

The Old Shoebox Newsletter

Adventures in modern technology by Marlo E. Schuldt

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GPS - The Ultimate Toy For Big Kids!

When I start talking about my handheld Global Positioning System (GPS) most people get that faraway look in their eyes and think we are going to start talking about rocket science and start to tune out. The next question is always very predictable.

“Is this something I really need or just another high tech gadget?”

My response with a big smile on my face is always, *“I’m glad you asked!”*

Let me start by saying that GPS is probably one of the easiest high tech gadgets I have ever used. Turn it on, push a button, wait a couple of seconds, watch the satellites tune in on your position and then it displays the latitude and longitude of your location anywhere in the world within 10 or 15 feet!

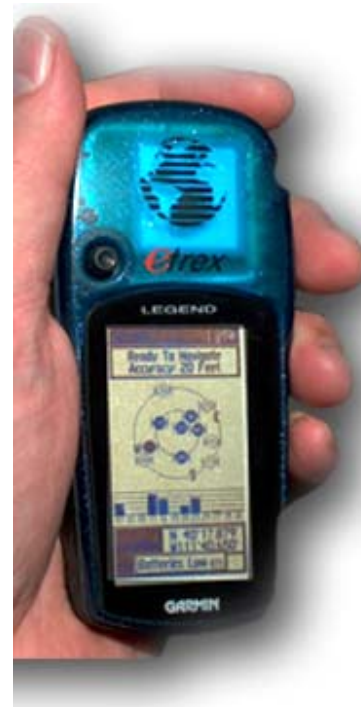
So what’s so great about that?

Some GPS Examples

A few years ago I purchased a handheld GPS. I started recording GPS coordinates of important family history locations. i.e., burial markers of my parents and grandparents, home where I grew up, location of my grandfather’s farm, my great grandfather’s first



The Garmin GPS-18 running on a laptop computer in back seat of our van.



The Garmin e-trax Legend handheld GPS.

rock home, our first home, various places in Yellowstone Park and more. Why? I would like my children and relatives to be able to find and visit these special places in the future. It also makes family history more real and believable, especially to children, when you stand where your relatives stood, see the same sights they witnessed and then share a special story that occurred there.

I discovered that keeping track of GPS coordinates was not easy and it started to get complicated and difficult to maintain the records in a usable manner. I asked our programmer if he could figure out a way to catalogue and associate GPS coordinates with photos in our Heritage Collector software. Soon I had an organized way to keep all the photos, information, and GPS coordinates in collections.

I was delighted to discover I could also use the GPS coordinates to create topographical maps and capture satellite images from different internet sites such as Google Earth and NASA's World Wind. Best of all, it was free and I could keep all of it organized in various Heritage Collector photo collections!

My next great breakthrough came about a month ago when I purchased my birthday present. Yes, it was another GPS gadget – a Garmin GPS-18. This is a poor man's navigation system. It comes with a little round GPS unit that plugs into a USB port in your laptop computer and sits on the dash in your car. It was about \$100 on Amazon.com and came with a great map program called n-Route.

The GPS-18 allows you to enter an address or GPS coordinate and then it instantly creates a route to that location. A pleasant voice tells you each time you need to turn left or right. It self corrects if you make a wrong turn. It's almost like being in a James Bond movie when you see the little red triangle moving along a road on the map and then realize that little triangle is your car!



Carl Olsen's first rock home located in Iona, Idaho. GPS Coordinates: 43 32.2980 N 111 55.4160 W



Carl Olsen's tombstone in Ovid, Idaho. The family name "Olson" is misspelled making it difficult to find. GPS Coordinates make it easier to locate the marker in a rural cemetery. GPS: 42 17.5510 N 111 24.2590 W



The Garmin GPS-18 sensor. Just plug it into the laptop.

However, this is was not my main purpose in purchasing the GPS-18. I wanted something that would make it easier to find special family history locations by providing a map and the driving directions. The GPS-18 passed my tests and will take me anywhere, even if it's just to a neighboring town to find and attend a wedding reception. Finding 1378 Pine Tree Lane is now simple. I can drive right to it without STRESS and being a guy, I won't have to be embarrassed to ask for the directions I still can't follow.

Another Example - Finding the Old Farm

Finding family history locations is more challenging since we may need to enlist the help of an older relative to pinpoint these special locations before he or she passes on. This is what happened to me about three years ago.



The Martin Flat Dry Farm in late 1800's. Note the 33 horse grain harvester in operation.

I wanted to visit the dry farm my grandfather homesteaded around the turn of the 19th century in rural Idaho. The last time I visited the farm I was about six years old and too young to remember the location. Luckily I was able to persuade an older cousin, Ronald Olsen, to take me there during a family reunion held in the little town of Iona, Idaho.

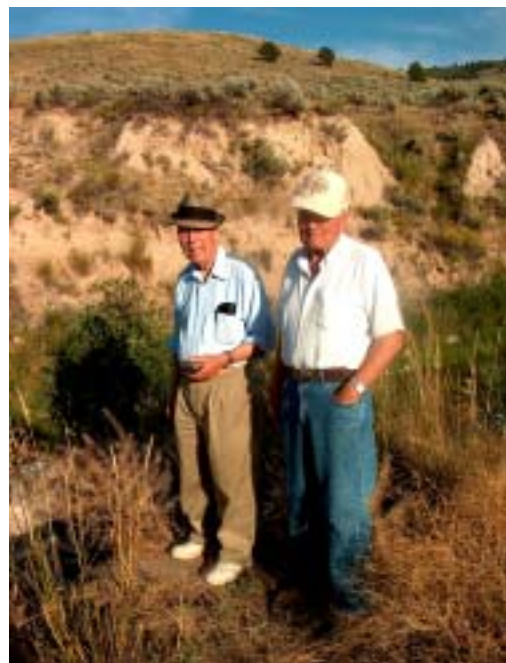
My cousin wasn't sure of the location so he called on the services of an 82 year old friend who served as the navigator.

It was an exciting trip for me and the other 25 relatives that tagged along for an adventure in exploring real family history.

We were so lucky the day we visited the dry farm. They were harvesting wheat and I was able to take many photos and shoot video to



Place the Garmin GPS-18 sensor on the car dash or use the windshield suction cup mount. (This is mounted higher than necessary to make it more visible in this photo).



Ron Olsen with our 80 year old navigator / helper.

share with my children, grandchildren and other Olsen relatives.

Next we were able to visit one of my grand father's secret fishin' holes at Willow Creek.

Now I know why grandpa liked to fish there. It was within walking distance from the farm. It was a cool, beautiful, hidden oasis, scented with willow and in the middle of some really hot and arid land. At that time, the little creek was full of big native mountain rainbow trout.



Heritage Collector Professional software contains the GPS coordinates used in the GPS-18 to create a detailed map and travel directions to the dry farm.

Today I gave my GPS-18 a difficult test. I brought Heritage Collector up, went into the Martin Flat Dry Farm collection, displayed the photo of the dry farm and copied the GPS coordinates. Next I ran my GPS-18, pasted the GPS coordinates into the n-Route program and had the software calculate the route from my driveway to my grandfather's dry farm.

It was so impressive. In seconds, the GPS-18 calculated the travel route on the map, gave me the exact mileage of 268 miles, the driving time of 4 hours and 22 minutes and even an estimated time of arrival. I will never be stumped or lost again when going to an obscure family history location.

See the next page for sample maps the GPS-18 created for the trip to the farm in Idaho.



Willow Creek GPS: 43 27.1890 N 111 48.0930 W.

Someday I plan to take my kids and grandkids fishing here. I will then tell them their great great grandfather T.E. Olsen once fished in this spot after a hot day working on the 160 acres of land he was homesteading just a few miles over the hills in the background.

Any member of the Olsen family may now easily visit and explore this personal family history site instead of getting lost. Remember, you will be out in the "sticks" and there is no one around to ask directions.



Above: The Garmin GPS-18 quickly generated a detailed travel route (green line) of 268 miles from my home in Utah to the dry farm in Idaho.



Above: The detail is much better than shown in these screen captures. You can zoom down on the map several more times to see street names, highway route numbers.

Below: Zoom in screen capture of the route through the little farming community of Iona, Idaho. It would be hard to get lost following the green route line on the interactive computer generated map. GPS-18 will provide audible prompts telling you when to turn right or left as you travel. You can save time and view more helpful information about the local area such as gas stations restaurants, stores and more while you travel.



I now have the perfect combination—the GPS-18 in the car to direct every turn for a location hundreds of miles away. My handheld GPS then directs my steps to the burial marker in an old cemetery or the hidden fresh water springs on the family farm.

My challenge is to explore all the important GPS coordinates for special family history sites and incorporate them into my collections in Heritage Collector, In the future I plan to reference this material to go into printed family history books.

THANK YOU Garmin and Heritage Collector for making all this possible and easy.

I will never get lost again or have to stop and ask directions from strangers who may not supply the best or most accurate directions.



Pioneer Soda and the Olden Days

Several years ago my mother took our children on a mysterious trip. She was very secretive and would not tell us anything about where we were going or what we were going to do.

Her preparations were designed to increase our curiosity. First she took the children to the grocery store to buy fresh lemons, sugar and plastic drinking cups.



The special trip to the store made the kids very inquisitive. She still would not reveal any additional information except she appeared with a plastic bag full of ice cubes she deposited in the sack with the lemons, cups and sugar.



Her next instruction placed us in our van to embark on a trip she said would probably take about an hour. At that point my mind started searching through every location we had been to when I was growing up. As we started to drive south I suggested some possible destinations. She quickly ended my best guesses with the statement, "Son, you have never been where we are going."

She then volunteered that we were going to a place that she had visited a few times when she was growing up. The older kids asked grandma, "Does it have anything to do with the lemons and sugar?" This caused a little mischievous smile to appear that was heightened with her reply of, "Maybe."

We received our first hint of the destination when she instructed me to take the exit off the freeway to Soda Springs. However, that didn't give me any more clues since I had never been there.

As we neared the little Idaho community, my mother started to talk about what things were like when she was young. My children loved these kinds of stories and often begged their grandma to tell them about the "olden times" when she was young girl in about 1915.

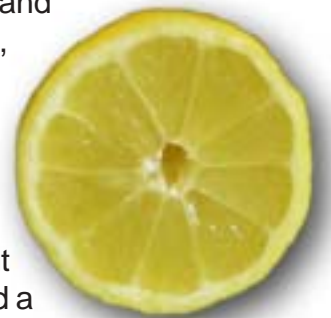
We arrived in Soda Springs. My mother said things have changed a lot and we needed to get some driving instructions. We then went into a little store and she asked how to get to the "Soda Springs."

In a few minutes we were in a little parking lot facing a covered springs with a marker that read, "Hooper Springs."



Another sign informed us that these springs were of historical significance. The springs were a favorite stopping place for pioneers traveling on the Oregon Trail to bathe and get fresh drinking water. It also noted that the water was naturally carbonated and safe to drink, but noted, "at your own risk."

Mom told us to go down and scoop up a glass of water out of the springs. Mother then cut a lemon and squeezed a few drops of lemon juice into each of our cups, added two tablespoons of sugar and an ice cube to cool the tepid spring water..



We were next “gently” encouraged to “drink it now.” We all looked at each other like we had poison in our glasses, shrugged our shoulders and each had just a little sip.



A little water from the “Soda Springs” with some fresh lemon juice, sugar and an ice cube makes a refreshing drink. If you want to spice it up, add your favorite punch base instead of lemon or lime juice..

GPS: 42 40.7690 N 111 36.2678 W

To our surprise, it was really good! We had just made a truly natural soft drink that tasted like modern day 7-Up or Sprite.

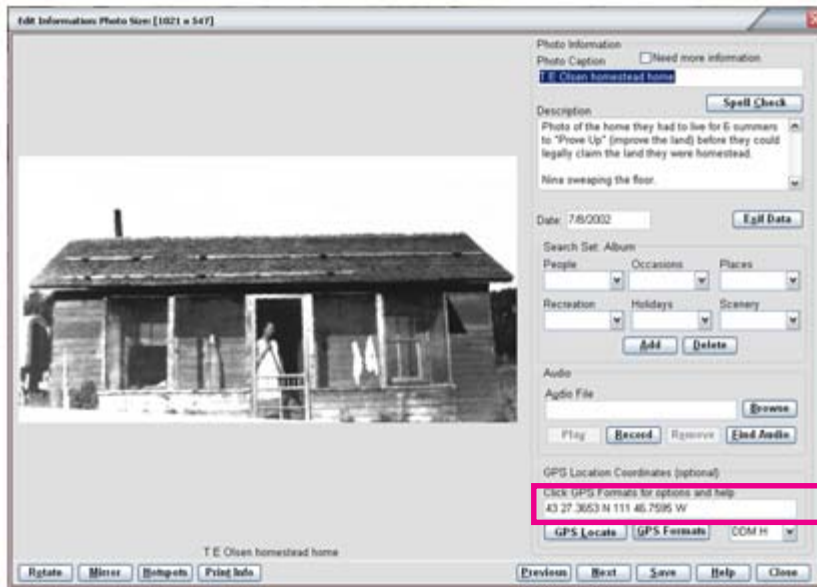
I spent some time on the internet visiting various sites to get more information about Soda Springs and now have the GPS coordinates. I’m planning to travel to Soda Springs and using the GPS-18 will make the journey much easier. This time I will be the grandpa introducing my grandchildren to the wonders of their great grandmother’s “Pioneer Soda” mixed with a generous helping of my own stories from the “Olden Days.”



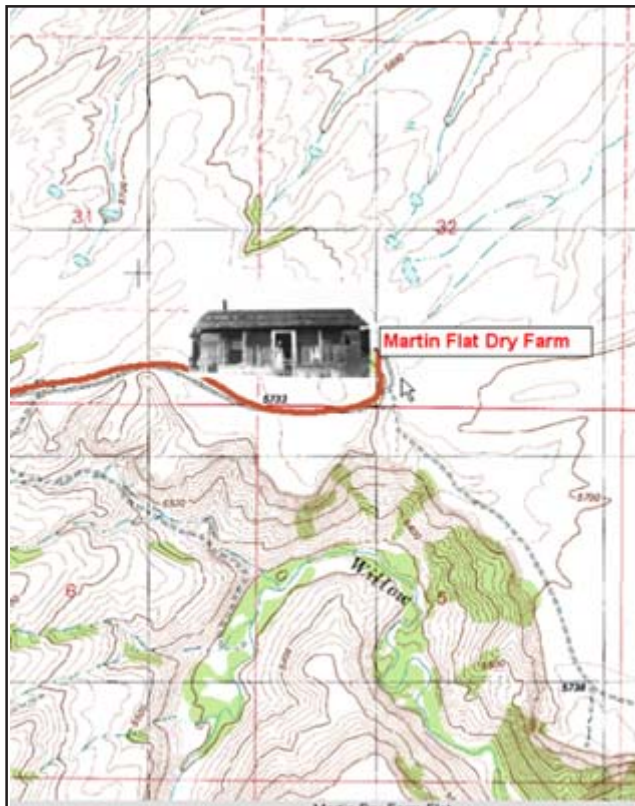
Above: View of complete route generated by GPS-18.



Magnified view: Route to Hooper Springs through Soda Springs, Idaho. 217 miles, Drive time of 3:38 hours.



Left: Heritage Collector stores several different kinds of information about a photo. i.e., photo caption, description word tags, a photo date, associated audio file, hot spot and GPS coordinates.



Above: A screen capture of a topographical map. Heritage Collector Professional was used to superimpose a little photo of the homestead house the Olsen family lived in when the land was being homesteaded.

Passing your mouse cursor over the display will cause the name and image to appear on the map. Narration can also play providing more information.

GPS coordinates may be displayed by selecting the Edit Info button.



Above: Take a photo of your GPS unit. This is much easier than trying to write the coordinates in a notebook. Your coordinates will also stay with the photos making it easier to enter the coordinates when importing the photos into Heritage Collector. Try using your flash when taking photos of the GPS. Take it out of the case to reduce reflection and take photos in the shade for best results.

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