



Picture perfect

Site aims to be the world's photo album

Everybody loves to look through old family photo albums. What if there was a giant photo album with pictures of families from all over the world? That's the goal of the folks at **Historypin.com**.

The site, which has been in beta for a year, officially launched on Monday. It allows registered users (registration is free) to post old or new photos where they can be combined with Google Maps and Street View.



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InSites

You can view a picture of your grandparents marching in the St. Patrick's Day parade superimposed over a current picture of the same street.

The site allows you to fade the pictures in and out so you can go back and forth in time between the old and the new.

A world of images

The main feature of the site is a Google map of the world with thousands of photos pinned to it. You can pan around the map to an area of interest and click on a photo or group of photos.

Or you can use the search tools to find pictures. Enter a location, and a subject if you like, in the search fields. Then use the sliders on the timeline to bracket a period in time. The timeline ranges from 1840, the time of the earliest photography, to the present. Hit enter and the map pans to your designated destination revealing all the pictures that meet your criteria.

Once you click on a picture it opens up bigger with a title, date and name of the source. From there you have several options.

Watch for local pix
Times-Tribune librarian Brian Fulton plans to post local pictures from our extensive archives on Historypin. There will be a link with the pictures that will allow viewers to purchase them.

Hovering over the picture, or clicking on the story icon, gives you the option to enlarge it and see other photos taken nearby. This option also provides stories that may be attached to the picture and more information on the image, including copyright status and links to the source's website. There are also buttons that allow you to dispute the accuracy of the information or report offensive content and links to social media.

Another icon on the image takes you to the street view when clicked. There, the enlarged picture is displayed over a current photo of the same location. Both options have buttons to take you back and forth between the story or street view, as well as links to the source's profile.

More than just photos

Besides the individual pictures, Historypin also has collections and tours. Collections are groups of photos that deal with similar subject matter, such as the 1906 San Francisco earthquake or the civil rights movement. You can view the many featured collections, or you can create your own using pictures you post or by combining images already on the site.

Tours are similar to collections, but they have a narrative, such as chronicling Beatlemania or World War II. You can view the existing tours on the site or build your own, just like collections.

You can also post video and audio to the site, and you can include them

in collections or tours. While posting pictures is a do-it-yourself proposition, video and audio has to be formatted by the site staff after you upload it.

Historypin also has a free smartphone app. Currently, it's available for phones using the Android platform with an iPhone version on the way soon.

In addition to the same features as the website, the app has some additional cool stuff. If you hold your phone's camera up to the street, the app will display any nearby images. You can overlay the pictures on the current view and toggle back and forth. You also can take pictures with your phone and have them immediately pinned to the site's map. If you shake the app, random images from around the world will appear.

Almost picture perfect

The site is very well done and lots of fun to explore. The design is aesthetically pleasing and intuitive to navigate. The sophisticated integration of images, video, audio, slideshows, Google maps and more indicate the site's creators are technically very proficient.

The only thing Historypin needs to become a better site right now is time. As more content is added it will become more relevant for more people. For instance, now there are very few pictures from our region on the site, while big cities and famous landmarks are well represented. If word gets out and more pictures from Northeast Pennsylvania start to appear, visiting the site on a regular basis will become a more meaningful experience.

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