharged from the Army.

After the Civil War, the family moved to Hepburn Township, Lycoming County, Pennsylvania where he worked as a foreman in the Ball's Woolen Factory until he retired.