Genealogy On Computers

by Bob Dietzel

This column is about converting photographs to a digital form so that they can be stored on a computer disk or CDROM and what you can do with them after they are converted.

Some people will like to put their photos into CDROM form in order to archive them. Others will only convert them in order to put them into a form that they can use in their computer for publishing or printing. Either way, here are some ideas for you to think about.

Converting Photos to a Kodak PhotoCD

By far the only current widely accepted standard for photographic CDROM storage for the general public is the Kodak PhotoCD standard. The Kodak PhotoCD holds about 100 pictures which are scanned in at five different resolutions (3,072 by 2,048 and down to 192 by 128) in 24-bit color. The costs seem to vary because they are set by the dealer and not Kodak, but a typical charge is about $10 for the CDROM and under $1 for each image copied to the CDROM. If you don't fill the entire CDROM, you can have additional photos added later for a small setup fee plus a charge per image. The easiest way to find a local shop to make your photoCD is to call the Kodak information number 1-800-242-2424 from a touchtone phone and follow the directions.

Keep in mind that for photos to be put on the Kodak PhotoCD you must have the negatives. If you don't have the negatives for all of your photos (who does!), you will have to either have them made for you or you will have to photograph them yourself. Although I am far from being a professional photographer, I will pass along some things that I have learned about copying old photos. I photograph each old photo using a 35mm camera with a macro lens. This allows me to get reasonably close to the photo while still maintaining focus. The photo is placed on a piece of plywood which is covered with black construction paper and a piece of non-glare glass, that I got from an old picture frame, is placed over it. The glass keeps the photo flat and keeps any glare to a minimum. The camera is mounted on a tripod and is positioned so that point-of-aim is perpendicular to the photo to minimize distortion. In order to avoid using a flash or other direct lighting, I use a fairly fast film like ASA 200 or ASA 400. I have found that using a flash sometimes makes reflections that are not apparent until you get the film back from being developed.

The Kodak PhotoCD is usable not only in home computer CDROM drives, but also in a Kodak PhotoCD player which displays the photos on a television set and the CD-i player which also accepts music CD's, CD-i games, and movies.

There is some concern that the PhotoCD format will become obsolete in a few years. All of us who have a few grey hairs can remember what happened with bell-bottom pants, 8-track stereos, and 8mm movie cameras! Unfortunately, we cannot predict the future, but we can be sure that, since the PhotoCD is a digital copy, even if the PhotoCD format does not survive, converting it to whatever format replaces it should give as good of a copy as the PhotoCD. In that sense, the PhotoCD will make a more permanent archival copy than will the best chemical copy. If not exposed to extremes in temperature, Kodak is predicting that the PhotoCD disc itself is expected to last about 100 years and remain readable.

Kodak maintains a PhotoCD mailing list and has an anonymous ftp site on the Internet. There is a wealth of information there, including lists of known processors.

All things considered, Kodak PhotoCDs are a very attractive way to both archive photos and to have them in a form that is usable in your computer for publishing.

Scanning Photos Directly Into Your Computer

One of the most popular methods of scanning photos into your computer directly uses the Logitech 24-bit Scanman. It is handheld so you can scan anything—and it even has OCR (Optical Character Recognition) to convert scanned text to a editable file. Although many people profess to like the OCR capability, I find it quite inaccurate. However, this minor flaw in its usefulness is easily ignored when you compare the price and performance to the larger and much more expensive flatbed scanners.

You will have a choice to make when it comes time to use your scanner to scan your first photo. The higher the scanning density, the more disk space it will take to store the photo. There is a practical limit for most non-professional use. When you scan photos at 400 dpi (dots-per-inch) and print the image out on a 600 dpi laserprinter using high quality paper, you will find it difficult to see a difference with a regular photograph. Some people will even scan at the 100 dpi rate with good results. You will have to see what pleases you. Do a test with your publishing software to see how it handles the file. For example, PageMaker does not seem to handle high density files very well.

As for the software that it comes with...the word amazing comes to mind. You can edit photos to remove scratches, correct faded photographs, correct over/under exposure, and everyone's favorite and most used—focus an unfocused photo.

Depending on the file format from your scanning software, you would probably want to convert your file to a more common format. A common format for scanners is TIFF, but it produces very large files when you scan at higher densities. GIF format is common and provides some compression to reduce file size. JPEG is also common and provides quite a bit more compression but can degrade picture quality some. If you use JPEG, it is best to compare the JPEG encoded version with the original; you can adjust the JPEG compression and resulting data loss. When a TIFF file of several megabytes was converted to a JPEG file, the resultant file was around 100 kilobytes using only medium compression and when I could not discern any changes. A nice thing about JPEG is that it will retain the full 24-bit information unlike other image compression formats like GIF that will only store 8 bit.

WELCOME
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We want to thank
Doris Lessig
for a job well done as
Ways & Means Committee Chairman...
And, also, we are happy to report
she is still volunteering on the
Projects Committee.

The Bicksler/Bixler/Pixler/ Picksler/Bichsel Family

by Jean T. Feer

A Henry Bixler was born ca1753 as the oldest son of Christian Bixler (d. 1811). Christian Bixler lived in Cocalico Twp., Lancaster Co., Pa., and Robeson Twp., Berks Co., Pa., as well as in Northampton Co., Pa.

Henry Bixler and three of his brothers, Abraham, Philip, and Christian, served together in the Revolutionary War in the Robeson Twp., Berks Co., 7th Company under Joseph Davis.

There are records of three of Henry's sons, Elias Buecheler, b. Apr. 25, 1775 (Alleghenyville Church, Robeson Twp., Berks), Johannes Bucheler, b. Apr. 20, 1781 (Rev. Frederick Illing), and Johannes Simon Buchler, b. Mar. 18, 1784 (Rev. John Waldschmidt of Cocalico Twp, Lancaster Co.).

Tax records for Berks County and Lancaster County do not list a Henry Bixler after 1770 when he married Eva. Where did Henry and Eva move, or was he missed in the tax records? He is listed as serving in the Revolutionary War with his brothers until about 1782.

In 1794, Henry and Eva are living in Hardy Co., W.V., where he purchased land from Isaac Oldacre and his wife, Lucretia Pixler. Could this be Henry's daughter? In 1801, he sold the land to Daniel Harris, and according to the deed, Lucretia, by that time, was a widow. Henry's son, Elias Picksler (b. 1775) married in 1800 to Sarah Pingley of Shenandoah Co., Va., also puchased some land in this same area. Elias also sold his land in Hardy Co., W.V., ca1801.

Both families then moved to Fairfield Co., Ohio. In 1802, Henry puchased and sold more land in Fairfield Co., through the Chillicothe, Ross Co., Land Office, in Jan. 1805 and Dec. 1805, using the name of Henry Pixler. The first purchase was later sold to his son Elias Picksler.

Elias moved to Fairfield Co. and later to Salt Creek Twp., Hocking Co. The 1820 Fairfield Co., Ohio, census shows that Henry's sons, Henry Jr., Christian, and John, also used the surname Pixler.

In 1822, Henry Bixler, Sr., and his sons' George and Christian moved to Fremont, Bellville Twp., Sandusky Co., Ohio.

I am still working for this family, so if anyone thinks that they are part of this family, or know anything about them, I would be most interested in corresponding with you.

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The Bicksler/Bixler/Pixler/Picksler/Bixhsel Family Reunion will be held Saturday, August 5, 1995, at the Mt. Lebanon Campmeeting Grounds north of Lebanon, Pa.