

Episode 4: Creating Timelines That Produce Answers

Timelines are great ways to keep track of details in an ancestor's life. And, as a bonus, they'll help you follow your ancestors' migratory habits, link your relatives to historical events and quickly show you what you know - and what you might want to still find out.

Timelines are easy to create. Pencil and paper or a word-processing program are all you really need.

Start by gathering names, dates and place. A good, first resource? The census!

For example, in this 1930 census record you get the Szucs family's residence on April 1, 1930, the official census date. The town is listed at the top of the census page and the street address is in the first two columns. Tack that onto the names and you're ready to go.

By subtracting the ages from the year 1930 and pairing that date with the place of birth, you can add births for each member of the household to your timeline as well.

Szucs, John	Head	0	25,000	R.	M	W	50	M	24	W	40	Czechoslovakia
Theresa	Wife - H.				F	W	48	M	22	W	40	Czechoslovakia
Stephen	Son				M	W	22	S.		W	40	Ohio..
Irene	Daughter				F	W	16	S.		W	40	Ohio

- c. 1880 - John Szucs is born in Czechoslovakia.
- c. 1882 - Theresa Szucs is born in Czechoslovakia.
- c. 1908 - Stephen Szucs is born in Ohio.
- c. 1914 - Irene Szucs is born in Ohio.
- 1 April 1930-Szucs Residence
4623 West 47th Place, 9th Ward,
Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, Ohio

Szucs, John	Head	0	25,000	R.	M	W	50	M	24	W	40	Age at first marriage	Czechoslovakia
Theresa	Wife - H.				F	W	48	M	22	W	40		Czechoslovakia
Stephen	Son				M	W	22	S.		W	40		Ohio..
Irene	Daughter				F	W	16	S.		W	40		Ohio

And that's not all. You can use John and Theresa's ages and their age at first marriage to estimate their marriage year as 1904: John was born in 1880 + 24 = 1904; Theresa was born in 1882 + 22 = 1904. Another event for your timeline.

The census also lists John and Theresa's years of immigration. Compare those dates with what you've determined about their marriage, and you can deduce that John and Theresa were married in the United States. There's another detail you can add.

RESEARCH TIPS Cont.

Czechoslovakia	Czechoslovakia	Czechoslovakia	Magyar	17	15	V 1902	Ma	Yes	Mason Cent.	Anderson	Cuyahoga	E	460	Yes
Czechoslovakia	Czechoslovakia	Czechoslovakia	Magyar	17	15	V 1903	Ma	Yes	Arrival year					
Ohio	Czechoslovakia	Czechoslovakia		59	15	0		460	Mason	Mason Cent.	Cuyahoga	W	460	
Ohio	Czechoslovakia	Czechoslovakia		59	15	0		460	None					

- 22 September 1879 - John Szucs is born in Czechoslovakia.
- c. 1882 - Theresa Szucs is born in Czechoslovakia.
- 1902 - John Szucs immigrates to the U.S.
- 1903 - Theresa Szucs immigrates to the U.S.
- c. 1904 - John and Theresa are married in the U.S.
- c. 1908 - Stephen Szucs is born in Ohio.
- c. 1914 - Irene Szucs is born in Ohio.
- 1 April 1930 - Szucs Residence
4623 West 47th Place, 9th Ward,
Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, Ohio

Overlaying historical events can lead you to more discoveries. For example, World War I spanned 1914-18. In the United States, men born between 1872 and 1900 were required to register for the draft. Since John's estimated birth date falls in that timeframe, it's worth taking a look for him in those records.

It turns out that John registered for the draft in Barton, Belmont County, Ohio, providing another residence entry for the timeline in September 1918. And since that's only a few years after Irene was born, this would be a good place to start a search for her birth record. That birth record gives a more precise birth date for John as well, which means another update to the timeline.

You can see how the details from just two records can quickly flesh out what you know about a family (your map) and give clues for further research (your compass). With the dates on the timeline, you could expand the search to birth records, John and Theresa's marriage record, passenger arrivals for John and Theresa, as well as adding details from the 1910 and 1920 U.S. censuses and more.