

Finding Family – June 2021

Organizing your family photos

By Christine Dunn

It is all too easy to believe that our family photos will always be there. After all, they have been sitting in the back of the closet for years. But for many of us, the wildfires that swept through our neighboring communities last year brought reality home. Unless we finally organize and store our photos, they could easily be lost.

To get you started, here are some tips from the pros:

- **Take baby steps:** Step up a table or desk and designate it as a temporary workspace. (I used the queen-sized bed in my spare room.) Collect all your photos, negatives, slides and albums. Resist the temptation to reminisce during this phase.
- **Create your system:** How do you want to organize your photos? Creating a family timeline can help you sort everything by date. Photos also can be organized by themes, such as Christmas or vacation or by person.

Label some temporary storage boxes with the categories you have selected. Put each photo in its correct box.

- **Sort:** Sort the photos in each box by order of importance. Professional organizers use an acronym called ABCS to help make these decisions. “A” photos are most important and should be digitized. “B” photos help tell your family story. “C” photos are the ones you can toss — the blurry ones, the doubles, the empty landscapes.

Have a big trash bag on hand for this. “S” photos are those that are not particularly good quality but speak to you. That out-of-focus shot of your dad with his dog for example.

- **Label:** Now you are ready to label your photos. A soft lead (#1) pencil is the gold standard. Hard lead pencils may leave an indentation on the photo. Write who is in the photo, the date it was taken, the occasion, and the place it was taken on the back of the photo.

Unfortunately, pencils will not work on modern photos, which are printed on coated paper. Instead, you will have to use a waterproof, soft-tip marker. Avoid ballpoint pens and felt-tip markers, which can smudge and bleed. You can find a variety of archival pencils and pens on the internet or in craft supply stores.

Take your time with this enormous task, perhaps setting aside 30 minutes to an hour day so that you don't become distracted.

Next month we will explore the various ways to store photos.

Zoom into your family history

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The Napa Valley Genealogical Society presents its monthly Zoom genealogy lectures for members and the public on June 17.

Kelly Wheaton will discuss "A Picture is Worth 1,000 Words."

She will demonstrate how to create custom maps for the places that matter to you because they mattered to your ancestors and share examples of My Google Maps. She will explain how to get started and how to share or embed the maps in documents.

The meeting begins at 1 p.m. with announcements, and the program is at 1:30 p.m.

Wheaton is a founding member of the Napa Valley Genealogical Society with 50 years of experience and 10 years of using DNA tools. She is the author of the free online course, "Beginner's Guide to Genetic Genealogy."

For guest registration, go to the website, napagensoc.org. On the home page click on "Using My Maps on Google Maps."

Members of the Society will receive the Zoom link and do not need to register.

The Napa Valley Genealogical Society is happy to report that many readers of the Napa Valley Register have joined the monthly meetings. There are many ways to find your families all over the world. The Genealogical Society can help you and they are happy to accept new members.

If you would like help discovering your personal family story, contact the Napa Valley Genealogical Society's Library, 1701 Menlo Ave., Napa, 252-2252 or napagensoc.org.