
PLAIN HISTORY GENEALOGY GROUP

Covering Plain, Sauk Co, Wisconsin and Beyond

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Meeting & Events Schedule

Saturday, November 14th, 2005
9:30 am, Plain, WI
Kraemer Library and Community Center

We will discuss how to digitize old photos and documents using scanners and digital cameras. This meeting is open to anyone interested in genealogy or local history of the area.

Internet and Goodies

LDS digitizing / indexing microfilm holdings
<http://deseretnews.com/dn/view/0,1249,605153189,00.html>

The LDS church has over 2 million rolls of microfilm. This article explains the church's goal to digitize and index the information on these microfilms. Do not underestimate how this will drastically change the way genealogical research has done.

Genealogy Guy's Podcast

<http://www.genealogyguys.com/>

Here is a nice podcast from the Genealogy Guys. Like the saying of the founder of Faber College goes "Knowledge is good". This is another site that lets you learn more about genealogy. Give it a listen.

Sauk County 1880 History On Line

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~wisauk/QtyIndex.htm>

Some really nice people have typed up the portions of "The History of Sauk County, Wisconsin Publisher: Western Historical Co. (Chicago), 1880" that deal with individuals. If you have ancestors from Sauk Co Wisconsin, you should give this site a look.

Freeze Dried Burial

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?mi=%2Fnews%2F2005%2F09%2F28%2Fwfreez28.xml&sSheet=%2Fnews%2F2005%2F09%2F28%2Fixnewstop.html>

In case you haven't decided what your family should do with your body after you die, here is another option, freeze drying.

Theft Attempt at WI Historical Society

http://www.ala.org/al_onlineTemplate.cfm?Section=alonline&template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=106206

Just a quick story about an attempted robbery at the Wisconsin Historical Society Library in Madison.

FBI Storing and Improving Fingerprint

http://www.nsf.gov/discoveries/disc_summ.jsp?cntn_id=104378&org=NSF

The FBI has got some really good stuff to work with the millions and millions of fingerprint images they have on file. First off they have a compression method that is three times better than JPEG. The bright boys at the University of Texas at Austin have come up with a program that cleans up images without human intervention. The results are impressive.

How can I use this? Never ever throw away a photo, digital or on paper because it isn't good enough. Someday there will be a program that will be able to save the photo.

Hildegarde Thering's Research Notes

Louisa Bauer-Bettinger

htb0003.jpg

"July 18, 1907

Louisa only daughter of Mr & Mrs John B Bauer was born November 3, 1892 at the old homestead on the farm now owned by John H. Bauer. - parents moved to Spring Green 1895. Married P. Bettinger Jan 30, 1901 - 2 sons Louis 6 - Clarence 4"

Ochiner \$500 fine WWI espionage

htbf0003.jpg

"March 20 1919

Arthur Ochiner (sic) paid fine \$500 - pleading guilty to a charge of violation of the espionage act by criticisms of America's part in war."

This is an interesting article for number different reasons. \$500 was a significant fine. Obviously Freedom of speech was not quite so free back then. It is also interesting that hostilities ended in 1918 so he receives the fine after the fighting was over.

Loretto Rock Part II

<http://garylhaas.web.aplus.net/therock200509/>
<http://garylhaas.web.aplus.net/therock/>

On the afternoon of Saturday, September 10, 2005, a group of five made another trip to the Rock where students of the Loretto one-room school house carved their initials. Sandy Stiemke, Gene and Karen Beth, LaVerne Haas and Gary Haas.

This crew got a lot of the moss and lichen off of the Rock. You can judge our progress by looking at the photos on the Internet. The Rock probably has never been this clean.

We took some measurements of the Rock. Measuring around the base of the Rock, we came up with about 32 feet of circumference. We got about 13 feet for the length. The width was about 6 1/2 feet. The height was about 2 1/2 feet. Laverne Haas, a former bridge construction foreman, told us that a square yard of gravel weighs about 3200 pounds. You can do your own math, but I come up with a rough 12,000 pounds. This is only an estimate of what is aboveground. Who knows how far the Rock extends into the ground.

Our plan is to make another visit to the Rock again in November. Hopefully the cold weather will have removed the remaining growth. We will take a more systematic approach to try to identify some of the initials carved on the Rock. Some of the initials are very faint and difficult to record. We are even considering taking rubbings of the initials.

Here's a suggestion for anybody doing genealogical research. If you're with a group of people scratching grass off of a rock, make sure you have a tape recorder. There were lots of good stories told but not recorded while we were working on the Rock.

(You can tell I took these pictures because you can see my tennis shoes.)

Using Google Picasa 2

Using Picasa 2 to manage your digital images.

Before we talk about what a great tool Picasa 2 is to manage your digital images, let's spend some time discussing: why digitize, what can you digitize, how can you digitize stuff and what are some tools to manage digital images.

There are number of good reasons why you should digitize all your important documents, photos, audio and video recordings. The best reason is to preserve your stuff. Or do you think your stuff is protected by some mysterious force against fire, floods, tornadoes, and theft? If you digitize your stuff, you can hold all your important documents in one handful of CD/DVD disks. Imagine that your house starts on fire. What will be easier to carry out the door; boxes and filing cabinets full of photos and documents or a handful of disks?

An even bigger danger to your stuff than floods or fire, is that your important stuff gets lost in a pile of paper. Can you lay your hands on a single sheet of paper that might be hiding in your filing cabinets? More importantly, what happens when you eventually die (and it will happen)? Will the people going through your documents treat them in a loving caring way? Or will your stuff end up in a dumpster or Goodwill? Digitizing allows you to add organization to your images. It might make it easier for somebody to want to rummage through your stuff.

Digitizing makes it easy to share stuff. Imagine that you are in a relative's home and they have a fantastic picture of your great-grandfather. Justifiably the relative might not let you take the photo and make a copy of it. If you have a scanner or digital camera with you, you can make a copy of the photo in seconds.

I have lots of nifty images in digital format. When somebody asks me for an individual image, I can e-mail it as an attachment. This allows you to share images across the world in seconds.

Once you have your digitized images backed up to a CD or DVD disc, you have the makings of a great gift. Giving your backup disks of your images to relatives and friends accomplishes two things. One, it gives them access to images about their heritage. Two, you now have spread backup copies in a number of different locations. Your house might burn down or your computer might crash. Then you will be real happy that somebody has a backup copy that you can use.

Digitizing stuff makes it easier to do your research. Instead of having to search through filing cabinets, boxes or piles of paper, all of your stuff can be available in one place on your computer. This makes it easy to pull together all the information you have on an individual.

Computers make it easy to improve the readability of digital images. You can zoom in and magnify areas of images. You can lighten, darken and enhanced images.

What sort of things can you digitize? The short answer is that you can digitize almost anything. Photos of tombstones, churches, people, towns are commonly digitize. You can digitize books, newspaper articles, school certificates, military records, birth certificates, marriage certificates, and death certificates. Plat maps, census information, farm census and other government records can be digitized.

Tape recordings and other audio recordings can be digitized. Home movies can be digitized. Considering that magnetic tape wears out in a few years, storing stuff in a digital format can keep things in a great quality format forever.

OK'd now you are convinced that having stuff in a digital format is neat. The question is how you digitize things. There are number ways that you can collect and create digital images.

If you see an image on the Internet, you can make a copy of it by clicking on it with the right mouse button. This allows you to save the image to your PC.

Scanners are another way of getting things digitized. There are all sorts of scanners with all sorts of different capabilities. If you have never worked with a scanner before, ask a friend to give you a couple hours of training on one. This will save you a boatload of time.

Digital cameras are great for getting things into a digitize format. One afternoon I was taking photos in a cemetery of tombstones. By the time I was done I had over 500 images. Digital cameras also worked great as a portable scanner. I always take mine to research libraries so that I can make copies of books and microfilm reader displays.

In the past it used to be very difficult to make copies of camcorder and other videotapes. For under \$200 you can get devices that were records your video to DVD disks.

There's an old saying, "*If the only tool you have is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail. Sometimes you need a screwdriver.*" There's lots of nifty tools for working with digital images.

PDA's for Personal Digital Assistants are handheld computer devices that let you carry your images around with you. This is great for showing and other people.

USB drives can hold thousands of images. Like PDA's, USB drives make it easy to share your images with other people. USB drives also allow you to take your research documents with you when you go to libraries.

DVD drives and large hard disks allow you to store all your stuff in one spot. Having your information organized on large capacity storage devices, makes it easier to find and back up your information.

Putting your digitized images on web pages, is a great way to attract and meet people researching on the same family lines. Putting your digitized images on a web page also reduces the amount stuff that you have to lug to a library when you during research. You can store copies of birth, marriage, death certificates on your web page.

When you are at the library you can look at the image on the Internet.

There are digital image processing programs that have special capabilities. Irfanview allows you to create web pages and do some more advanced editing of images. Some programs allow you to write comments and put keywords inside the images themselves for organization reasons. Exifer lets you print this information out and transfer it to other programs to make printed indexes.

IrfanView <http://www.irfanview.com/>
Exifer <http://www.friedemann-schmidt.com/software/exifer/>

Sometimes you need a more complex, full-featured image editor to do things like clone and repair scratches.

There are lots of databases to index your digitized images. Picasa 2 is a great example of this.

I have over 50,000 images in my digitized image collection. Picasa 2 is one of the tools for I use to manage these digital files. To start with the price is right. You can download Picasa 2 from <http://picasa.google.com>.

This article is not meant to cover all the tools and features of Picasa 2. In order to learn the features of the program in high use and you'll have to experiment and it doesn't hurt to get a geek friend to help you.

You need to have Windows 98 or better to use Picasa 2. You also need to have Microsoft's Internet Explorer installed. You don't need to use Microsoft's browser. But Picasa 2 need some of the files and programs installed with this program.

HERE IS ONE VERY, VERY, VERY IMPORTANT THING TO KNOW ABOUT PICASA 2. IT IS SPECIFICALLY SET UP TO KEEP YOU FROM DAMAGING YOUR ORIGINAL IMAGES. We will discuss this out more detail later in this article.

Picasa 2 works with a number of different digital image and digital video formats. JPEG, BMP, PSD, RAW, AVI, MPG, WMV.

The first thing you do after downloading and installing Picasa 2, is to import your files into its database. Picasa 2 will automatically scan every nook and cranny on your computer looking for files to catalog. This is pretty much of an automated process, but it can take hours. Or at least it seems that way. You can start this process before you go to bed and the next day it will be done.

OK, let's look at what Picasa 2 looks like when you start it up. The program starts out in the library view. It shows you all of your files with thumbnails.

Down towards the bottom of your screen, is the picture tray and output options area. There is a slide bar in this area that allows you to increase or decrease the size of thumbnails.

Underneath the VIEW menu option there are couple of things that you might want to play around with. One option allows you to view your images in a slide show. Another option lets you search or folder list by: the name of the folder, the date the folder was created, and folders with recent changes in. You can also click on search options which adds an additional buttons to push when you're searching for files.

The HELP menu option can be very helpful in trying to figure out how to do all the nifty things that Picasa 2 can do. I strongly recommend that you spent a lot of time exploring in this area of the program.

When you load Picasa 2 for the first-time it'll do a scan of your entire disk. It will automatically monitor changes in specific folders and update itself: DESKTOP, MY DOCUMENTS, MY PICTURES. Under the TOOLS menu option, under the FOLDER MANAGER option you can tell Picasa 2 which folders to WATCH FOR CHANGES.

One of the strongest features of Picasa 2 is that it gives you a number of different ways to organize your digital files. In other words it helps you find files hiding on your hard disk.

One feature of Picasa 2 is that it lets you rename files. You find this capability under the FILE menu, RENAME FILES option. This can be handy if you digital camera automatically assigns some weird sequential name to its files.

The LABEL button allows you to create virtual folders of files. You click on the thumbnail of the file, and assign a label to one or more images. This will group the images with similar labels so that you can view them quickly as though they're in the same folder. However it does not physically move the file.

You can assign KEYWORDS to a file. You first select a file by clicking on the thumbnail, then assign one or more keywords to the file. You can do this by accessing the VIEW menu, KEYWORDS option or you can use the shortcut key of CTRL K. Picasa 2 will automatically write these keywords into the actual file itself. This is not dangerous and is not change your digital file in any significant fashion. You can use Picasa 2's SEARCH feature to find files tagged with desired keywords.

You can also tag a file with a STAR. You first select a file by clicking on the thumbnail, then click on the star at the bottom of the screen. You can use Picasa 2's SEARCH feature to find files tagged with a star.

By double-clicking on the image you go into the edit area. If you look very closely towards the bottom of the screen you can see the phrase MAKE A CAPTION! This allows you enter a caption into the image file. Which can be searched for by Picasa 2's SEARCH feature. This is a great place to tell a story about the image. Who is in the image, when it be that take place, were to be that take place, what went on. Picasa 2 has a clumsy way of adding captions to images. Irfanview gives you an easier way to embed this image in the file. However it can be tricky to get Picasa 2 to recognize a new caption.

One way to get Picasa 2 to recognize new captions is to uninstall Picasa 2 and install Picasa 2 begin in do a scan of your desk. CAREFUL, you can lose any edits you've made to images.

To use the SEARCH feature, towards the top of the screen on the right hand side is a search box that allows you type in keywords, captions, filenames, folder names, date of the image, and even the camera maker to search for a file. This is something you need to play around with on your own to get a feel for how it works.

HERE IS A TRICK. OK you've entered all these keywords and captions into the image files, can you access this information? It sure to be nice to print this out in an index or book format. You can use the program EXIFER the transfer this information to a spreadsheet program, which can be used to set up an index using a wordprocessing program.

A really, really, really neat feature of Picasa 2 is how easy it fixes up digital images. By double-clicking on an image you are put into the edit screen. NOW THIS IS VERY, VERY, VERY IMPORTANT UNDERSTAND. In the EDIT screen none of the changes are made to the actual file itself. In order to make the changes to the file, you have to EXPORT the file. And Picasa 2 will force you to create a new file. It will not allow you to overwrite the original file.

Unlike full-featured digital image editing programs, Picasa 2 lets you make "simple" changes to a file without having to master complicated menus and commands.

There are three tabs in the EDIT screen. Let's start with the BASIC FIXES.

The first button on the left is CROP. This is button allows you to cut out unneeded areas on an image. This is handy for removing borders on photos for example.

The second button is STRAIGHTEN. Suppose the person who took the image was a goof and took the photo at an angle. This button allows you to straighten the photo. This is different than

the ROTATE TO THE LEFT or ROTATE TO THE RIGHT buttons at the bottom of the screen.

The third button is REDEYE. This allows you to the redeye or the devil eye affect you get when you use a flash on a camera.

The fourth button is I'M FEELING LUCKY. Sometimes by magic, Picasa 2 can automatically figure out what's wrong with the image and fix the problem itself.

The next buttons are AUTO CONTRAST and AUTO COLOR. For myself, these have not worked out well for me. There are other options which we will look at shortly.

The last item is a slide bar for FILL LIGHT. This lets you lighten or darken images. I have gotten some phenomenal results by just moving the slide bar back-and-forth. For example I had one image that was so dark all you could see was a reflection off the person's eyeglasses. The FILL LIGHT slide bar made it possible to actually bring out the person's facial features from what looked like a almost pitch black photo.

Right below the slide bar are buttons which will allow you to UNDO the changes you made.

The second tab on the EDIT screen is, TUNING. These slide bar's let's you experiment with trying to improve an image. Experiment with them.

My favorite slide bar is COLOR TEMPERATURE. I am not the world's greatest photographer, and sometimes I forget to use the right settings for my digital camera. For example I'll take outdoor pictures using an indoor setting. This adds a nice blue or red tints to the image. You might also run into old images that have faded due to age. The COLOR TEMPERATURE slide bar allows you to easily fix these colors. A blue tint is considered cold, while a red tent is considered warm.

The third tab in the EDIT screen is EFFECT. This area allows you to get artsy fartsy with images.

There is not enough room in this newsletter to cover each one of the edit tools of Picasa 2 in

detail. Experiment on your own. You can do this safely because Picasa 2 does not overwrite the original image.

If you are looking for help, there is an extremely active user group that should be a glance or any question you might come up with. You can ask this is user group at

<http://groups.google.com/group/picasa>

<http://groups.google.com/group/picasa-users>

To finish this article let's answer the \$64,000 question. Why is Google doing this for free? This is only my opinion. Information has value. Individuals have lots of information. Google wants to be a provider of a way for individuals to organize their information. Someday, people want sure this information with the world and Google will be ready to provide this service.