

The Old Shoebox Newsletter

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Add Sound to Presentations and Slideshows. Convert Old Recordings.

One of mankind's most prized possessions is the ability to communicate. It's the one thing that makes us human and more capable than other creatures. Each day we express ourselves in a myriad of ways. We type e-mails, converse 24/7 on our cell phones, and talk as we share a meal with a friend or family. We still correspond via handwritten cards and letters. We add hand signals and gestures to annotate our words. Some add hot sauce or a staccato quality to their speech as they spew out a terse scolding.

Each of us has a personal "Voice Print" which makes our choice of words unique. It's almost like a word fingerprint. Some consistently mispronounce their words. Others have a southern accent. Some like to say, "Ya All" when they speak to us. A raspy or husky voice quality is the one thing that makes grandpa's voice distinctly "grandpa."

Spoken words strung together in a sentence communicate more than our thoughts. The rate and pitch color the words with shades of passion, endearment, excitement or deep frustration.

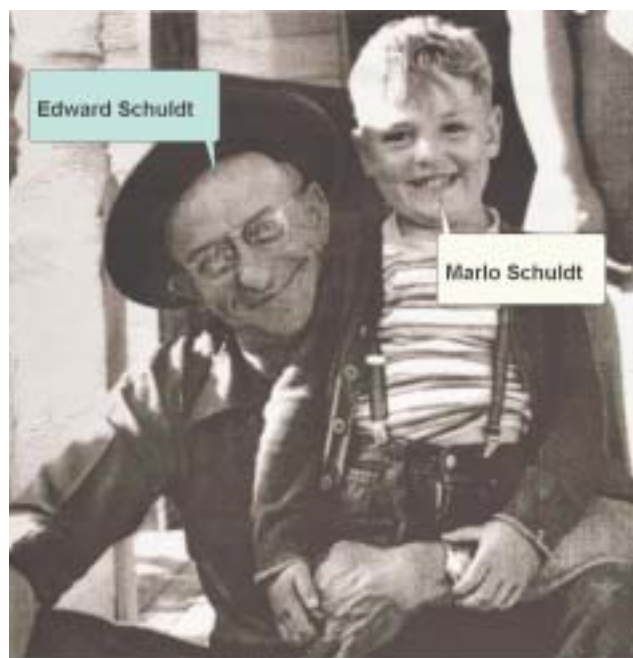
Hopefully I have convinced you that oral speech is the most powerful and personalized way to express yourself. This is why it's so important to record and preserve the verbal personalities of our grandparents, parents, and children.

Recording your narrative and the speech of others is a relatively simple and inexpensive process. The next few pages provide a basic understanding of how to use your computer to create, capture, and convert old tape recordings into computer sound files.

Create Talking Photos

Heritage Collector makes it possible for a photo to interactively tell its own story by adding voices to the photo.

The following photo of my dad and me was taken many years ago. Clicking on the yellow balloon hotspot will play a sound file of me introducing my dad and the song he will sing.



Clicking the blue balloon hotspot labeled “Edward Schuldt” causes another sound file to play. It’s a pleasant surprise to hear my dad singing an old German song he sang to me when I was a young child. This will be a wonderful treat and introduction for my children and grandchildren to hear their grandfather singing German song in 1969.

My father passed away many years ago. Hearing my dad sing floods my mind with fond childhood memories.

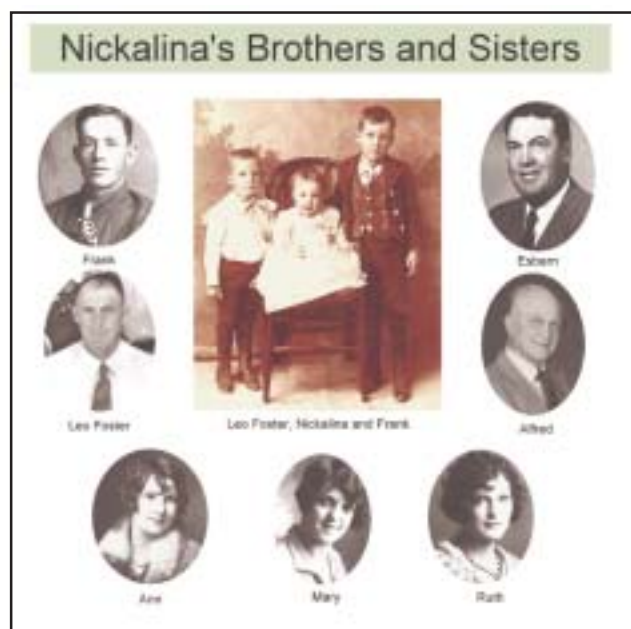
My father’s singing and many other stories were recorded on little reels of tape. I used my computer to convert the recordings to WAV and MP3 audio files. I can now share and use these digital recordings for many family history projects.

Narrated Slideshows

Informative slideshows are more interesting and holds our attention longer. Adding a verbal narrative to each photo creates a meaningful story.

Let’s do some new things that will be fun and informative. All you need is a digital voice recorder (DVR) or tape recorder.

Narrated Photo Album. Go to your parent’s or grandparent’s home and thumb through the old photo album. Record the stories and information. Scan the photos and edit your recordings. Use the recordings as the narrative for a slideshow of the photos in the old album starring the voice of the parent or grandparent you recorded



Family Reunion Remembrances. At the next reunion take photos and sound recordings. Snap a group photo of the aunts and uncles. Approach each person in the photo with your sound recorder and ask for their name and something unique about them such as their favorite cookie. Import the photo into a collection in Heritage Collector and add a Hotspot for each of their names. Associate the verbal introduction to each hotspot. You’ll have great fun showing the group photo and then surprising each of them with their verbal introduction.

Family Stories. Take your camera and voice recorder whenever you visit family or relatives. Record stories and then use the story narrative for slideshows and hotspot narratives.

Holidays, Special Events and Funerals. The best time to record family stories are at occasions where everyone in the family comes together. Mingle among the little informal groups that develop so you can record the stories that are spontaneously shared. Later you will have precious eye witness accounts.

Audio Equipment (From Chapter 3 page 53 - *The Digital Family History Guidebook*)

Sound quality is determined by the microphone, sound card, software and recording devices used. A few minor adjustments and utilizing a few tips can make a big difference in sound quality.

Digital Voice Recorder (DVR)



Shown above is one of the newest ways to record sound while offering several advantages:

- Records sound in a digital format.
- Superior sound quality.
- No “hiss” or sound from the recorder.
- Small size and portability.
- Holds several hours of sound recordings.
- May be used with speech recognition software.
- Import sound directly into computer.
- Excellent device for recording a personal journal or for conducting oral history interviews.

There are many models and types of DVR devices available. Select a DVR that can record at CD quality if you plan to use the recordings for oral history. It’s also very important to be able to create WAV or MP3 output files from the recorder / software provided. Some devices come with speech recognition software that can convert your dictation into a printed output that can be edited.

Tape Recorder

It doesn’t need to be expensive, but it needs to be able to record without distortion. Use the power adapter whenever possible. As batteries become weak, the recorder will slow down causing- the recording to become distorted. Voice pitch will sound higher than normal when played back.

Avoid using cassette tapes over 60 minutes. You will also need an input cable that connects your tape recorder to your computer sound card.

Quality Microphone

The microphone is one of the most important pieces of equipment. Using the built-in microphone in most tape recorders is a big mistake because the mic will pick up motor noises of the recorder as well as other noises from the moving tape. Built in microphones also pick up sounds conducted through the table or surface such as writing, leaning on the table, paper noises and more.

Hand held mics work OK but they also pick up noise when the cord moves. Placing the mic on a table focuses attention to the mic and that you are recording which may intimidate some.

Most people have a tendency to talk too close to the mic causing distortion. A lapel mic, once it is clipped on to a shirt pocket or blouse, is soon forgotten and the sound level stays constant since the mic moves with the person.

Consult the Digital Family History Guidebook, page 55-56 for recording tips.

Preparing To Use Sound

There are three things you must do to get sound into your computer.

1. Select or add sound input channels.
2. Adjust the volume for the input channel.
3. Connect a microphone, tape player, or other sound generating device to the sound card in your computer.

Selecting Input Sound Channels

Double click the speaker icon, usually located at the bottom right of your display.*

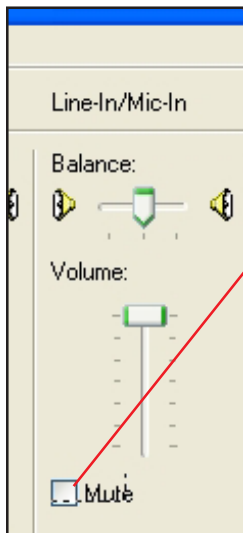
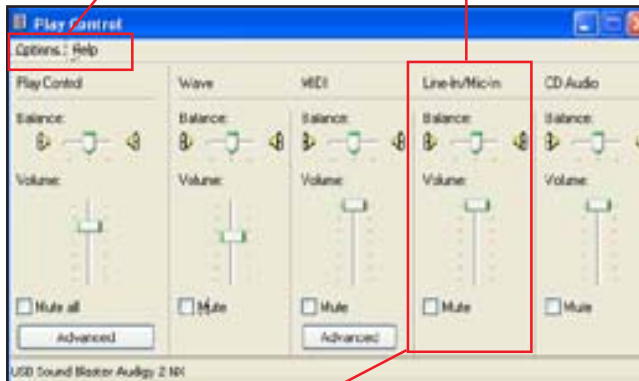
The following display will appear.



* If you do not have a speaker Icon on your taskbar, click Start (lower left display bottom) select Settings, Control panel, Sound and Audio and then click the Volume Tab.

If you do not see these volume settings for a mic or Line In options, click Options (located at the top left of the sound display). Next, click the **Properties** option.


You should see a channel for **Line In** (tape recorder) and Mic (for microphone) volume settings



Note: Your sound displays may not look the same as these two displays.

Be sure to uncheck the **Mute** button at the bottom of the Microphone options whenever you plan to use the microphone or Line In to record.

No Sound or Too Much Sound



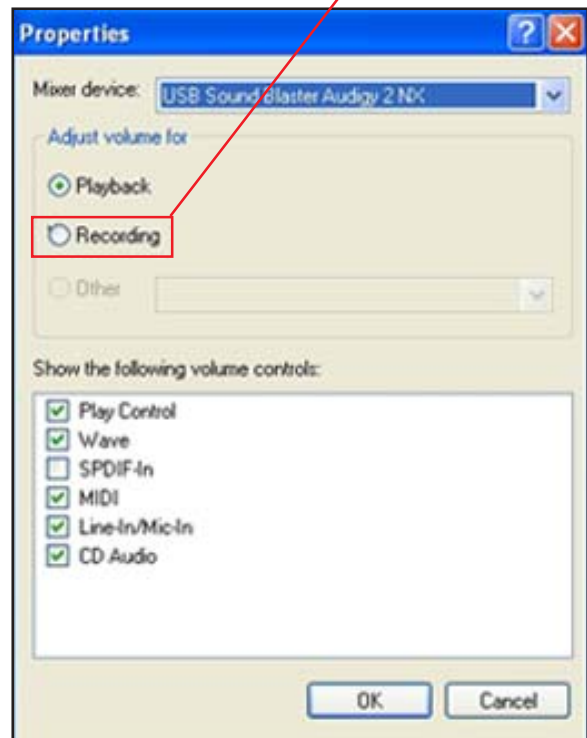
The microphone option is usually set to "Mute" by the factory causing you to think your microphone doesn't work.

Turn the Master Volume control down before turning the Microphone volume up to avoid getting a loud squeal (feedback) from your speakers. Use headphones when recording to monitor while recording and for evaluation after recording.

After clicking the Option menu item on the Volume Control, the following display will appear and lists all the different sound input and volume control options that have been selected for your computer. If you have several options selected, you may need to use a scroll button located on the right side of the display to scroll through a variety of sound input options.

Select the Line In and Microphone options and then click the OK button at the bottom of the display. You will see the Line In and Microphone Volume Controls appear as shown below. Move the volume control (Line In and Mic) up at least 3/4 of the way toward the top of the sound scale.

You may need to check the **Recording** option.



Preparing to Get Sound

“Pop” Goes Your Sound Card



Use Caution Attaching Cables !

Static electricity can destroy some of the sensitive parts in your computer. It's wise to turn off your computer before inserting or attaching any cable or jack. At the very least, ground yourself before touching your computer when attaching cables.

Tip - Use a Good Microphone

Using the built-in microphone in a tape recorder or a microphone on a stand is not recommended. These mics pickup background noise from the desk or the sounds the tape player makes as it runs.

Refer to the Registered User's website, Tips and Suggestions, " **Selecting a Microphone and Headset**" for recommendations.

Attaching Input Devices

You are now ready to attach a tape recorder or microphone to your computer. Depending on the location of your computer, you may find a flashlight helpful making it easier to read the words stamped into the metal on the sound card.

Take a photo of all your computer connections and cards for reference later so you can easily see where the various cables will be attached.

You will need to locate your sound card and identify each of the jack receptacles. Typically you will find four round jacks and one large connector for a joystick. Newer sound cards may have extra receptacles for digital sound options.

Some new sound cards are color coded making it easier to locate the appropriate receptacle. (See your computer sound card documentation). Insert your microphone into the receptacle labeled "Mic" (microphone).



Plug in the pin jack from your tape recorder (headphone or "Line Out" jack) to the "line in" receptacles on your sound card to get sound from your tape recorder into your computer.

Plug the other end of the pin jack into the headphone or "Line Out" jack on your tape recorder if you wish to capture sound recorded on cassette tapes or an older reel-to-reel tape recorder.

You may use the microphone in your tape recorder. However, this is not recommended because it will pick up the sounds the recorder makes when it is running.

Next, locate the "Line In" receptacle. Use this receptacle to plug in your tape recorder. You will Plug in your microphone pin jack to "mic" receptacles on your sound card to record sound directly into your computer.

You may purchase one of these cables (Stereo Pin Jack cable) from your local computer store, electronics shop or other large department stores such as Target and Wal-Mart.

Sound Card (View from the back of computer)

Note: Get a USB Line In adapter for notebook computers that do not have a Line In jack.



Microphone

Line In

The jacks on your sound card may be in a different order than shown in this example and may be labeled with different words.

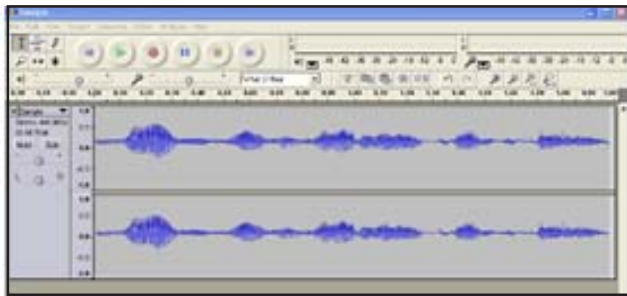
Software Preparation

Adding sound and narration to your photos is a relatively simple process. You can use the Sound Recorder that comes installed with Windows and will automatically come up when you click the Record button.

Note: Sound Recorder will only allow recording for up to 60 seconds.



Consider using another simple but full featured sound editing program such as Audacity. Best of all you can download this freeware program from this site: <http://audacity.sourceforge.net>



Computer Preparation Tips

- ✓ Make sure the sound (microphone) settings are correctly set in your computer.
- ✓ Mic is not muted in the sound panel.
- ✓ Mic and master volume is turned up almost to the maximum setting.
- ✓ Mic is turned to the ON position if it has a switch.
- ✓ If you are using a tape recorder make sure the batteries are not run down.
- ✓ Turn your speakers down so you won't get a feedback squeal.
- ✓ Start your sound editing software.
- ✓ Do a test sample by counting to ten or say your favorite poem.
- ✓ Listen to the test recording and make necessary changes to the mic and other settings

The Next Step - Making a Script

Use your favorite word processing program and start writing some short stories. It may be a good idea to pick a few of your favorite photos to use as visuals while composing the story. Consider selecting a sequence of several photos and use the sequence as a basic outline for your story.

Type the story as if you were telling it to your spouse, one of your children or a friend. Next, proof read it for typos. Finally, read the story out loud. You will find your story sounds much different when you read it out loud than to yourself. Yes, you do need to read it out loud!

You will find more typos and awkward sentences and wording. Continue to read and reread the narration out loud until it sounds and feels "natural" as if you were telling it to someone in the room.

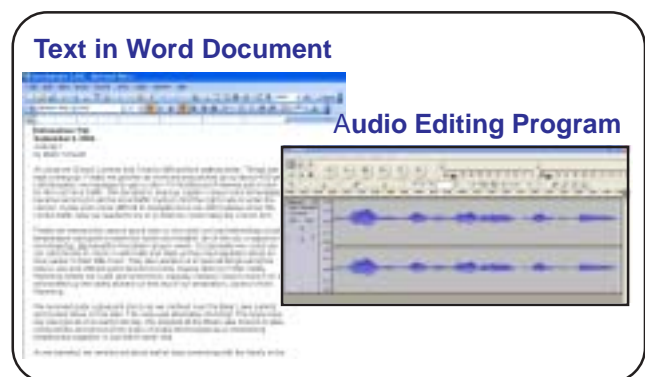
Breaking it Up

The next step is to separate your script (story) into small segments between 10 to 30 seconds each. Each segment will be used with a photo or to talk about someone or something significant in the photo. There is a good reason to do this and it will make it to create a slide show or create photos that tell their own stories.

Recording Tips

Make sure you are comfortably seated in a chair that doesn't squeak or make noise as you move or turn. Next position your script in an area that is easy for you to see and read. Remember, rustling papers can also be heard during a recording and are very distracting to the listener and spoil the feeling and storytelling atmosphere you are trying to develop.

Consider opening the sound editing program and your word processing file so they both appear on your monitor at the same time as shown below.



Display showing your script and your sound editing program can be displayed at the same time

You will then be able to read your script off your monitor and record at the same time. This will be an easier way to edit your script as you make changes after you read the script a few times.

Bloopers Here I Come!

You are now ready to start recording your story. Be prepared to laugh at yourself. You might even generate some of those deep belly laughs you see the movie stars make when you watch the movie blooper file. You will make mistakes and the harder you try to make the “perfect” narration the more mistakes you will make.

Select a time when it is **quiet** at your house. You will be surprised how noisy your world is - slamming doors, motorcycles going by your house, barking dogs, someone slamming the fridge door and more. All of these little background sounds will magically appear in your recording if you are not careful. Early morning and late at night are the best times. Don't forget that your computer also makes sound. Consider putting a pillow in front of it but be sure not to cover your computer up so much it overheats.

If you must use a tape recorder to capture sound away from home, consider getting a battery assisted lapel microphone to plug into the tape recorder. It will make your recording louder with more clarity. Place the mic over the speaker's (person) upper chest area to avoid puffs of air and to get better voice resonance.

It is finally time to start your very own personal chapter of blooper files! Yes, it is proper for you to laugh or talk to yourself if no one can hear or is watching you. It's also a great way to relieve stress as you get frustrated.

The Magic of Sound Editing

You are ready to record or edit your script or sound files. The first step is to do a little warm up to get your voice ready and to check all your basic sound settings and computer set up.

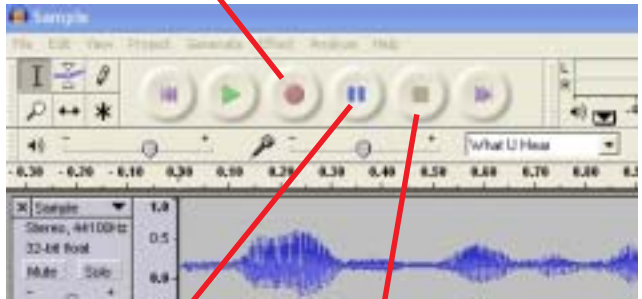
Audio File Editing Tips

You will be able to solve many problems and enhance new and old sound files with a good sound editing program like Audacity.

- Trim off the silent part of the beginning and end of all sound files. This is very important and makes smaller files.
- Remove bloopers without adversely affecting the rest of the recording.
- Increase the overall volume or specific parts of the recording.
- Eliminate pauses between sentences and words.
- Save the file as an MP3 to save space.
- Save the file as a WAV file for greater compatibility or for archiving.
- Increase the volume of the entire file. Try to keep the volume of sound files consistent.

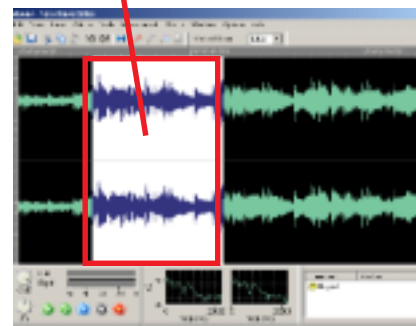
Recording and Editing

1. Click the **Record** button in the sound editing software.



Click **Pause**. Click the **Stop** button when you are finished recording.

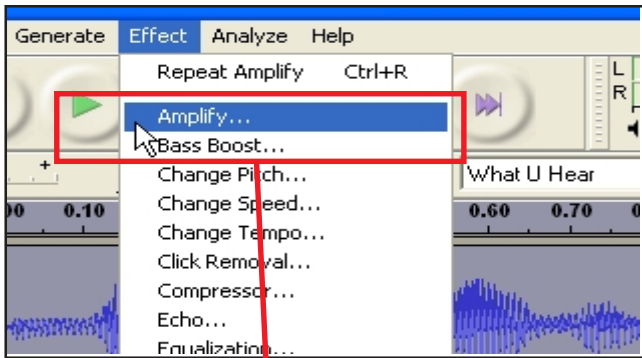
2. **Highlight** an area to cut out and click the Play button to check the portion of the sound file to be edited.



3. Click the scissors to cut out the designated portion. Use the “Undo” option if it does not sound right.

4. Trim out the dead space at the beginning and end of the sound file.

5. Increase the volume level of the clip. Highlight (Left click at the beginning of the sound file and drag to the end so the whole file is highlighted. Click the “Effect”



button and select **Amplify**. Click the OK button to get a consistent amplification. If you need more, do this again. Be sure to listen to the file each time before amplifying again to make sure the sound files do not become distorted or too loud so you can “Undo” if necessary.

Using Heritage Collector to Add Sound

Associating a sound file with an image is easy. Once the sound file has been created, it can be added to the photo. The sound file can be played when viewing the image by clicking the Audio button and during a slide show.

1 Display a Photo or File

Right click on a thumbnail image. Select Edit Info.

2 Entering GPS Coordinates

Click in the white space under the GPS Location Coordinates. Type in the Coordinate. Click the GPS Formats button if you need more information about GPS formats.

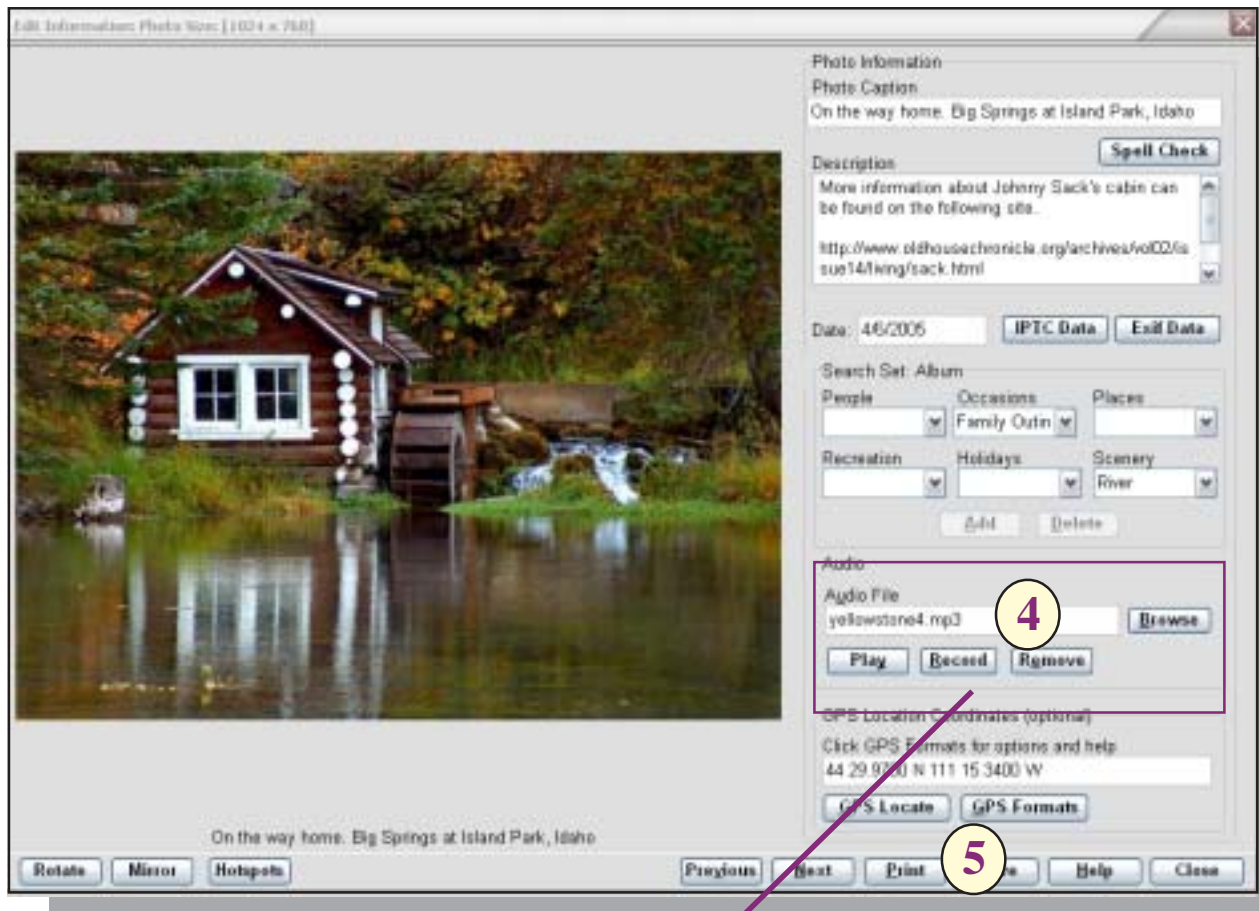
You may also use standard Windows cut / paste commands (CTRL C to copy and CTRL V to paste).

3 Select the Photo

Run Professional.

Select the photo that sound will be associated with.

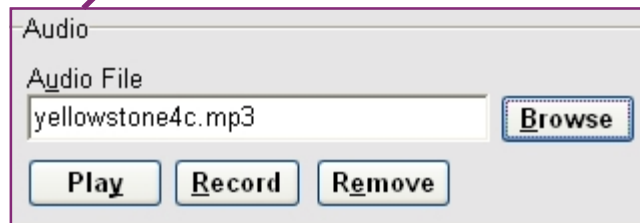
Right click on photo thumbnail and select Edit Info.



4 Associate Sound File With Photo

Click the Browse button.
Open folder containing sound file
Select sound file and click OK.

5 Save Changes - click Save.



Tip. Sound files stay associated with the photo. You can move the photo to a different place in the photo sequence which also changes the slide show sequence.

Using Heritage Collector to Add Sound to a Hot Spot

Photos can now tell their stories and the people in the photo can actually speak to you as if they were right in the room! All you have to do is add sound to a hot spot on the photo. Here's how.

1 Record / Edit Sound File

Create or edit a sound file.
Edit bloopers or unwanted portions.

Remove the blank space from the beginning and end of the sound file.

2 Name and Save Files

Use sequential numbers in the file name such as:

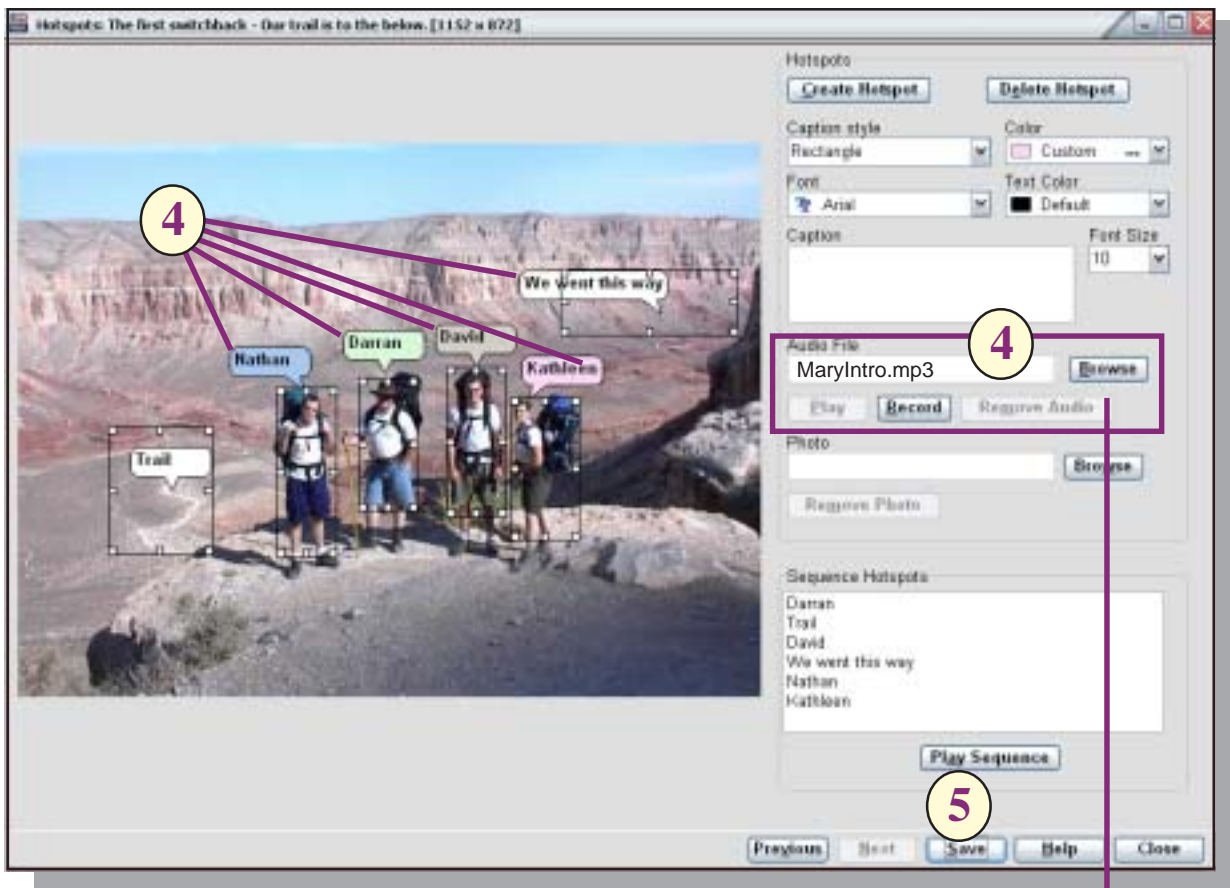
Intro.mp3
JohnIntro.mp3
TedIntro.mp3
MaryIntro.mp3
Save files in a folder easy for you to find.

3 Select the Photo

Run Professional.

Select the photo you would like to associate sound with hot spots on photo.

Right click on photo thumbnail and select Photo Hotspots.



4 Associate Sound File With Hot Spot

Click a Hot Spot.
Click the Browse button in Audio File section.
Select folder containing the desired sound file.
Select sound file and click OK.

5 Save Changes - click Save.



The sound files associated with hot spots will play whenever a hot spot is clicked on a photo. Hot spots containing audio will automatically play in the sequence you specify during a slide show.

The Audio Mine Field



- √ Audio files may be very large.
- √ MP3 sound files may not play on Windows 98 computers.
- √ Audio compression usually makes music sound terrible and distorted.
- √ You 'WILL' make many blooper files - learn how to edit audio files.
- √ Trying to make a perfect narration is impossible as you will soon learn.
- √ Built in microphones pick up the sound of the tape recorder and background.
- √ Low or run down batteries make the recording sound fast when played back.
- √ Microphones on stands pick up all the sound on the desk, table or other surface.
- √ Unamplified (without battery) microphones produce lower sound levels.
- √ Cassette tape recorders produce background "hiss" in the recording.
- √ Placing the microphone too close to your mouth produces pops and explosions.
- √ Audio feedback happens when the microphone is too close to a speaker.
- √ A static shock can occur when plugging things into your computer when the computer is running. The "shock" may destroy sensitive cards and other components in your computer. It takes longer to turn your computer off before inserting cables and jacks but it only takes one shock. The next **shock** will come when you get the repair bill, if it can be repaired!

Audio File Type Definitions and Recommendations

Wave Form audio (WAV) format was developed jointly by Microsoft and IBM. WAV audio files are one of the oldest and most universal audio formats. WAV files are uncompressed and therefore easy to edit and enhance. A good archive format to use. WAV files create large files.

MPEG Audio Layer 3 (MP3) was developed in Germany by the Fraunhofer Institute and is a popular audio compression format typically used for music files. MP3 is a compressed file format and most often used as the final output file used to play music and narration. MP3 audio files are much smaller than WAV files.

Microphone Positioning is Critical



Do not put the mic NEAR THE MOUTH ! Positioning the mic near the mouth is always a big mistake and causes "popping" sounds and distortion. Use a lapel microphone with a clip so that the mic can be clipped to a pocket or lapel somewhere in the area of the chest.

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Summarized from The Digital Family History Guidebook. Chapter 3, *Working With Sound - and Doing Much More* by Marlo E. Schuldt Copyright 2007-8