

The Old Shoebox Newsletter

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Old homestead on the "Bone" Road GPS 43 0.3850 N 111 23.5967 W

Let's Go On a Family History Vacation!

Tips and Suggestions
by Marlo E. Schuldt

We enjoyed using our GPS navigator this summer. It was worth every penny. It helped us find cemeteries, wedding receptions, relatives in distant cities, hotels and guided us through Yellowstone National Park. We have become very dependent on our Garmin GPS. We like it so much we even nicknamed her "Garmie."

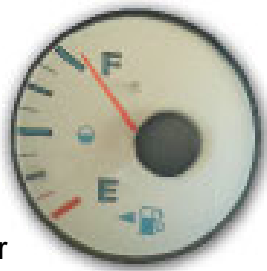
We also had our AMOD GPS Logger along to record everywhere we ventured and to register a GPS coordinate for every photo we snapped.

GPS technology has made it possible for our children and future generations to retrace our steps and visit the special places we found on our journeys off the beaten trail (Interstate).

Following are some recommendations to aid you in avoiding unfortunate, unexpected and embarrassing problems when you travel with your GPS. Modern technology is a wonder when it all works right. You need to be prepared when technology fails or malfunctions.

- **Service Your Vehicle.** Have your car checked out so it will not let you down later or waste your time waiting for expensive repairs. Having a flat tire on the freeway or out in the middle of nowhere could be a dangerous experience you do not want to write about in your journal.

- **Full Tank of Gas.** Why drive and worry about running out of gas when you are in unfamiliar territory? Spending a few extra pennies for gas is a small price to pay to eliminate the nagging insecurity and stress of running out of gas in the boondocks, on a dangerous and busy freeway, or while sitting stalled in road construction.

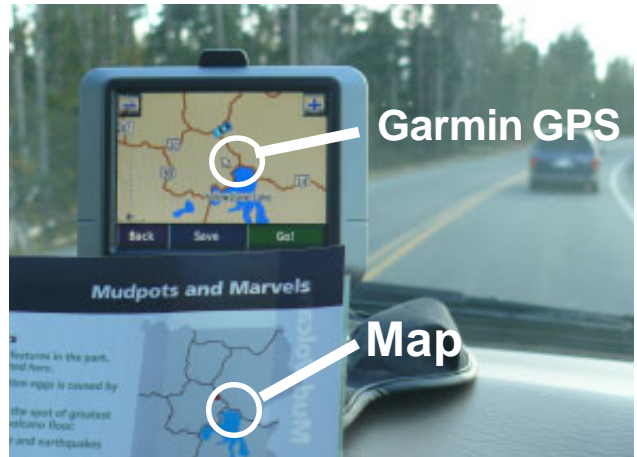


- **Travel Notebook.** Get a three ring binder. Put ALL of your travel plans, maps, hotel information / confirmations in the binder for easy reference. Include some extra pages and pens.

Buy a brightly colored binder so it will be easy to spot in the vehicle amongst the clutter. Store the notebook next to or under the seat for quick reference.



- **Compare the GPS With a Printed Map.** Even if your GPS gets lost or “turned around” it will probably still show your location on the map. You can compare the GPS location with the printed map to get your bearings.



- **Printed Maps or Road Atlas.** Paper is old technology but it doesn't need batteries and it doesn't get lost. Looking at a map is reassuring and can give you a much larger view of the travel area than a GPS screen. Use Google Maps to print out customized maps BEFORE you leave on your trip. Put maps in your travel notebook for reference later.
- **Cell Phone / Google Maps / Personal Consultant.** Ask a relative or family member to be “On Call” in case you get lost or have a problem when you are traveling.

You may also need assistance if your GPS will not accept or find an address.

Unless you are out of cell phone range, you can call your friend, relative, or family member, and have them bring up Google Maps on their computer to suggest alternate routes for you to consider.

You can also explore alternate routes in Google Maps by dragging the blue map route line to different roads and then note the difference in time and mileage.

- AMOD GPS Logger.** Let the AMOD track your journey if you are trail blazing or exploring new territory. I can now confidently encourage my children and grandchildren to take the desolate 70 mile dirt road my great grandfather and I explored. I can assure them they will not get lost since I can generate a customized digital map of the correct route, with photos and GPS coordinates to enrich and safeguard their travel experience.



- Food & Water.** There is wisdom in the old phrase, "Stop and smell the roses. Make a picnic out of your travel adventure and enjoy the unique sights and sounds. The extra food and water may be helpful if you get lost or your journey takes more time than you had planned.

The roads you travel may present some unforeseen challenges as you navigate new territory. You will find the following three GPS stories interesting and instructive while demonstrating how the suggestions listed above could prevent some difficult situations from developing.

Trip #1 - Soda Springs to Iona, Idaho.

Recently we decided to retrace the route my great grandfather took 130 years ago when he moved from Utah to a remote area of southeastern Idaho. I studied old maps from the 1840's up to the 1930's to determine the original route my great grandfather took on his journey.



My great grandfather's 131 mile migration started at Ovid, Idaho, then to Soda Springs and finally on to Iona, Idaho.

My journey started on a paved road meandering through rolling hills of lush green farmland. Our first challenge was to locate an obscure junction leading to Gray Road so we could begin the 70.3 mile leg of the journey.

We turned at the remote junction we thought was the starting place for the third leg of the journey. I was relieved to discover a historical plaque detailing the route of the Overland Stage.



*First turn off the main road.
GPS 42 59.7033 N 23.4900 W*

I was reassured we were on the actual trail used by my great grandpa. We proceeded about 5 miles down the dirt road passing a few cattle farms.

We were finally experiencing the sights, sounds and smells my great grandpa Olsen witnessed so long ago.

Soon I was greeted by a warning road sign, **"This road is not maintained past this point."** The sign conjured up vivid visual flashbacks of my youth when I went fishing with my parents. I remembered the fear I experienced as we traversed harrowing kinds of roads with big jagged rocks sticking up in the middle of a narrow road. Mom or dad would take turns getting out of the car and watch under the car as it passed over pointed rocks to avoid knocking off the oil pan. Sometimes we had to drive really fast through a muddy wash to avoid getting stuck.

We could see where others had foolishly slowed down and become mired in the muddy bog. Soon I was snapped back into the reality of the nice dry road we were driving on.



The road seemed to go on forever to nowhere.

The spring had been unusually wet causing the level of the Grays Lake to rise. As we neared the lake the water on both sides of the road was only about twelve inches below the road surface. I wondered if I would lose control as I attempted to speed through scary washes and mud puddles that might suddenly appear. If we got stuck it might be impossible for me to push our van out of the mud while my wife drove. Soon the water receded and we breathed a sigh of relief.

We easily traveled the first 35 miles of the 70 mile trip. The road was excellently maintained and had recently been graded and leveled with a fresh gravel surface. We quickly found ourselves out in the “middle of nowhere” with sparse signs of any civilization. I was self-assured and not worried because we were invincible since we had a GPS in our car. We couldn’t possibly get lost!

Our trusty GPS navigator confidently announced, “Turn left in 100 feet.” I continued the hundred feet, slowed down and prepared to turn left. A left turn was impossible because all we could see was a pile of rocks. Even worse, no other roads were in sight. The GPS continued to offer incorrect instructions. At one point I discovered that following the GPS would have taken us in a big circle. I realized my GPS was LOST! That meant WE WERE LOST and my

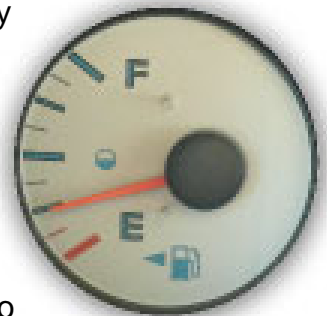


confidence evaporated! My previous map study helped me avoid panic but was no help in determining exactly where we were and how far our destination was.

My attention was now focused on the gas gauge, which indicated there was less than a quarter tank of gas remaining. A wrong turn now, driving in the wrong direction or driving in circles would easily leave us stranded in the middle of nowhere with an empty tank and no gas station for who knew how many miles. Turning back wasn’t an option since we had reached the point of no return many miles back.

It was now about 7:30 PM with sunset and darkness falling by about 9:00 PM. I started having visions of running out of gas with a very long walk in the dark listening to howling coyotes. I wondered if there were any large stealthy mountain lions lurking close by anticipating an easy meal.

We hadn’t seen a farmhouse for over 45 minutes so that would mean a walk into unknown and desolate territory. This scary reality flashed into my mind about a hundred times as I obsessively checked the gas gauge for the next thirty minutes.



The car compass indicated we were correctly traveling west. The dust continued to boil up from behind the car as we hopefully progressed in the right direction.

I tried to make light conversation so my wife wouldn't discern my fear of running out of gas out in the boondocks.

Our GPS had us at the correct location but was totally wacko with regard to offering directions. So the printed maps had 'saved our bacon!' We had about a gallon of gas to spare when we stopped at the first gas station we encountered.

Fortunately I had my AMOD GPS Tracker along to log our trip. I now have photos, GPS



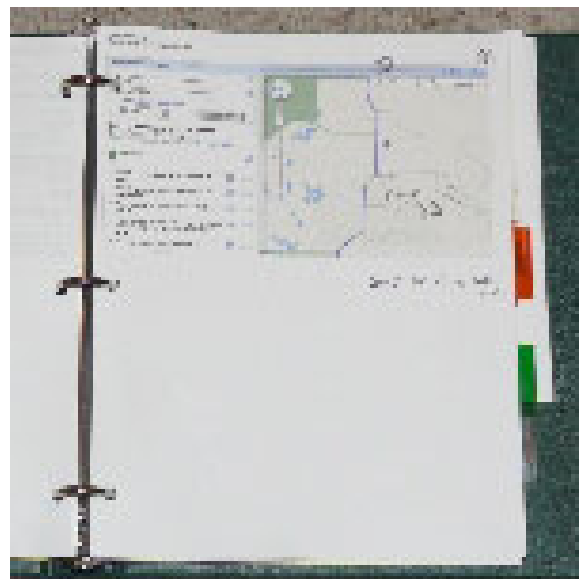
"What are you lookin' at?"

I now added the likelihood of bears being in the surrounding hills preying on the cattle, deer and other wildlife. Yes, we were making some family history. I just hoped it wouldn't be stupid history.

We were in such a remote geographic area our cell phone was worthless and gave the message, "No service available." Maybe it would make a good flashlight after dark.

I finally remembered the maps I'd printed that morning and placed in our travel notebook. Fortunately I had zoomed in on the maps so I could write the names of a few small roads that intersected with the old stage route we were following. With a great sense of relief I soon knew exactly where we were by watching for the names of roads that crossed our road that I had marked on the map.

coordinates, a personalized map and recommendations to guide future generations who want to rediscover this interesting part of their pioneer heritage.



Trip #2 - Helping the Kids Move to New York.

Recently our son-in-law was accepted to medical school. They sold their home and charted the 2,000 mile trip from Pleasant Grove, Utah to Buffalo, New York. They planned to make the trip in three days. Unexpected circumstances delayed their departure to the afternoon. It was 90 degrees F when they hit the road. Within the first 80 miles the air conditioning went out in their big rental moving truck.

The truck company promised to fix the problem that night but they had to make an early and unplanned stopover in Rock Springs, Wyoming. Luckily, they were able to adjust their travel plans.

The next morning they discovered the air conditioner could not be fixed because the necessary part was in Mexico. So, they had to press forward through the wilderness of Wyoming with both windows down in order to survive the stifling heat and humidity.

They finally arrived at their halfway point late in the evening on the second day. We made hotel reservations earlier in the day for them and were calling their cell phone to give them the address and hotel confirmation.

Unfortunately, their GPS would not accept the address of the hotel. We tried to verbally direct them via cell phone to the hotel since we could see exactly where the hotel was located. However, attempting to see street signs in the dark while navigating winding roads in unfamiliar territory was a bit of a challenge.

Luckily I could see the highway name was different on the Google Map than the street listed by the hotel. That worked and their GPS successfully guided them to their destination.



After hugs and a tearful good-bye we wished our kids and grandkids good luck.

They had printed some travel routes and placed them in a travel binder for reference if they became lost. This also made it easier to assist them via Google Maps using our cell phones.

More unexpected travel surprises lay ahead for them and their four children. On the third day we found a route to avoid driving their wide moving truck across a very narrow bridge crossing the Missouri River.

They had their first experiences with toll roads and how expensive it can be for a rental truck pulling a car on a trailer. *Hint:* The Garmin GPS can be set to avoid toll roads.

They and their four children arrived safely at their new home in Buffalo, New York. We all breathed a sigh of relief - *WHEW!!*

Note: Watch for information, suggestions and ideas for using Heritage Collector, Skype and a webcam to make it easier for grandparents to stay closely involved in the lives and progress of their children and grandchildren.

Trip #3 - Getting REALLY Lost in Casper, Wyoming.

We were recently on a working travel vacation. We'd traveled all day and our GPS navigator had worked perfectly. We preprogrammed the address of our final hotel stay the previous night. I thought to myself, *"I just love technology - It can make life so much easier!"*

We visited a few historic sites on our travel day which was about over. It was getting dark and we were exhausted. The GPS took the worry out of finding our hotel no matter where it was located. Soon we were relieved to be sitting in front of our hotel with the thought of relaxing for a few minutes before having our dinner.



"Garmie" helps us navigate on all our trips.



"Devil's Gate, Wyoming. GPS - 42 26.5183 N 107 13.0350 W

We checked in at the hotel but found our room not ready for occupancy. We decided to go out and explore the rustic old part of town and find a local place to dine.

We were soon disappointed since all the nearby restaurants looked like great places to get food poisoning.

Road construction and detours got us totally lost and turned around.

It was now about 11:00 PM and we were too tired for more spontaneous exploration. We gave up the idea of a nice meal and purchased some frozen microwave dinners to heat up back at our hotel room.

In 30 minutes we were in front of the Royal Inn. The only problem was we were NOT staying at the Royal Inn and it was not in a very nice part of town.

How could we be lost since the GPS worked earlier? I knew my wife would soon be smiling as she served me an extra large helping of humble pie if we ever arrived back at our hotel.

My wife took the wheel while I tried to get the GPS to work. Three times we returned the Royal Inn. Each time my face reddened as my embarrassment increased. The address (street name and number) was not found. We had the phone number of the hotel programmed into the GPS but we were so lost we couldn't tell anyone where we were. By now it was so late nothing was open and there were no gas stations in sight - just dark streets.

I could see the GPS was showing us on the right street. While my wife drove I found the name of the hotel in the Points of Interest category preprogrammed into the GPS.

I clicked on the hotel and it correctly guided us back to the hotel. *WE SHOULD HAVE PRINTED A MAP* for reference and placed it in the travel notebook.

GPS navigation is wonderful when it works. It can be frustrating and hazardous to your health and marriage if you are unprepared for the unexpected on a dark night.

The rest of the story . . . To add insult to injury, when we finally got to our room there was no microwave and the concierge said, "Sorry, but they were all given out earlier."

Ever tried to eat a partially defrosted TV dinner at midnight? That experience defies description and should not be attempted. My next midnight challenge came as I tried to cut a watermelon with one of those little plastic knives. It worked (sort of) and the watermelon was outstanding!



I used the AMOD 3080 GPS Logger to capture and associate GPS coordinates with all the photos I took.

The GPS coordinates generated by the AMOD are compatible for use with Heritage Collector software and our new GPS Maps module.

The good people at AMOD have offered to supply you with a **10% coupon code for the AMOD 3080** The coupon code is **"AMOD10"** and it does not expire.

Go to the following link to order or for more information:

<http://www.semsons.com/amaggpsdalos.html>

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