

The Old Shoebox Newsletter

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Pilots, seamen, explorers and scientists have been using global positioning systems (GPS) for many years to assist with navigation. The internet community is also showing increasing interest in GPS. A Google search of "GPS" returned 313,000,000 references. GPS is now in cars, cell phones and cameras.

All the interest in GPS is good news for genealogists and family historians since GPS is now more affordable and easier to use.

How Can GPS Help You?

I've had some fun experimenting with four different GPS navigation units. I've shared several ways GPS has made life easier for me.

Refer to my two other newsletters:

GPS - The Ultimate Toy For Big Kids. (*Fun - Pioneer Soda Pop*)

<http://www.heritagecollector.com/Newsletter/GPS.pdf>

Family Geocache Exploring. *Traveling and Making Your Own - Never Get Lost Again!*

<http://www.heritagecollector.com/Newsletter/Family%20Geocache.pdf>

Where In The World - Is? Part 1

*The AMOD AGL 3080 Knows
The Perfect Companion to Heritage Collector
by Marlo E. Schuldt*

This is Part 1 of a two part series about the benefits of using GPS in family History.

Part 1 provides information about using the AMOD AGL 3080 GPS Data Logger.

Part 2 will focus on using GPS coordinates with the new GPS Maps add-on module for Heritage Collector 5.3.

Recently GPS has expanded my understanding of the world in which I grew up. My view of the world has become more personalized and interesting. I'm more serious about tagging my photos and travels with GPS coordinates. Why? In some ways I feel like I've become an explorer leaving a trail of breadcrumbs to entice my posterity to share in the impromptu adventures and expeditions of my life. I want to passively guide my grandchildren to explore the same places. I hope they will have similar experiences.

Visiting and experiencing the geography of our personal family history locations will give our posterity a better understanding of their heritage.

I smile when I envision a future day when a great grandson might say, "This is the exact spot where my Great Grandpa Schuldt stood 50 years ago when he took this photo. This place was one of Great-Great Grandpa Olsen's favorite fishin' holes. He caught so many fish here he had to take off his overalls, fill the pant legs with fish and then throw the overalls across the back of his horse so he could take all the fish home for a big family dinner."

Regional Geography

I think I have stumbled onto the concept of “regional geography.” Wikipedia defines regional geography as, “a study of regions throughout the world in order to understand or define the unique characteristics of a particular region which consists of natural as well as human elements.”



In my opinion, regional geography has the capacity to answer many questions and open new vistas in the study of our personal family history. In a landlocked area it might explain why people found spouses in the same geographic region and how the geography determined the occupations of those living in the surrounding area. An understanding of geography may answer many other questions and provide clues to the solution of other family history mysteries.

Getting the Right GPS

In a previous GPS newsletter I made the recommendation to take a photo of your GPS display to make it easier to enter the GPS coordinates into your computer when you get back home.



This works reasonably well and is much easier than trying to write the coordinates into a book and then trying and remember which coordinates go with the photos.

I explored getting a new camera that had GPS capacity but my hopes and finances were dashed when I discovered a good GPS capable camera retails for around \$1,000 promptly ending that dream.

Next I considered upgrading my cell phone to make it GPS capable but eliminated that option for other reasons.

One of our software users told me about a device he had purchased that would automatically put GPS coordinates into the photo files of the pictures he took. This was hard for me to understand and sounded like a complicated process so I continued taking photos of my Garmin Nuvi 200 to get the coordinates. However this process takes a lot of time and you still have to manually type in the GPS coordinates.

So I headed back to the internet to search for easier ways to acquire and combine GPS coordinates with photos. I spent many hours reading reviews and studying other GPS devices.

I noticed the AMOD AGL 3080 GPS logger appeared often and the reviews were positive and it was less expensive and more sensitive than other GPS devices. I decided to write a letter to AMOD and ask if they would allow me to evaluate an AMOD so I could share my experience with all of you. Within a week the good people at AMOD sent me a shiny little

black AMOD to try. The package included the AMOD, an installation CD, belt clip and USB cable. I printed out the documentation, punched it and put the pages into a binder for easy reference.

How AMOD Works

Every time your camera takes a photo it automatically places a time stamp (date and time) in the photo file it creates. The date and time are determined by the settings you've previously entered into the camera.

The AMOD is designed to work with the photos your camera takes and your computer. You simply turn the AMOD on, hook it onto your belt or put it into your pocket and take it wherever you go. The AMOD also has a built in clock and a program that records GPS coordinates along with the time and date. It records this information every 1-5 seconds.

Later when you return from a trip or taking photos, you copy the photos from your camera into a file, run the



Almost actual size.

AMOD program, select the appropriate log file and it automatically matches and places the GPS coordinates into each photo file. Finally you save the photos to another file. This only takes a few minutes.

You can then view the location of each photo on Google Earth or run a fun little program that comes with the AMOD to create an animated movie retracing and marking your journey on a Google map.

My First AMOD Experience

The AMOD was easy to set up and get started. The only critical requirement is to set the camera and computer clock to the same time. My computer clock said it was 3:00 PM so I set my camera to 3:00 and was ready to do my first test.

I followed the steps as indicated in my printed manual. Nothing worked and no coordinates were saved into the photo files. I took some more photos with the same results.

I was stumped so I carefully researched the AMOD manual and discovered my mistake. I didn't realize my camera used a 24 hour clock so when I set the camera to 3:00 I thought I was setting it for 3:00 PM. I actually had set my camera for 3:00 AM. As a result the AMOD was not able to match the GPS coordinates from the AMOD with the photos I took after 3:00 PM that afternoon.

After referring to my camera manual I was able to set the correct time. I took a few more photos and within a few seconds the AMOD program had successfully added the correct GPS coordinates into all the photos I had taken. I was elated !!

Why I Like My AMOD

It's small, durable, and light weight.

Runs itself. Once you get your camera and computer clocks set to the same time you don't have to make any more adjustments. Just turn the AMOD on and it automatically saves all the necessary information.

It's fast and convenient. Previously I had to bring up one photo, save the photo, bring up the GPS photo and then type in the coordinates. The AMOD could have done the same thing for 70 or 80 photos in a minute or less **and with NO mistakes.**

Inexpensive. The cost of the AMOD is affordable and well worth it.

Customer Support. I had my first AMOD for about two weeks when it developed a problem. I was very stressed because I wanted to demonstrate the AMOD in a presentation I was making at a Family History Expo. I e-mailed AMOD support and had a reply back within TWO hours! In four days (counting the weekend) I had a new AMOD in my hand and in time for the convention..

The AMOD customer support people have been courteous, responsive and most helpful. A refreshing change. In my opinion, customer support is a more important consideration than the cost of a product. If you can't use the product, price is not a consideration.

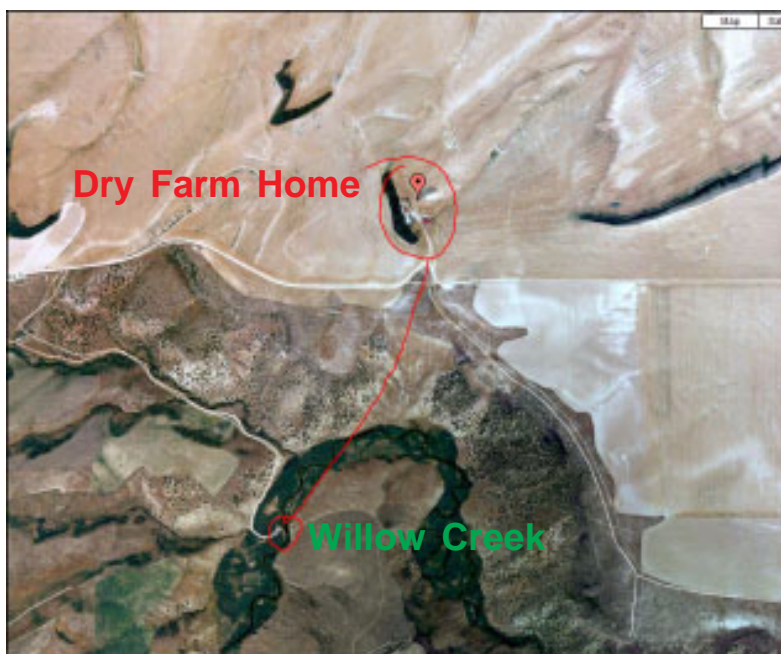
Fun Things You Can Do

Having GPS coordinates with your photos is of little value unless you can do something meaningful. From a family history perspective, using Google Earth to view the location of GPS coordinates makes references to locations real, tangible and believable *and fun to view.*

One of Many Examples

A satellite view of the family "dry" farm and Willow Creek answers some questions I can't ask Grandpa since he passed on many years ago.

I could easily see why my Grandfather Olsen liked to fish in Willow Creek when he was working on his hot and isolated wheat farm. The creek was only about a two mile walk from their little homestead home. Willow Creek was an oasis hidden down in a little canyon surrounded by sweet smelling willows trees. The cool shade and gentle breezes must have been wonderfully refreshing on a hot dry day. I can see Grandpa with his



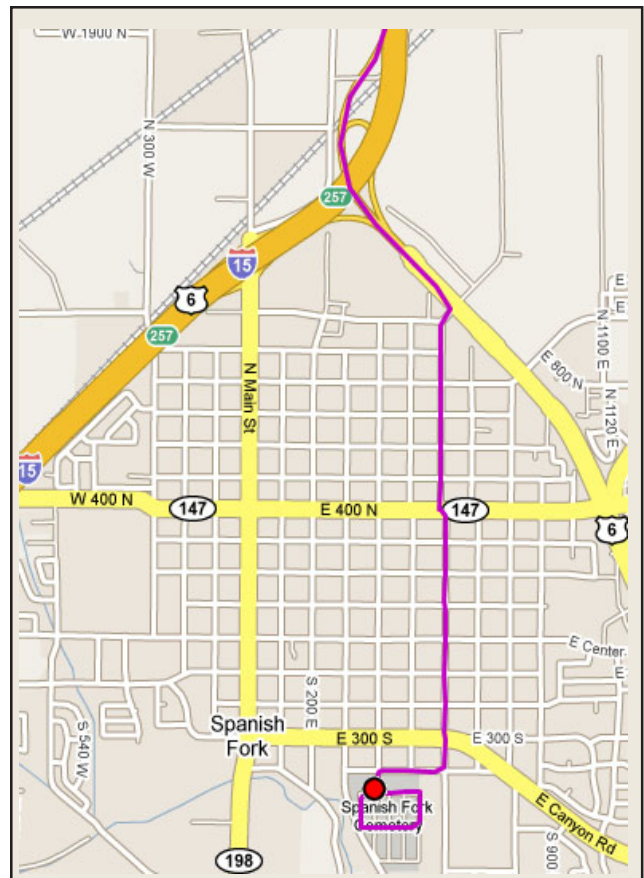
long cane fishing pole in hand while soaking his hot feet in the cool, crystal clear water as he fished.

Imagine the family's excitement when they saw their father approaching with many large rainbow trout hanging from a willow stringer in his hand. Having fresh fish for an evening meal must have been a welcome change and a real treat.

Recently I traveled to the farm and Willow Creek. I have coordinates, photos and driving directions to entice my children and future generations to visit this special place. Few people, even the locals don't know about this marvelous spot. I hope to take some grandchildren to this place to fish and share stories about their Great-Great Grandpa and his homesteading history.

The map shown at the right is enlarged and explained below.

Note: I captured the route map the AMOD created and added the images of the tombstones to the map to show where I took each photo as I walked through the Spanish Fork Cemetery while the AMOD automatically recorded the GPS coordinates.



Animated Travel Routes

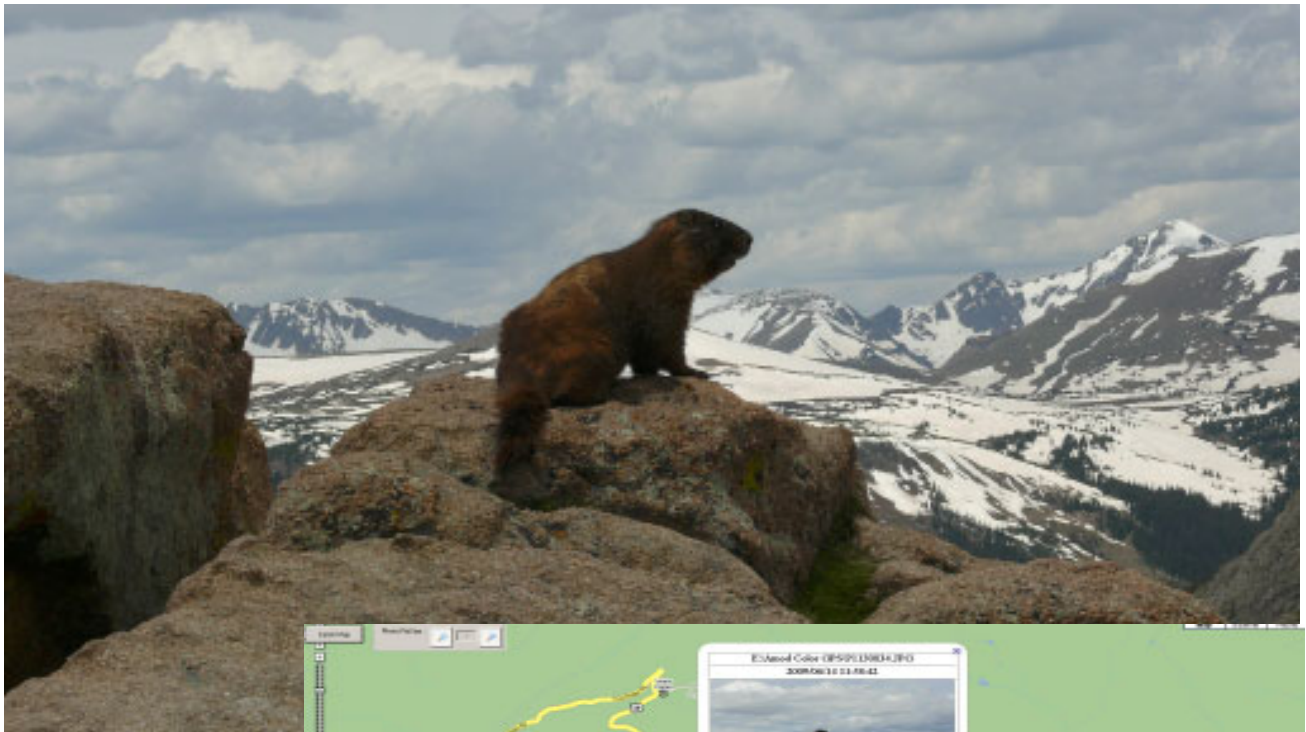
The AMOD software has a new option that will create animated travel routes that traces everywhere you went while the AMOD was recording information. This is extremely helpful when you're visiting a cemetery. If you zoom down on the map you can see everywhere you walked in a cemetery and where you stopped to take photos of burial sites.

The purple line on the map at the right indicates the path I took as I walked through the Spanish Fork Cemetery.

This map makes it very easy for others to see the burial location in geographic relationship to the layout of the cemetery. Very nice feature!

Google Map Views

The AMOD program allows you to view any photo in Google Earth like this photo of a yellow bellied marmot I took at Rocky Mountain National Park a few weeks ago. Seeing the actual location makes this experience more interesting and invites more study.



Map view and image.



Map, satellite and image view.

Recommendations

The AMOD takes three AAA batteries. I'd recommend two sets of rechargeable batteries. One in the unit and a backup set in your pocket in case you need to change the batteries when you are out taking photos or making a map.

Charge batteries just before a trip so they will be fully charged.

Turn the AMOD on five or 10 minutes before you leave so it will have accessed the satellites and be ready to start logging your movements.

Hang the AMOD on your belt or keep it in your pocket. If you forget and leave the AMOD in your car you will only have the location where you parked your car. You will not have any coordinates for burial sites and the photos you have taken as you walked through the cemetery or moved to different locations.

Do not delete your camera photos until after you run the AMOD program on your photos and you have verified them. This eliminates the possibility of accidental loss of one-of-a-kind photos.

Save your AMOD log file in the same folder with your photos for future use, (animated map feature) and reference.

Use a capture program to create a movie file of the animated map as it plays on your screen. Use the Windows WMV file format since it will be more compatible for others to view on their computer.

Save the AMOD log files to your computer in case something happens to the AMOD or you need to delete the log files to make space to create new log files.

Take the AMOD with you wherever you go. It provides a fun way to log and preserve your travels for the curious members of your posterity.

I would highly recommend the purchase of the AMOD AGL 3080. I seldom leave home without it and I've had a lot of fun using it and hope to do more in the future.

The next newsletter will explain how you can use the AMOD with Heritage Collector's new "Go to Map" module.

Go to the following web pages to purchase or for more information about the AMOD AGLL 3080 GPS Data Logger / Photo Tracker:

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

AMOD Corporation:

<http://www.amod.com.tw>

A complete list of newsletters may be found by clicking on the following link:

<http://www.heritagecollector.com/Newsletter/Newslist.htm>

Click on the blue text to go to the web page.

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