


Finding Your Ancestors Across the Censuses

Example 1: The Zanes

Ebenezer Zane

Below is a record for Ebenezer Zane from the 1810 census as it appears through *Heritage Quest* and in the original census. This is a perfect example of why the genealogist should take records with a grain of salt: despite the name being recorded in the database as “Ebenezer Lane”, a helpful transcriber has added “Ebenezer Zane” in brackets so it is findable with either name. As already mentioned, the information is pretty sparse; this makes things extra tricky for the genealogist because we often have to rely on names of spouse, child(ren), and ages to determine if the record refers to the ancestor we are looking for. Looking at the original record makes me feel fairly certain that Zane was mis-transcribed and this is in fact Wheeling’s founder, but without additional information I cannot guarantee it without additional digging.

Heritage Quest view:



Not all information on the record image has been transcribed. Please view the image to see all the information or ask others for assistance.

Name:	Ebenezer Lane [Ebenezer Zane]
Home in 1810 (City, County, State):	Wheeling, Ohio, Virginia
Free White Persons - Males - 10 thru 15:	2
Free White Persons - Males - 16 thru 25:	1
Free White Persons - Males - 26 thru 44:	1
Free White Persons - Males - 45 and over:	1
Free White Persons - Females - 10 thru 15:	2
Free White Persons - Females - 16 thru 25:	1
Free White Persons - Females - 26 thru 44:	1
Numbers of Slaves:	10
Number of Household Members Under 16 :	4
Number of Household Members Over 25 :	3
Number of Household Members:	19

Census view:




Thomas Elgin	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3
Isaac Lane	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Solomon Clark	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Richard Carter	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Joseph Keen	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Elijah Church	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Ebenezer Clark	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Samuel Clark	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Zachariah Sprigg	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Joseph Palmer	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Simon Banks	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Thomas Callender	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
William Lewis	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
John Community	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
John Reynolds	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Francis Updegraff	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Michael Graham	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
John Lockman	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Daniel Kyles	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Samuel Montgomery	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Morton Howard	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Robert Sharp	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Wm Wells	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Sum of page 2	46	17	38	41	14	56	18	24	26	6	5	38

Ebenezer Clark

Keeping with Zane example, below is the 1850 census record for Ebenezer Clark, son of Betty Zane. Right away it should be evident that this record is much fuller than the previous example: it lists every occupant by name, not just the head of the household, and their ages. Later censuses will indicate relationships between those in a residence, but even without this data inferences can be made. It stands to reason that Harriett, 44, is Ebenezer's wife, and the remaining occupants their children. Also indicated is Ebenezer's birthplace, year of birth, occupancy and occupation at the time of the census, and even an estimated value of his real estate.

Heritage Quest view:



[View](#)

Not all information on the record image has been transcribed. Please view the image to see all the information or ask others for assistance.

Name:	Ebenezer Clarke [Clark]
Gender:	Male
Age:	48
Birth Year:	abt 1802
Birthplace:	Pennsylvania
Home in 1850:	District 64, Wetzel, Virginia, USA
Occupation:	Farmer
Industry:	Agriculture
Real Estate:	3000
Line Number:	17
Dwelling Number:	602
Family Number:	602

Household Members	Age
Ebenezer Clarke	48
Harriett Clarke	44
Melissa Clarke	20
Ira Clarke	19
Matilda Clarke	16
Josephus Clarke	14
Phebe Clarke	12
Caleb Clarke	10
John Clarke	6
Friend Clarke	4
Virginia Clarke	3


Census view:

1850 United States Federal Census for Ebenezer Clarke											
Virginia > Wetzel > District 64											
Line No.	Dwelling No.	Family No.	Name	Age	Sex	Race	Real Estate	Birthplace	Married 1850	Attended School	Condition
17	612	602	Ebenezer Clarke	48	M		3000	Pa			
18			Harriett	44	F			"			
19			Melissa	20	F			Va	/		
20			Ira	19	M			"	/		
21			Matilda	16	F			"	/		
22			Josephus	14	M			"	/		
23			Phebe	12	F			"	/		
24			Caleb	10	M			"	/		
25			John	6	M			"	/		
26			Friend	4	M			"			
27			Virginia	3	F			"			

Example 2: The Tosburns

To give a clearer idea of what information was represented in the 1860, 1870, and 1880 censuses, let's look at some census records for the Tosburn family. Joseph Tosburn was an Irish immigrant who settled in Wheeling and fought for the Union in the Civil War. Before entering the war Joseph was a physician and, at the time of the 1860 census, was married with two young children. (Also listed is a Gertrude Desal, age 12, but that is a mystery for another day.)

Heritage Quest view:



[View](#)

Not all information on the record image has been transcribed. Please view the image to see all the information or ask others for assistance.

Name: Joseph Thoburn

Age: 35

Birth Year: abt 1825

Gender: Male

Birth Place: Ireland

Home in 1860: Wheeling Ward 5, Ohio, Virginia

Post Office: Wheeling

Dwelling Number: 2851

Family Number: 2969

Occupation: Physician

Personal Estate Value: 300

Household Members	Age
Joseph Thoburn	35
Catharine Thoburn	33
Martin M Thoburn	2
Mary Thoburn	6/12
Gertrude Desal	12

Census view:


Page No. 444

SCHEDULE 1.—Free Inhabitants in the 5th Ward City of Wheeling in the County of Ohio State
of Pa enumerated by me, on the 19th day of Sept 1860. Wm. Martin Ass't Marshal
Post Office Wheeling

Dwelling-house— numbered in the order of visitation.	Families numbered in the order of visitation.	The name of every person whose usual place of abode on the first day of June, 1860, was in this family.	DESCRIPTION.			Profession, Occupation, or Trade of each person, male and female, over 15 years of age.	VALUE OF ESTATE OWNED.		Place of Birth, Naming the State, Territory, or Country.	Married within the year.	Attended School within the year.	Whether deaf and dumb, blind, insane, idiotic, pauper, or convict.	
			Age.	Sex.	White, black or mulatto.		Value of Real Estate.	Value of Personal Estate.					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1		John J. Merv	4	M					Pa				
2		Virginia	12	F					Pa				
3	2851 2969	Joseph Thoburn	35	M		Physician		300	Ireland				
4		Catharine	33	F					Pa				
5		Martin M	2	M					Pa				
6		Mary	6/12	F					"				
7		Gertrude Desal	12	F					Ger				

[illegible]

For 1880, I looked for daughter Mary. Mary, her siblings, and her mother are still living with Catherine's father, but the absence of Catherine's mother suggests that she died sometime between the censuses.



Not all information on the record image has been transcribed. Please view the image to see all the information or ask others for assistance.

Name: Mary M. Hoburn
[Thoburn]

Age: 20

Birth Date: Abt 1860

Birthplace: West Virginia

Home in 1880: MT Pleasant, Jefferson, Ohio, USA

Dwelling Number: 109

Race: White

Gender: Female

Relation to Head of House: Daughter

Marital Status: Single

Father's Birthplace: Ireland

Mother's Name: Catherine Hoburn

Mother's Birthplace: Pennsylvania

Neighbors: [View others on page](#)

Household Members	Age	Relationship
Benjamin Mitchell	79	Self (Head)
Catherine Hoburn	53	Daughter
I. Martin Hoburn	32	Son
Mary M. Hoburn	20	Daughter
Connie L. Hoburn	18	Daughter

1880 United States Federal Census for Mary M. Hoburn																										
Ohio > Jefferson > Mt Pleasant > 103																										
Street	House No.	Dwell Fam. No.	Name	Race	Sex	Age	Birth Month	Relationship	Single	Married	Widow/D.	Married C.	Occupation	Month Unem.	Sick	Blind	Deaf and Idiotic	Incapable	Disabled	Attended	Cannot read	Cannot write	Birthplace	Birthplace of Father	Birthplace of Mother	
	103	105	Mitchell, Benjamin W.	W	M	79		Father					Minister										Penn	Penn	Penn	
			Johnnie, Catherine	W	F	53		Daughter															Penn	Penn	Penn	
			" I. Martin	W	M	32		Son															W Virginia	Ireland	Penn	
			" Mary M.	W	F	20		Daughter															"	"	Ireland	
			" Annie L.	W	F	18		Daughter															"	"	Penn	

The curious case of Mary Tosburn: Aside from the name Tosburn being repeatedly misspelled/mis-transcribed, one thing that made tracking down the Tosburns was daughter Mary's age. Mary was 6 months old in the 1860 census, 16 years old in the 1870, and 20 in the 1880 census—something wasn't adding up, literally. This highlights again why it is so important to view the original record and take information with a grain of salt. Once I looked at the 1870 census and not just it's summary page, it became quite clear that Mary was 10 and the broken zero had been read as a six. The addition of parents' birthplaces made this easier to infer.