

Is this your family? Photos washed to sea by Sandy find a home on Facebook

By **Laura June** (<http://www.theverge.com/users/LauraJune>) on December 1, 2012 02:55 pm Email (<mailto:laura@theverge.com>) @laura_june
(https://twitter.com/intent/user?screen_name=laura_june)



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Hurricane Sandy hits the internet: how to track, watch, and stay safe

Hurricane Sandy's damage to the East Coast of the United States is now estimated at over \$70 billion dollars. Thousands of people lost their homes in the worst affected areas. One of those harder hit areas is Union Beach, New Jersey. A neighborhood group, lead by Jeannette Van Houton and Mary Danielson, has organized with one goal: to scour the beaches in their local areas, rescuing photos which have washed ashore. The group then scans the photos in the hopes of eventually finding their owners.

Danielson, who is a **professional genealogist** (<http://www.documentedlegacy.com/>), says, "I became involved when I read the first story about resident Jeannette Van Houten's effort to collect and reconnect photos to their owners. I offered to help and haven't left." The group has collected over 10,000 photos already, and Danielson expects they could have closer to 20,000 once all the areas have been cleaned.

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Union Beach, a one square mile area, was "completely impacted" by the hurricane, and Danielson says that "the one thing I continue to hear from residents is 'all I want to find are my photos.'" Danielson's interest in the project is also professional, she says, as a "case study" in "how to rescue an entire town's photo collection."

PHOTOS ARE SCANNED USING SMALL SCANNERS, THEN UPLOADED TO FACEBOOK

The originator of the project, Jeannette Van Houton, lost her home, her car, and all of her possessions in the hurricane. "I started with a single photo that was found in my brother's friend's driveway the day after the storm," she told me. She kept finding more, and took them home to dry them. Soon, she was collecting photos all over her local area, enlisting people to help her. Once they collect and clean off the photos, they're scanned using small scanners, then uploaded to Facebook. There are already more than 3,000 images on Facebook, organized in small albums with names like "found on Third St towards the bend that merges w/ 2nd" and, "Dropped at Keller's." Found photos are a common time suck on the internet, but looking through these albums, seeing the debris still attached to many of the badly damaged photos, is quite a visceral experience.

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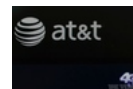


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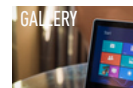
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"If nothing else, at least these owners can have a fresh clean scan of a photograph that can no longer exist," Danielson says, because the photos mostly mold beyond repair, deteriorating quickly, meaning that the group's efforts are under the constraints of time. The group is working in Monmouth County all this weekend, scanning on site using mobile scanners, and also raising money to purchases supplies to scan the more than 10,000 photos which Van Houton estimates need to be scanned just this weekend. The group, called [Restoring Union Beach Memories \(http://www.gofundme.com/1k3w9c?pc=fb_cr\)](http://www.gofundme.com/1k3w9c?pc=fb_cr) , which originally hoped to raise \$2,000, has surpassed that goal and is still raising funds.

IMAGE CREDIT

FACEBOOK (HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/GROUPS/391552050924511/)

THERE ARE 22 COMMENTS. ADD YOURS.

[Vellion](#) says:

nice.

now facebook has the rights to these poor people's family photos.

that sucks.

Posted on Dec 01, 2012 | 3:10 PM EST (#130256109)

Reply (#)

[sbattey's](#) reply:

No, actually they don't. Technically they were uploaded without permission and neither party has any rights to the photos.

Posted on Dec 01, 2012 | 3:15 PM EST (#130257043)

Reply (#)

[garrett's](#) reply:

That's what I find interesting. I can see reasons where scanning and posting on facebook could be very bad for *some* people.

Posted on Dec 01, 2012 | 3:24 PM EST (#130258585)

Reply (#)

[Killing Time's](#) reply:

give an example.

Posted on Dec 01, 2012 | 10:07 PM EST (#130351267)

Reply (#)

[tim crook's](#) reply:

A photo of a of a married black guy kissing a white woman that is not his wife at a Mitt Romney campaign rally.

Posted on Dec 02, 2012 | 9:55 PM EST (#130597325)

Reply (#)

[Zc456's](#) reply:

Well, no one is claiming ownership either.

Posted on Dec 03, 2012 | 4:19 AM EST (#130636861)

Reply (#)

[UnionBeachPhotoLady's](#) reply:

Facebook does not have the right to the photos. They are intellectual property and the only person that can give permission is the person that owns the photo. Since I don't own the photo, I have no right to give permission. It is a vehicle to get the photos out to the community.

Posted on Dec 05, 2012 | 10:55 AM EST (#131054855)

Reply (#)



Evernote 5.0: Sluggish?

24 minutes ago by Bionix

(http://www.theverge.com/users/Bionix)1 comment

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about 1 hour ago by BDiz

(http://www.theverge.com/users/BDiz)5 comments

iOS 7: a wish list

about 1 hour ago by jfmartin67

(http://www.theverge.com/users/jfmartin67)7 comments

Memory Upgrades in New 27" iMacs?

about 1 hour ago by groberts1980

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about 2 hours ago by Stefan Constantinescu

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help/suggestions for music playback in living room

about 2 hours ago by arnavd

(http://www.theverge.com/users/arnavd)

No Streaming - Xbox Music App Crashing

about 2 hours ago by BIG-BOSS

(http://www.theverge.com/users/BIG-BOSS)1 comment

Emperius says:

That's very helpful. Makes me think now that I must move my VHS's (too bad they weren't kept at mini-dv) to digital (DVD/BluRay) and extra copies in hard drives off shore and encrypted.

Posted on Dec 01, 2012 | 4:01 PM EST (#130264743)

[Reply \(#\)](#)

Shocker: Windows 8 is not selling because hardware is not available.

about 2 hours ago by Runner50783

(<http://www.theverge.com/users/Runner50783>) 1 comment

YozMan's reply:

The digital copies better be kept on servers in countries that have really bad relationship with US if you want to ensure that you're not prosecuted for illegal copying.

Posted on Dec 01, 2012 | 8:22 PM EST (#130317317)

[Reply \(#\)](#)

WP8 owners Unite!

about 3 hours ago by mono

(<http://www.theverge.com/users/mono>)

csdheeraj's reply:

Or you can use Bitcasa (which will be 10\$/month post beta) to give you super encrypted unlimited storage. Not even the company can see what you're storing.

Posted on Dec 01, 2012 | 9:17 PM EST (#130334477)

[Reply \(#\)](#)

OPPO Find 5, Unlocked and Contract-Free \$499, will come to USA

about 4 hours ago by vergechina

(<http://www.theverge.com/users/vergechina>) 9 comments

Sium's reply:

But how long will this company be in business?

Posted on Dec 03, 2012 | 4:00 AM EST (#130636637)

[Reply \(#\)](#)

csdheeraj's reply:

The company uses deduplication (heavily) using convergent encryption and they have about 9 million in funding.

They're looking at nothing close to being out of business.

Posted on Dec 04, 2012 | 8:40 PM EST (#130971321)

[Reply \(#\)](#)

Jumbybird's reply:

Why?

Posted on Dec 02, 2012 | 10:11 AM EST (#130408845)

[Reply \(#\)](#)

rougegoat's reply:

So that he has an offsite backup of them incase anything happens to the original or to his area in general.

Posted on Dec 03, 2012 | 9:29 AM EST (#130644669)

[Reply \(#\)](#)

zepfloyd says:

Sometimes people's best intentions are misaligned. Many family's personal photos, particularly old ones are rather private. Blasting them publicly all over facebook for the world to see by a stranger is probably the last thing many of these people want as they try to put their lives back together. Perhaps a better approach is to collect photos at a central location and let people know from the area (even via facebook) they are there to reclaim if wanted. As someone with extended family directly impacted by the storm I know this is the last thing they would want, but I'm sure others may feel differently.

Posted on Dec 01, 2012 | 6:26 PM EST (#130291253)

[Reply \(#\)](#)

BraytonAK's reply:

Then it's a case of 'damned if you do, damned if you don't.'

More power to them. Too many people get slammed these days for trying to do something good or helpful.

Posted on Dec 02, 2012 | 2:37 AM EST (#130399827)

[Reply \(#\)](#)

[Jumbybird](#) says:

Judging from some of the comments here, maybe they should have just taken them and dumped them in the garbage or burned them for heat... shame on you Van Houton and Danielson for trying to reunite memories with their owners, **SHAME SHAME SHAME** Shame on you for trying to do something decent for your neighbors.

Posted on Dec 02, 2012 | 10:12 AM EST (#130408907)

[Reply \(#\)](#)

[Jumbybird](#) says:

I'm trying to find the link to the Facebook page but can't

Posted on Dec 02, 2012 | 10:19 AM EST (#130409265)

[Reply \(#\)](#)

[UnionBeachPhotoLady's](#) reply:

Here is the facebook page:<https://www.facebook.com/groups/391552050924511/>

Posted on Dec 05, 2012 | 10:57 AM EST (#131055087)

[Reply \(#\)](#)

[JKDir](#) says:

I live in the town next to union beach I can help with the scanning any way possible is there a way to get in touch?

Posted on Dec 02, 2012 | 9:26 PM EST (#130590591) via Android app

[Reply \(#\)](#)

[roycebarber](#) says:

Where do I go to VIEW the photos?!?!?!?!? The article has two links which don't show the thousands of photos scanned in. They mention Facebook, but no link TO facebook? This is annoying.

Posted on Dec 03, 2012 | 2:15 AM EST (#130634243)

[Reply \(#\)](#)

[kreitcher](#) says:

Brace yourselves ...

New Instagram filters are coming ...

Posted on Dec 03, 2012 | 3:33 AM EST (#130636237)

[Reply \(#\)](#)

[Zc456](#) says:

This reminds of Titanic.

Posted on Dec 03, 2012 | 4:17 AM EST (#130636835)

[Reply \(#\)](#)

