

## Spring Water \*

Recently, Louis Jasmin Sr. showed me a spring on their family's land that they purchased in 1919. The previous owner made a point of making certain that the purchaser knew the location of this spring, which flows with a great force. Physically, it is a circular area about 15 feet in diameter with a pool of water two feet deep. The water currently is coming from a hole about one inch in diameter with enough force to cause the surface two feet above to boil up, sending ripples out 360 degrees. And it's cold – you wouldn't keep your hand in that water very long!

Members of the family have closely observed this spring for the past 81 years, and have never known it to vary in volume, whether we were in a prolonged drought, or at the end of a wet spell. Nor does the temperature change; summer or winter, it remains at a constant 46° or 47° F.

For reasons that I'm not completely sure of, water from a true spring flows at a temperature that reflects the average annual air temperature for that location. This is true for any location in the world. The physical law that governs water temperature also holds true for air temperature in deep caves, such as those found in New York State or Virginia's Luray Caverns and Mammoth Cave in Kentucky. Colebrook's average annual temperature is 46° F, a fact that can be ascertained by checking the temperature in any of our true springs.

Years ago, water was foremost in the minds of farmers and non-farmers alike, and a house or barn was not placed where the view might be best, rather where the water was. Some of the ways water influenced everyday events can be seen in land records, place names and physical remains. On Sandy Brook for example, the section of stream at Campbell's Road Bridge was referred to as "the watering place", meaning that it was accessible to livestock. The reason becomes clear when you drive down Sandy Brook Road from the curve near the Town Garage and realize that there are steep embankments on both sides of the brook from that point down to just upstream from Campbell Road Bridge. Immediately downstream from that bridge the banks resume and continue for about one half mile until the next accessible place.

Parts of Algonquin Forest north of Sandy Brook were once farmland. Here can still be seen the well-built stonewalls constructed along one bank of a stream that was obviously built so as to enclose that portion into a pasture or barnyard, thus supplying water on a year around basis without the tiresome task of carrying water to the livestock, or rounding up strays that escaped confinement.

The Winchester Town Records contain references to a spring located in what used to be the southwest corner of that township, but which is now part of Torrington. It was here that Winchester's first inhabitant, Caleb Beach, accompanied by his 15-year-old son Joel, erected the first dwelling house in town in 1750.

The proprietors of Winchester held a meeting in Hartford in February 1772 "to alter and exchange any highways where it shall be found necessary". The description of one such road follows: "Begins east end of west tier of lots at Torrington line; run north 18° 30' east to the north side of Joel Beach's home lot with one or two rods reserved for a spring a little to the northeast of his house for to accommodate his land." In other words, they made the width 16 to 32 feet wider so as to include the spring.

At a town meeting held December 22, 1788, it was voted “that the spring by Mr. Joel Beach’s be divided in the middle – Mr. Beach have one-half and the town the other, that the inhabitants, if they want to use the spring, shall so fence it upon their own private cost so as to keep out hogs and other cattle that shall tend to foul the spring. The spring to be dug six feet long from the head so wide as to be convenient for to dip a pail.”

In a world beleaguered by pollution and land mismanagement, we who are fortunate enough to live in these parts should not forget that clean water, one of our most precious commodities, is still to be found, constantly pouring forth in an unending flow, just as it has for thousands of years.

Appreciate it for what it is and don’t become complacent and take pure spring water for granted.

-- Bob Grigg