



# FOUR PROVEN STRATEGIES

FOR OVERCOMING RESEARCH OBSTACLES

1870: Laurier elected for the first time

1899: First South African War begins

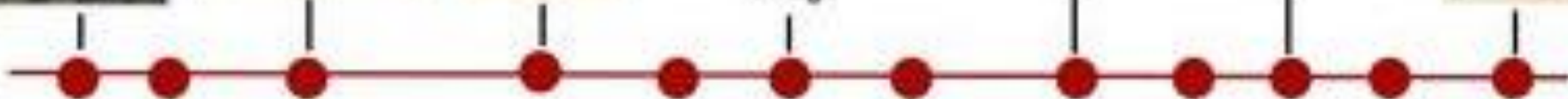
1903: Silver discovered at Cobalt, Ontario

1906: Roald Amundsen Navigates NW Passage

1914: World War One begins

1918: World War One ends

1923: Grand Trunk Railway joins Canadian National Rail



USE A TIMELINE

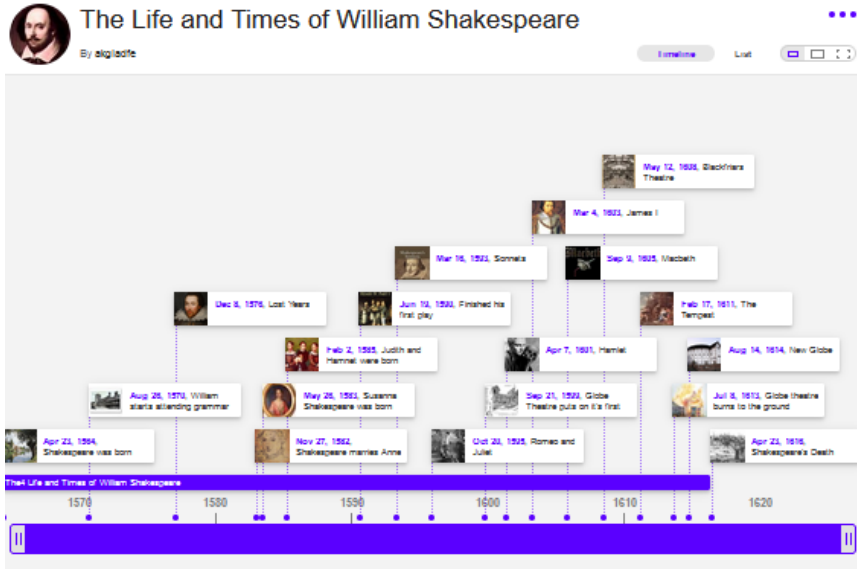
gold rush

Confederation

Manitoba and Saskatchewan

war

# WHAT IS A TIMELINE?



| Timeline of John Wesley Morrow's life |                                   |      |        |                                  |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------|--------|----------------------------------|
| Cultural Event                        | Political Event                   | Year | Date   | Life Event                       |
| Oliver Twist pub                      | Upper and Lower Canada Rebellions | 1837 |        | Born in Orillia                  |
| Daguerreotype camera invented         |                                   | 1838 | 13-Apr |                                  |
|                                       |                                   | 1839 |        | Brother James born               |
|                                       |                                   | 1840 | 14-Apr | Brother Samuel born              |
|                                       |                                   | 1841 | 08-Nov | Brother Samuel died              |
|                                       |                                   | 1842 | Aug    | Sister Mary Jane born            |
|                                       |                                   | 1843 | 28-May | Sister Mary Jane died            |
|                                       |                                   | 1844 | 18-Sep | Sister Sarah born                |
|                                       |                                   | 1845 | 01-Mar |                                  |
|                                       |                                   | 1846 |        | Sister Emma born                 |
|                                       |                                   | 1847 | 09-Aug | Family moved to Barrie           |
|                                       |                                   | 1848 |        | Brother David born               |
|                                       |                                   | 1849 | 11-Apr | Sister Sophia born               |
|                                       |                                   | 1850 | 28-Dec |                                  |
|                                       |                                   | 1851 |        | Sister Louisa born               |
|                                       |                                   | 1852 | 14-Mar |                                  |
|                                       |                                   | 1853 |        |                                  |
|                                       |                                   | 1854 |        |                                  |
|                                       |                                   | 1855 |        |                                  |
|                                       |                                   | 1856 |        |                                  |
|                                       |                                   | 1857 | 29-Jan | Sister Sophia died               |
|                                       |                                   | 1858 |        |                                  |
|                                       |                                   | 1859 |        |                                  |
|                                       |                                   | 1860 |        |                                  |
|                                       |                                   | 1861 |        |                                  |
|                                       |                                   | 1862 | 02-Sep | Married to Jennie A. Howard      |
|                                       |                                   | 1863 | 02-Jun | Son Frank born                   |
|                                       |                                   | 1864 |        |                                  |
|                                       |                                   | 1865 | 18-Apr | Son Walter born                  |
|                                       |                                   | 1866 |        |                                  |
|                                       |                                   | 1867 | 28-Aug | First wife Jennie died           |
|                                       |                                   | 1869 | 31-May | Married second wife Mary Plaxton |
|                                       |                                   | 1870 | 04-May | Son James born                   |
|                                       |                                   | 1871 |        |                                  |
|                                       |                                   | 1872 | 01-Aug | Daughter Emma born               |
|                                       |                                   | 1873 |        |                                  |
|                                       |                                   | 1874 | 24-Dec | Daughter Sarah born              |
|                                       |                                   | 1875 |        |                                  |
|                                       |                                   | 1876 |        |                                  |

# WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR TIMELINE

## Basic Facts for:

- Subject
- Spouse
- Siblings
- Parents
- Children

## Exact Dates for:

- Major bio events
- Census enumerations
- Wars
- District boundary changes

# ANALYSE YOUR TIMELINE

- Look for gaps
- Do all children's birthdates work? Any missing?
- Do the ages make sense?
- Do you have death dates for everyone?
- Could you be conflating two people with the same name?

A man with dark hair and glasses, wearing a vertically striped shirt, is sitting at a table in a cafe. He is leaning forward, focused on writing on a notepad with a pen. The background features a wall with a mix of dark and light bricks. A white coffee cup is visible on the table to the left. A dark purple banner is overlaid at the bottom of the image, containing the text 'WRITE IT UP'.

WRITE IT UP

# WHY WRITE?



The process itself and can help clarify your thinking, help you spot gaps and errors and encourage you to revisit your research



Other people can see things you can't, from a different perspective, and suggest gaps, errors



Other people may have knowledge or access to sources you don't have

# PUBLISHING OPTIONS

- Your blog or social media
- Ancestry family trees, FamilySearch, WikiTree
- Genealogy Society newsletter or journal
- Print-on-demand book for family



# WHAT TO INCLUDE

- Define the problem
- Explain your reasoning
- List what you've searched and why
- Describe how you searched (manually, using keywords, using an index, etc.)
- Cite every fact fully
- Explain any gaps



GO OLD SCHOOL

# SEARCH MANUALLY

- Read the actual records, not just keywords and search engines
- Human eyes can spot things the best AI can't
- Context is easier to see when you scroll through the whole district of a census, or page by page through a church record or newspaper

# TIPS FOR SEARCHING MANUALLY

- Skim columns other than surnames
- Check page numbering
- Read the introduction, cover page, first and last pages
- Review the entire section
- Look for patterns
- Notice the informants, clerks, enumerators

# OTHER “OLD SCHOOL” METHODS

- Wherever possible, examine the original
- Visit archives, libraries and museums in person
- Look for manuscript records that aren't online
- Write a letter





WIDEN THE FOCUS

# WHOLE LIFE

- Don't fixate on a particular fact or event
- Gather everything you can learn about the person
- Think biographically

# WHOLE FAMILY

- Don't restrict yourself to your direct line
- Research the siblings, nieces/nephews, other spouses, in-laws



# WHOLE NETWORK

- Don't limit yourself to your own relatives
- Identify their neighbours, friends and associates
- Check the witnesses, sponsors

# WHOLE COMMUNITY

- Don't neglect the wider community
- Read about the village/township/county
- Where did people come from? Where did they go when they left?
- Who were the ministers? Merchants? Civic leaders? Socialites?
- What unique sources might be available for this particular community?
- Are there any private funds for other community members?



# *Questions?*

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