

"HISTORY IN THE WATER PIPES"

BY LEONARD PECK

LECTURE

JULY 1979

NEIGHBORS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, GOOD FRIENDS, I'VE BEEN HAVING A LOT OF FUN WITH MY ANNOUNCED TOPIC, "HISTORY IN THE WATER PIPES".

PEOPLE WANT TO KNOW WHAT I MEAN BY THAT, AND I'VE BEEN MAKING A MYSTERY OF IT. ONE OFFERS ME OLD DOCUMENTS RELATED TO THE PLANNING AND BUILDING OF THE COTUIT WATER SYSTEM. THE HISTORY OF THE COTUIT WATER SYSTEM IS A WORTHY SUBJECT, LOTS OF FASCINATING DETAILS, LOTS TO BE LEARNED, SOME OF IT'S ON FILM.

THERE'S AN OLD MOVIE ENTITLED "COTUIT BUILDS A WATER SYSTEM", ABOUT THE ORIGINAL CONSTRUCTION, WHICH THIS SOCIETY OUGHT TO TRACE. I SAW IT MAYBE TEN YEARS AGO, AND THE GREATEST THING ABOUT IT TO ME WAS THE CHARACTERS, WHO WERE FRIENDS OF MINE, MEN WHO WERE NICE TO ME WHEN I WAS A KID, AND WHO HELPED ME WHEN I WAS TRYING TO START MY BUSINESS.

THE LATE MAYNARD GIFFORD, WHO WAS DEEP IN COTUIT WATER FROM THE BEGINNING. MAYNARD, AS I RECALL, WEARING A DERBY HAT. THE LATE HENRY ROBBINS, THE LATE DAVE LELAND, WEARING A BLACK WOOL UNDERSHIRT, SAME AS HE ALWAYS DID, RIGHT UP TILL THE TIME HE DIED.

I DON'T KNOW WHERE THIS FILM IS, SEEMS TO ME IT WAS MADE BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WHO FINANCED THE CONSTRUCTION OF OUR WATER SYSTEM AS ONE OF ITS WORTHY AND ENDURING DEPRESSION PROJECTS. SOMEBODY IN TOWN MUST KNOW WHERE TO GET HOLD OF IT. AND THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OUGHT TO OWN A PRINT. IT'S THE VERY THING WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE DOING, RECORDING THE CHANGING HISTORY OF OUR VILLAGE IN DETAIL, BEFORE THE DETAILS ARE FORGOTTEN.

MY ORATION ISN'T ABOUT THE COTUIT WATER SYSTEM, EXCEPT INCIDENTALLY. THE WATER PIPES I MEAN ARE OLDER THAN THE CENTRAL

WELLS AND PUMPS AND MAINS. I'M CONCERNED WITH HOW PEOPLE GOT THEIR WATER BEFORE THERE WAS ANY SYSTEM, AND HOW THEY PASSED IT AROUND FROM WHERE IT ORIGINATED TO WHERE THEY USED IT.

FOR ME, THE DETAILS OF SECURING AND DISTRIBUTING WATER IN THE OLD DAYS TELL US THINGS THAT MAY SOON BE FORGOTTEN, ABOUT HOW WE LIVED IN COTUIT A GENERATION OR SO AGO. I TRIED TO GET THESE RECOLLECTIONS DOWN A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO WHEN MY WIFE BETTY WAS RECORDING US OLD TIMERS ON THE SOCIETY'S TAPE MACHINE. BETTY DID A ROSEMARY WOODS ON ME, ERASED THE TAPE. BY ACCIDENT, NATURALLY. OR MAYBE IT WAS DULL, SHE OUGHT TO KNOW.

JUST THE SAME, HERE I GO AGAIN, SPOUTING REMINISCENCES LIKE ANY OLD GABBER. IT'S FINE TO DIG OUT TRACES OF HOW THINGS WERE AROUND HERE BEFORE WE WERE BORN. CLIPPERS, COASTING SCHOONERS, WHALERS, FARMS AND SALT WORKS AND COALWORKS. THAT'S HISTORY, SURE ENOUGH, AND FASCINATING. BUT THERE IS ANOTHER SORT OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH. TO RECORD THE THINGS THAT WILL BECOME HISTORY AFTER WE'RE GONE. SO OUR CHILDREN, IF THEY CARE, CAN KNOW IN MORE DETAIL HOW IT WAS WITH US. THESE THINGS SKIP A GENERATION, OUR CHILDREN WON'T CARE, BUT MAYBE THE GRANDCHILDREN WILL.

THAT'S THE KIND OF HISTORY I'M INTO. SETTING DOWN THE THINGS I SAW WITH MY OWN EYES BECAUSE THEY'RE IMPORTANT TO ME, THEY'RE SIGNIFICANT. AND IF SOMEBODY DOESN'T PUT THEM DOWN THEY'LL BE FORGOTTEN. ACCORDINGLY, I WANT TO PLACE MYSELF AND MY RECOLLECTIONS AS PRECISELY AS I CAN IN HISTORICAL TIME.

MY FAMILY CAME TO COTUIT EVERY SUMMER STARTING ABOUT 1926 OR 1927. OUR HOME IN THOSE DAYS WAS IN PHILADELPHIA. AND WE MADE THE TRIP BY TRAIN AND BY THE FALL RIVER STEAMER. THERE'S A LOT OF HISTORY ABOUT THE FALL RIVER STEAMBOAT, TOO. AND SOME DAY, IF I LIVE LONG ENOUGH, I'LL ORGANIZE MY CHILDISH IMPRESSIONS OF THE STEAMER PRISCILLA AND OF THE BOAT TRAIN THAT MET HER ON THE FALL RIVER WHARF, AND CARRIED THE PASSENGERS TO CAPE COD, TO WEST BARNSTABLE, AND TOOK HALF A DAY TO DO IT.

IT WAS A TRAIN, NO HURRY. THE SHIP WOULD BE ALREADY DOCKED WHEN I AWOKE AND THE TRAIN DIDN'T LEAVE BEFORE WE ALL HAD A LEISURELY BREAKFAST UNDER THE CRYSTAL CHANDELIERS AND ON THE WHITE LINEN OF THE GREAT DINING SALON. IT WAS A LONG TRAIN, IT HAD NOT ONE BUT TWO STEAM LOCOMOTIVES. IT HAD PARLOR CARS, PULLMAN PARLOR CARS AND THE UPHOLSTERY WAS BRIGHT SCARLET RED PLUSH. PART OF THE WAY UP AROUND MIDDLEBORO IT WENT BACKWARD FOR FEW MILES. AND AS IT JIGGED OVER THE INADEQUATE ROAD BED THE CHILD'S ANTICIPATION MOUNTED WITH EVERY CLUNK OF THE WHEELS.

IT WAS MET AT WEST BARNSTABLE BY THE TAXI OF THE COTUIT TRANSPORTATION COMPANY, A SEVEN PASSENGER LINCOLN TOURING CAR WITH THE TOP DOWN. DRIVEN BY HENRY ROBBINS HIMSELF, WHAT A WELCOME. HENRY WAS A MORE GENIAL OFFICIAL GREETER THAN ANY GROVER WHALEN. THUS SUITABLY ESCORTED, WE MOVED INTO OUR SUMMER QUARTERS, THE PORTER HOUSE. RIGHT ON THE SHORE OF HOOPER'S LANDING. IT'S THERE STILL. FOR A FEW YEARS YET. AND IT'S FULL OF COTUIT HISTORY. IT WAS ORIGINALLY, OR AT LEAST FOR PART OF ITS EARLIER LIFE A BLACKSMITH SHOP KEPT BY ONE SYLVANUS PORTER.

MRS JOHN MURRAY, WHO WAS AN OLD LADY WHEN I WAS A VERY YOUNG MAN, WAS A DESCENDANT OF HIS. ANYBODY HERE REMEMBER THE JOHN MURRAYS? I THOUGHT SO. THEY LIVED ON MAIN STREET. IF YOU GO NORTH OF THE COTUIT GROCERY. JOHN WAS A QUAHOGER, BEAR WITH ME, I'LL GET BACK TO JOHN.

I WAS TALKING ABOUT THE PORTER HOUSE, AS IT MUST HAVE BEEN IN THE DAYS OF SYLVANUS THE BLACKSMITH. THERE'S A PORCH ACROSS THE FRONT OF IT NOW, BUT BACK THEN THERE WERE BIG BARN DOORS OPENING ACROSS THE FRONT. I SAW AN OLD PICTURE OF IT SOMEWHERE. THE FRONT ROOM, WHAT'S NOW THE LIVING ROOM, WAS WHERE THE SHOP WAS. THE FORGE MUST HAVE BEEN WHERE THERE'S NOW A FIREPLACE. MAYBE THE CHIMNEY IS STILL THE SAME.

BUT BY THE TIME THE PECK'S WERE SPENDING THE SUMMERS THERE, THE BLACKSMITH SHOP WAS LONG GONE. THE LIVING ROOM WAS IN ITS PLACE. MATCHBOARD WAINSCOTTING PAINTED WHITE UP TO WITHIN A FOOT OR SO OF THE LOW CEILING. A SHELF FOR KNICKKNACKS ALL AROUND THE ROOM,

JUST BELOW THE PLASTERED CEILING. BEHIND THE LIVING ROOM, THE KITCHEN, JUST AS LARGE AND WITH A WOOD BURNING RANGE BACKED UP AGAINST THE REAR OF THE CHIMNEY. WE DIDN'T USE THE RANGE IN SUMMER. ACROSS THE ROOM FROM IT WAS A THREE BURNER KEROSENE COOKSTOVE. THE KIND WITH A ROUND WICK IN EACH BURNER. IT SMOKED AND MADE A DELIGHTFUL OILY SMELL WHEN YOU FIRST LIGHTED IT.

THERE WAS NO ELECTRICITY BELOW THE HILL IN THOSE YEARS. AND IF WE STAYED UP AFTER DARK ON THE LONG SUMMER EVENINGS WE LIGHTED KEROSENE LAMPS. THESE DIDN'T SMOKE AS MUCH AS THE STOVE BUT THEY MADE THE SAME SMELL. MY PECULIAR TASTE, MY PASSIONATE FONDNESS, TO THIS DAY FOR THE SMELL OF DIESEL EXHAUST IS PURE NOSTALGIA FOR THE SMELL IN THE PORTER HOUSE WHEN I WAS A BOY.

WE OWNED NO AUTOMOBILE THEN, AND ONE OF MY CHORES WAS REPLENISHING THE FAMILY KEROSENE SUPPLY. I WALKED UP THE HILL TO THE COTUIT GROCERY STORE, TOTEING A ONE GALLON GALVANIZED CAN, ALL A NINE YEAR OLD COULD CARRY. MUST MENTION THE ROUTE I TOOK. THE PORTER HOUSE, THEN, AS NOW, WAS PART OF THE COOLIDGE PROPERTY. AND THERE WERE PATHS THROUGH THE GROUNDS, WHERE YOU WENT FROM THE MAIN HOUSE ACROSS THE SLOPING MEADOW, DOWN THROUGH THE WOODS TO THE SHORE AND TO THE OTHER HOUSES AND OUTBUILDINGS. FROM THE HARBOR, THAT MEADOW DOWN TO THE FRINGE OF THE WOODS ALONG THE SHORE LOOKS GREEN AND CULTIVATED, LIKE THE LAWN OF A SOUTHERN MANSION BESIDES THE JAMES RIVER OR SUCH. ACTUALLY, IT WAS A HAYFIELD. THE PATHS ACROSS IT WERE THE SAME COARSE GRASS THAT MOWED SHORT WITH A REEL TYPE LAWNMOWER. WALKING ON THEM BAREFOOT REQUIRED A SPECIAL WAY OF PUTTING THE FOOT DOWN, WITH A SLIDING MOTION RATHER THAN STRAIGHT, TO AVOID GETTING IMPALED ON THE STIFF STUBBLES.

ON THESE ERRANDS I TOOK THE MOST DIRECT ROUTE. STRAIGHT UP TO THE BROAD FRONT PORCH OF THE GREAT HOUSE. THEN ALONG THE SIDE OF IT, AROUND THE CORNER OF THE BUILDING AND PAST THE KITCHEN AND THE PANTRY. THE AREA OUTSIDE THESE BIG ROOMS WAS ALL PAVED WITH MOSSY BRICKS, SLIPPERY WHEN WET. MANY TIMES KATHERINE, THE COOK, WOULD CATCH ME. HELLO LEONARD, SHE'D SAY, WANT A COOKIE? SHE WAS OLD COUNTRY IRISH, AS WERE ALL THE HELP ON THE PLACE.

KATIE THE PARLOURMAID, AND WILLIAM THE COACHMAN-GARDENER. KATHERINE IS LONG GONE, BUT WILLIAM AND KATIE HANG ON. THEY MARRIED, IN DUE COURSE, AND WERE RETIRED FROM SERVICE MAYBE TEN OR FIFTEEN YEAR AGO. THEY LIVE IN BELMONT NOW.

AS I WAS SAYING, BEFORE I THOUGHT OF SOMETHING ELSE, WE BOUGHT OUR OIL AT COTUIT GROCERY. THERE WAS A HAND PUMP CONNECTED TO AN UNDERGROUND TANK RIGHT IN FRONT OF THE STORE. ABOUT WHERE THOSE ICE STORAGE BOXES ARE TODAY. WHEN MILTON AND GRACE DOTTRIDGE AND JOHN REED WERE BUSY IN THE STORE I WAS ALLOWED TO PUMP MY OWN KEROSENE. THEN I TRECKED BACK DOWN THE PATHS WITH THE CAN, HEAVIER NOW. BE PATIENT WITH ME, I'M COMING TO THOSE WATER PIPES. THEY'RE A PART OF THE WHOLE SCENE I'M TRYING TO RECORD WHILE I CAN.

COMING DOWN THE PATH I WOULD PASS THE APPLE TREE, THE TREE'S STANDING STILL AS FAR AS I KNOW. I HAVEN'T BEEN BACK TO LOOK IN TEN YEARS OR SO. BUT IT HASN'T BORN FRUIT IN YEARS. SHE'S AN OLD TREE, LEONARD, WILLIAM EXPLAINED TO ME BACK ABOUT 1946, SHE'S TIRED OUT, BUT SHE BORE FRUIT WHEN I WAS A CHILD. REMARKABLE FRUIT, INCREDIBLE QUANTITIES OF IT. THE APPLES WEREN'T AS BIG, BUT THEY WERE SWEET. THEY WERE EARLY. THE PECK'S NEVER STAYED ON THE CAPE MUCH AFTER LABOR DAY. BUT ALL SUMMER, AS IT NOW SEEMS, CERTAINLY THROUGH MOST OF AUGUST, THERE WERE RIPE APPLES.

I WASN'T SUPPOSED TO CLIMB THE TREE AND PICK THEM. WILLIAM DID THAT FOR THE FAMILY IN THE BIG HOUSE. I CAN'T REMEMBER THAT I EVER DID CLIMB FOR THEM. THERE WAS NO NEED. I WAS FREE TO HELP MYSELF TO WINDFALLS AND THERE WERE HUNDREDS OF THEM, RIPE AND PERFECT. THEY WERE THE KIND OF APPLES YOU DON'T GET ANYMORE, NOT LARGE, BUT SWEET AND JUICY WITH A PECULIAR FINISH, RED AND YELLOW AND NARROW STRIPES FROM STEM TO BLOSSOM. SOMETIMES I'D FILL MY POCKETS AND MY SHIRTFRONT WITH APPLES AND WALK AROUND THE VILLAGE OR SAIL AROUND THE HARBOR EATING APPLES, ONE RIGHT AFTER THE OTHER.

FROM MY HEAVY LITTLE CAN, I FILLED THE STOVE TANK. IT HELD MAYBE HALF A GALLON. THE TANK SET ON THE LITTLE TIN BASIN ON THE SIDE

OF THE STOVE AND IT METERED THE FUEL WITH AN INGENIOUS VALVE THAT RELEASED FUEL AT COOPERATIVE TIMES, MAKING A SOFT BUBBLING SOUND ABOUT ONCE EVERY MINUTE. I DIDN'T FILL THE LAMPS. THEY WERE MOSTLY ALL MADE OF GLASS AND NOT SAFE FOR A CHILD TO HANDLE. MOTHER CLEANED THE CHIMNEYS EVERY MORNING AND REFILLED THE BASIN OUT OF WHAT WAS LEFT IN MY CAN.

ABOVE THE KITCHEN WAS THE BATHROOM. ABOVE THE LIVING ROOM WAS THE SINGLE BEDROOM WHERE THE WHOLE FAMILY SLEPT SORT OF LIKE GHETTO SARDINES. FOUR SINGLE IRON BEDSTEADS, ALL CROWDED TOGETHER.

MY CLEAREST MEMORIES CONNECTED WITH SLEEPING HERE ARE THE EARLY MORNINGS. THERE WAS ONE BIG DORMER WINDOW FACING OUT ACROSS THE ROAD, IT WASN'T PAVED THEN, TO THE HARBOR. IT HAD A DARK GREEN BLIND MADE OF BAMBOO SLATS, WHICH ROLLED UP AND DOWN BY MEANS OF A CORD HALYARD. IT WAS LOWERED AT NIGHT, NATURALLY, SINCE THE WINDOW FACED EAST. BUT THE SUNRISE OVER GRAND ISLAND WAS REFLECTED OFF THE WATER AND SHONE IN BETWEEN THE SLATS AND MADE A PATTERN OF NARROW STRIPES ON THE OPPOSITE WALL, WHICH WAS THE SLOPING INSIDE OF THE GABLE ROOF. IT RIPPLED WITH THE RIPPLES ON THE HARBOR. AND IF THE MOVING RIPPLES OF LIGHT OVER YOUR HEAD DIDN'T WAKE YOU UP AT HALF PAST FOUR, THE SOUNDS OF HARBOR ACTIVITY WOULD.

THE GROWNUPS DIDN'T ENJOY IT THE WAY I DID. THEY DEVELOPED AN INCREDIBLE ABILITY TO SLEEP RIGHT THROUGH THE MOVING LIGHTS AND THE STACCATO SOUNDS. NOT ME, I'D BE UP AND STIRRING AROUND WATCHING THE FISHERMEN AND TALKING TO THEM ON THE BEACH. THEY WERE SHELLFISHERMEN, THEY GOT UNDERWAY AS SOON AS THE LIGHTS CAME ON. THEY HAD THE SAME SORT OF BOATS OUR SHELLFISHERMEN USE NOW. MUSTN'T GET SIDETRACKED TONIGHT ON THE HISTORY OF THE QUAHOGERS SCOW. BUT OUTBOARD MOTORS WERE SO NEW THEY HADN'T COME TO THE CAPE. THEY WERE EXPENSIVE, AND PUNY, AND UNRELIABLE. THE FISHERMEN ALL USED HEAVY ONE CYLINDER INBOARDS. HAND STARTING, DIRECT REVERSION, FASCINATING TECHNICAL TERMINOLOGY OUT OF THE PAST. THE SOUND MAY HAVE BEEN LESS IRRITATING THAN THE HIGH SPEED OUTBOARDS OF TODAY, BUT THEY WEREN'T ANY LESS NOISY.

THERE WERE AT LEAST TEN OF THEM THAT STARTED EVERY MORNING, ONE AFTER ANOTHER IN THE COVE AT HOOPER'S LANDING. POP, WHEEZE, POP, POP, WHEEZE AND GRUNT! POP, POP, POP, POP, POP, POP - FIRST ONE THEN ANOTHER - THE ENGINE SOUNDS BLENDED OR CLASHED WITH THE HUMAN SOUNDS.

I REMEMBER JOHN MURRAY. I TOLD YOU I'D GET BACK TO HIM. JOHN HAD ASTHMA AND HE HAD HIS OWN RYTHYM OF WHEEZING THAT SYNCHRONIZED WITH HIS ENGINE. POOR MAN, HE WAS ONE OF THE GENTLEST AND KINDEST PEOPLE WHO EVER LIVED. HE AND HIS WIFE GAVE THEIR WHOLE LIVES TO A SINGLE ACT OF PERSONAL PHILANTHROPY. AND HE WENT OUT FULL RIGGING EVERY DAY, WINTER AND SUMMER. I ASSUME HE DID, I WASN'T HERE IN THE WINTER. FOR THIRTY YEARS THAT I KNOW OF TO KEEP IT GOING. WITH HIS HEALTH, HE SHOULDN'T HAVE BEEN QUAHOGING AT ALL. AND THIS IS THE SMALL PART OF THE LEGACY HE LEFT. HAPPY MEMORIES IN THE MIND OF A SMALL BOY, THE SOUND OF HIS WHEEZING AND COUGHING IN TIME WITH THE POPPING OF HIS LABORED ENGINE, EVERY MORNING AT SUNRISE. PART OF THE SCENE FROM THE UPSTAIRS BEDROOM OF THE PORTER HOUSE.

SOMETIME IN THE 1930'S THE HOUSE ACQUIRED ANOTHER BEDROOM. BUILT OUT OVER THE WOODSHED IN BACK, UNDER THE HILL. BUT EVEN IN THE 20'S THERE WAS A SECOND ROOM AT THE HEAD OF THE STAIRS. THE CRAZIEST STAIRS EVER BUILT, LEADING FROM THE KITCHEN STRAIGHT UP, STEEP AS A LADDER. BUILT INTO A NARROW BOX OF A SHAFT, ABOUT TWO AND A HALF FEET BY SIX FEET. TWO RIGHT ANGLE BENDS, NOT WITH LANDINGS, BUT WITH TRIANGULAR STAIRTREADS TO TAKE YOU ROUND THE CORNER. THESE STAIRS LANDED YOU BREATHLESS AT THE DOOR OF THAT BATHROOM. CONTAINED A FLUSH TOILET. BUT IN 1927, NO BATHTUB AND NO SINK. AND THE WAY THAT TOILET FLUSHED GETS US TO THE SUBJECT OF THIS TALK AT LAST.

FOR THE HOUSE HAD RUNNING WATER WHEN I FIRST KNEW IT. NOT HOT WATER, THOUGH NOT EXACTLY COLD, EITHER, BUT DEFINITELY AND RELIABLY RUNNING. HOW IT ACQUIRED THE RUNNING WATER IN EARLIER DAYS AND WHAT IT HAS DONE WITH IT SINCE, FORMS MY CURIOUS IDEA OF HISTORY.

FOR ON THE EAST WALL OF THE KITCHEN, UNDER A WINDOW THAT LOOKED OUT ACROSS THE DUSTY ROAD TO THE BEACH AND THE HARBOR, WAS A BIG SOAPSTONE SINK WITH A SINGLE FAUCET. WHEN YOU TURNED THE FAUCET ON, WATER CAME OUT. JUST AS IT DID IN PHILADELPHIA. BUT THAT AIN'T ALL. ABOVE THE SINK WAS A WHOLE ROAD MAP OF GALVANIZED IRON WATER PIPES. TO FEED THAT ONE FAUCET. EVEN SO. HAD TO SUPPLY THE ARCHEOLOGIST WITH THE RESEARCH DATA FOR THE HOUSES PRE HISTORY.

LEAVE THE WATER PIPES ALONE FOR ANOTHER MOMENT. CLIMB WITH ME BACK UP THOSE HAZARDOUS STAIRS WHILE I GO TO THE BATHROOM. PULL THE CHAIN, FLUSH THE TOILET AS A GOOD BOY SHOULD. THE FLUSH WATER IS STORED IN A WOODEN TANK HIGH OVERHEAD AND LEADS DOWN TO THE TOILET BOWL THROUGH A LONG PIPE. AS WITH MOST INDOOR TOILETS, EVEN IN THE 20'S, NOTHING REMARKABLE ABOUT IT. NOT UNTIL YOU FLUSH THE TOILET AND THE LITTLE WOOD TANK IS EMPTY.

NOW EMBARK ON THE MYSTERY OF ALL THOSE PIPES. THE STORAGE TANK DOESN'T REFILL ITSELF AS A GOOD TOILET SHOULD. EVEN IN THOSE DAYS, BY MEANS OF THE FLOATING BALL ON A LONG ROD WHICH GOES UP AND DOWN AS THE WATER RISES AND FALLS, OPENING AND CLOSING A VALVE. NOTHING SO COMPLICATED. WHEN THE TOILET HAS FLUSHED, AND THE TANK IS EMPTY, WE GO BACK DOWN THE STAIRS TO THE KITCHEN.

AMONG THE MAZE OF PIPES OVER THE SINK IS A CERTAIN GUAGE VALVE. OPEN IT BY GIVING IT A QUARTER TURN, DON'T GO AWAY, YOU WILL HAVE TURNED THE WATER INTO THE TANK UPSTAIRS AND IT WILL KEEP RUNNING UNTIL THE TANK IS FULL. IT WILL KEEP RUNNING UNTIL YOU TURN THE GUAGE VALVE OFF AGAIN. IF A LITTLE BOY GETS DISTRACTED AND GOES OFF TO TALK TO THE FISHERMEN OR SOMETHING, THE TANK WILL OVERFLOW AND THE WATER WILL COME RIGHT BACK DOWN, THROUGH THE BATHROOM FLOOR AND THE KITCHEN CEILING. MAKE A GODAWFUL MESS, GET YOU IN GODAWFUL TROUBLE.

WHO IN THE WORLD WOULD HAVE CONCOCTED A SANITARY SYSTEM LIKE THAT. FACT IS, NOBODY DID, IT JUST GREW. I MEAN THAT KIND OF GROWTH IS WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT - 'HISTORY IN THE WATER PIPES'. FOR AT THE SOUTH END OF THE SINK WAS AN IRON PUMP, DIRECTLY ABOVE

A SHALLOW WELL, RIGHT UNDER THE KITCHEN. BEFORE THE RUNNING WATER WAS BROUGHT IN, THAT WAS THE HOUSE WATER SUPPLY. IT WAS AN UNUSUAL PUMP, THOUGH THERE MUST HAVE BEEN SOME OF THEM AROUND.

BEFORE EVERYBODY HAD A WINDMILL. IT WAS A FORCE PUMP, DIFFERENT FROM THE USUAL PITCHER PUMP IN THAT THE TOP WAS CLOSED RIGHT IN. THE TOP OF THE CASTING WAS A SPHERE ABOUT AS BIG AS A GRAPEFRUIT. AND THE PISTON ROD LED DOWN THROUGH IT THROUGH A PACKING NUT. YOU PUMPED THE THING JUST LIKE ANY PUMP, BY MOVING THE HANDLE UP AND DOWN. BUT THERE WAS AN EXTRA LINK BETWEEN THE HANDLE AND THE ROD SO THE ROD WOULD GO STRAIGHT UP AND DOWN THROUGH THE PACKING.

PURPOSE OF ALL THIS WAS TO DELIVER WATER UNDER A LITTLE PRESSURE. SO'S TO FORCE IT OUT THE FAUCET, SO'S TO FORCE IT UP ONE FLIGHT OF PIPE TO THAT TANK ABOVE THE TOILET. I HAVE DESCRIBED THE SYSTEM AS IT WAS WHEN I CAME ON THE SCENE. BUT BEFORE THE RUNNING WATER WAS BROUGHT IN, THE PROCEDURE WAS AFTER FLUSHING GO DOWN TO THE KITCHEN AND REFILL THE TANK BY PUMPING THE WATER UP BY HAND. NO DANGER OF OVERFLOWING IT THEN. WHO'D WASTE ALL THAT WORK. THEN WHEN THE HOUSE ACQUIRED RUNNING WATER IS WAS JUST ADDED ON TO THE EXISTING PLUMBING. VALVES ADDED, SO THE WATER WOULDN'T RUN DOWN INTO THE WELL AND STUFF LIKE THAT.

IT WASN'T CARELESSNESS OR SLOPPY WORK. THE PORTER HOUSE WAS THE ONLY BUILDING ON THE COOLIDGE PLACE YOU COULD LIVE IN IN THE WINTER. WHEN THE RUNNING WATER SYSTEM WAS SHUT DOWN AND DRAINED, YOU COULD REACTIVATE THE WELL AND PUMP BY HAND ONCE MORE AS SYLVANUS PORTER DID. WE EVEN USED THE PUMP OURSELVES, BY CHOICE, TO GET A COOL DRINK, RIGHT FROM THE WELL. PEOPLE WEREN'T BOTHERED THEN BY FEARS OF POLLUTION.

REACTIVATING THE WELL IS FANCY LANGUAGE FOR PRIMING THE PUMP. YOU PRIME A PUMP BY POURING WATER DOWN IT. BUT THIS PUMP HAD, AS I SAY, A SEALED TOP. TO PRIME IT, THERE WAS A HAND MADE FUNNEL OF ZINC, ALL PRETTILY SOLDERED TOGETHER. PERCHED HIGH ABOVE THE PIPES WITH A VALVE BETWEEN THE FUNNEL AND THE PUMP, SO THE WATER WOULDN'T ALL RUN OUT THE FUNNEL WHEN YOU GOT THE PUMP WORKING. IN WINTER, I SUPPOSE, YOU GOT THE QUART OR TWO OF PRIMING WATER

RIGHT OUT OF THE BAY. ONE OR TWO STROKES OF THE PUMP, ONCE YOU GOT IT GOING, WOULD BE ENOUGH TO CLEAR THE SHORT PIPE OF SALT. BUT THAT RUNNING WATER NOW - WHERE DID IT COME FROM?

I'M TALKING ABOUT BEFORE THERE WAS A COTUIT WATER SYSTEM. EVERYPLACE HAD IT'S OWN PRIVATE WATER WORKS. THE COOLIDGE PLACE HAD A MOST ELABORATE ONE. AT FIRST, OF COURSE, IT HAD A WINDMILL HIGH ABOVE THE WELL, HIGH ON THE HIGHEST PART OF THE PROPERTY. HIGH ON A THREE STORY TOWER. AND IN THE TOP STORY OF THE TOWER A HUGE WOODEN TANK. MOST OF THE WINDMILLS IN THE VILLAGE WERE ON SKELETON TOWERS, OF STEEL RODS AND STRAPS AND ANGLE IRONS. BUT THE COOLIDGE'S HAD A FANCIER ONE.

FIRST OF ALL, A ROUND BUILDING OF FIELDSTONE. IT'S THERE YET. ABOVE IT, TWO STORIES OF SHINGLED WOOD. MANY SIDED BUT NOT QUITE ROUND, WITH A CONICAL POINTED ROOF. BY MY TIME THE WINDMILL WAS GONE AND THE WATER WAS PUMPED BY AN ELECTRIC MOTOR. BUT IT DROVE THE ORIGINAL PUMP SITTING ON THE BOARD FLOOR OF THE BUILDING. YOU COULD GO IN AND WATCH IT WORK. NOT MUCH VISIBLE HAPPENED. BUT I WAS ALWAYS INTO WORDS, AND THERE WERE ABOVE THE PUMP WORDS OF PROFOUND MYSTERY AND SIGNIFICANCE.

THERE WAS, TO WIT A PLACQUARD SUPPLIED BY THE PUMP MANUFACTURER AND THIS IS WHAT IT SAID. 'WITHOUT A RIVAL AND WITHOUT A PEER'. I SUPPOSED RIVALS AND PEERS TO BE PARTS OF THE USUAL PUMP COMPONENTS WHICH GAVE TROUBLE. COMPONENTS WHICH THESE INGENIOUS MANUFACTURERS HAD FOUND A WAY TO ELIMINATE.

THIS PEERLESS PRODUCT SUPPLIED WATER TO THE WIDE COMPLEX, TO GALVANIZED PIPES BURIED ABOUT SIX INCHES BELOW THE SOD. NONE OF IT WAS INTENDED FOR USE IN FREEZING WEATHER. THE PLACE WASN'T OCCUPIED IN THE WINTER. IF MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY CAME DOWN FOR A WEEKEND OFF SEASON THEY CAMPED OUT IN THE PORTER HOUSE AND USED THE PUMP. WHAT A LABOR IT MUST HAVE BEEN FOR WILLIAM EVERY FALL TO DIG UP ALL THOSE PIPE JOINTS AND DISCONNECT THEM. DRAINED THE WHOLE MAIN HOUSE AND THREE OTHER ROOMS AS WELL AS THE TANK. MAYBE HE DIDN'T DO IT. MAYBE THE LOCAL PLUMBERS, THE D.H.NICKERSONS DID IT, AFTER THE FAMILY DEPARTED, I DON'T KNOW.

SO SOMETIME, JUST BEFORE THE ADVENT OF THE PECKS, A PIPE WAS RUN IN A SHALLOW TRENCH ALL THE WAY DOWN THE HILL TO THE PORTER HOUSE. THE HOUSE SITS JUST UNDER THE BLUFF, AND THE PIPE CAME OUT OF THE GROUND AT THE LEVEL OF THE KITCHEN CEILING. FLEW THROUGH THE AIR FOR FIVE FEET OR SO AND DISAPPEARED INTO THE REAR WALL. IT CAME RIGHT ON THROUGH AND HOOKED INTO THAT CHEMICAL FIRE ENGINE OF STRAIGHT PIPING ABOVE THE SINK.

NOW HAVE A STEADY LOOK FOR A MOMENT, AT ALL THOSE VALVES AND NICKELS AND CONNECTIONS. PART OF THE COMPLEXITY FOLLOWS FROM THE ANNUAL NECESSITY OF DRAINING EVERY LAST BEND AND JOINT. SO THERE WERE COUPLINGS AS WELL AS UNIONS. THERE WAS, FOR SOME PURPOSE UNKNOWN TO ME, EVEN A LITTLE DIAL PRESSURE GAUGE BUILT IN. WITH A VALVE TO TURN IT OFF AND ON. AND FREE FORM SOLDERED JOINTS EVERYWHERE. IT WAS A GROWING, EVOLVING WATER SYSTEM.

EVENTUALLY A SINK AND A TUB WERE INSTALLED IN THE BATHROOM. THOUGH, AT FIRST, COLD WATER ONLY. INSTEAD OF TAKING A BATH ONCE OR TWICE A WEEK IN A BIG TIN SAUCER IN THE KITCHEN, WITH WATER HEATED ON THE STOVE, YOU COULD BATHE IN PRIVACY. BUT YOU STILL HAD TO HEAT THE WATER ON THE STOVE AND LUG IT UP THE STAIRS OR BATHE COLD.

ALL THAT MEANT ADDITIONAL PIPES ADDED ON TO THE ALREADY COMPLEX SYSTEM. THE NEW PIPES STARTING ABOVE THE SINK AND WENT STRAIGHT UP INTO THE CEILING. NOTHING WAS EVER BY ANY CHANCE RIPPED OUT. JUST ADDED ON TO.

THOSE PIPES LEADING ABOUT THE ESTATE WERE TINY LITTLE ONES. I THINK THE PORTER HOUSE WATER CAME ALL THAT WAY THROUGH HALF INCH PIPE. YOU WOULDN'T THINK LOW PRESSURE WATER COULD BE CARRIED THAT FAR IN SUCH A SMALL CONDUIT, BUT THE WHOLE PLACE SLOPED AND THE GRAVITY WAS JUST ENOUGH TO OVERCOME THE FRICTION. THE PIPE, SO CLOSE TO THE SURFACE, ALL THE WAY DOWN THE SUNNY MEADOW, HEATED THE WATER SUPPLY UNPLEASANTLY DURING THE DAY, CULMINATING IN THAT SUPER HEATER SIX FEET IN THE AIR. BUT I REMEMBER WHEN THE OLD PEERLESS WAS RETIRED AND THE COLLIDGES WENT ON TOWN WATER, A DISASTER YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE.

THE PIPES AND CONNECTIONS ALL OVER THE PROPERTY, DOWN THE HILL OVER THE SINK IN THE PORTER HOUSE, ALL BURST, NOT ALL AT ONCE. BUT AT INTERVALS, OVER SEVERAL WEEKS. YOU NEVER KNEW IF THERE'D BE TOO MUCH WATER IN THE PORTER HOUSE IN THE WRONG PLACES OR IF THERE'D BE NONE AT ALL BECAUSE OF THE BURST PIPES SOMEWHERE BACK UP THE HILL. WE HAD HOT WATER BY THEN. MORE PIPES TIED INTO THE EXISTING ONES. MODERN COPPER TUBING LEADING OFF THAT OLD GALVANIZED PIPE.

FOR WIRES HAD FINALLY MADE IT OVER THE HILL AND WE HAD AN ELECTRIC WATER HEATER, AND AN ELECTRIC STOVE, NO MORE KERESONE. SO IT GOES.

IT WAS FOR A FEW WEEKS, THE DAYS OF HAND FILLING THE FLUSH TANK ALL OVER AGAIN. IF THE WATER STOPPED, YOU HAD TO BE ON WATCH AND SHUT OFF THE ELECTRIC HEATER OR IT MIGHT OVERHEAT AND MAKE STEAM. THERE WERE YEARS, OF COURSE, AFTER THE PECK FAMILY STOPPED COMING TO THE PORTER HOUSE FOR THE SUMMER AND BEFORE ANOTHER GENERATION OF PECKS WERE NEW TO FISHING. MY CHILDREN ALSO GOT TO SPEND THEIR FIRST SUMMERS THERE.

BUT THE PIPES CONTAINED ONE LAST NUGGET, MORE, OF HISTORY. THE 1944 HURRICANE SURFED INTO COTUIT ON A WAVE OF WATER ABOUT EIGHT FEET HIGH. AND THE PORTER HOUSE SITS ABOUT SIX INCHES ABOVE SEA LEVEL. WHEN BETTY AND I MOVED BACK IN TO CAMP THERE AND RESTORE THE PLACE IN THE SUMMER OF 1946 THE PLACE WAS JUST AS THE HURRICANE HAD LEFT IT.

THE WATER HAD FILLED THE WHOLE DOWNSTAIRS. WHEN THE WAVE RECEDED IT WENT BACK OUT THE FRONT DOOR WITH SUCH FORCE THAT IT BROKE THE CAST IRON KITCHEN RANGE INTO A THOUSAND PIECES, BORE THEM THROUGH THE LIVING ROOM AND OUT THE FRONT DOOR AND SCATTERED THEM ON THE FRONT LAWN. THE HOUSE STOOD THAT. THE FRONT PORCH COLLAPSED BUT THE FABRIC OF THE BUILDING STILL STANDS FOURSQUARE ON ITS MORTARLESS BRICK FOUNDATION. THE HIGHWATER MARKS ON THOSE PIPES ABOVE THE KITCHEN SINK MARKED BY LEAVES AND DEBRIS WAS HIGHER THAN MY HEAD.

THAT'S REALLY ALL OF MY CONTRIBUTION TO HISTORY. OH, I COULD GO ON LIKE AN OLD GABBER DRAWING CONCLUSIONS, - THEY DON'T BUILD HOUSES LIKE THEY USED TO. ALL THE PROGRESS WE'VE MADE SINCE THEN HAS SERVED ONLY TO TAKE THE CHALLENGE OUT OF EVERYTHING. A TOILET THAT FLUSHES ITSELF DOESN'T TEACH A BOY RESPONSIBILITY. THE HEIRS OF LUTHER BURBANK WILL NOT REST FROM PRUNING AND GRAFTING TILL THEY'VE CONTRIVED AN APPLE TREE THE SIZE OF A STALK OF CELERY. THAT BEARS EACH SEASON JUST ONE APPLE THE SIZE OF A WATERMELON, AND JUST ABOUT AS TASTY. THAT'S PROGRESS.

IF WE HAD TO CARRY OUR OIL HOME IN GALLON CANS BAREFOOT THERE WOULDN'T BE A SHORTAGE. ALL STUFF LIKE THAT. THIS VIEW OF HISTORY IS A SIGN ONE IS GROWING OLD. I WISH I COULD GROW OLD AS GRACEFULLY, AS FULL OF LOVE AS COTUIT HAS.

END OF SIDE 1 'HISTORY IN THE WATER PIPES'
LEONARD PECK