Using Legacy Individual Numbers to Identify Photos in My Collection

By Julie Stillwell Sorenson

There’s nothing sadder than an interesting old photo of people who are unidentified and lost to history. Maybe there’s “Grandpa” scrawled on back. Not helpful.

Ever go through a stack of old photos, fearful that you’ve labeled one as your second cousin’s daughter, but it’s really just a school picture of an acquaintance of one of your children?

What about when kids are named after older relatives? How do you keep track of which “Jim Johnson” is which?

Sadly, most photos are never properly identified, much less dated. When my Mom (Donna Busch Stillwell) sparked my interest in genealogy with her family tree efforts, I started scanning photos. I debated quite a while before deciding on my strategy for naming and dating photos.

My Solution

I decided to use the file name of the scanned image to store as much identifying info as possible, including identification numbers from my Legacy software database. Now, instead of clicking through a fat folder of files to find an image, I can search the photo folder by name, individual and marriage codes, year, city name, spouse name or whatever terms might be helpful.

The obvious downside is that the searcher needs access to my Legacy database to get the identification codes. Luckily, the Legacy database is on the same computer. Instructions follow.

How Legacy Works

The Legacy database is resident on my computer, not the internet. I use it to store all my data about each person.

Each individual who is entered in the database gets a unique number, called a RIN, or Record Identification Number. I am R2, Hannah is R3, and John is R4, simply because that was the order in which they were entered in the database. Hannah’s husband, Nate, is R8404 and their son, Roland, is R8625. (I am approaching 9,000 individuals in my database.)

Each marriage/union/partnership also receives a MRIN number. This is assigned in the order entered. My parent’s MRIN is M3. Hannah and Nate’s is M1164.

How I Apply the Codes

If the photo is of just one individual, I use their RIN.

If the photo is of a couple, I use their MRIN first, and maybe add their RINs as well.

If the photo is of a couple and their children, I use the MRIN first and include kids’ RINs with their names.

If the photo is multigenerational, I use the MRIN of the oldest parent represented.

Examples

R2 1960 12 16 Julie Stillwell in bassinet day of birth

R2 1960 12 Julie Stillwell home in crib

M3 1960 12 16 R7 Larry and R8 Donna Stillwell R2 Julie Stillwell born

M3 1970 12 24 before gifts L2R bk R7 Larry R8 Donna fr Jay Scott Julie David Lisa

M8 1970 12 25 R15 Gerhart R16 Emma Busch with R8 Donna at table

As you can see, the pattern is MRIN or RIN number first, then date, then combination of names and numbers as needed. “L2R” is “left to right.” The dates are year, month and then day. This helps the photos sort out in chronological order.

Every single image name must be different, or the computer will volunteer to overwrite the old one. Adding identifying verbiage like “lace collar,” “cowboy hat” or “on bike” will help make these photo names unique.

I try to use both codes and names, so you can also search by name. However, the codes give a definitive identity as opposed to “Grandpa.”

Using the Legacy Software Program

Double click on the Legacy Icon to open the program.

Click on Index tab. It will be in alpha order. See the RIN column at the far left.

There are three search fields above the table. “RIN\_\_\_\_\_\_GIVEN\_\_\_\_\_SURNAME\_\_\_\_\_\_”

If you click on any of these three boxes, it will re-sort based on RIN, GIVEN or SURNAME.

If you enter characters in a field, it will highlight your results in the table with a blue horizontal bar.

To access MRIN numbers, chick on the ribbon Icon labeled “Marriage List.” Type in husband or wife’s name, using surname at birth. Find the correct pairing (careful with multiple spouses) and note the MRIN number in the first column of the table.