The Old Shoebox Newsletter
Adventures in modern technology by Marlo E. Schuldt

A Family Geocache

Exploring, Traveling and Making Your Own

Never Get Lost Again!

Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. September 1, 2008
GPS - 44°43'15.75" N 110°28'46.16"W
L-R David, McKenna, Madison, Marlo and Leanna

Remember all the fun times you had going on treasure hunts? Did you relish the challenge of decoding the riddle in each clue? Were you tricked into going to some strange places? Did you enjoy the feeling of accomplishment when the last clue guided you to the hidden treasure?

It's time to introduce your children and grandchildren to a new high-tech treasure hunt that uses space age technology. It's called Geocaching and it's fun for children and adults. All you need is a Global Positioning System (GPS).

A GPS unit will make it easier for your children, grandchildren and future generations to discover their family roots as they travel to forgotten places such as ancestral homes, gravesites, an old farm, where you grew up and more.

Big Springs, Idaho September 14, 2004
GPS- 43°29'51.27"N 110°52'32.38"W

Olsen Family at Wilson, Wyoming circa 1897
GPS- 43°29'51.27"N 110°52'32.38"W

What You Need to Get Started

1. GPS. You may already have a GPS in your cell phone or new car. If not, you can purchase one for around $100 if you shop around. You will discover that buying a GPS will be well worth the money when you start exploring all of its many useful applications.

2. Access to Google Earth, or NASA WorldWind. The good news is both software programs are free to download and use

What's a GPS?

A GPS works like a transistor radio except it gets signals from 32 satellites circling overhead. The software in the GPS calculates your exact location on the ground and then shows where you are on a map using GPS coordinates.

You can use a GPS anywhere in the world. Sportsmen and hikers use a GPS to locate remote campsites and keep from getting lost on the trail. Travelers use a GPS to navigate highways, back roads or to find their way to the address of a relative in a distant city.

There are many different kinds of GPS units used in cars, boats, computers and handheld units. The three GPS units I currently use for travel and family history are shown below:

Garmin Nuvi 200

Garmin e-Trax Legend

Garmin GPS-18

Acquiring GPS Coordinates

There are two ways to obtain GPS coordinates:

1. Travel to the location with a GPS unit and record the coordinates.

Tip: Take a photo of the GPS coordinates screen so you can enter the coordinates into Heritage Collector or as part of a photo caption later. This eliminates the need to carry a notebook.

2. You do not need to use a GPS to get GPS coordinates. Use satellite imaging programs that provide GPS coordinates.

   a. Google Earth. Go to Google Earth, move the cursor around on the display and record the coordinates located at the bottom left of the display. However, It's easier to add the yellow pushpin (placement marker) to the location on the Google Earth display and then copy and paste the coordinates to another location such as in Heritage Collector.

      http://earth.google.com/

   b. NASA WorldWind. Place the cursor on the desired location, go to the edit menu, select Copy and use the paste command to save the coordinates. You will need to edit the coordinate information (Delete the URL information combined with the GPS coordinates).

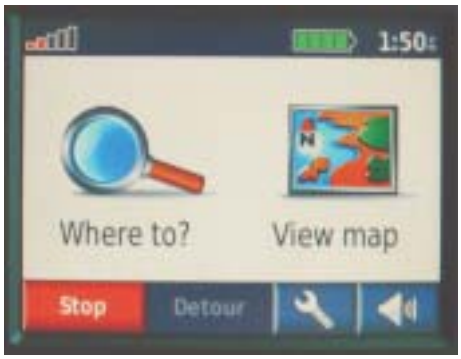
      http://worldwind.arc.nasa.gov

Make a Family Geocache

A family geocache will help you catalogue and locate places important to your family and relatives. Compiling a list of names and GPS coordinates will make it easy to travel to the site or to view the location using Google Earth or NASA WorldWind.

The Garmin Nuvi 200 makes it simple to create and save a list of locations in the GPS unit so travel information will be easy to access whenever you need directions. Go to the desired location.

1. Click “Where To?



2. Click “Browse Map.”

Go to a location on the map.

3. Click “Save” and OK.

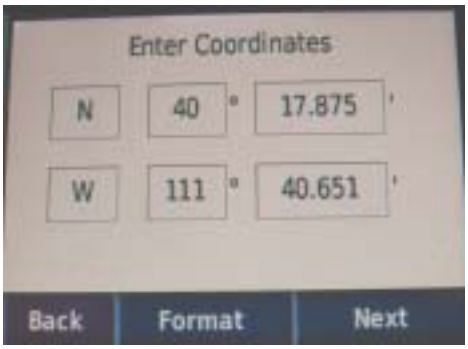
4. Click “Save as a New Destination.”

Navigating to a Destination

The Garmin makes it easy to drive to any destination. You have two options:

1. Select the destination from the list of favorites you previously created and stored in your Garmin.

2. Enter the GPS coordinates and click Next.



You Can’t Get Lost With a GPS!

The wonderful thing about using a GPS is <u>you can’t get lost!</u> Yes, you read correctly! You will never get lost if you have a GPS along unless it has *dead batteries*. Being lost means you do not know where you are in relationship to where you want to go. A GPS makes that situation impossible.

Turn on your GPS and it will immediately show your exact location on a map. That solves the first problem - figuring out where you are. The second problem is determining where you need to go. You have to two options.

1. Decrease the magnification of the GPS so you “get the big picture.” You should be able to see a city or town along your travel route somewhat close to your next destination.

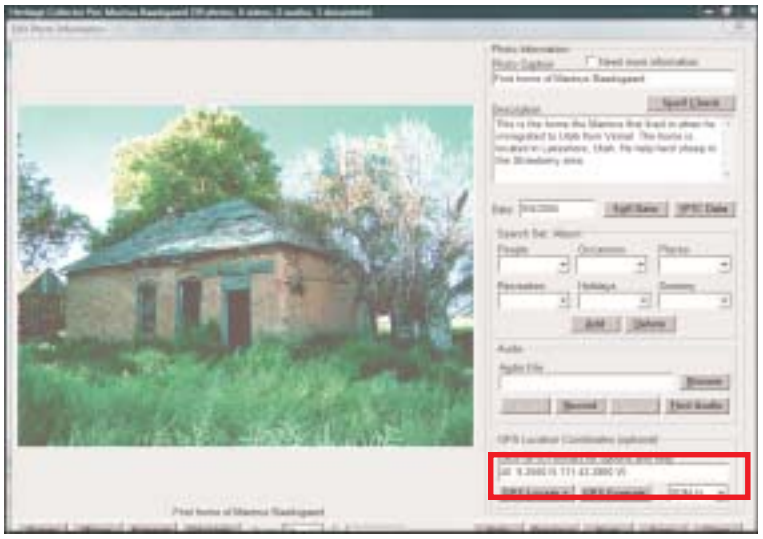
2. Compare a printed map with the GPS display.

Comparing a Garmin GPS with a map of Yellowstone Park.

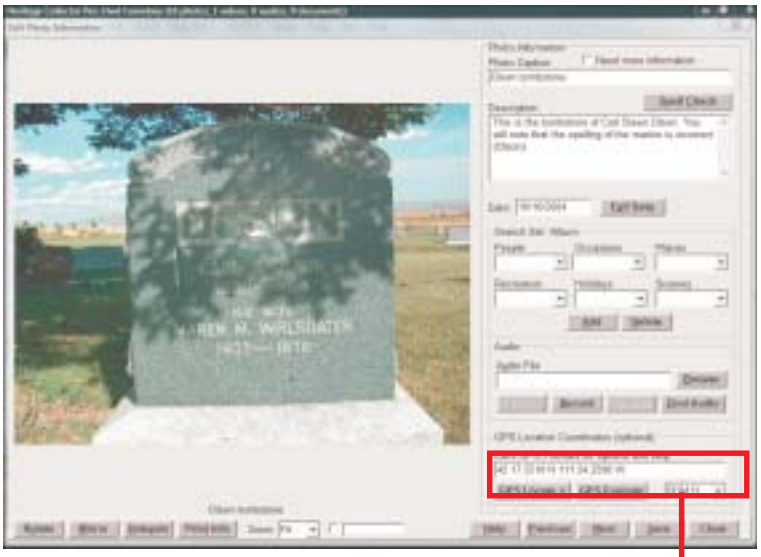
Where to Purchase

Always check out Amazon.com first. Check prices at Radio Shack, Cabela’s and Target for the best prices. You may also find some good deals on other web sites.

Caution: Not all GPS units allow you to view or enter GPS coordinates. Do not buy a GPS unit if you can not access GPS coordinates.



First home of Marinus Baadsgaard. Lake Shore, Utah circa 1890.
GPS coordinates - 40 9.2560 N 111 43.2860 W



Burial site of Carl Steen Olsen. Ovid, Idaho.
GPS coordinates - 42 17.5510 N 111 24.2590 W