

## OLD FAMILY PHOTOS – FROM SHOEBOX TO FAMILYSEARCH & BEYOND

*“The only way to eat an elephant is one bite at a time.”* Consider inviting a guest or two to the meal!

**1. COMMIT to the project then GATHER photos in one place.** Check with relatives who might be willing to share what they have. Some wise advice: “Don’t start sorting or reminiscing while gathering!”

**2. IDENTIFY people in photos.** May take detective work! Contact relatives, especially older ones. Look for clues in & on the photos: *photographer stamps, clothing/hair styles, buildings, scenery, etc.* The type of photo can give an approximate time period. My Heritage has “PhotoDater.” Check FamilySearch or Ancestry for other photos which might help identify people. Or set aside in “Unidentified” file.

Something to keep in mind: If someone died before 1840-50 but is identified as being in a photograph, it likely is not them. It could be someone from the same family but just a later generation.

For a history of photography: [thoughtco.com/photography-timeline-1992306](http://thoughtco.com/photography-timeline-1992306) or

[historyonthenet.com/authentichistory/1865-1897/5-technology/1-photography/index.html](http://historyonthenet.com/authentichistory/1865-1897/5-technology/1-photography/index.html)

Always work with clean hands! Use soft pencil or acid-free pen on back of photos in the margins. Markers & ball-point pens can bleed through. Add full name, date & place if known. Or use acid free/archival photo sleeves & write on the sleeves. Avoid using paperclips on photos. Another method is to number each photo and keep a list of who/what is in each photo.

**3. ORGANIZE.** Use file folders, large envelopes, or ziplock bags in a box or sheet protectors in a binder. File alphabetically by last name either individually or as families. Use smaller envelopes to further organize within each file. Again, don’t reminisce while organizing!

**4. DIGITIZE/Scan to computer.** Types of scanners: Flatbed; printer with scanner; portable; for negatives and slides. The FamilySearch Center has large flatbed & other scanners for patron use. They can also digitize home videos, etc. You can take pictures of larger photos/portraits with a good camera or smart phone & download to computer. Scan full photo & backs, also, if information is there. Crop later if needed. Include photos of homes, heirlooms, documents, school-related items, etc.

File on computer in “Pictures” in appropriate file & edit photos where needed. Windows Photo app for basic editing. The My Heritage app, “Reimagine,” can scan, colorize, repair, enhance & *animate*. Also Photoshop or other software or professionals for photos with significant damage.

Back up photo files in more than one place: External hard drive, USB drive, Google Photos, icloud, etc.

**5. SHARE to FamilySearch.** Upload photos directly to “Gallery” or to a Family Tree person > Add Memories >File. Select your photo source. Add title, tag people in photo, add event date, place, description if possible. Consider sharing photos to Ancestry, My Heritage, etc.

Other ways to share & preserve: A family Facebook page, blog or website; Google Photos; copies of photos; photobooks; family yearbooks; heritage books; calendars (Snapfish, Shutterfly, Mixbook, etc.); Walmart, Costco, Walgreens for more basic ones); videos; display matted, framed *copies*.

**6. STORE/PRESERVE Originals.** Store in “archival safe”, “acid free”, “lignin free” & “PVC free”, “polyester” or “polypropylene,” in dark, dry, moderate temperatures. In binders or albums with archival sheet protectors or photo pocket pages. Mount photos on acid-free scrapbook paper & place in sheet protectors. Don’t use “magnetic” albums & never laminate photos. Consider storing in bookcases (in appropriate environment) for easy family access. Avoid air-tight plastic containers that could trap moisture.

There are many more resources like these online:

[familysearch.org/blog/en/turn-your-photo-collection-from-chaos-to-order-with-these-simple-tips](http://familysearch.org/blog/en/turn-your-photo-collection-from-chaos-to-order-with-these-simple-tips)

[familysearch.org/en/blog/photo-preservation](http://familysearch.org/en/blog/photo-preservation) (Related RootsTech classes listed there, also)

[scancafe.com/blog/memories-stuck-in-physical-photo-albums/](http://scancafe.com/blog/memories-stuck-in-physical-photo-albums/)

Something fun related to photos: See which ancestors you look most like at

[familysearch.org/discovery/compareme](http://familysearch.org/discovery/compareme)

**Strangers In The Box**

"Come, look with me inside this drawer,  
In this box I've often seen,  
At the pictures, black and white,  
Faces proud, still, and serene.

I wish I knew the people,  
These strangers in the box,  
Their names and all their memories,  
Are lost among my socks.

I wonder what their lives were like,  
How did they spend their days?  
What about their special times?  
I'll never know their ways.

If only someone had taken time,  
To tell, who, what, where, and when,  
These faces of my heritage,  
Would come to life again.

Could this become the fate,  
Of the pictures we take today?  
The faces and the memories,  
Someday to be passed away?

Take time to save your stories,  
Seize the opportunity when it knocks,  
Or someday you and yours,  
Could be strangers in the box."

-Pamela A. Harazim

Teach Me Genealogy - [tmgenealogy.com](http://tmgenealogy.com)

**Days Gone By**


"The special book upon the shelf,  
Was made with many hands.  
Our ancestors who posed back then,  
All came from different lands.

Their pictures were all tucked away,  
And rarely did we see,  
The importance of these treasures-  
The start of you and me.

The history of our families,  
Now here in black and white.  
Preserved with special care and time,  
Each page is done just right.

When time permits, we take it down,  
And think of days long past.  
Our hopes, our dreams, our heritage,  
All safe and made to last."

Author: Unknown



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**If you don't see that it gets done, who will?**

