

Multimedia Files in Reunion 6™—Part 2: Linking Sounds

Introduction—You can link Reunion to sound files that might be of genealogical interest. Home tape recorders were available in the early 1950s, and home video cameras have been available since the 1970s, so genealogy researchers may have collected “sound bites” that go back two or three generations. If you have a famous ancestor, you might even find sound bites of that ancestor’s voice dating back as far as the late 19th century.

If you build a personal web-site, you can also link sounds to the other data on your site.

Sound File Formats—Reunion displays sound files in three formats: sifl, AIFF/AIFC, and WAV. The following paragraphs discuss these sound file formats.

sifl—Macintosh System Sound files. These files contain “stand alone” sounds, like those created when you drag a sound out of the System file suitcase. Some attributes of these sounds are:

- The file plays by opening or double-clicking.
- Sound data can be copied to the clipboard.
- Sound resides in RAM so will play without sound-gaps on playback.
- Recording/playback time is limited by the amount of free RAM.
- Files are Macintosh specific—won’t play on other computers.
- The actual sound is in the resource fork of the file. A PC-type computer can’t read a resource fork in a Macintosh file and may become “confused” when it tries to read it.

AIFF/AIFC—Audio Interchange File Format. This format was developed by Apple for storage of sounds in the data fork. It has been used by SGI (Silicon Graphics, Inc.) and in some other specialized applications. Some attributes are:

- Recording time is limited only by the amount of free disk space.
- The AIFC version allows file compression.
- This format is not dependent on the Mac.
- Long files can’t be copied to the clipboard.
- Slower Macs and hard drives may cause gaps in playback.

WAV—A common sound file format created by Microsoft and IBM. Some attributes are:

- Inclusion in Microsoft Windows 3.1 has made it popular.
- Specifies an arbitrary sampling rate, number of channels, and sample time.
- Has a plethora of different compression formats.
- Plays on a Macintosh while displaying a QuickTime slider.

Adding Pre-Recorded Sounds to Reunion—Archived digital sounds, especially of famous people, are available on the Web or on Encyclopedia CD-ROMs. For an example, I have stored some pre-recorded WAV sound files in a **Sounds** folder in the main **Reunion 6** folder.

Here is how to link a sound for playing from a Family Card.

First, go to the Family Card where you want to link the sound, click the **Multi-M** button and select the **Multimedia Window**.
RESULT: The Multimedia dialog box opens.



Click the **Add Item** button. RESULT: An Open dialog box is displayed similar to that shown on the next page.



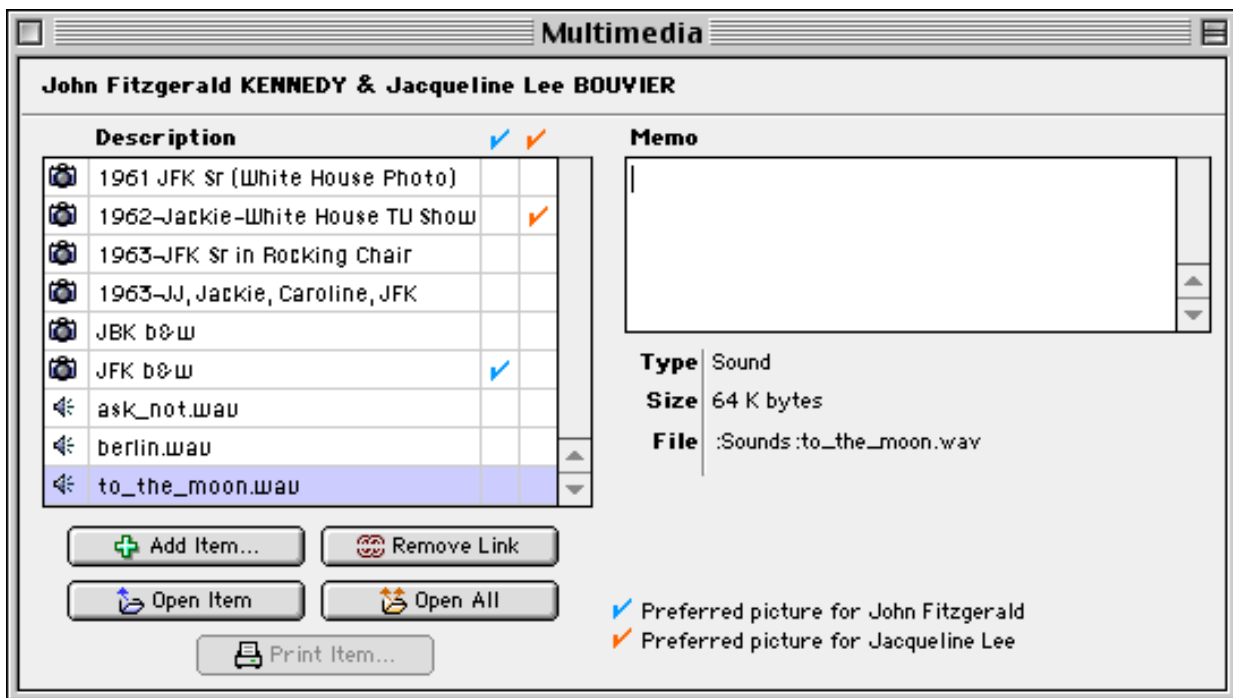
Navigate to find and select the desired sound file.

In this example, it is the **ask_not.wav** file I found on the web.

Click the **Convert** button.

RESULT: The dialog box closes and your Multimedia window now lists the **ask_not.wav** file along with your list of pictures.

Add other sound files in the same way. In the example below, I have used the Multimedia window to add three sound bites to JFK's Family Card (*ask_not.wav*, *berlin.wav*, and *to_the_moon.wav*).

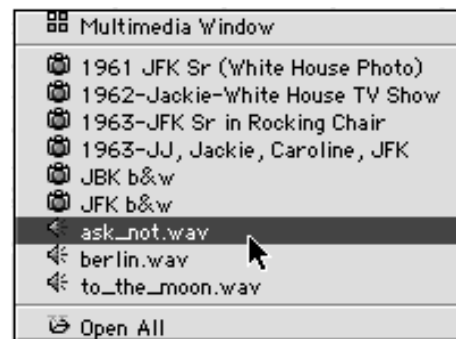


Playing a WAV Sound in Reunion—Try this short-cut: Click-and-hold the **Multi-M** button on the desired Family Card.

RESULT: A pop-down menu (right) shows the multimedia selections available from this card.

Select the desired sound file (**ask_not.wav** in the example) and release your mouse.

RESULT: Your Mac takes a few moments to load the sound into RAM, then a QuickTime slider appears when the sound starts to play.



If necessary, use the QuickTime slider to adjust the sound volume, play or pause, and rewind. When you play more than one sound, a slider appears for each sound file.

Adding Your Own Sounds to Reunion—You can use Reunion’s built-in recorder to make your own sound file. This is handy if you want to link your personal comments to a Family Card or if you want to link Reunion to a recording of an ancestor.

Equipment Needed—The Macintosh built-in (or plug-in) microphone is easy to use and, when making a “live” recording, will produce acceptable quality.

However, if you attempt to transfer sound from a speaker “through the air” to your Mac’s microphone, quality will suffer greatly. I *strongly suggest* you use an audio cable to transfer sound from a tape-recorder or hi-fi to your Mac. An audio cable can be purchased from a supplier like Radio Shack or Fry’s Electronics but first, be sure to ask a qualified Macintosh technician to help select the type of cable you need. All Macs have microphone jacks, but some also have an optional AV (Audio/Video) card that makes cable connections to audio and video equipment very easy.

Recording Your own Sounds in Reunion—You can copy a tape recording into Reunion (using the suggested cable) as a sound file or use the Mac’s microphone to record your own voice.

As usual, go to the Family Card where you want to link the sound, click the **Multi-M** button and select the **Multimedia Window**.
RESULT: The Multimedia dialog box opens.



Click the **Add Item** button, then click the **Record** button to open the **Record Sound** window (below).



Use the familiar tape recorder-type controls to control recording, stop, pause, rewind, playback, and fast-forward.

A horizontal progress-bar displays the number of seconds you have recorded and a vertical indicator shows relative volume.

With no background sounds present, speak clearly into the mike. You may find the recording process easier if you have previously prepared a simple script. You may need to record your voice several times to get it just right! When satisfied, click the **Save** button, name your file, and save it.

Playing a Recorded Sound—Either double-click on the speaker icon in the Multimedia window that represents the desired sound file or select the file from the **Multi-M** button’s Pop-down menu.

RESULT: A sound dialog box with the familiar play buttons is displayed that looks like the one at right. Notice its title has the same name as your recorded file.



Editing Digitized Sounds—To edit a sound file or to change a sound file’s format to one used by Reunion, use a sound editing application like **Sound Machine** (shareware).

Size of Sound Files—Sound files can be quite large; for example, the 20 second “Introduction to JFK” file is 441K and the WAV files range from 65K for 8 seconds to 672K for 42 seconds.

More Help on Linking Sounds—For more information on using multimedia with Reunion, see the **Multimedia, Pictures, Sounds** and **Movies** pages in the *Using Advanced Features* section of the Reunion manual.

I hope this short tutorial has been of some help to you.

Ted Finch <tedfinch@techie.com>