Timelines

Why use them?

Timelines are a wonderful genealogical tool. They provide a way to:

- Place your family in historical context
- Place them in a particular location at a particular time
- Sort out people with similar names
- Trace migration

What goes in them?

When you construct a timeline, you want to include

- Events that you can prove by documentation
- Events that include other immediate family members
- Dates, ages, and sources for all events
    - These are especially important for helping you to prove your assumptions.
    - Did your uncle really get married at age eleven?
    - Was it your John Williams who graduated high school in 1912 in Lewis County or was your John Williams the one who was in fourth grade?
    - If your grandfather naturalized in 1897, is it likely that a man with the same name on a passenger list for 1897 is really your grandfather?

How do you construct a timeline?

- Most computer software programs have a built-in timeline feature that will allow you to use data you have already typed in. Check the manual for your program for instructions.
- It is very simple to make a basic timeline in Excel or Microsoft Word.
    - Use columns for:
        - Date
        - Age
        - Event
        - Location
        - Source
- To make an individual timeline, typically, start with the year the person was born and create a line for each year of his/her life.
- To make a family timeline (like the one on the next page), begin with a defining event and continue with as many events as possible in chronological order.
- Intersperse historical events with family events as appropriate or keep a separate timeline for historical events that occurred at the same time.
- Check the Internet for websites with timeline templates and more suggestions.

Documented Event	Date	Family Events for Lorene Kennedy
Family bible entry	1905	Lorene Kennedy born in Ekron, Meade Co., Kentucky
Photo in yearbook	1906	Father attending William Jewell College, Liberty, Clay Co., Missouri
Death record	1908	Mother died 6 December, Liberty, Clay Co.
	1909	Lived with aunt and uncle in Brandenburg, Meade Co.
Marriage license	1910	Father married again on 15 June, Liberty, Clay Co.
Family bible entry	1913	Sister Evelyn born 16 August, Meade Co., Kentucky.
School records	1913–1916	Attended grades 2–4 in Louisville, Jefferson Co., Kentucky.
Family bible entry	1916	Brother Abram born 21 July, Letts, Decatur Co., Indiana.
	1916–1917	Attended grades 5–6 in Letts, Decatur Co. Moved to Jamesport, Daviess Co., Missouri
	1918	Moved to Ash Grove, Greene Co., Missouri.
	1919	Graduated 8th grade in Ash Grove.
Death record/1920 federal census	1920	Brother Abram died 9 March in Ash Grove. Family enumerated in Greene Co. on federal census.
	1921	Sister Nannie Lou born 28 August in Shelbina, Shelby Co., Missouri.
	1922	Sister Grace Margaret born 24 September in Shelbina.
	1923	Graduated Shelbina High School. Moved to Blue Mountain, Tippah Co., Mississippi, to attend Blue Mountain College.
Death record	1926	Grandfather Kennedy died 23 February, Meade Co.
	1927	Graduated from Blue Mountain College and moved to St. Louis.
	1928	Attended Missouri Baptist Hospital School of Nursing in St. Louis.
Federal census	1930	Enumerated in the 1930 federal census in St. Louis
	1931	Attended Washington University School of Nursing, St. Louis.
School yearbook	1933	Graduated from nursing school. Began to work at Barnes Hospital, St. Louis City, Missouri.
Marriage record/ City directory	1934	Marriage to Charles W. Murray in Liberty, Clay Co., Missouri./Worked at Barnes Hospital. Lived in University City, Missouri.
Birth record	1935	Birth of first son, Charles E., on 23 December, in St. Louis City.

Individual Timeline for _____

Year	Age	Location	Event	Source