

## **FORENSICS V2 LAB SERIES**

# Lab 17: Log Capturing and Interpretation

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#### Introduction

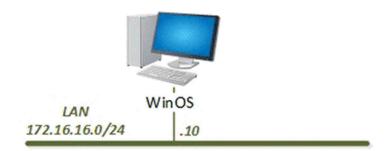
All digital devices store logs that are mainly used to help troubleshoot and determine what activity occurred at what times. This module will cover two types of file system logs stored on a windows computer.

### **Objectives**

Learn what are the popular Windows logs
Learn how to identify the USNJournal
Learn how to identify the Event Logs
Learn how to find simple data within these files



### **Lab Topology**





### **Lab Settings**

The information in the table below will be needed in order to complete the lab. The task sections below provide details on the use of this information.

Virtual Machine	IP Address / Subnet Mask	Account (if needed)	Password (if needed)
Caine	172.16.16.30	caine	Train1ng\$
CSI-Linux	172.16.16.40	csi	csi
DEFT	172.16.16.20	deft	Train1ng\$
WinOS	172.16.16.10	Administrator	Train1ng\$



### 1 Identifying the USN Journal and the Windows Event Logs

Logs are one of the best tools for troubleshooting and investigating. They provide dates and times of specific events and are extremely useful when added to timelines. In this lab, we will go over 2 of the most verbose types of logs that are stored on Windows systems, the USN Journal and the Event Logs.

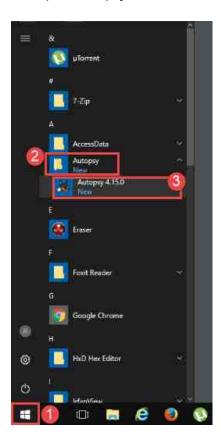
- 1. To begin, launch the WinOS virtual machine to access the graphical login screen.
  - a. Select Send CTRL+ALT+DEL from the dropdown menu to be prompted with the login screen.



b. Log in as Admi ni strator using the password: Trai n1ng\$



2. Once you are logged into the VM, launch the Autopsy program from the windows menu by navigating to Start Menu > Autopsy > Autopsy 4.15.0. Alternatively, you can open Autopsy from the Desktop by clicking the icon called Autopsy 4.15.0:

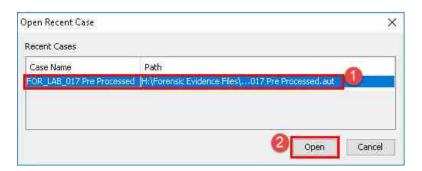


3. The Welcome screen will appear; click Open Recent Case as highlighted below. This will open the Open Recent Case window.

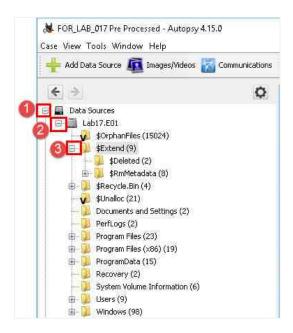




4. In the Open Recent Case window, select the case name FOR\_LAB\_017 Pre Processed, as highlighted in item 1 below. This case was processed with the USN Parser and ParseEvtx ingest modules. Next, click Open as highlighted in item 2 below.

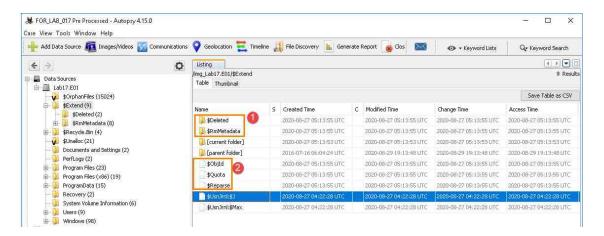


- 5. The pre-processed case will open, and you will be taken to the main GUI of Autopsy. Since the USN Journal and Event logs have been parsed, we will not have to manually review them. Still, we should know where to find them in the filesystem, so we know where the data is being pulled from. You should be at the Autopsy main window by now. Let us start browsing to the USN Journal first. The USN Journal is also known as the changelog, and it stores records such as creations, deletions, encryption, and more. This is a feature of NTFS Files Systems, which means it can be found on drives that do not have operating systems on it. It is always stored in the root directory of the disk in a folder hidden system file called \$Extend\\$USNJrnl.
- 6. Begin by clicking the + sign beside Data Sources to view the file structure on the drive, as seen in item 1 below. Next, expand the FEF called Lab17.E01 by clicking the + sign beside it, as seen in item 2 below. You will see the folders and files that make up the operating system. As we mentioned, the USN Journal is in the \$Extend folder. Click the + sign beside it to expand it, as seen in item 3 below.

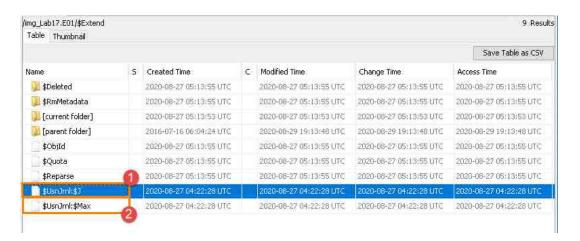




7. You will see seven files and folders that all start with \$; these files are all specific to the NTFS file system and store different types of data. There are 2 files here that begin with \$UsnJrnI, as seen in items 1 and 2 below. There is really only one file called \$UsnJrnI with 2 files that are stored within the alternate data stream (ADS) of this file.

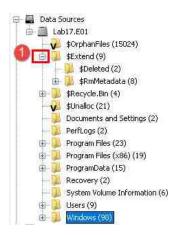


8. These are the files called \$J and \$Max seen after the colon. The file called \$Max contains data about the maximum size of the change journal, among other things. The file called \$J is the one that contains all the changes. You can tell this by looking at the size of this file and compare it to the size of the \$Max file. Scroll to the right using the in items 1 and 2 below. Since the log is not stored in raw text, we need to parse the data using a tool that can interpret it. Luckily, we ran an ingest module that does just that.





9. Let us find the Windows Event logs now; to begin, click the - sign beside \$Extend, seen in item 1 below, to contract the folder tree and make it easier to navigate.



10. Next, click the + sign beside the following folders to get to the Windows event logs Windows > System32 > WinEVT, as seen in items 2, 3, and 4 below.

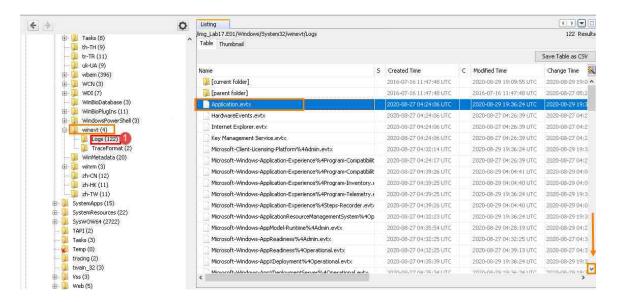




Autopsy displays a number in brackets to denote the number of files within a tree pane entry.



11. You will see 2 folders: Logs and TraceFormat. We are interested in the folder called Logs, so click it as seen in item 1 below. Now turn your attention to the File List pane where you will see the different event logs listed. The three main event logs we mentioned earlier are Application.evtx, System.evtx, and Security.evtx. Scroll down the File List pane to see if you can identify them all. Even though these are the popular ones, different investigations may lead you to access additional event logs. Also, note that in older versions of Microsoft Windows like XP, the path is Windows > System32 > config, and the files have the extension .evt. Now let us look at the data that we parsed earlier.

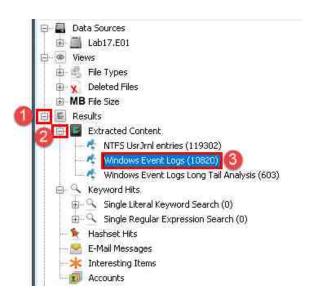




### 2 Reviewing Event Log Data

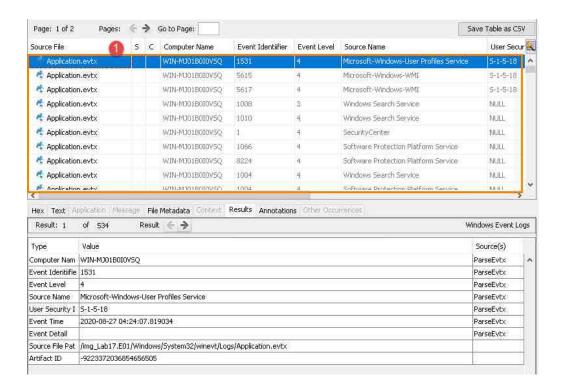
The event logs store detailed records of operating system events, and it can answer a lot of different questions. Details are available for events like a successful logoff or logon, an incorrect login attempt, a remote login, and networking events, to name a few. Each type of event has an Event ID that classifies the type of record. For example, Event ID 8194 is the successful creation of a system restore point. Let us use the parsed data to identify some useful events by searching for their event IDs.

1. To begin, expand the Results and Extracted Content tree items by clicking the plus sign beside them, as seen in items 1 and 2 below. You will see 2 options appear, click Windows Event Logs, as seen in item 3 below.





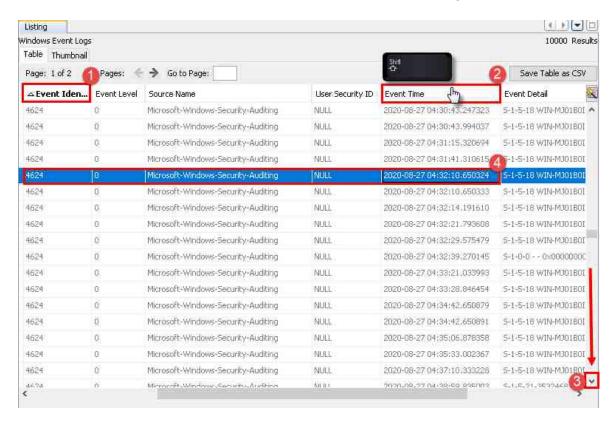
2. You will see the parsed event logs in the Listing pane, as seen in item 1 below. The table below the following screenshot will provide details about the data in each column.



Source File	This column provides data about the file that the information in each row was taken from
Computer Name	This refers to the NetBIOS name of the computer that the event is referring to
Event Identifier	This is the Event ID. It is a unique identifier for events
Event Level	Used to determine how severe and event is. There is document about the meaning of each event level
Source Name	The is the name of the Application or service that the data is retrieved from
User Security ID	This is the name of the application or service that created the event
Event Time	The time that the event was generated
Event Detail	The details of the specific event



3. Let us look at some event IDs now. The first one we will check out is the Logon event. This can provide information about which users logged on, when they logged on, and what method they used to log in. Let us sort the events by Event Identifier and then by Event Time so we can find specific events and view them in chronological order. Do this by clicking the title of the column Event Identifier, as seen in item 1 below. Now hold Shift and click the title of the column Event Time, as seen in item 2 below. This will sort by Event ID then time. You can verify that it is sorted if you see the sequential numbers 1 or 2 beside the column names. Now scroll down using the scroll bar or arrow button until you get to Event ID 4624 as seen in item 3 below. You will see a lot of these events, and most of them are system user accounts doing things in the background. Let us scroll to the one that has the timestamp 2020-08-27 04:32:10.650324 and click on it as seen in item 4 below. Note that the associated event ID is 4624, which refers to logons.

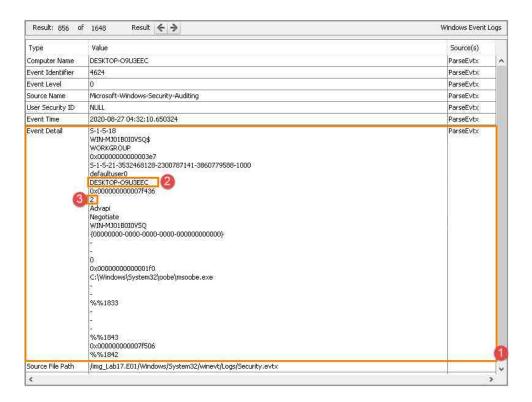




Try clicking in the Event Identifier column and typing 4624. This is a cool feature within Autopsy that allows examiner to quickly locate specific data sets within the table.

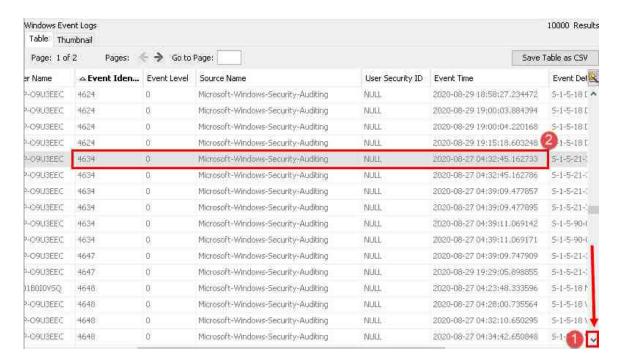


4. The details of the event will populate the View pane at the bottom-right of the window, as seen in item 1. We are interested in the Event Detail row so scroll down to it. The details list the name of the computer that was used to log in, seen in item 2 below. It also lists the username of the last user and the computer name of the destination. The value 2 seen in item 3 below is the logon type. This logon type indicates that the user logged on via a network connection.

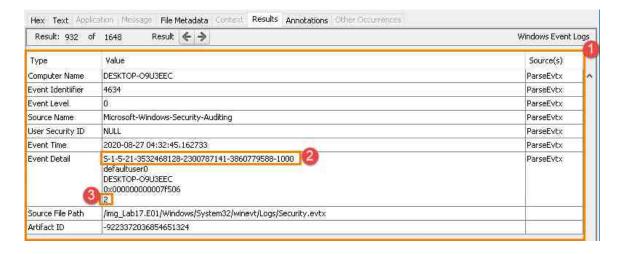




5. Now let us see if we can find a logoff date for this logon. Use the scroll bar or arrow button to scroll to Event ID 4634, as seen in item 1 below. As you can see, there are a lot less logoffs than logons. Let us scroll to the one that has the timestamp 2020-08-27 04:32:45.162733 and click on it as seen in item 2 below. Note that the associated event ID is 4634, which refers to logoffs.

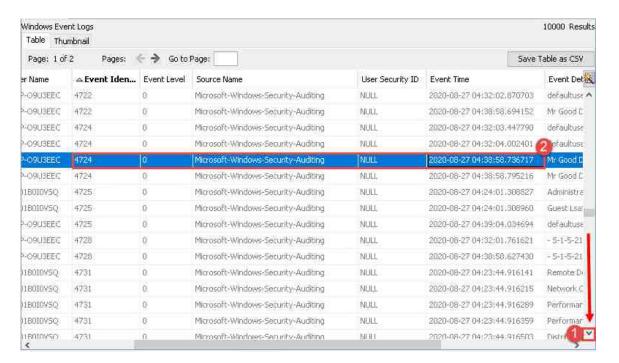


6. The details of the event will populate the View pane at the bottom-right of the window, as seen in item 1. We are interested in the Event Detail row so scroll down to it. The details list the SID, username, and the name of the computer that was used to log in, as seen in item 2 below. The value 2 seen in item 3 below is the logon type. This logon type indicates that the user logged on via a network connection. Based on the time between the 2 events, it is likely that the login and logout were automated, possibly because of the initial Windows setup.

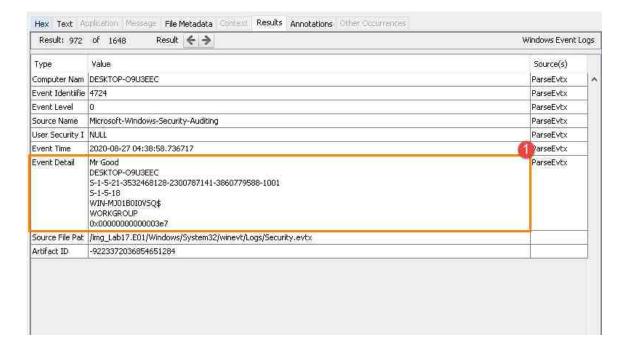




7. Next, let us look at password resets. The Event ID for password reset attempts is 4724. Let us use the scroll bar or arrow button to scroll to Event ID 4724, as seen in item 1 below. Next, select the one that has the timestamp 2020-08-27 04:38:58.736717 by clicking it, as seen in item 2 below.

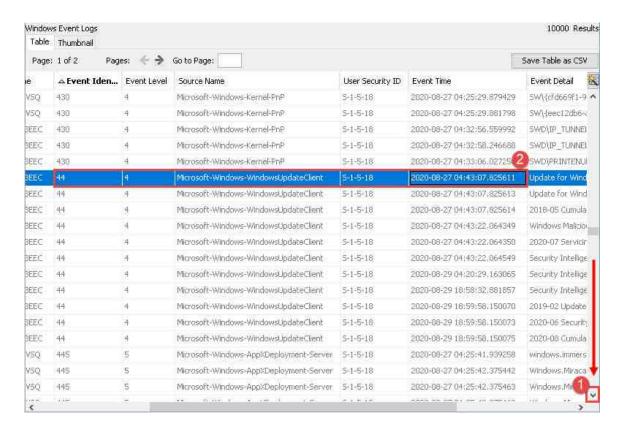


8. The details in this event are like the logon and logoff events. As seen in item 1 below, this log provides the username of the affected user, their computer name, and the SID.

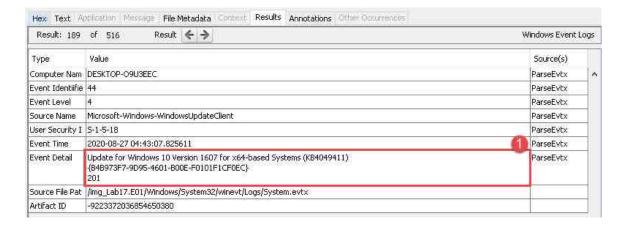




9. Finally, let us look at Windows updates. The Event ID for update downloads is 44. Use the scroll bar or arrow button to scroll to Event ID 44, as seen in item 1 below. Next, select the one that has the timestamp 2020-08-27 04:43:07.825611 by clicking it as seen in item 2 below.

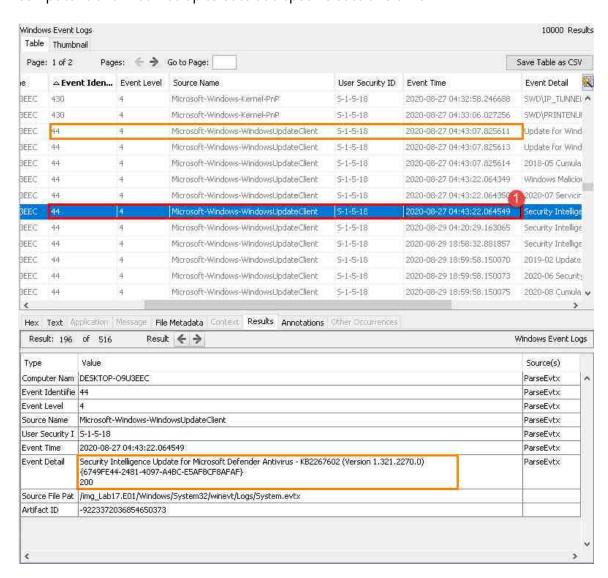


10. The details in this event are significantly different from the logon and logoff events. As seen in item 1 below, this log simply provides the name of the update being downloaded for install.



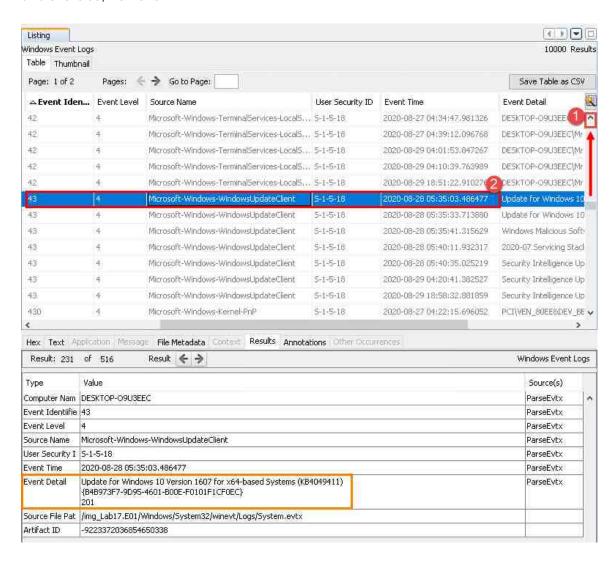


11. Let us select another update event; click the one that has the timestamp 2020-08-27 04:43:22.064549 as seen in item 1 below. As you can see in item 1, this is an update for Microsoft Defender, and it can provide information about whether the computer's antivirus was up to date at a specific date and time.





12. Let us check if these updates were installed by comparing the update download event (Event ID 44) with the update install event (Event ID 43). Let us use the scroll bar or arrow button to scroll to Event ID 43, as seen in item 1 below. Next, select the event that has the timestamp 2020-08-28 05:35:03.486477 by clicking it as seen in item 2 below. You can match each one with its download event to see if an install was attempted. There is also an event that tells whether the install was successful or it failed. This is found under event ID 19. We will not be reviewing these events in this exercise, however.





#### 3 Reviewing USN Journal Data

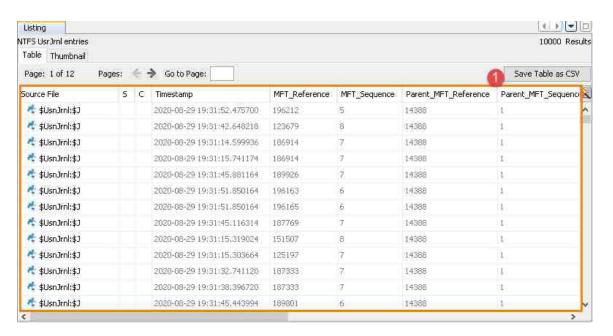
As we mentioned in the first section, the USN (Update Sequence Number) Journal stores records such as creations, deletions, encryption, and more. In this exercise, we will look at some of the data inside this log.

1. The Results and Extracted Content tree should already be expanded. Let us begin by clicking the NTFS UsrJrnl Entries, as seen in item 1 below.





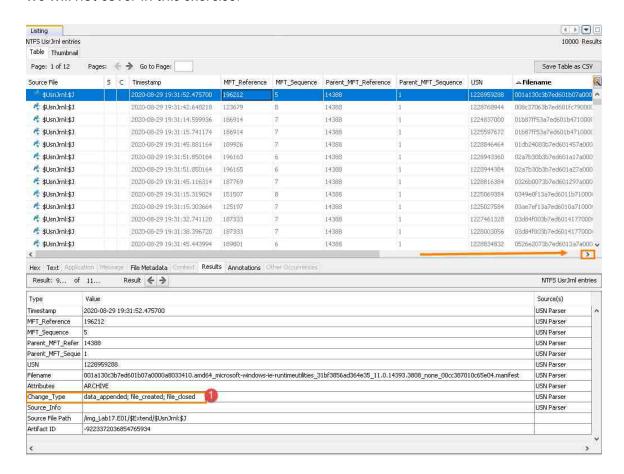
2. You will see the parsed USN Journal logs in the Listing pane as seen in item 1 below. The table below the following screenshot will provide details about the data in each column.



Source File	This column provides data about the file that the information in each row was taken from
Timestamp	The time that the event was generated
MFT Reference	The MFT record number of the file or directory that is affected by the change
Parent_MFT_Reference	The MFT record number of the parent directory of the file or directory that is affected by the change
USN (Update Sequence Number)	The record number in the USN Journal
Filename	The name of the affected file
Attributes	Attributes of the affected file
Change_Type	Details of the change that was made



3. The logs in this journal can be very granular, so it is important that you have an idea of what you are looking for before searching it. Before we look for any specific file, look at the column called Change\_Type¹ as seen in item 1. It tells you what change was made to the associated file. As you can see, there are entries like file\_deleted; file\_closed and file\_created; file\_closed. These entries indicate whether a file was deleted or created, respectively. There are several other types of change types that we will not cover in this exercise.





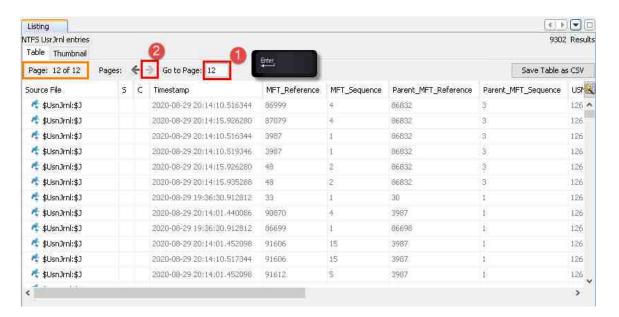
The data for each entry, if selected will load in the view pane. It can take a few seconds for the data to be populated, so feel free to just scroll horizontally to view each row within their respective columns.



<sup>1</sup>https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/win32/api/winioctl/ns-winioctl-usn\_record\_v2?redirectedfrom=MSDN



4. Let us look at an event that occurred that was recorded in the USN Journal. Begin by changing to page 12 of the USN Journal entries by clicking and typing 12 in the Go to Page field and pressing Enter as seen in item 1 or by clicking the right arrow beside pages, as seen in item 2 below. This will take you to the end of the journal.

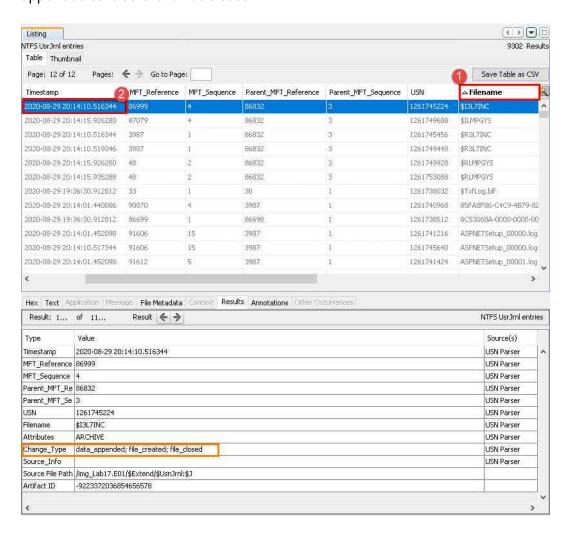




We are only going to this location because we know that the files of interest are located there. In practice, use different search and sorting techniques to identify files of interest.

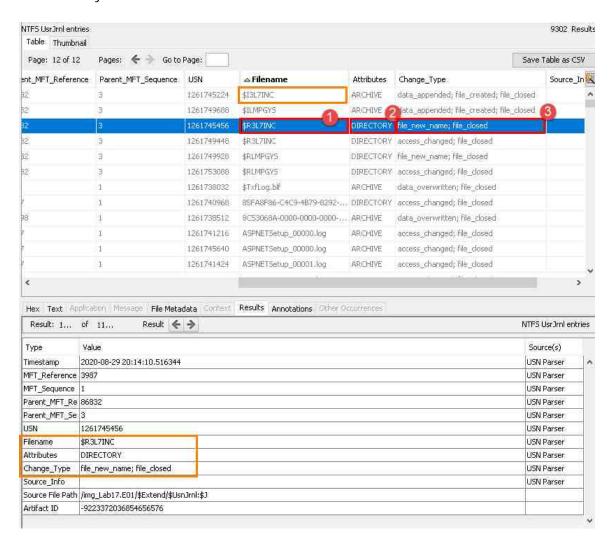


5. Now that we are at the last page, click the column called Filename to sort the column alphabetically, as seen in item 1. Ensure that the files are sorted from a – z, which means the arrow beside Filename should be pointing up. Scroll down until you get to the timestamp 2020-08-29 20:14:01.516344, as seen in item 2 below. This is a file that has a name that resembles a file found in the Recycle.Bin folder. As you can see from the Change\_Type for this file is data\_appended; file\_created; file\_closed. This means the file called \$13L7INC was created at that specific time, and data was appended to it before it was closed.



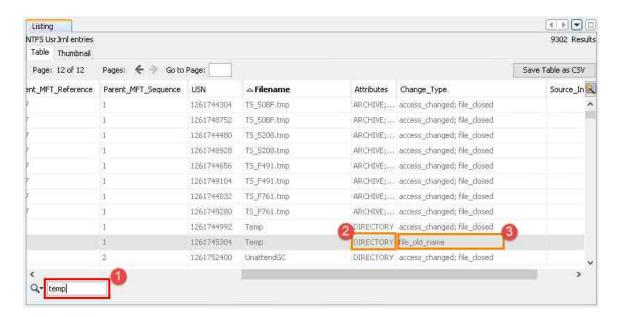


6. Let us look at the next file \$R3L7INC, as seen in item 1 below. This file also has a naming convention that resembles a recycled file. The Attributes column in item 2 indicates that this item is a directory as well. Now look at the Change\_Type column as seen in item 3, where it states file\_new\_name; file\_closed. This entry corresponds with the previous one and indicates that the folder called Temp was deleted, and the name was changed to \$R3L7INC. As with files in the Recycle.Bin folder, an index for the recycle bin entry called \$I3L7INC was also created right before the rename. This process gives you some insight into the behavior of the USN Journal and how to track activity inside it.





7. Next, search for the filename Temp as seen in item 1. There should be two files with the name Temp, the one we are interested in has the Attributes column indicating that it is a directory, as seen in item 2, and the Change\_Type is file\_old\_name, as seen in item 3. This means that this item was renamed.





Remember, this can be achieved easily by clicking within the column Filename and typing temp as seen in item 1.

- 8. Now on your own, scroll down to look for another delete folder and note its old name, new name, and the times of the changes.
- 9. Once done, close all the open windows and log out of the workstation. You are now at the end of this lab.

