



September 2021

Willow Valley Genealogy Club Board

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September 21-Using City, County, and Other

Directories to Their Full Advantage-- Deb Oesch

Our first post-COVID live meeting is a first for us-- we've never done City Directories before, so look forward to learning something new--- like a few of their advantages: printed, and many are bi-annual, where the census is handwritten and decennial.

NOTE: We are planning this to be a hybrid meeting-- we'll meet in person (masks required), but also hope to make it available as a Zoom meeting--look for updates before the meeting.

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Genie lites: Beginning with our September meeting, this new five to ten (5-10) minute intro about an app you find helpful in your genealogy, a brick wall you solved (or are working on), a web site of interest, a blog or newsletter you subscribe to, a book of interest or help, a

photo, a letter. Basically, anything which is of interest to you which you can share with us. It can be just a talk or a slide show or "show and tell."

It's designed for those of us who don't want to do a full 45 minute presentation, but could do a short share time.

Some may hit a chord with others who have a similar topic or experience which may spark enough interest for us to develop a full program.

Let a Board member know if you would like to do one of these--we have a few people lined up and are open for more.

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Seeking indexers: There are tax records on the Lancasterhistory.org website which are handwritten, and therefore not indexed. Would you be interested in helping index them so they are searchable? If so, contact pburkhart1@aol.com

You can work on the indexing at your leisure, once a week, once a month, or, if ambitious, daily.

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Proposed 2021-2022 Genealogy Club Presentations

Oct 19 Focus of Your Genealogy/Beginning Genealogy (Common Sense Genealogy)

George & Peg Myrback

Nov 16-DAR-Barbara Park & Cheri Weakley

Dec 21-TBS

Jan 18-Archiving-Heather Tennies

Feb 15-Local Print sources-Ginger Shelley

Mar 15-Preparing for the 1950 census-(hands on)-Al Fulvio

Apr 19-Tax Records-Carol Darrow

May 17-Fun Family Genealogy-Al Fulvio

Any areas you'd like to hear or learn about?

Let us know your thoughts via (emails above) or mention them at our meeting.

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Membership: Just a reminder that Genealogy Club membership dues are being accepted for the 2021-22 year. \$10 per WV resident household and \$15 for others. Send a check for "Willow Valley Genealogy Club" to Jim Robinson Vistas 409 or for non-WV Residents, Jim Robinson 800 Willow Valley Square, Vistas 409, Lancaster, PA 17602. Or bring your check to our 2:00 meeting September 21. Click [here](#) for printable pdf of our membership form where you can update your information."

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I don't know if any of you are Barry Manilow fans, but you wouldn't be reading this unless you're genealogists. A friend sent me this link which I think you'll find intriguing.

<https://smolenyak.medium.com/finding-barry-manilows-mysterious-grandfather-9e2ec2deaa8>

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I subscribe to Dick Eastman's Genealogy Newsletter + edition and in June he had an interesting, but lengthy article on digital images. I've divided it into 3 parts and here's the first part

What Format Should You Use to Store Your Files?

The following is an Eastman's Genealogy Newsletter Plus Edition article, written by and copyright by Dick Eastman. It is being used with the author's permission.

One question that pops up frequently is: "What format should I use to save my files?" The question is often asked about digital pictures. Should they be saved as JPG or PDF or GIF or PNG or TIFF or some other format? Similar questions are often asked about word processing files, although there seem to be fewer options available. I thought I would offer a few suggestions and also tell what works for me.

Digital Picture

Today's technology allows for a selection of image file formats, including JPG, GIF, TIFF, BMP, PSD, RAW, PNG, EPS, PDF, and others in a seemingly endless alphabet soup of abbreviations and acronyms.

You can find many good reasons and bad reasons for selecting any of these file formats. However, from a genealogist's point of view, there are two significant issues to deal with: image size and image compression.

NOTE: PDF files have unique advantages and disadvantages for both digital pictures and for documents. I will write about PDF separately later in this article.

Image size has been an issue since the first scanned images were stored on a computer, back in the vacuum tube days. In this case, the physical size of the picture is not the issue, but the size of the file you create was very important. That is, the problem revolved around the number of bytes required to store a faithful reproduction of the original image.

Not many years ago, disk drives were expensive. Luckily, that problem is disappearing as the price per byte of storage has plummeted in the past few decades. Prices for one-terabyte disk drives have now dropped to the \$50 range, a price undreamed of only a few years ago. It is now cost-effective to store hundreds of thousands of very large digital image files. Prices for disk storage are still dropping nearly every week.

However, file size remains an issue when transferring those files to another computer or when inserting images into a web page. Not everyone uses high-speed, multi-megabyte-per-second Internet connections. Next, even those who do use such high-speed connections find that including very large digital images in a web page results in slow performance. A high-resolution picture also might not display properly inside a web page. Such a picture might fill the entire screen or even "overflow" the screen, leaving no space for text, links, and other information in the web page. Finally, sending a hundred or so old family photographs to a cousin can be a painstaking effort if the files are very large.

Image file size, expressed as the number of bytes, increases with the number of pixels composing an image and the color depth of the pixels. The greater the number of rows and columns, the greater the image resolution and the larger the file. Also, each pixel of an image increases in size when its color depth increases: an 8-bit pixel (1 byte) stores 256 colors, and a 24-bit pixel (3 bytes) stores 16 million colors. Most color images these days are stored as 16-bit or, even better, as 24-bit colors. However, if the original picture is large (perhaps 8-by-10 inches or larger) and is scanned as a high-resolution image, the resultant digital image can be huge.

Fold3.com (formerly known as Footnote.com) created a single image of the entire *Viet Nam War Memorial* in Washington, D.C. The picture was created by taking several thousand very high resolution photographs, one for each small section of "the Wall," and then electronically "stitching the images together" to form one huge image. The result is one huge image that consumes gigabytes of disk space. It is believed to be the biggest single image ever posted to the Internet, and special software had to be developed so that users could view pieces of the original image without downloading the entire master image. Downloading the entire master image might require several days or a week or even longer on a dial-up connection! Luckily, there is no need to do that as the custom-written software allows the user to "zoom in" and look only at specific segments. The result is quick downloads, even on dial-up connections. However, that is the only picture I know of that is available via the custom-written software that transfers only part of the image at a time.

The issue of file size quickly became a problem back in the days of expensive disk drives, when typical computer connection speeds were 300 baud or so. Storing hundreds of images

on the limited storage capacity disk drives of the day was a problem, as was the inability to send large images across very slow network connections. To solve these problems, image compression was invented. Compression is not much of an issue in these days of high-speed Internet connections and cheap disk drives but still cannot be ignored.

File compression refers to the application of computer algorithms to analyze images and to find pixels to delete, thereby reducing the file size. For instance, if the picture had three red pixels in a row, the compression algorithms might eliminate one, or even two, of those pixels. The human eye probably won't notice the difference, and the savings in file size is significant when thousands of pixels can be combined and the duplicates eliminated. The elimination of duplicate pixels is only one part of the sophisticated compression techniques used.

Of course, any time you delete pixels you are also reducing the quality of the original image. However, modern compression algorithms are very good at reducing file sizes without inducing significant loss of image quality. The most important word is "significant."

To be sure, converting a large image to a compressed image using a modern compression algorithm will result in a new picture that is nearly identical to the original, except that it requires far fewer bytes for storage and for transmission across a network. Placing the original image beside a compressed image often results in two images that are nearly indistinguishable. A photo expert with sharp eyesight might notice a difference, but most other people will not.

As long as you keep the original image in an uncompressed format and you make a compressed image **ONE TIME**, most people will not notice any difference. Problems arise, however, when you compress an image time and time again. That is, you start with a compressed image and then compress it still further. Perhaps you save it and then, at a later date, you open the re-compressed image again and attempt to compress it still further. Sadly, many people do that without realizing the impact.

Images stored in TIFF or RAW formats are not compressed. (There is an option for compressed TIFF files but that doesn't appear to be very popular.) Each and every pixel is accounted for and is saved in the uncompressed file. The problem with TIFF and RAW formats is that the files are much larger than those of compressed format.

A number of compressed formats are popular these days. The PNG, JPG, and GIF formats are most often used to display images on the Internet, and other compressed formats are popular for other uses. Many people use these compressed formats to email their pictures to friends because email programs often limit the size of attachments. As an example, they might start with a 2-megabyte TIFF file, which they save as a JPG file to shrink the file. This JPG file might be a mere 200 or 300 kilobytes, about a tenth of the original, uncompressed file size.

NOTE: JPEG or JPG (pronounced "Jay-Peg") images have variable compression capabilities. That is, the software that creates JPEG images may have adjustable compression parameters. The actual compression applied might be zero, or it might be as high as 75%. The more compression used, the greater the loss of clarity.) GIF and PNG both apply a lot of compression and have no user-accessible adjustments for compression ratios.

There is a loss-less version of JPEG called JPEG2000. However, that newer format has never become very popular and many image editing and image viewing programs cannot handle JPEG2000 images. You can read more about JPEG2000 at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/JPEG_2000.

Most digital cameras automatically store all images in compressed JPEG format. Many

desktop scanners do the same. Most of the resultant images are very high quality, although perhaps just a bit less quality than those stored in an uncompressed format, such as TIFF or RAW. In most cases, the user will never notice the difference between a compressed JPEG image and an uncompressed TIFF image.

Copying digital images is never a problem, whether they are compressed or uncompressed. Unlike photocopies, photographs, and other analog technologies, simply copying a digital image file never induces any loss within the original. Copying a file from one hard drive to another or sending the file across the Internet never adds any degradation **AS LONG AS NO MODIFICATIONS ARE MADE**. This is the secret to keeping archival copies of digital images: each copy is as good as the original file. Digital images can be copied time and time again with no loss of detail. Again, this is true only when no modifications are made: a one-for-one digital copy always works well.

A problem arises, however, when the user opens a photo editing program, edits an image that has been stored in a compressed format, and then saves the new image in a compressed (or even-more-compressed) format.

Part 2 next month