Census Tracking - Using Head of Household Censuses to a build probable case.

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Discover the benefits of census tracking and learn how to glean new information from your census data using logical assumptions. Strategies include comparing census records for families as they move and change over time, making head of household censuses (pre-1850 U.S. censuses) meaningful and useful, and improving deduction and analysis skills. Tracking censuses over time provides a building block as you try to prove your assumptions and unlocks new possibilities to further your research. MagiCensus software (formerly known as MagiKey Family Tree) makes census tracking easier and quicker. A free demo of MagiCensus is available at www.themagikey.com.

How to make a probable case from circumstantial evidence:

Start with the known, discover the probable, use other sources to prove.

Step 1. Start with the known - Use timelines and other research to find out what you know.
Step 2. Record known information on a census tracker
Step 3. Make assumptions based on census rules and logic
Step 4. Identify contradictions and make plausible explanations.
    Use Occam's Razor: for us that means "..simplest explanation is the most likely one". This means explanations with fewer assumptions are better.
Step 5. Record assumptions into the Census Tracker
Step 6. Compare assumptions to another possible census or other sources and repeat.

Information that can be gleaned from censuses:

1. Suggest where to look for someone
2. Narrow down birth date
3. Identify possible recording errors or assumptions
4. Determine which entry is most likely the same family

Making Assumptions while census tracking:

Census rules change for every census taken.	MagiCensus links to the rules for each census year and incorporates them in logic
You need to calculate actual age of an individual as of a given census date before you can determine in which age range they belong for adjacent age ranges.	MagiCensus lists census dates in on the census tracker spreadsheet visual reference and uses appropriate dates for calculations

Tips when working with censuses:

- Information might not be as of census date
- Estimate about 2 years between each child
- Watch for boundary changes
- "Wife" age change may indicate remarriage
- Look for wife as head in case husband died
- Look for children as heads to find elderly parents
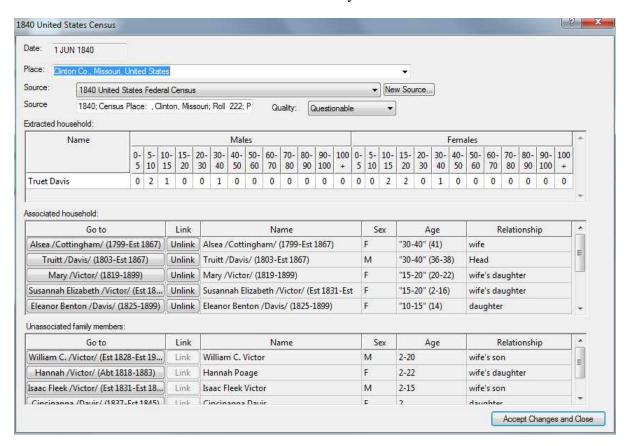
MagiCensus can simplify some census tracking steps:

Known Information	Logic	MagiCensus
Number of years in an age range can vary from census to census.	Using overlapping ranges for multiple years can narrow down birthdates.	Automatically estimates and calculates an age range using all census data available and updates it in a spreadsheet.
Location of an individual at specific point of time	Looking at known locations for all family members for many years gives you possible places for additional research.	Displays census locations of all known family members in a spreadsheet automatically.
Quantity and gender of the household members for a given census, also known as a footprint of a household.	Comparing footprints for families with identical head of household names can help you identify which census household matches your family.	Includes year specific extraction forms then expands the extracted information to provide the family footprint. Allows you link the known information about family members to a person recorded only by age and gender in the census.
Age range and gender of a household member in a census.	Determining potential relationships using age and gender. (e.g. wife or daughter)	Suggests probable relationships when associating an individual with the extracted family footprint.
	Identifying possible recording errors of age or gender by comparing the household footprint over many years.	Automatically highlights age discrepancies between expected and extracted information and displays them in color-coded cells.

Further steps in proving a probable case:

1. Use tax records or land records to narrow down when a family moved
2. Use a personal timeline for each possibility when trying to track a person
3. Look for other sources in the localities found (wills, probates, cemeteries, marriages of possible children, etc.)
4. Contact descendants of possible children

MagiCensus Head of Household Extraction Forms Instructions

1. Extract the census data to the head of household census extraction form
   a. Type the head of household name in to the Extracted Household section.
   b. Enter the correct number of individuals into each age bracket for both males and females.
      i. MagiCensus will add a new row for each individual with the corresponding age bracket into the Associated Family Member section.

2. Compare the footprint in the Associated Household section with the footprint of the Unassociated Family Members section to verify that this is a likely census for this family.
   a. Link the head of household
      i. If the person who is head of household in the census is listed in the Unassociated Family Members section and the age fits into the oldest male age bracket, click the Link button by the name in the Unassociated Family Members section.
      ii. Once the Head of household is linked, MagiCensus will include the relationship of the individual to the head of household in the Unassociated Family Members section.
   b. Link the wife of head of household.
      i. Look for the wife in the Unassociated Family Members section, if the person listed as the wife corresponds with a correct age bracket from the extracted census, click the Link button in the Unassociated Family Members section by her name.

      ii. Wives are generally within plus or minus ten years of the age range of their spouses. If the age doesn't match, click the Link button in the Associated Household to look for the correct individual.

c. Link the children.
      i. If the Unassociated Family Members section lists children, and their ages and gender of the children match the extracted census then:
            1. Ask yourself, "Which sex and age range fits _____?" Use any known information as evidence to link a child in a row that has the correct gender and the age range.
            2. Click the Link button by each child's name in the Unassociated Family Members section.
            3. Remember the enumerator instructions when deciding between close ranges such as 10-15 or 15-20.   The enumerator was instructed not to include a person in the 10-15 category if they had already turned 15.
      ii. If no children are listed in the Associated Family Member section, then create place holding names such as Daughter 1 or Son 2 to help create a footprint.