## Forensics: A Quick Dive into Windows Registry

## Introduction

Window registry is more like a database, one that stores all kinds of information that are vital to the proper functioning of the operating system. Information related to:

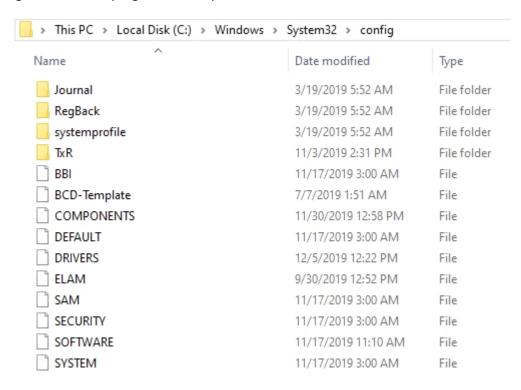
- Applications: info [timestamps, version, ...], settings, options, etc...
- Users: profiles, configs, etc..
- Hardware: serials, state, drivers, etc.

The registry has a hierarchical nature and works with two basic elements which are Keys and Values:

- Values are non-container objects, similar to 'files'.
- Keys are container objects, similar to 'folders', so keys can contain subkeys and values.

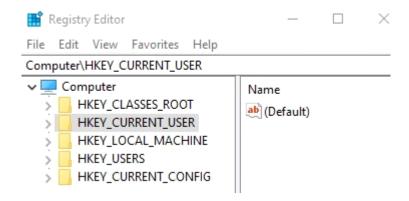
The most important registry hives are **DEFAULT**, **SAM**, **SECURITY**, **SOFTWARE**, **SYSTEM** they are located under **\Windows\System32\config** and also automatically backed up in

**\Windows\System32\config\RegBack**. Regback folder is important because most often, attackers who try to cover their tracks and perform anti-forensics techniques like deleting certain keys or purging the registry forget to delete or purge the back up.



There are five root keys visible in the registry editor, but today we are going to work with tow:

### HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER and HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE.



## **User related forensics**

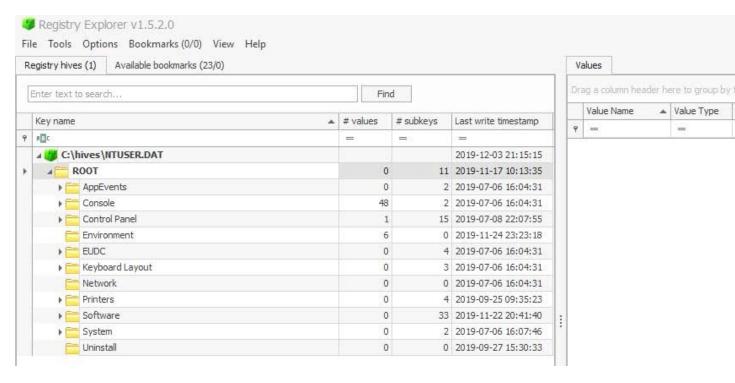
**NTUSER.DAT** is an important hive that every user has which represents that particular user's registry-related information and it actually plugs in to the registry as HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER, it's located under **\Users\@username**, . HK\_LOCAL\_MACHINE on the other hand is formed from the hives mentioned earlier.

```
Volume in drive C has no label
Volume Serial Number is E2AB-8747
Directory of C:\Users\Emir Fattoum
07/06/2019 05:04 PM
                                        AppData
                        <JUNCTION>
7/06/2019
           05:04 PM
                                        Application Data [C:\Users\Emir Fattoum\AppData\Roaming]
7/06/2019
           05:04 PM
                        <JUNCTION>
                                        Cookies [C:\Users\Emir Fattoum\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCookies]
                                        IntelGraphicsProfiles
Local Settings [C:\Users\Emir Fattoum\AppData\Local]
MicrosoftEdgeBackups
1/17/2019 11:13 AM
                        < JUNCTION>
07/06/2019 05:04 PM
           05:08 PM
                        <DIR>
7/06/2019
                                        My Documents [C:\Users\Emir Fattoum\Documents]
NetHood [C:\Users\Emir Fattoum\AppData\Roaming\Microsoft\Windows\Network Short
 7/06/2019
           05:04 PM
                        <JUNCTION>
                        <JUNCTION>
                             2,883,584 NTUSER.DAT
 1/17/2019
           11:13 AM
                             1,224,704 ntuser.dat.LOG1
978,944 ntuser.dat.LOG2
 7/06/2019
           05:04 PM
           05:04 PM
 7/06/2019
                               7/06/2019
           05:07 PM
 7/06/2019
           05:04 PM
```

Usually, if we talk about HKeys we're referring to live system forensics, on the other hand if we talk about hives such as NTUSER.DAT we're referring to forensics of a dead/offline system.

Now Let's grab those hives and dive straight through some very common and basic artifacts. To do that I'm going to use **Registry explorer** to explore through the hives. you can find the tools here <a href="https://ericzimmerman.github.io/#!index.md">https://ericzimmerman.github.io/#!index.md</a>.

First, let's start by loading NTUSER.DAT and discuss some artifacts from there.



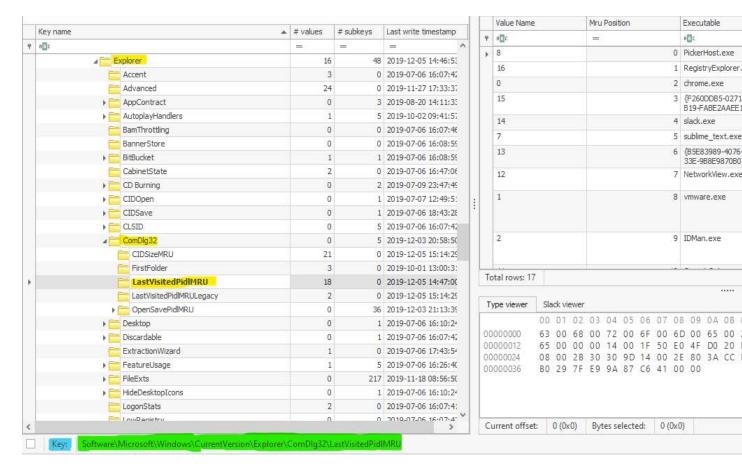
Let's navigate to \SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer:

### \ComDlg32:

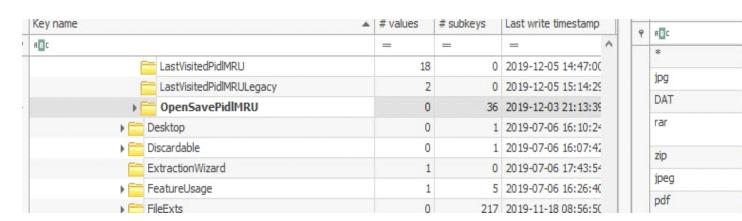
Here we can find information related to files that are opened or saved via windows explorer style dialogue boxes, for example files (pdf, txt, jpg ,..) that are opened/saved from a web browser. The most important subkeys are:

- \LastVisitedPidlMRU: which contains the binaries that are used to open or store these files.

\*MRU stands for Most Recent Use.

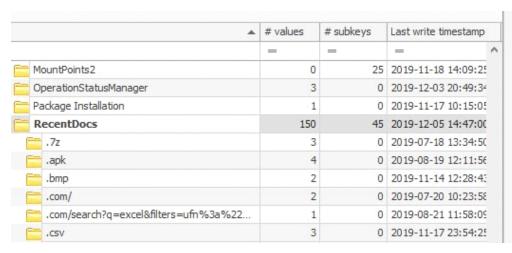


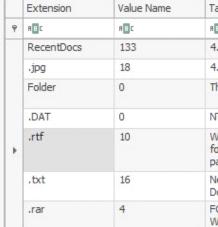
- \OpenSavedPidIMRU: contains the files themselves:



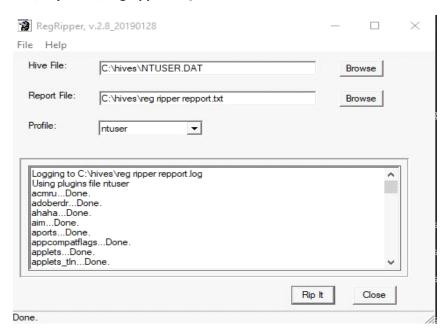
### \RecentDocs:

This key shows recent documents that interacted with the system whether opened or saved.





There are tools that can parse these types of keys automatically. For example **RegRipper** [https://github.com/keydet89/RegRipper2.8]



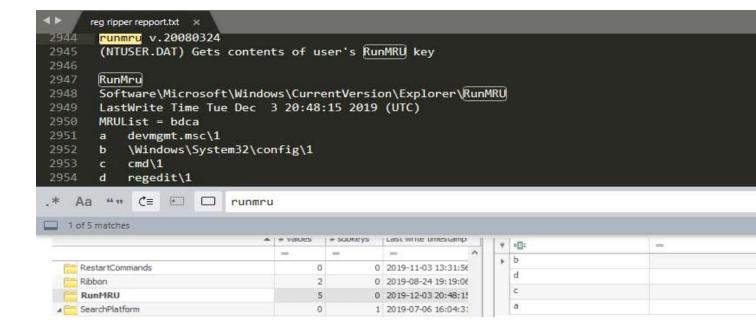
The results are very clear, this tool event sorts the documents by type / extension

```
recentdocs v.20100405
(NTUSER.DAT) Gets contents of user's RecentDocs key

RecentDocs
**All values printed in MRUList\MRUListEx order.
Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\RecentDocs
LastWrite Time Thu Dec 5 14:47:00 2019 (UTC)
    133 = 4.jpg
    2 = The Internet
    113 = edit?isTemporary=true&source=screenclip&sharedAccessToken=0400038F-9401-488C-9903-E0E9FC10441A&secondarySharedAcces
    05CA-478D-9309-B9C5E17C30AC&viewId=-2034847
    31 = hives
    29 = NTUSER.DAT
    111 = This PC
    57 = C:\
    110 = Local Disk (C:)
    102 = Annotation 2019-12-05 144654.jpg
```

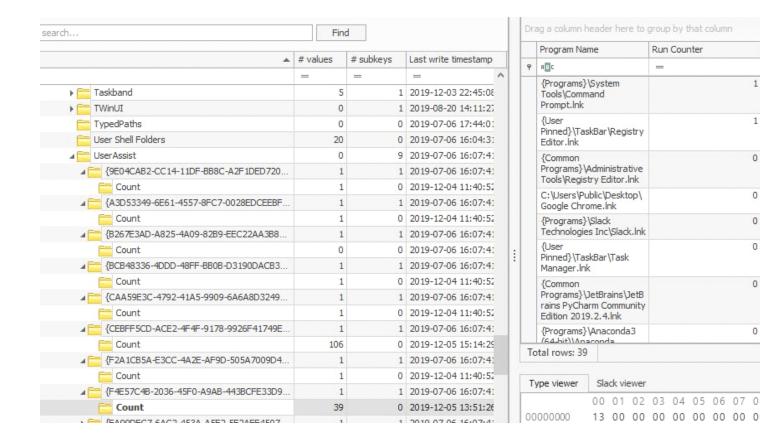
```
Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\RecentDocs\.ipynb
LastWrite Time Mon Nov 18 08:06:07 2019 (UTC)
MRUListEx = 1,0
  1 = Untitled1 - Copy.ipynb
  0 = Untitled1.ipynb
Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\RecentDocs\.iso
LastWrite Time Sun Oct 20 21:23:49 2019 (UTC)
MRUListEx = 3,2,1,0
  3 = ubuntu-19.04-live-server-amd64.iso
  2 = en_windows_10_multiple_editions_x64_dvd_6846432.iso
 1 = Windows10.iso
  0 = kali-linux-2019.2-amd64.iso
Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\RecentDocs\.jar
LastWrite Time Wed Sep 25 10:33:12 2019 (UTC)
MRUListEx = 2,1,0
  2 = jython-installer-2.7.1.jar
  1 = burpsuite_community_v2.1.01.jar
 0 = jython-installer-2.7.0.jar
```

**\RunMRU:** This one contains the most recent programs executed and their order



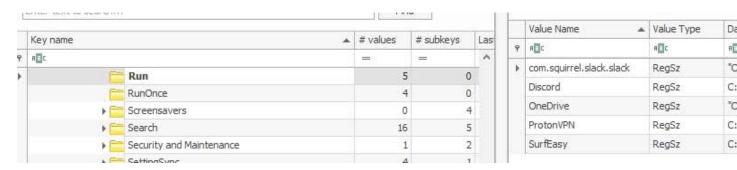
<u>\typedpaths:</u> This key contains information about paths typed-in in windows explorer. an attacker will probably know exactly the location of its target, he'll probably won't stumble around. This is why this key is useful.

<u>UserAssist:</u> Through this key we can see when GUI applications have been executed, how many times and by whom which is very important in a forensics investigation.



### Next let's check \SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Run & ~\RunOnce:

These keys provide us with information regarding applications that starts automatically with system, even in the background.

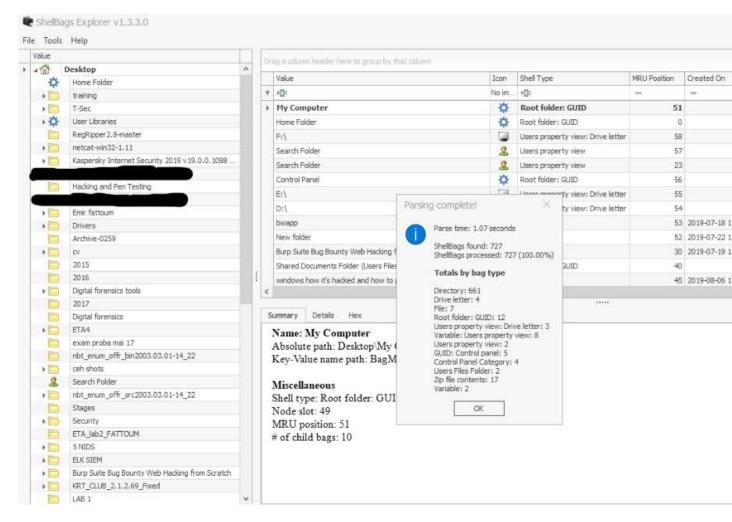


#### Next, I'm going to briefly introduce **Shellbags**:

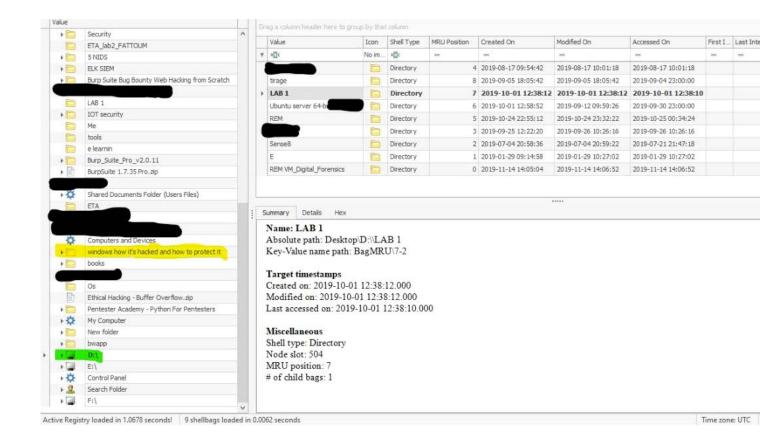
- Shellbags are registry keys that basically store details about a viewed folder when viewed through windows explorer such as the view, the icons, the size, the window position, the sorting method, etc. ... This also include network folders and removable devices.
- Shellbags are important from an investigators perspective because they persist even after the folder is deleted from the system, which gives great insight about the browsing history and content of folders

that are no longer accessible (located in removable device or even deleted).

For shelbags we're going to use **ShellBags Explorer** [from the same source as Registry explorer] This is the initial window that shows information regarding the parsed shelbags.



As we can see below, the left side panel shows the contents of the shellbags. For example, the drive in green is actually a USB flash drive that I used on my machine recently and the folder in yellow is one that was deleted ages ago.



# **System forensics**

#### **USB** forensics

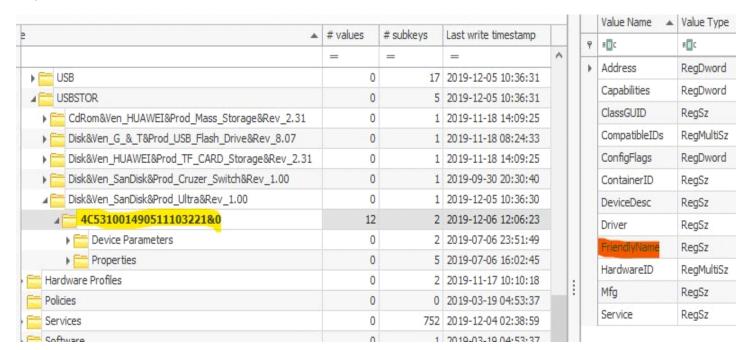
USB forensics is very important, they can be used to steal sensitive data from companies by a recently fired employee for example, inject malware, break into a system once physical access is gained and many more possible scenarios.

After loading the SYSTEM hive, let's take a look under \USBSTOR and \USB keys located under \SYSTEM\ControlSet001\Enum\.

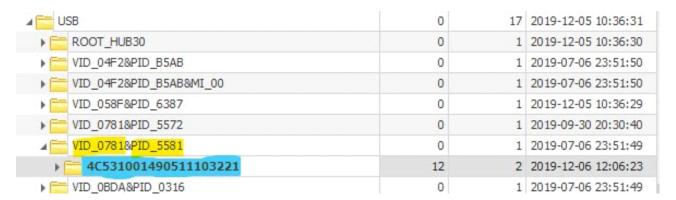
Under \USBSTOR we can see a list of thumb drives that were used in this machine

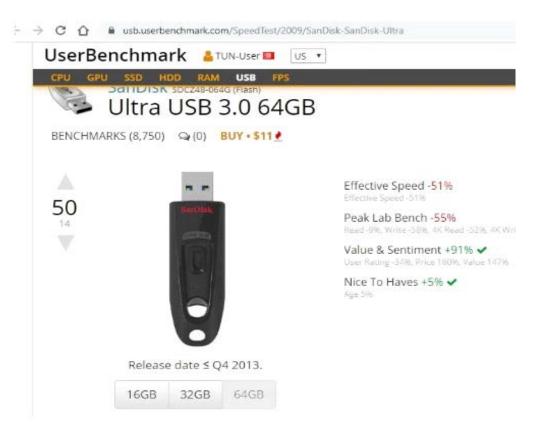
USBSTOR	0	5	2019-12-05 10:36:31
▶ 💳 CdRom&Ven_HUAWEI&Prod_Mass_Storage&Rev_2.31	0	1	2019-11-18 14:09:25
▶ Comparison	0	1	2019-11-18 08:24:33
▶ 🚞 Disk&Ven_HUAWEI&Prod_TF_CARD_Storage&Rev_2.31	0	1	2019-11-18 14:09:25
▶ == Disk&Ven_SanDisk&Prod_Cruzer_Switch&Rev_1.00	0	1	2019-09-30 20:30:40
Disk&Ven_SanDisk&Prod_Ultra&Rev_1.00	0	1	2019-12-05 10:36:30
			2010 11 17 10 10 10

I plugged a flash drive just before I was making this part, if we expand further, as seen below. The number in yellow corresponds to the serial number of the flash drive. Correspondingly we can see a time stamp that is recorded in UTC ( windows always use UTC in records ), so we need to convert it to local time so that we can build an event line or a chain of events . In red is the name of the flash drive. As you can see, a lot of readable and useful information.



Under \USB we can see the VID and PID that corresponds to the serial number, google can find more information about the make, model and even pictures. This will help us pinpoint the physical USB device that can be used later as evidence.

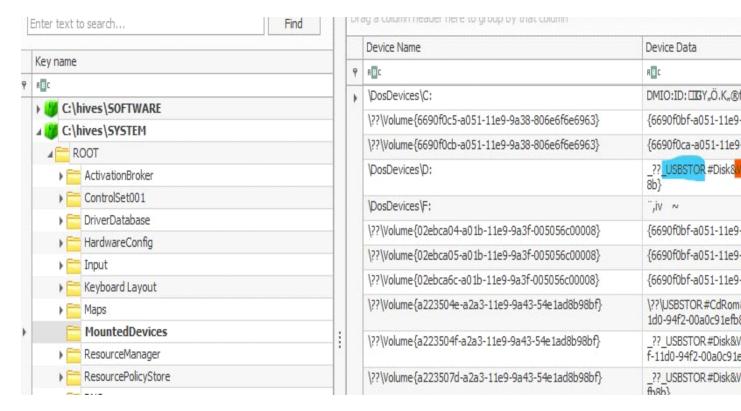




Product Name	Vendor Name	VID	PID	Rea		
SanDisk Ultra USB Device	SanDisk Corp.	14.53 GB	781 781	5581	37.20 36.25	
SanDisk Ultra USB Device	SanDisk Corp.	116.25 GB		5581		
SanDisk Ultra USB Device	SanDisk Corp.	232.29 GB	781	5581	39.33	
SanDisk Ultra USB Device	SanDisk Corp.	7.43 GB	781	5581	21.08	

### Under \SYSTEM\MountedDevices

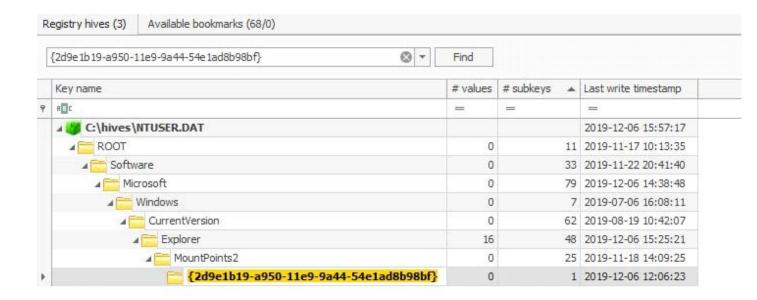
There is details about the flash drive and the drive letter associated with it



But the most important thing here is we get the Volume GUID related to the flash drive as we can see below in red. The **Volume GUID** is a unique identifier assigned by windows the first time it encounters a new volume and it does not change even if the drive letter is changed. This is useful to track the activities of the USB in the system.

Or	rag a column h	neade	er her	e to	group	by t	that c	olum	n																				
	_	Value Name																			Da	ata R	ecord	Rea	alloc	Is	Delet	ed	
9	RBC											RBC			ЯВ	c							]					]-	
7	\??	(02eb	ca04	-a01b	)-11e	9-9a	3f-00	5056	c000	08}		Reg	Binar	у	7E	3-00-	36-00	0-36-0	00-3.										
	\??	(02eb	ca05-	-a01b	)-11e	9-9a	3f-00	5056	c000	08}		Reg	Binar	у	7E	3-00-3	36-00	)-36-(	00-3.	🗆									
	\??	(02eb	са6с-	a01b	-11e	9-9a	3f-00	5056	c000	(80		Reg	Binar	у	7E	3-00-3	36-00	)-36-(	00-3.										
	\??	(053b	8828	-e372	2-11e	9-9a	4f-f8	5971	520fr	)2}		Reg	Binar	у	5F	-00-	3F-00	)-3F-(	00-5.									Ĺ	
	\??	(053b	88a1	-e372	2-11e	9-9a	4f-f8	5971	520fr	)2}		Reg	Binar	у	5F	-00-	3F-00	0-3F-(	00-5.										
	\??\Volume	\??\Volume{053b8a8c-e372-11e9-9a4f-f85971520f02} \??\Volume{053b9187-e372-11e9-9a4f-f85971520f02}				?\Volume{053b8a8c-e372-11e9-9a4f-f85971520f02}							Reg	Binar	у	5F	-00-	3F-00	)-3F-(	00-5.	i								Ĺ
	\??\Volume					??\Volume{053b9187-e372-11e9-9a4f-f85971520f02}								Reg	Binar	у	50	2-00-	3F-00	0-3F-	00-5.								
\??\Volume{2d9e10cb-a950-11e9-9a44-54e1ad8b98bf}									Reg	gBinar	у	50	5C-00-3F-00-3F-00-5											Ê					
	\??\Volume	\??\Volume {2d9e 1b 19-a950-11e9-9a 44-54e 1ad8b98				8bf}		Reg	Binar	у	5F	-00-	3F-00	0-3F-(	00-5.														
\??4da2bffa-		bffa-	099d	-11ea	a-9a5	54-54	e 1ad	8b98	of}		Reg	Binar	ary 5F-00-3F-00		)-3F-(	00-5.				]					Ē				
\??\Volume{4da2c6b9-099d-11ea-9a54-54e1ad8b98bf}											Reg	gBinar	у	50	2-00-	3F-00	0-3F-	00-5.				]							
\??\Volume{4da2c6bc-099d-11ea-9a54-54e1ad8b98bf}											Reg	gBinar	у	5F	-00-	3F-00	0-3F-(	00-5.									Ĺ		
\??\Volume{6690f0c5-a051-11e9-9a38-806e6f6e6963}											Reg	Binar	у	7E	3-00-	36-00	0-36-0	00-3.				]							
	\??\Volume/	??\Volume{6690f0cb-a051-11e9-9a38-806e6f6e6963}						Reg	Binar	у	7B-00-36-00-36-00-3													1					
1	Type viewer	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.5	1.0	4.4	1.7	4.9	4.4	1 5	16	17	10	10	_	
c	0000000	00 5 F	01	02 3F	03	04 3F	0.5	06 5F	07	08	09	0A	0B	0C 42	00	0 E	0 F	10 54	11	12 4F	13	14 52	15	16	17	18	19		
_	0000000 000001B	00	73	00	6B	00	26	00	56	00	65	00	6E	00	5 F	00	53	00	61	00	6 E	00	44	00	69	00	73	(	
Ī	0000036	6 B	00	26	00	50	00	72	00	6 F	00	64	00	5 F	00	55	00	6 C	00	74	00	72	00	61	00	26	00		
_	0000051	00	65	00	76	00	5 F	00	31	00	2 E	00	30	00	30	00	23	00	34	00	43	00	35	00	33	00	31		
	000006C 0000087	30	00 31	30	00 26	31	30	34	23	39	00 7B	30	35	35	33	31	00 66	31	35	31	00 36	30	33	33	30	32	00 37		
_	0000087 00000A2	2 D		62	00	36		62	00	66	00	2 D	00	31	00	31	00	64	00	30	00	2 D	00	39	00	34	00		
	000000AZ	00	32	00					30	0.0			30		63	00	39	00	31	00	65	00	66		62	00	38		
_	00000D8			7 D		00	50	00	50	00	0 1	00	50	00	05	00	55	00	J 1	00	03	00	00	00	02	00	50		

Searching for matches for the Volume GUID in NTUSER.DAT hives, of all existing users, under \Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\Mountpoints2\, can give us the exact user that mounted the USB drive and the last time he did that. We can also use the search box of Registry Explorer to do the job:



Another Bonus, in SYSTEM hive, under

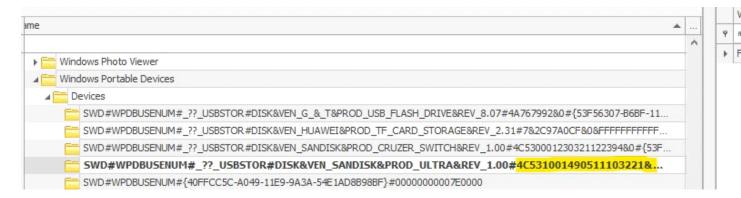
\SYSTEM\CurrentSet00X\Enum\USBSTOR\Ven\_Prod\_Version\"@targetUSBSerial"\Properties\"@Target\_Volume\_GUID"\

we can find important timestamps:

- 0064 => The first time the USB was plugged in.
- 0066 => The Last time the USB was plugged in.
- 0067 => The Last time the USB was removed/disconnected.

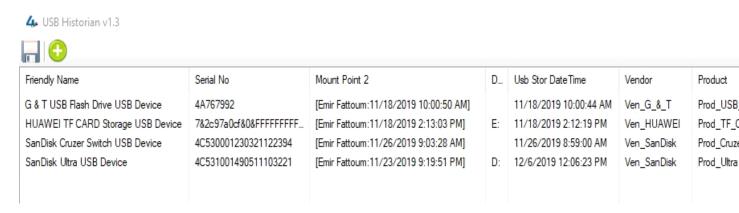
C USBSTOR		0	5	2019-12-05 10:36:31		
▶ 🚞 CdRom8	Ven_HUAWEI&Prod_Mass_Storage&Rev_2.31	0	1	2019-11-18 14:09:25		
▶ 💳 Disk&Ver	n_G_&_T&Prod_USB_Flash_Drive&Rev_8.07	0	1	2019-11-18 08:24:33		
▶ 🚞 Disk&Ver	n_HUAWEI&Prod_TF_CARD_Storage&Rev_2.31	0	1	2019-11-18 14:09:25		
▶ 🚞 Disk&Ver	n_SanDisk&Prod_Cruzer_Switch&Rev_1.00	0	1	2019-09-30 20:30:40		
⊿ 🚞 Disk&Ver	n_SanDisk&Prod_Ultra&Rev_1.00	0	1	2019-12-05 10:36:30		
<b>⊿</b> = 4C53	1001490511103221&0	12	2	2019-12-06 12:06:23		
▶ 💳 De	vice Parameters	0	2	2019-07-06 23:51:49		
⊿ 🚞 Pro	pperties	0 0	1	2019-07-06 16:02:4 2019-07-06 16:02:4		
<b>→</b> 🚞	{3464f7a4-2444-40b1-980a-e0903cb6d912}					
<b>&gt;</b>	{80497100-8c73-48b9-aad9-ce387e19c56e}			2019-07-06 23:51:49		
<b>→</b> 🚞	{540b947e-8b40-45bc-a8a2-6a0b894cbda2}	0		2019-07-06 23:51:49		
<b>⊿</b> <u>□</u>	{83da6326-97a6-4088-9453-a1923f573b29}	0		2019-07-06 16:47:02		
G	0003	1	0	2019-07-06 23:51:49		
G	000A	1	0	2019-07-06 23:51:49		
6	0064	1	0	2019-07-06 23:51:49		
	0065	1	0	2019-07-06 23:51:49		
6	0066	1	0	2019-12-06 12:06:23		
E	0067	1	0	2019-12-06 12:06:51		

Under **Software\Microsoft\Windows Portable Devices\Devices:** We can see the serial number & the volume name of the USB device



Again, such information can be retrieved automatically by other tools but it's important to know where it is in the registry and retrieve it manually.

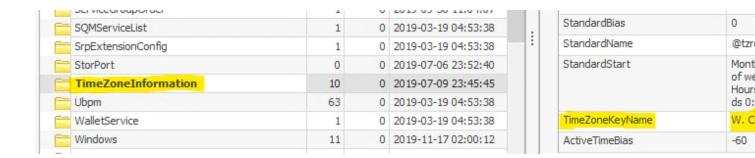
For example, **USB Historian** can retrieve useful information on the fly.



# Miscellaneous info

## Time zone information

First of all, it's recommended to record the system time zone at the very beginning of the analysis so that any time related information or events extracted during the investigation are accurate. We can find this information under \SYSTEM\ControlSet001\Control\TimeZoneInformation.



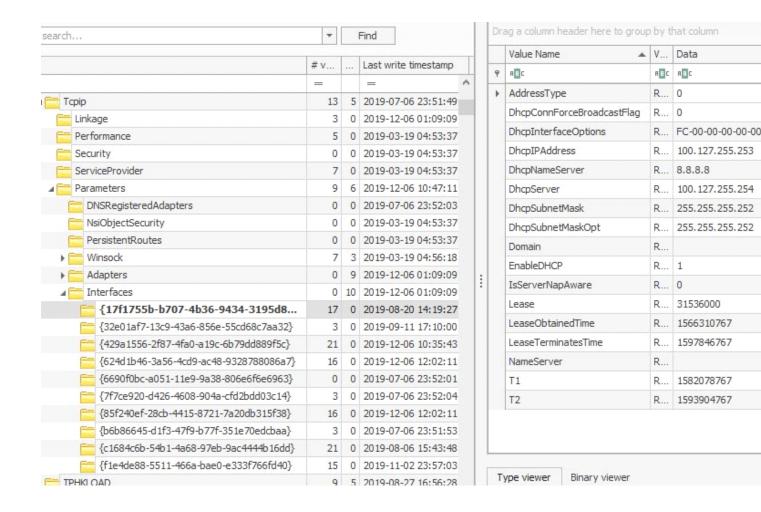
## **Computer Name**

It's also logical to grab the computer name of the machine being analyzed. we can find that under \SYSTEM\Control\ComputerName\ComputerName.



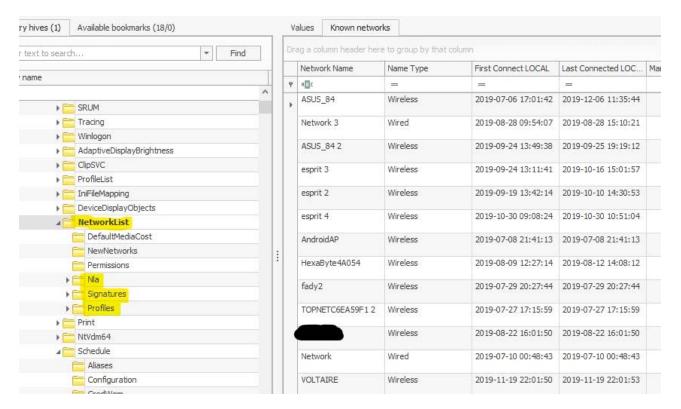
## **Network Interfaces**

Interfaces, Configuration can be found under \SYSTEM\ControlSet001\Services\Tcpip\Parameters\Interfaces



# **Wireless Network Listing**

Under \Software\Microsoft\Windows NT\Currentversion\Networklist, we can find all the Networks that this machine has ever connected to:



A lot of information is provided. Furthermore, we can grab the cash, under \NLA\Cache\, the profiles of each network under \Profiles and a lot more such as the domain, DnsSuffix, DefaultGatewayMac under \Signatures\Unmanaged.

# Prefetcher/SuperFetch

Prefetcher and SuperFetch are part of windows memory manager, they are used to cache data into the RAM so that it can be read fast. Investigators can use this to generate evidence of application execution on the entire machine (not related to users) and that include GUI and command line applications. These files are located under C:\windows\prefetch [main system partition]. We are going to use a tool called **WinPrefetchView** to view all the .pf files, we can see evidence of running "USB Historian" application, when ,where it's located ,etc.



