Old Family Photos in the Digital Age

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It's a Process

- **Cull & Organize The Photo Pile(s)**
- **Scan Once, Scan Big & Stay Organized**
- **Back It Up**
- **Make Something**

Before You Start, Answer Three Questions...

These answers will affect all future decisions and the extent of your efforts.

Who Am I Doing This For, and Why?

For myself? For my siblings and cousins? For my children? For my grandchildren?
Are you documenting their past, or making ancestral connections?

Analog or Digital?

Analog - If the majority of the collection(s) are prints, make prints of digital pictures, then sort and organize to display in photo albums.

Photo albums are a perfectly acceptable archives. Tactile viewing is a different experience than swiping through pictures in a smartphone. Albums are "instant antiques" and "kick the can" to others to scan into digital image files.

Digital - Old photo prints and slides are scanned into digital image files, newer digital images are added, and the new digital image collections are archived for sharing via "Cloud" storage and/or flash drives.

What Will I Make?

You have put all sorts of effort and soul into this undertaking. Make something...

Copy all the selected digital image files on flash drives or Cloud storage and distribute? Organize the selected old photo prints into photo albums? Create photo books from portions of the collection? Create audio PowerPoint or video presentations?

Time & Workflow

You will be overwhelmed if you look at this as one massive pile. Break it down into smaller projects to be completed one at a time as part of the whole project.

Half of your time will be sorting, selecting and organizing your "photo piles" into smaller, manageable groups of pictures to be displayed or scanned.

Write It Down

We forget. We put projects down to restart later. Others may pick up the project and not know its intent or how it is organized.

Write it down. How is your Photo Pile organized? What are the smaller groups? What has been completed? Where did you stop? How are you naming digital image files? Where are digital image files and folders stored?

Keep a log of the steps you have finsihed so if you stop, you know where to begin.

Be Consistent

Be consistent in the way you sort and organize photo prints, how you name digital image files, how you name and organize image folders. Write it down...

Volunteers

If family members request you scan photos, they are volunteering. Have them help with sorting, organizing, writing, scanning, and cost. This can be a bonding experience and builds value and ownership in the project.

Elder Pairing

If you have elder family members, pair them with younger family members to sort, select and identify pictures. The elders tell the stories behind the pictures to the youngers. Encourage the youngers to record the session(s) in video, audio or writing.
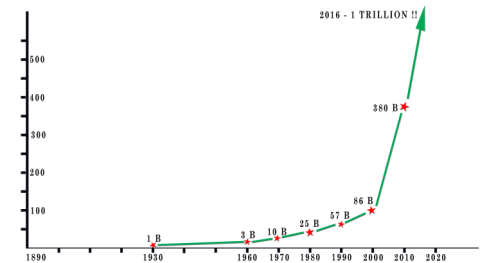
Cull the Herd

Simply put, we are in visual overload...

Viewers rapidly tire from too many photos.

The total number photos we made grew exponentially by the decade from 1900 to 2000.

There are few photos of our parents and grandparents because photography was a luxury. The Kodak came out for special occasions.

When we switched from film to digital, the number of photos we made went off the charts, from 380 billion in 2000 to 1 trillion pictures in 2016.

The Rough Sort

Rough sort the entire photo pile into smaller groups.

Keep collections you inherited as separate group(s) to be refined

For personal photos and your family(s) photos, roughly organize these photo piles into chronologies or groups that make sense to you.

Whatever you decide to do and how you have done it - write it down.

Remove or Delete:

- Duplicates
- Multiples of a scene or group.
- Crappy photos – blurry, unflattering, embarrassing.
- Unknowns – people, locations, events.
- Scenes – unless beautiful, has known people, or helps tell a story of a time, a place.

We Want To Keep:

- All Antique Ancestor images - if we know who they are.
- People and places that future viewers will "connect."
- Small groups of images that viewed together tell stories of places, people, events.
- Images that show detail - who, where, why, how.