

Extracting Census Data To Google Sheets

[Video Link Using Google Sheets](#)

[Video Link using MS Excel](#)

This is a technique I developed to help breakdown brick walls. When you are stuck, this technique can be extremely helpful in extracting data and filtering it so you can find all the other family members that may be living near your ancestors. This is helpful when researching the F.A.N. club.

The **F.A.N. Club** or F.A.N. is an acronym developed by the great genealogist Elizabeth Shown Mills who coined the term to mean Friends, Associates, and Neighbors. Others have adapted it to mean Family, Associates, and Neighbors. Especially if you are stuck in your genealogy research, you want to search everyone who touched the life of your ancestor. That might be friends, family, associates, neighbors, witnesses, fellow soldiers, and so on. The reason for this is because it might be in the F.A.N. Club's records, which mention your ancestor, which gives you the clues that you need to help breakdown those brick walls.

Getting Started

Let us start extracting U.S. Census Records into a Google Sheets spreadsheet. Keep in mind, this could work for any record that has been indexed in the same way, where you can copy and paste the data.

Google Account?

You will need a free Google account to access the free **Google Sheets**. [You can sign up for a Google account here](#), if you do not already have one.



With this account you will get a free Gmail email account, Google Drive to store files, Google Docs for writing anything, the ability to comment on YouTube videos, use of Google Maps pins, Google Earth (free download software), and much more.

All of it is free. Except for Google Earth, you will use all of this in the cloud, there is no software to download.

All these free tools are very handy for genealogy research, especially when you are out of town researching, as you can access it anywhere you have the internet. I love Google's tools!



GenealogyTV.org



YouTube.com/GenealogyTV

Google Sheets

Once you have a Google account go to [Sheets.Google.com](https://www.google.com/sheets) to start.

Open a new spreadsheet and name it in the upper left corner. You should now have a blank page.

Note this strategy works using [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) or [FamilySearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org) or any platform where you can copy the index. These instructions are using Ancestry for demonstration purposes.



On Ancestry

- Open a census record that you wish to extract.
- Be sure to drill into the image as that is where you will extract data from.
- Click on the small **people icon** on the bottom of the image viewer to open the transcription index.
- Use the three lines at the top of the transcription box to drag the transcription box up and bigger, if needed.
- Remember to start 5-10 pages or more, prior to your ancestors. In the video I started on page 15 going back 10 pages prior to where my ancestor George was listed on image 25.
- Instead of clicking the left arrow to go back 10 pages, type the number in the image number box.
- Then for your first capture of data you want to grab the column headers as well as the first page of data (as shown below).
- Put your mouse to the left of where it says Line Number (the left most column) and click and drag all the way down to the last line. You will see the data you are going to copy in blue.
- Click CNTL + C to Copy (CMD + C on a Mac). This holds the data you copied on the clipboard.

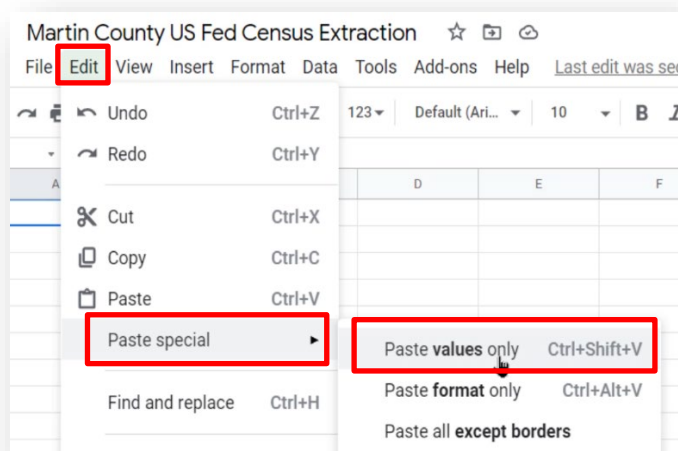


Line Number	Street	Dwelling Number	Family No.	Name	Race	Gender	Age	Birth Year	Relationship	Single	Married	Occupation	Sick	Blind	Deaf and Dumb	Months Employed	Birthplace	Birthplace of Father	Birthplace of Mother
25	North	170	170	George	Black	Male	27	1844	Self	Married	Chalk Maker						NC	NC	NC
				Wendy	Black	Female	22	1866	Daughter	Single	House Keeper						NC	NC	NC
				James	Black	Male	18	1848	Self	Married	Laborer						NC	NC	NC
				Martin	Black	Male	21	1844	Self	Married	House Keeper						NC	NC	NC
				Charles	Black	Female	12	1856	Daughter	Single	Laborer						NC	NC	NC
				Wendy	Black	Female	10	1866	Daughter	Single	Laborer						NC	NC	NC
				Susan	Black	Female	10	1856	Daughter	Single	Laborer						NC	NC	NC
				Isaac	Black	Male	1	1848	Son	Single	Laborer						NC	NC	NC
				Francis	Black	Male	2	1848	Son	Single	Laborer						NC	NC	NC

Line Number	Street	Dwelling Number	Suriname	Given Name	Race	Gender	Age	Birth Year	Relation to Head of House	Marital Status	Married During Census Year	Occupation	Months Not Employed	Sick	Blind	Deaf and Dumb
46		170	Grimes	Octenson	Black	Male	30	Abt 1820	Self (Head)	Married		Chalk Maker				
47			Grimes	Mahaly	Black	Female	30	Abt 1844	Wife	Married		House Keeper				
48			Grimes	Arnolds	Black	Female	15	Abt 1865	Daughter	Single		Laborer				
49		170	Grimes	Mary C.	Black	Female	13	Abt 1867	Daughter	Single		Laborer				
50			Grimes	Hartsho E.	Black	Female	11	Abt 1869	Daughter	Single		Laborer				

On Google Sheets

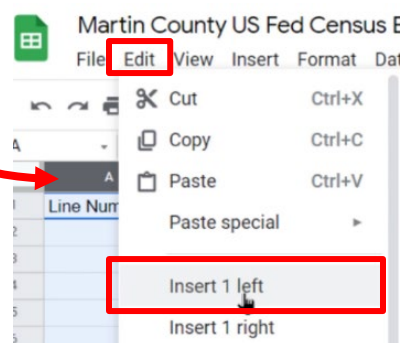
- Back on your blank Google Sheet you will paste this data into **cell B1**. Using a simple paste function will not work. If you do a simple paste, it will put all the data into one column. Use CNTL + Z or the undo button to undo mistakes.
- Instead, you want to use either of the two options below:
 - Click **Edit > Paste Special > Paste Values Only**.
 - Use the short cut code **CTRL + SHIFT + V** to do the same thing.
- You will use column A for the image number.



Inserting a Column

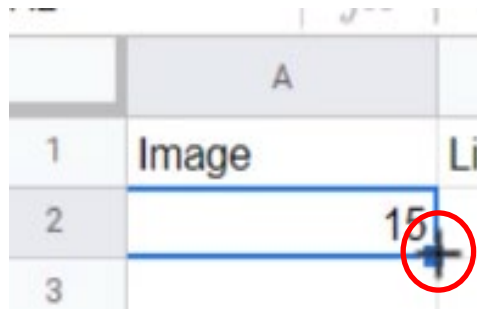
If you forgot to insert a column (as I did in the video) for the image number. You can simply insert a column by:

- **Clicking on the "A"** in the upper left corner of your spreadsheet to highlight the entire column.
- **Right Click and Choose "Insert 1 Left"**.
- Then type **"Image"** in the cell A1. This column is where you will insert the image numbers from the census.



Copy Cells by Dragging the Handle

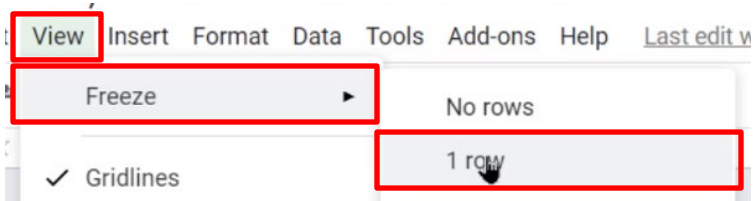
- **Type the image number** from the census in the first cell under the header you created called "Image."
- **Click the cell under "Image"** to highlight it as shown.
- **Hover** over the cell handle (little blue square in the lower right corner) **until you get the + symbol**.
- Then **click and drag down** to the end of the data that you had previously pasted. This will copy the number you typed in the cell to the cells you drag through.



Freezing a Row (Freeze Column Headers)

This keeps your headers on the screen. As you scroll through the data it will slide up underneath the headers so you can see what they are at all times.

- Click on the row you want to freeze. In the video the column headers were in row "1."
 - Click on the "1" in the gray left column to highlight the entire row to the right.
- Choose View (top menu), then "Freeze," then "1 row."
- To remove the freeze redo th process and cloose "no rows."



Changing Font (i.e., Bolding Headers)

Changing font is simple, just highlight the cells and use the options at the top of the screen to modify what the highlighted cells. I use the "B" icon to **bold** my headers.



You can even **add color to the cell** if you choose with the bucket tool (not demonstrated in the video).

Back to the Census on Ancestry

Copy Next Pages

For the rest of what you are copying, you only need the data, not the headers. You only need the headers one time. Clicking anywhere will unhighlight data (if it is still highlighted in blue).

- Click to the left of line "1" in the data (not the headers) and drag down and to the right to highlight all lines in the image.

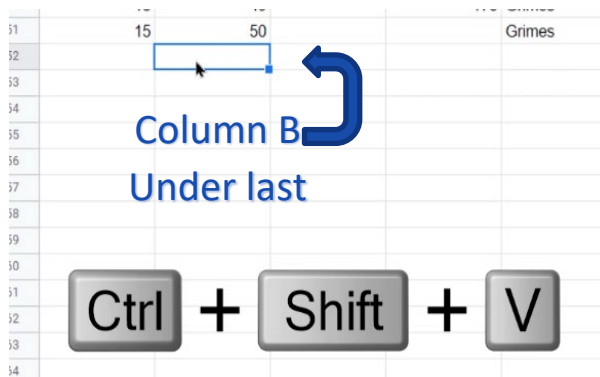
Line Number	Street	Dwelling Number	Surname	Given Name	Race	Gender	Age	Birth Month	Birth Year	Relation to Head of House	Marital Status	Married During Census Year	Occupation
46			Bell	Thomas	White	Male	5		Abt 1875	Son	Single		
47			Bell	Matty	White	Female	3		Abt 1877	Daughter	Single		
48			Bell	Peter	White	Male	1		Abt 1879	Son	Single		
49			Bell	Bicow	White	Male	20		Abt 1860	Son	Married	Yes	
50		190	Bell	Annie	White	Female	23		Abt 1857	Daughter-in-law	Married	Yes	

- Then copy (CNTL + C or CMD + C)
- Then move back to your Google Sheet.

Back on Google Sheet to Paste the Second Images Data

Remember to paste the second and all other images data in column B because you need column A for your image number.

- Use **CNTL + Shift + V** to use the short cut code to “Edit > Paste Special > Values Only.”
- **Add the next image number** to column A.
- Click the handle (lower right corner) in that cell and drag down to the length of the newly pasted data.
- Continue to repeat this process in the last two steps to copy and paste as many images as you desire.



Note: Google Sheets saves automatically in the cloud, as you work. No need to remember to save as long as you have internet service.

Resizing Columns & Rows

- **Hover over between columns** (in the top gray area) until you get the **double headed arrow** and click and drag to **resize columns**.
- Hover over between columns (in the top gray area) until you get the double headed arrow and **double click** to let Google Sheets **automatically resize the column** to the widest width needed.
- Highlight **multiple columns** and **hover over the right most column** until you get the **double headed arrow, double click to resize all highlighted columns**.
- Same will work on row height by hovering over the gray area of the rows.

Word Wrap

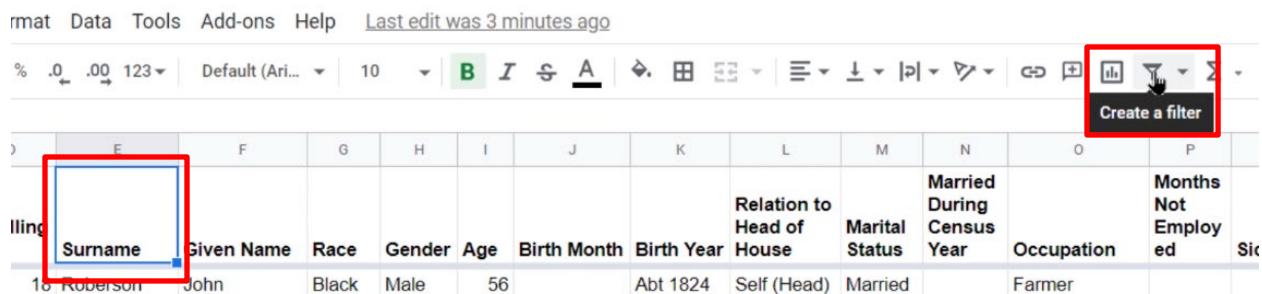
Use the Word Wrap function to allow text to expand the height of a cell and wrap the text around.

- On the ribbon look for the Text Wrap menu.
- Choose Wrap.
- Resizing columns smaller when then cause the cells that are word wrapped to stack the words making the row height accommodate as needed.
- You can select multiple cells and choose the word wrap function for all cells selected at one time.

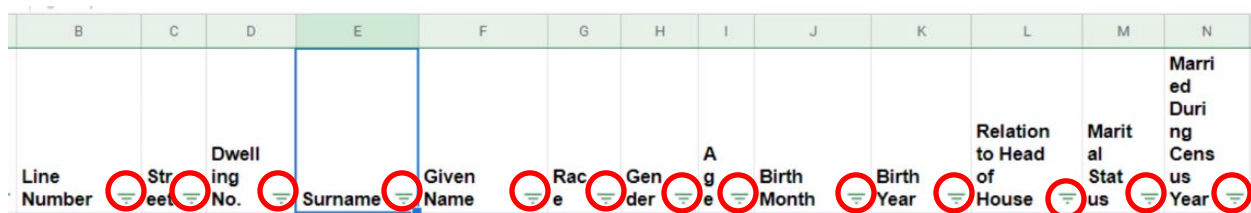


Filtering the Data in Google Sheets

- Click on any of the **cells** that represents your column titles you created in your data. Such as Surname or First Name.
- Click on the filter icon from the ribbon menu.

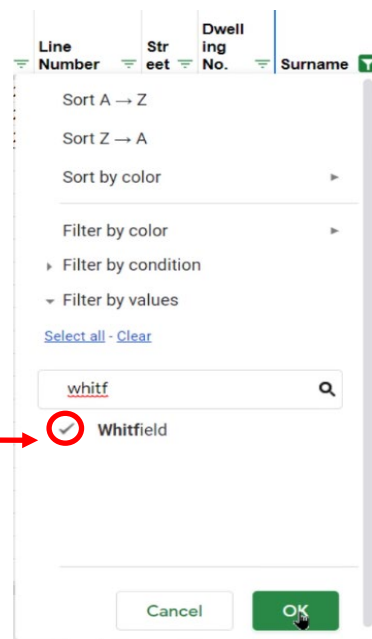


Filters will be created in every cell in the row, even though you selected only one cell.



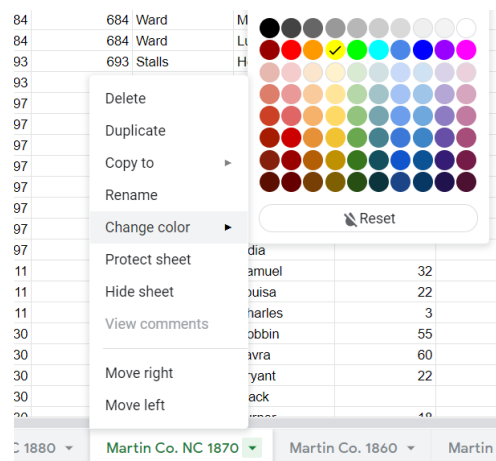
Filtering by Surname

- **Hover over the filter icon** in the Surname cell.
- **Click the filter icon to open the filter dialog box.**
- Use "Select All" to check all Surnames in the column.
- Use "Clear" to uncheck all Surnames in the column.
- **With Surnames unchecked, type the surname you wish to filter to in the search field.**
- Be sure to **put a check mark next to the Surname** to filter to just that name.
- **Click Ok** to see results.
- **Scroll up** if you do not see anything.
- Return to the Filter Icon to **add and check mark more surnames.**
- Make note of how close (in image numbers) the various ancestors are living.
- Also note various spellings when searching in the filter box. For example, in this video there were various spelling so Nancy, Nancey, Nancy E., etc.
- Also make sure to put a source citation at the bottom of your data.



Add, Move, Colorize, or Rename Sheets to the Google Sheets File

- You can **add multiple sheets** in one file by clicking the **+** button in the lower left corner.
- You can **reorder those sheets** by **clicking and dragging** them into a new position. The **down arrow** will tell you where it will drop as you drag around between tabs.
- You can **rename a sheet** by **double clicking on the tab title** at the bottom of the Google Sheets workspace.
- **Twirl the down arrow on any tab** (or right click) on the bottom tabs to open other menu options.



Using This Strategy for Genealogy

Remember the goal is to find other family members. Here are tips to use these filters to find those elusive ancestors.

Filtering Multiple Columns

Filter multiple columns to search for the F.A.N. Club members. Include maiden names, mothers-in-law maiden names, spouses, gender, age or whatever seems logical for the year you are searching.

When searching ages, search a few years either side of your target year, as the census was not perfect, or the informant might not have known the age of your ancestor when the census taker visited.

Do not over filter too many columns. When in doubt, click the filter icon and “select all” to start over in each column. **The dark green icon will show you which columns you have filtered.**

Family Not Found

If you are not finding the people you seek, look at other censuses for that county. Remember that there may be several rolls of microfilm for each county.

Look at neighboring counties. Other family may be just over the border, or the borders changed over time.

Add more images to your data set if you did not extract all the images in that roll.

Discover Various Name Spellings

Use the Filtering to Discover other Spellings. As you type the names, you will see an autofill of all the names in that column begin to appear. This may be a clue of several ways your ancestor’s name was spelled.

[Select all](#) - [Clear](#)

Given Name

Nancey

Nancy

Nancy E

Cancel
OK

Use Google Sheets to Combine Family in Timeline

You can combine information in another sheet to show the various census outlined as shown in the video.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	1880		1870		1860		1850	
2	Surname	First Name	Surname	First Name	Surname	First Name	Surname	First Name
23					Knox	William	Knox	Wm A
24					Knox	Lawrence	Knox	J L
25	Knox	George	Knox	George	Knox	George	Knox	G W
26			Knox	Rerding	Knox	Reddin		
27			Knox	Ann E	Knox	Ann		
28			Knox	Mary	Knox	Marth		
29			Knox	Emily				
30			Knox	Nancy	Knox	Nancy		
31								
32	Knox	Lucy A.			Knox	Lucina		
33	Knox	Henry W.						

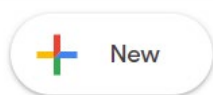
MAKE NOTE OF YOUR WORK FOR FUTURE USE

Google Sheets will save your work until you delete it. However, you can use this document repeatedly as you do research your family history.

Make note of where on your Google Drive you created this document. You can add folders on your Google Drive to keep your files organized.



On your Google Drive, click New and then Folder to create a new folder. You can double click to rename it. Then drag your documents into the folder.



If you use a Chrome browser (owned by Google) it will give you a set of icons in the upper right corner, when clicked, that will

show you all your free Google tools.

You can scroll down, click and drag to reorganize your favorite tools to the top.

Using Excel

To learn how to do this on Microsoft Excel see the video [“#1 Way to Break Down Brick Walls: Updated 2020”](#)

