10 Ideas for Great Gifts Using Your Family Photos

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Introduction

If you've ever been at a loss for what to get your parents, grandparents or any family member as a gift, help is on its way. Not only will you learn how to turn family photos into fun and memorable gifts, but you'll have at your disposal the best list of resources gathered for today's family historian.

The premise is simple: scan your family photos with a **Flip-Pal® mobile scanner** (http://flip-pal.com) *the right way*, get inspired with the ideas below, and the create a variety of items from any of the over 30 gift creation websites listed at the end of this handout. Better yet, you'll learn how to find deals and coupons and learn tips and tricks on creating photo-based gifts.

Scanning Tips for Great Gift Creation

Here are some tips on the best ways to scan your photos for use in creating gifts:

- Choose photos with high impact, good darks and lights, and a minimal amount of background.

- Set your scanner to a high resolution, such as 300 or 600 dpi.

- Clean the scanner with a microfiber cleaning cloth. Remove dust, lint and fingerprints so you can achieve the clearest possible scans.

- Make sure the photo is in contact with the scanning surface or as close as possible to the surface; however, often you can get a good scan right through a plastic sleeve, matt, or glass. Don't move the photo while scanning.

- Keep the photo lined up with the edges of the scanner in order to reduce the need for editing later on.

- If a photo is larger than 4 x 6 inches, perform multiple scans with an overlap of at least 1/2 to 3/4 inch. Then use the **Flip-Pal Easy Stitch** software to create a single digital image.

- When transferring digital images to your computer, always save an original scan of the photo and then make copies of the file to be used for editing. Also export to multiple file types.

- Use Photoshop Elements or your favorite graphic editing software to resize digital images for use with your favorite project.

- Remember to periodically backup your scans of photos and documents.

Digital Imaging Essentials

One of the best ways to educate yourself on digital imaging and scanning your family photos using the best possible methods is to use Geoff Rasmussen's book entitled *Digital Imaging Essentials*. Available in print format (http://bit.ly/digitalessentialsprint) as well as downloadable PDF (http://bit.ly/digitalessentialspdf).

From the very first page you will notice that this book is much more than a boring instructional manual - it is full of real-life examples that not only teach you the right buttons to push, but it thoroughly explains how to get the most of your digital imaging experience. AND this book is written specifically for genealogists!
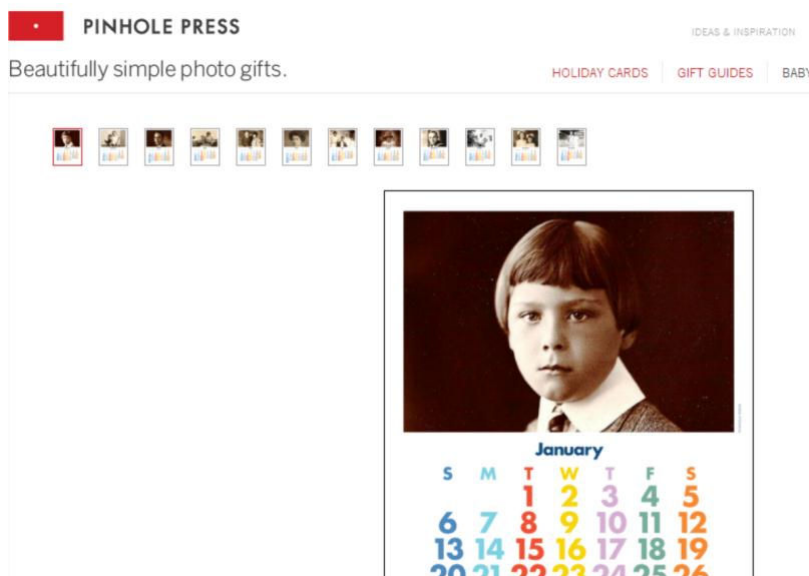
Create Gifts Using Scanned Photos

Once the photos are scanned and then copies are created in different file formats, the most difficult choice will be to find the right gift for that special family member. There are literally hundreds if not thousands of gift creation websites that allow you to upload your images and then created gifts. A list of 30 such sites has been curated especially for genealogists and family historians based on ease-of-use and the variety of products available.
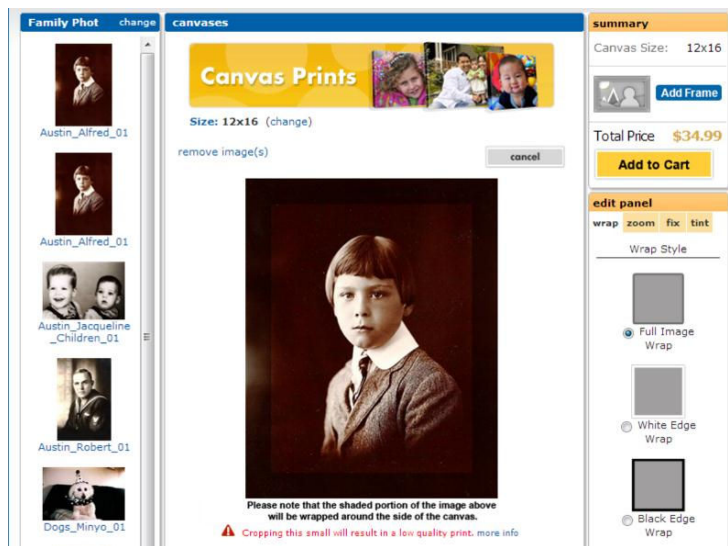
Gifted Inspiration: Ten Ideas

Now that you know the best way to scan your family photos and after you've got those images stored on your computer, what's next? For most of us, we need ideas so we can turn those photos into something meaningful for family members. Here are some popular gifts that can be made online or at home this holiday season:
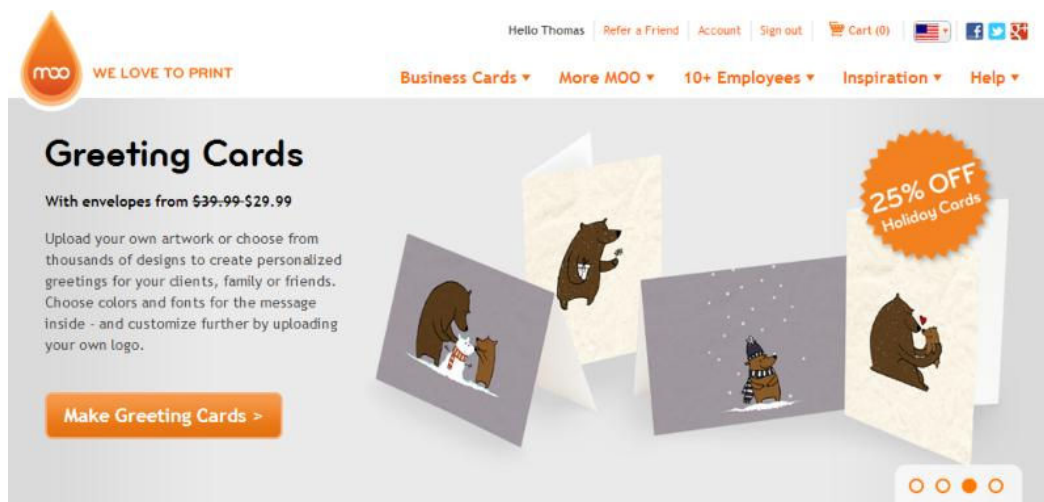
- **Calendars**: Imagine a useful wall calendar or even a day planner filled with old family photos! Most photo-based gift creation sites have a calendar product, one example being **Pinhole Press** (http://www.pinholepress.com). Simply select your photos, upload them and then, if the option exists, add your own special dates such as birthdays and anniversaries.

- **Canvas Prints**: Most of the sites mentioned in the Resource List at the end of this handout, offer a canvas print product in various different sizes and formats. You upload a photo, select a size, style and a finish and then place your order. Canvas prints are a nice way to display old family photos without using standard framing. In this example at **Costco's Photo Center** (http://www.costco.com/photo-center.html), you can quickly create stunning canvas prints using your family photos.

- **Greeting Cards**: Family photos can be the perfect choice for different types of greeting cards and even invitations. The choices are almost endless! Think of party invites, wedding thank you cards, and more. **Moo** (http://www.moo.com) lets you create holiday cards, greeting cards and invites using your own photos. The process involves uploading photos and then customizing the back of the card (with your image and a short note). Moo provides free envelopes and will even create variety packs using all your images.

- **Holiday Ornaments and Decorations**: Whether you choose the "do-it-yourself" option or have them made online, what better way to honor your family than to create a Christmas tree ornaments or a set of holiday decorations.
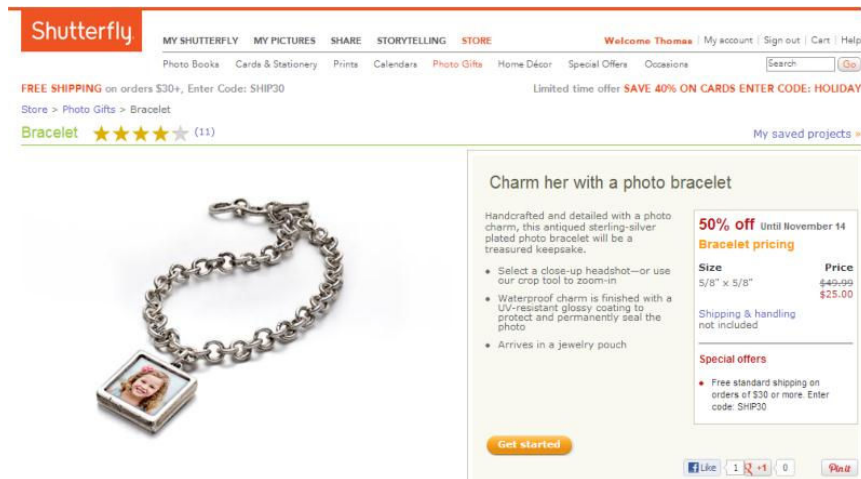
  The DIY crowd can visit a local craft store and then work with printed copies of scanned photos to create great items!

  You can also create holiday ornaments online at sites like mpix (http://www.mpix.com):
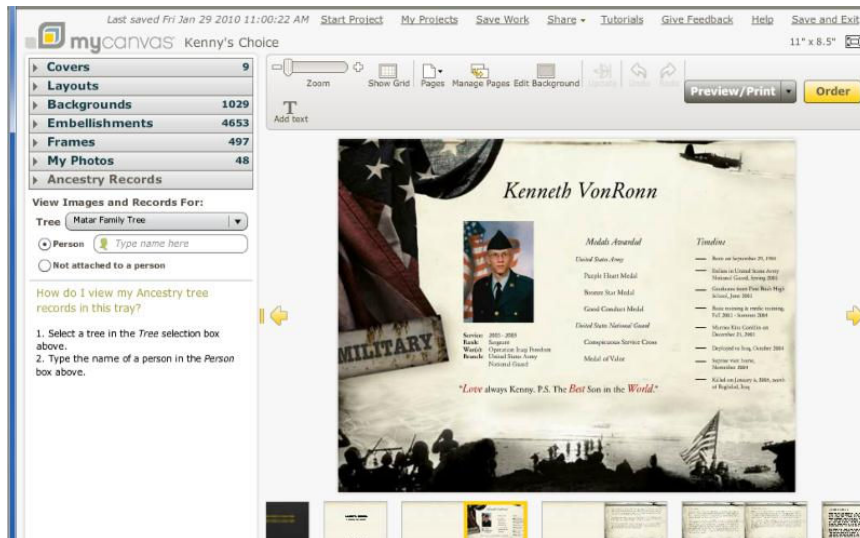
- **Jewelry**: Several sites allow you to create a keepsake piece of jewelry such as a bracelet or necklace. In addition, you may find it easier to purchase the jewelry in your own, then print out your photo to fit a locket, etc. At **Shutterfly** (http://www.shutterfly.com), one of many items available is a bracelet created using an uploaded photo.
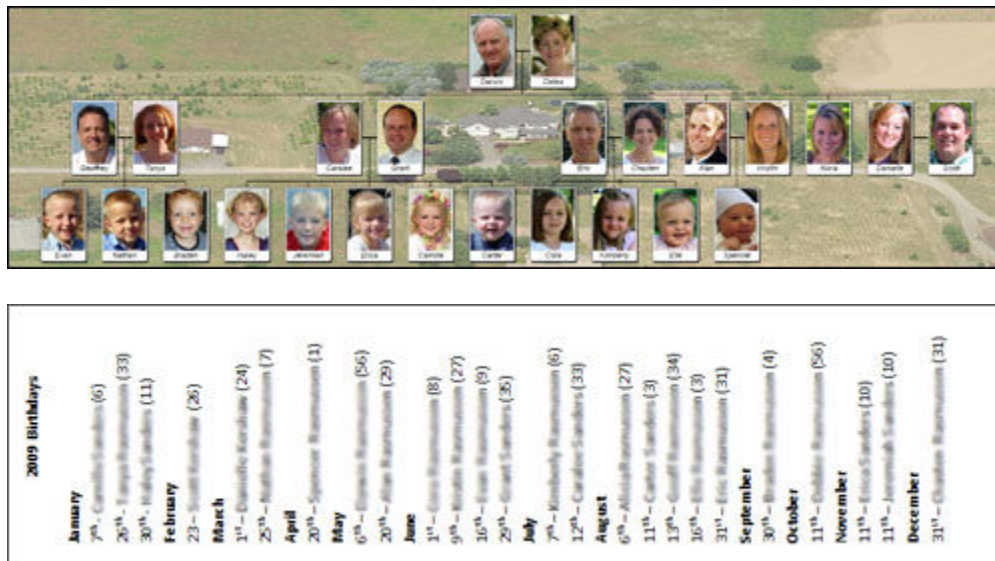

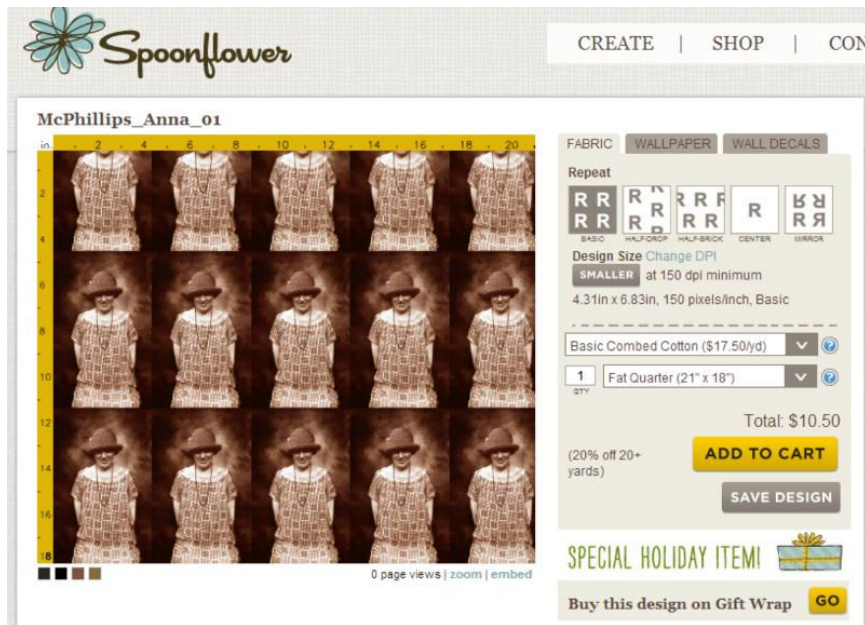Also, you can get creative by making your own jewelry:

- **Photo Books**: A hot product, a photo book can help the family history share his or her research with family and friends in a compelling, storytelling format. Most sites have a photo book product, all with varying options. **MyCanvas** (http://www.mycanvas.com) by Ancestry.com is unique in that it integrates with your research already stored on Ancestry in family trees. An added feature is the ability to print the pages you create directly to your printer so you can produce your own book if you don't want to do so through MyCanvas.
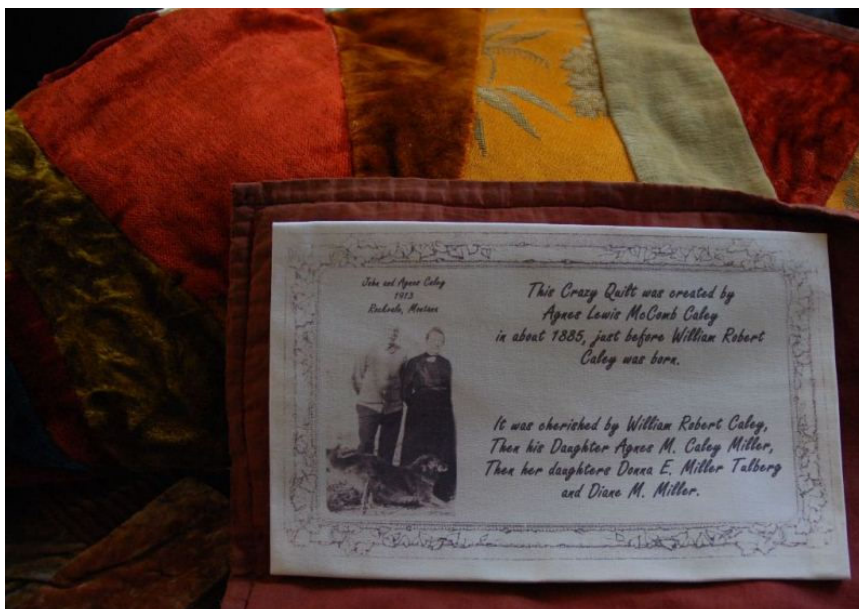

- **Family Tree Bookmark**: You can create a bookmark displaying a family tree, with photos, on one side, and a list of birthdays and other dates on the reverse. See http://bit.ly/famtreebookmark for more information on using **Legacy Charting** (http://www.legacycharting.com) to create these very popular gifts.

- **Quilts, Fabric, and Wall Hangings**: Did you know that custom printed fabric is available by the yard? One site that has no minimum order quantity is **Spoon Flower** (http://www.spoonflower.com).

Many fabric and hobby stores have colorfast cotton fabric sheets that can be printed with ink jet printers right at home. Create a family history quilt, table runner, wall hanging or throw pillow. Or sew a favorite family picture and recipe on to an apron. Print fun photos on a fabric album cover, tote bag, or sweatshirt. A neat twist is to add a history label and picture of the creator to a family heirloom quilt before giving it as a gift. Here is an example of a label for a 127-year old quilt with a picture of the seamstress.

- **Tech Gifts**: Many sites allow you to create a variety of tech related items including iPhone and other smartphone cases, iPad cases, mousepads, sleeves for a Kindle or Nook and more. One such site is **Café Press** (http:/www.cafepress.com) and here is an example of an iPhone case:

- **T-Shirts and Sweat Shirts**: Turn your family photos into wearable art . . . there's no better way to start a conversation about family history than to be your own personal billboard! Most sites will create a ready-to-wear item such as a t-shirt or sweatshirt based on a photo you upload. **Zazzle** (http://www.zazzle.com) has plenty of options for clothing including sweatshirts:

Creating an Online Store

Several sites such as Café Press, Lulu and Zazzle, allow you to create a variety of items and then sell them to family and friends, or the public, in an online store. How does this work?

As an example, let's look at the **GeneaBloggers Store** on Zazzle (http://www.zazzle.com/geneabloggers). Images are uploaded and then one or more products are created. Instead of just ordering the items for yourself, you can create a "storefront" with a description and then stock it with products you've created. For some stores you can set a "royalty" which is the amount of profit you make on each item sold.

Each site is different and you may need to provide tax information (we are talking income after all . . .) and a Paypal account to receive payment.

Maintaining the Creative Momentum

Creating photo-based gifts is not limited to the holiday season. Many occasions throughout the year offer an opportunity to give a unique gift to family and friends. Staying inspired and keeping those creative juices flowing can be a challenge. One way to stay on top of the latest trends and ideas is to follow blogs and websites related to photo gifts.

First, see if your favorite gift creation site has its own blog. An example is *MiDesign* by **Michaels Photo Blog** (http://blog.photocreations.michaels.com) offered by the Michaels chain of craft stores.

Another great blog is **Photobook Girl** (http://www.photobookgirl.com) which focuses primarily on creating photo books, but offers great ideas applicable to almost any photo-based gift.

Coupons and Discounts

Stop! Before you click that checkout button after you've uploaded photos and created your item, have you checked for sales and coupons! Take advantage of every possible saving on your purchase:

- Check the website for any sale ads and promo codes. Also scroll down to the very bottom of the website and see if there are special links for first time users.

- Visit discount promo code sites such as **RetailMeNot** (http://www.retailmenot.com) or **CouponCabin** (http://www.couponcabin.com) where the latest deals are usually posted.

Tips and Tricks on Creating Photo-Based Gifts

Here's are some best practices to use when creating gifts using family photos:

- **Choose your best photos to scan**. Photos should be as focused and as distinct as possible. The projects with the most impact are made from photos in which the whose subject stands distinct from the background.

- **Scan at highest resolution possible**. This means at least 300 dpi or higher. The Flip-Pal mobile scanner allows you to scan to 600 dpi. Some websites will reject your uploaded photo if it does not meet a minimum standard for resolution.

- **Save a master file of the photo and then create lower resolution copies**. A common mistake is to scan a photo at a high resolution and then make edits. Once you've lowered the resolution on certain file types, such as jpg, there is no way to restore it to its original format. Create working copies of each scanned photo and always keep the master file in its original format.

- **Export to several different file types**. Once you begin working with various websites and uploading photos, you'll realize that some accept only specific file types. Most will accept jpg, gif and png files so make sure you have at least one of these file versions available for use.

- **Review the Terms of Service when signing up for a site**. Before you start using photos at a website, understand who actually owns the photo once it is uploaded and what the website can do with it. It is your responsibility to fully understand the Terms of Service for each website.

- **Upload only the images you need**. Avoid uploading an entire album of photos to a site if you aren't going to use them to create items. Start with small batches of photos, six or eight, and then determine if the site is one you'll continue using. If not, delete you images and then move on to a site that appeals to you.

- **Backup your data**. There's nothing worse than spending hours scanning photos into digital format and working on cropping and formatting those photos only to suffer a data loss. Make sure you have a backup plan for <u>all</u> your data and store photo files in a secure area.

- **Understand each site's return policy**. Many of the items you create online are "one-of-a-kind" and cannot be returned unless there is a mistake made in production or the item is broken or damaged. Make sure you read the return policy before you order any item.

- **Look for coupons and promo codes**. Before you click the Checkout button, make sure you search for available coupons and promotion codes. Check for sales on the website itself or use discount aggregator sites like [RetailMeNot](#) or [CouponCabin](#).

- **Create a "store" for family and friends**. Many gift creation websites allow you to not only create fun items, but also set up a store so that family and even the general public can purchase your creations. The best part: you can earn money selling items (and this can help support your "family history habit.").

Resource List

Photo Scanning

Digital Imaging Essentials – Print
http://bit.ly/digitalessentialsprint

Digital Imaging Essentials – PDF
http://bit.ly/digitalessentialspdf

Flip-Pal® mobile scanner
http://flip-pal.com

Blogs

MiDesign by Michaels Photo Blog
http://blog.photocreations.michaels.com

Photobook Girl
http://www.photobookgirl.com

Coupons and Discounts

Coupon Cabin
http://www.couponcabin.com

currentcodes.com
http://www.currentcodes.com

RetailMeNot
http://www.retailmenot.com

Gift Creation Websites

Blurb
http://www.blurb.com
Best for: Photo books

Bumblejax
http://www.bumblejax.com
Best for: Canvas prints

Café Press
http://www.cafepress.com
Best for: Anything and everything;
Create your own store

Canvas Pop
http://www.canvaspop.com
Best for: Canvas prints

Costco
http://www.costco.com/photo-center.html
Best for: Anything & everything

CVS
http://www.cvsphoto.com
Best for: Anything & everything

ImageSnap
https://www.imagesnap.com
Best for: Ceramic tiles

Keepsy
http://www.keepsy.com
Best for: Calendars, photo books

Legacy Charting
http://www.legacycharting.com
Best for: Bookmarks, family tree charts;
conencts with Legacy Family Tree data

Lulu
http://www.lulu.com
Best for: Calendars, photo books;
Create your own store

Makeyourowngiftideas.com
http://www.makeyourowngiftideas.com
Best for: Anything and Everything,
unusual Items

Minted
http://www.minted.com
Best for: Canvas prints, cards&
invitations, party decorations

Mixbook
http://www.mixbook.com
Best for: calendars, cards, photobooks

Moo
http://www.moo.com
Best for: Business cards, cards &
invitations, labels, stickers

mpix
http://www.mpix.com
Best for: Calendars, canvas prints, kids
growth charts, photo books

MyCanvas
http://www.mycanvas.com
Best for: Photo books, collage posters;
connects with Ancestry.com data

MyDaVinci
http://www.mydavinci.com
Best for: Canvas prints and art photos

MyPublisher
http://www.mypublisher.com
Best for: Calendars, canvas prints,
cards & invites, photo books

OrangePiel
http://www.orangepiel.com
Best for: Window shades

Pinhole Press
http://pinholepress.com
Best for: Anything and everything

RocketLife
http://www.rocketlife.com
Best for: Calendars, photo books,
posters

Shutterfly
http://www.shutterfly.com
Best for: Calendars, cards & invitations,
photo books

SmugMug
http://www.smugmug.com
Best for: Anything and everything

Snapfish
http://www.snapfish.com
Best for: Calendars, cards & invitations,
photo books

Spoonflower
http://www.spoonflower.com
Best for: Custom printed fabric

The UPS Store
http://photo.theupsstore.com
Best for: Anything and everything

Walgreens
http://photo.walgreens.com/walgreens/
Best for: Anything and everything

Wallhog
http://www.wallhogs.com
Best for: Wall decals

Walmart Photo
http://photos.walmart.com
Best for: Anything and everything

Wondershare
http://www.wondershare.com
Best for: DVD Slideshow

Zazzle
http://www.zazzle.com
Best for: Best for: Anything and
everything; Create your own store