Create a Timeline in Word by Converting a Reunion Event List

(these instructions work for Microsoft Word 365 and should also work with other versions)

by Susan Freas Rogers, June 2025 for SVCGG Reunion SIG   susanrogers@nccn.net

1. **Unmark** everyone in the family file.

2. Navigate to, then **Mark** the person whose Events you want to make into a Timeline.

3. Open the left sidebar if it's collapsed. Click **Lists,** then choose **Events**. You'll get a list of Events for your Marked person.

4. On the bottom bar next to the brown gear, click the "**Share**" icon (box with up arrow). In the top box, type whatever **Report title** you choose (such as "Jane Jones Timeline"). For Destination, choose **Microsoft Word**, then click "**Open in Microsoft Word**."

    Your person's Event data will open in Word *as an RTF file*. Notice that even though your chosen Report title (i.e., whatever you typed into the Report Title box in the previous step) shows up in both the Header and in the body of the new document, you will see at the very top of the file that its actual filename is something like "Report 001, Event List.rtf," meaning that it is an RTF (Rich Text File).

5. You need to save this to a Word docx file. One of the methods below will work.

    a. Try saving it to a Word docx file: do **File>Save As** from the top menu bar. When it asks for where to save it and File Format, choose **Word Document (.docx).** I suggest saving it to your Desktop while you're working on it or choose another destination you will remember.
    If saving to a docx file works, go to Step 6. If you get a message that it can't complete the Save due to a file permission error, go to Step 5b.

    b. Open a blank Word Document.

        i. Go back and click on your RTF document. Click **Edit** (from top menu bar), then **Select All** on the RTF file. Click **Edit>Copy**.

        ii. Switch to your new blank Word doc and **Paste** everything into it. Close the RTF file (you can trash it later).

6. In your Word doc, if the Ribbon is not showing, click **Home** to see the formatting options on the Ribbon (or a quick keyboard shortcut to show or hide the Ribbon is **Option+Command+R**). Click the paragraph symbol   ¶   so you can see any blank lines above and below your Events information.

7. In the document body, **highlight ONLY the rows of text that you want to appear in the table,** *starting with the column headers* (**Name**, **Event**, etc.). Don't worry that it doesn't look like a table yet and the text may be wrapping in a strange way. Avoid highlighting blank lines above and below the text you want in the table, and don't highlight the document title that was inserted.

8. With your desired text selected, you will now **convert the text to a table**. See image captures below and follow these steps for each:
LEFT IMAGE: click **Table** in the top Word menu bar. In the drop-down, click **Convert>Convert Text to Table**.
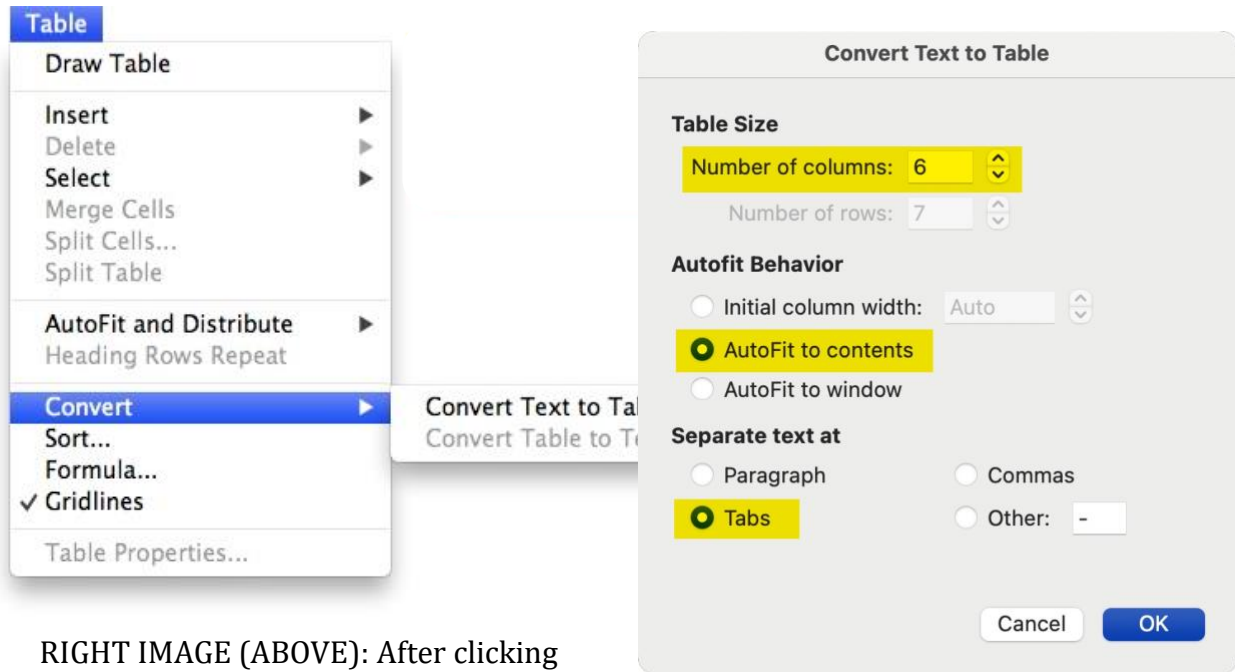
RIGHT IMAGE (ABOVE): After clicking "Convert Text to Table," it should show **6** for the number of columns. See yellow highlights in the image to make the other choices (**Autofit to contents** and **Tabs**).

9. Your page should now look something like this:

Name	Event	Date	Age	Place	Memo
Rev. William Wallace EVERTS Jr. - G Grandfather	Birth	10 Feb 1849		New York, New York	
Rev. William Wallace EVERTS Jr. - G Grandfather	Residence	1878	28	Providence, Rhode Island	at time of marriage
Rev. William Wallace EVERTS Jr. - G Grandfather	Marriage	9 May 1878	29	Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts	ceremony conducted by Albert Paine
Rev. William Wallace EVERTS Jr. - G Grandfather	Census	1900	50	Ramsey, Minnesota	HH: Wm W, Eliz P, Charles P, Edward B, Marg S, Albert P, Christine E, Emily G
Rev. William Wallace EVERTS Jr. - G Grandfather	Residence	1920	70	Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts	Ward 16. HH: Wm W, Elizabeth, Margaret S, & servant
Rev. William Wallace EVERTS Jr. - G Grandfather	Death	14 May 1926	77	Roxbury, Suffolk, Massachusetts	

10. Notice that you don't need the first column now IF your timeline is meant to track only one person's life events. Delete the first column by using your cursor to **point down** the column to highlight the entire column. **Right-Click** and choose "**Delete Columns**."

11. You are likely to want the **Date** column to be first, followed by Event, Age, etc. If so, highlight the **Date** column and use **Cut>Paste** to change the order of the first two columns. (Highlight **Date** column, do **Command+X**, highlight **Event** column, do **Command+V**. The Date column will insert and push Events to the right.

Voila! You now have a Timeline chart you can manipulate as you wish. Some tips:

- Reunion put its own title into a Header. Double-click in the header to change the text OR you can delete the text so there won't be a Header.

- Your table is likely to be on the very top line of your page. You will probably want to write something (such as an introductory paragraph) before the timeline, so here's how to push the timeline down:
  - Highlight **the top row** in the table.
  - On the top menu bar, click **Table>Split Table**. This will insert a blank line above your table for you to type on, as many lines as you need.

- When it first created your Events list for your chosen person, Reunion automatically included Marriage(s) in its list. If you had previously added a Marriage on the Events Panel, Reunion did not see that you had already done that, and so the marriage(s) will appear twice in your final table. Just delete one of the duplicate Marriage rows in the table.

- You can save space inside the cells by using **Find/Replace** to change state names to abbreviations (*MA* or *Mass.* instead of Massachusetts, etc).

- To highlight or distinguish certain parts of the table, change the font colors OR fill the cells with a color.

- There are two ways to adjust the spacing of the columns:
  - Highlight the entire table. On the top menu bar, click **Table>AutoFit and Distribute>AutoFit to Contents.** OR…
  - Click anywhere inside the table. Notice that a ruler then appears at the top of the page. Little grids of dots show the location of the lines separating the columns (see image below). Point your cursor at a gridbox, hold down and drag the gridbox to move the column divider line. (Alternate method: put your cursor in the table, point to a column divider line until you see a thick vertical line with arrows pointing left and right. Press and drag the divider line to adjust as desired.)
  - If the furthest-right column extends off the page and you can't see the little grid box on the ruler for the right edge of the last column, go to View on the top menu bar, choose Zoom, choose 25%. See the little grid box off the far-right edge, hold your cursor down on it and drag it left, back onto the page. Change your Zoom back to 100%.

Event	Date	Age	Place	Memo
Birth	10 Feb 1849		New Yorĺk, New York	
Residence	1878	28	Providence, Rhode Island	at time of marriage
Marriage	9 May 1878	29	Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts	ceremony conducted by Albert Paine
Census	1900	50	Ramsey, Minnesota	HH: Wm W, Eliz P, Charles P, Edward B, Marg S, Albert P, Christine E, Emily G
Residence	1920	70	Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts	Ward 16. HH: Wm W, Elizabeth, Margaret S, & servant
Death	14 May 1926	77	Roxbury, Suffolk, Massachusetts	

- If the timeline will combine the Events of two or more people, don't delete the Name column in Step 10 above. If you (for example) want to show all events for a couple, you can insert the second spouse's Events a few lines below the first spouse's Events, convert both sets of data into their own tables, then delete blank lines between the two tables. It will then act as one table and you can move the second spouse's Event lines into chronological order with the first spouse's Events using this keyboard trick:
  - Highlight the row you want to move. Now, on the keyboard, hold down Shift+Control with your left hand, and with your right hand, press the Up or Down arrow (depending on where you want to move your highlighted row).

Recommended reading, with good information about using Timelines:

- [Using Timelines to Analyze Your Research](#), Carl A. Taplin, CG®, www.genealogypants.com

- [A Genealogical Timeline as a Research Tool](#), by Stephen B. Hatton, at NGSgenealogy.org

- [Creating Timelines That Produce Answers](#), Ancestry.com Research Tips, Episode 4

Miscellaneous Google Search tip:

You can search for specific filetype when using Google. Searching for a PDF is probably the most common filetype when using this search trick for genealogy research, but you can also search for Excel files, Powerpoint files and more. There are two ways to do this:

1. In the address bar of your browser (or in the Google search box), type –if you want a PDF, for example – **filetype:pdf** [your keywords here, such as surname, county and/or state, date range with two dots between the years]/
OR
2. Go to Google's Advanced Search page: https://www.google.com/advanced_search. The top section has fields for you to fill in with your keywords, and in the lower "Then narrow your results by…." Section, under **file type**, choose the type of file you want to search for.

   You don't have to remember or bookmark the link above. At any time, just type "advanced search" into Google search bar (or address bar) and you'll get a result to take you to the page.