

A SEARCH FOR TREASURE

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by

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And Moses said, "Listen, you rebels! Do we have to get water out of this rock for you?" Then Moses raised the stick and struck the rock twice with it, and a great stream of water gushed out, and all the people and animals drank.

And so begins my paper which I have entitled, "A Search for Treasure".

Only a family which, like the children of Israel, left urban convenience and journeyed into the wilderness of North Christain county, would understand the frustration of those persons Moses addressed as rebels. And only such a family would virtually pray for the rod of Moses.

You see I'm sure, the family in consideration is my own, the Westerfield's, eager to make a life in a new land. Endowed with a bountiful crop of children. Blessed with the simultaneous birth of two sons thus bringing to four the number requiring the more rudimentary hygiene procedure of diapers. Blessed with a new home, self-constructed and hardly finished sufficiently to keep out the cold and finally, blessed with a four thousand five hundred dollar dry hole, a waterless well.

Though I had worked for a number of years at the Pennyroyal Mental Health Center, I for the first time in my life really experienced depression. Not only did we not know what to do. We didn't know what to do it with.

Drill another well? With what? The water supply budget had been depleted. As a temporary measure a '56 Chevy truck and 2000 gallon water tank were added to the family property inventory. Daily trips to the local minit market exchanging crisp dollar bills for quarters and the sometimes twice daily trips to local water dispensary were a new routine for the pioneers. Maybe I should explain the quarters. Water you see, like many other commodities is purchased from a vending machine.

I became acquainted with a whole new cult, the water cravers. Each day I would listen with amazement to the stories of those who long preceeded me a water haulers. The advice was plentiful, only exceeded by the frustration caused by a junk truck and the havoc created by the inertial force of 2000 gallons of lunging, surging water.

Needless to say the original thought of drilling a second well recurred regularly. Several flat tires and other forms of vehicular difficulty force a re-evaluation of fiscal priorities and soon with the May receipt of an income tax refund from the IRS, the second well was elevated to number one on the list.

Among the bits of advice garnered at the daily visits to the water

hole, was a healthy list of well drillers, most of whom ran their rigs on trucks that would make mine look like a prize.

A few contacts were made. With each contact my well drilling vocabulary developed and eventually I was able to make an arrangement with a fellow who fired a boiler at a local establishment during the evenings and would be happy to drill my well on his days off. His price was pleasing too, less than a third per foot than I had already invested in my previous effort.

All plans were set and the driller was to move his rig in the following Saturday. A phone call to his residence to confirm the schedule was to yield quite a surprise.

He caught me off guard with his first question, "have you marked the spot where you want the well? As I sputtered a response, the second stated in a rhetorical fashion stumped me completely. The question, "have you witched it yet?", was certainly not anticpated.

"Witched?", I asked, what do you mean?

Well, I got an answer and a country boy to a city slicker lecture to boot. It wasn't at all difficult for the driller to point out to me the foolhardiness of drilling for water without witching first. Still a bit naive to the local lore, I inquired of the driller how this was done and who possessed the skill. I was suprised at the scope of the list of names I was given.

Now for the dilemma. How in the world could a mind, trained in the objective sciences, steeped in the artful skill of logical problem solving succumb to such? A water witch.

Pressured by the desire for water, severely limited financial resources and a "what can I loose attitude", I placed the call to a name on the list which I recognized. One most of you would recognize too.

Beset with timidity and a bit of embarrassment, greetings were exchanged and we got down to business. I was quite suprised at the response, a hearty willingness to help out. A meeting time for the following Saturday morning was arranged.

Saturday arrived and I stopped by to pick up the witcher, or as I had learned more appropriately, a dowser. The trip to the homestead was delayed for a short while with a detour to a wooded area familiar to the dowser. The mission was to select a special peach branch, preferably one of new growth, explained my guest. Carefully clipped and trimmed, the Y shaped branch was tucked in the car and we were once again on our way.

Once on the site, there was no hesitation. Grasping one of the smaller branches of the peach Y in each hand in a palms up fashion and with the butt of the Y pointed ahead in the horizontal plane, the dowser began an active but deliberate pace through the woods.

For several minutes he walked, back and forth, crisscrossing the wooded area which surrounded our home. For the first few minutes I followed along, a pace or two behind, full of curiosity. However, with time, curiosity gave way to skeptical cynicism and I stopped following so closely and moved to a point which would allow me to observe his arched path. . In my mind the thought of "I knew it wouldn't work", loomed.

Almost as if he knew what I was thinking, he paused to inform me that , "its pretty hard to find water in North Christian, too many caves and sink holes". Without waiting for a response, He resumed his patient pace soon working his way to an area on the southern side of our property.

Without warning he halted, about faced and retraced his steps and there I saw with my own eyes the butt end of the peach branch dip toward the earth as if it had been pulled down with a sharp jerk.

Not a word was spoken. I caught myself holding my breath. Back and forth he strode scratching the ground with his heel each time the rod dipped. Soon a jagged but noticable line traced across the leaf covered ground.

"Not a real strong stream" he said, "but it ought to be good enough to do, and I'd drill right here" he quipped, marking a spot on the line with his toe. The spot looked fine to me, right on the edge of a clearing. Anyway, who could argue with the power of the divining rod?

Thinking the job was finished, I was suprised to see the dowser grasp both of the small branches in a fashion not unlike an experienced golfer preparing for a tee shot. The butt end again pointed on the horizontal. As if responding to some subterranean force, the tip of rod dipped, once, twice, three times and soon I realized he was counting, "forty, forty-one, forty-two". As suddenly as it started, it stopped. "Forty-five feet", he called out, "you should hit it at forty-five feet.

Casual conversation occupied the trip back to town. Offers of remuneration were rejected but a gift to a local charity was strongly encouraged.

Saturday afternoon and the arrival of the drilling rig came quickly. An antique truck bore on its back a recently painted B -Erie cable tool rig looking somewhat like a large praying mantis perched on a leaf. It took little time to erect the mast, prepare the tooling and begin the thud-swoosh, thud-swoosh as the weighted bit pounded its way through the soft top soil and into the rock strata below.

Darkness arrived as the white stripe on the cable marking thirty feet passed through the drilling deck. "No more work till Tuesday morning", volunteered the driller as he shut down the rig's engine. Quietness and questions filled the night. Will we hit water?

A phone call home at mid-day on Tuesday informed me that the driller has arrived about 10:00 AM and the pounding of the bit had been steady



ever since. The rythmic sounds greeted me as I came home from work in the late evening. The top of the rig's mast shown above the trees with the top wheel oscillating like the balance wheel of a freshly wound watch.

"Any luck?", I inquired. The driller shook his head and continued to grip the cable seeming to guide it as moved up and down. Soon the evening darkness stopped the drilling and in the quiet the driller shared his pessimism. "Eighty feet and dry as powder", was his message. "I'll case it out and plug it in the morning. I'd be wasting your money to go any deeper", he advised.

Work the next day was dull. Thoughts of disappointment from my apparent false hope and concern for our next step were interrupted with a call requesting me to come to the house at lunch.

When I arrived, my heart jumped. I was met with the toothless amber stained grin of the driller. "She's standing full", he exclaimed, "it took me an hour to bail her dry". In the insuing moments he explained the events of the morning. He had arrived at the well ~~right~~ to find the hole filled with water. His first thought was that the hole had caved in and ground water had filled the surface cavity. To be sure he lowered his bit and found it went the entire depth. Suprised, he removed the bit and proceded to bail the water out. Apparently the pounding of the bit had sealed the vein of water from the well, but overnite the pressure of the source had forced its way thru the blockage and it was flowing freely. I asked questions faster than he could answer. Ultimately I asked the clincher. Having withheld from the driller the depth predicted by the douser, I asked, "How deep was the vein".

Yes, you're ahead of me, thats right. The response was, forty-five feet.

Still filled with suspision and question I started that day and have continued to this a study of any literature I could find on dowsing. I will share some of my finds with you.

Other than the earlier reference to Moses, which can be found in the 20th chapter of Numbers, the Divining Rod, was an instrument originally used in the 15th Century in the Harz mountains of Germany for finding metals.

Romans supplied the first name for dowsing, virgula divinal, but they employed the rod in a form of divination, unrelated to dowsing. The first authenticated evidence of dowsing with a forked stick comes from medeval Germany in 1556. Gerogius Agricola published in his Treatise' de Metellica a discription of dowsing by Tutonic miners to locate minearals and ores.

Martin Luther and other clerics thought dowsing had possible satanic relationships. In spite of church injunctions dowsing spread to other European countries. It was introduced into England during the rein

of Queen Elizabeth I by German miners working in Cornwall. Exploration and colonization by Europeans carried dowsing to Africa, Asia and to the new world.

Charles Richet, a French scholar and a 1913 Nobel Prize winner in medicine and physiology, wrote his *Traite de Metapsychique* which gave an unequivocal endorsement of dowsing as a fact. The 1922 report describes the phenomena as this. "When certain sensitive individuals hold between their fingers a flexible Y shaped branch, with not intervention of bending, twisting or moving, the branch will, under certain condition, turn downward. It bends in the hands of the individual holding it. It even seems to turn by itself with extreme force and independent of the will of the operator. When such an individual grasping this branch, passes above a region crossed by subterranean water the rod twists down with almost irresistible force." Richet did not present a scientific explanation for the phenomena, in fact he said one did not exist. He did express confidence that in due time, as with other scientific discoveries, a theory would be put forth and proven.

Richet's thesis generated considerable controversy in the scientific community but an Englishman, Oxford scholar and one time editor of the Oxford University Press, Theodore Besterman, issued a premise which was applicable then and in my opinion holds true still.

Besterman said about the research in Richet's papers, "These records must ~~express~~ <sup>impress</sup> all but the most willful skeptics. It must not be forgotten that there is an obstinate skepticism as well as an obstinate credulity and that ~~it~~ would be difficult to determine which of these qualities is more harmful in scientific investigation. There is no more success in arguing with the will to disbelieve than with the will to believe. <sup>As a convinced rationalist, I must confess to a good deal of contempt for those</sup> who refuse to see facts which stare them in the face and find refuge in facile formula of pseudo rationalism. With such skeptics, it is useless to debate.

In a more literary sense, Thoreau in speaking of Walden Pond wrote of an ancient settler, "when he first came with his divining rod, he saw a thin vapor rising from the sward, the hazel pointed steadily downward and he concluded to dig a well".

In more recent times ~~its~~ <sup>the</sup> main use of divining or dowsing has been the use in finding water. The skill very early called rhabdomancy, itself known in this part of the United States more commonly as water witching is usually claimed by its practitioners to be a mystical power although some claim unconscious stimulation by the presence of underlying water and "electricity".

Belief in the effectiveness of dowsing is wide spread especially where water is scarce and the geologic rock structure is complex. By some sources there are an estimated 25000 practicing dowsers in the United States. Although reports from the 1981 Big Sky Diviner and Water Witches Convention in Montana place the numbers at more than twice that.

In the past rods of hazelwood were preferred, now a variety of woods are employed. Rods now may also be made of nylon, whalebone and metal. The leading alternative dowsing instrument is a pendulum suspended from a string or chain. One end of the chain may be attached to a heavy weight while the other is held in the hand of the dowser. In some instances, the string is attached to a Bible which is held by the dowser. The presence of the desired object is indicated by the gyration of a the pendulum weight.

A third medthod of dowsing involves the use of a pair of L shaped angled rods. One rod is grasp in each hand. The short leg is held in the grasp of the dowser while the longer leg is pointed forward in the horizontal plane. The projecting legs will cross or swing outward lin the presence of the desired object.

Finally, some dowsers claim to find objects with their hands alone while others profess to locate materials by dowsing over maps.

Dowsers claim the instrument moves of its own accord in locating an object. Careful observation shows that animation of the instrument is due to minute muscular movement of the dowser generally on a subconscious level.

Controlled field and laboratory tests have failed to establish the validity of dowsing.

Until the mid 1930's there were a number of offical positions in the U.S. government which gave credibility to dowsing. A well documented study of numerous successes by a New England game warden named Henry Gross was published as late as 1951, however published reports since that date do not appear in credible scientific journals. Instead they appear in publications of dowsing support groups and literary works such a Mother Earth News.

Judged by scientific standards the practice has little foundation in facts. Believers in dowsing impute negative test results to supposed inadaquacies in the scientific approach or argue that the practice cannot be expected to work in the artifical conditions of a laboratory. Most studies indicate that although folk belief accepts the skills of dowsers, their success in finding water are no more frequent in finding water are than those gained by other methods

What do I think? Well, I wish someone had asked me if I wanted the first effort witched? I might have saved a lot of worry and money.

What do you think? Remember Besterman's comment.

Thank you.