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Drilling for Water

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Duane George Chadwick
North Logan, Utah
November 14, 2018

Drilling for Water

Personal Experience Narrative

Informant: Duane George Chadwick is my maternal grandfather. He was born in La Grande, Oregon in the year 1925. His parents moved to Weiser, Idaho when he was very young and purchased a farm. Their home did not have running water or electricity until he was 14 years old. Many of his memorable stories happened on and around his family's farm.

Context: My grandfather currently lives in North Logan, Utah. He has always been a great story teller. Often, when he tells his stories, they are told so vividly that I can easily imagine what it was like to live on his family's farm, far away from civilization. He really loves his parents and siblings and has great respect for them. This is obvious, as he tells his stories which are filled with love for his family and the past. They were not wealthy farmers, but their intelligence and hard work made their home life very rich. Many people of all ages, have heard and enjoyed my grandpa's stories. He has told his stories at various church activities, the Lyric Theater, at Utah State University, as well as other venues. His stories kept his audiences captivated as he accompanied his memories with musical renditions on his musical saw, harmonica, guitar, and piano. Now, that he is on the brink of 94 years old, he usually tells his stories to his family. His descendants gather together and enjoy him sharing his memories from his colorful and powerful past.

Text: One of the most alarming things that you can have happen on a farm... actually there are a number of alarming things...but, the one I'll mention is when dad came in and said, "Our well has gone dry. The rod that pulls the water up was broken in two and I can't get any water." Well, we didn't have running water in a pipe like you do in the city. It all came out of the well. And we fortunately had three ten-gallon cans that we could go down to the neighbors a half mile away and get water that way but that was a headache (chuckle) and it was skimpy in terms of what we really needed. And so, we got a well driller in there to drill us a new well. We wanted a new well because the old one—water was kind of brackish (um) a hard water smell that meant there was quite a bit of Sulphur in the water. We thought there was no reason to

put up with that, we thought if we went deeper, we would get better water. So, we got the well driller in there and we authorized him to go 100 feet down instead of just the 60 down like our old well. He set up and went 100 feet and the hole was dry and a dad said, "Well, it has to be down there somewhere, go a hundred and fifty. And he went down a hundred and fifty and still no water. "Now we've got quite a lot of money tied up in the well and we can't abandon it now and end up with no water so go 200." And still no water and dad talked it over and decided to go 250. And that was dry. The deeper we went the more desperate it got. "So, go 300". Still it was dry. And, uh, nobody had ever drilled a well that deep in our country so we didn't know what was down there. "Well, go another." So now we are at 400 feet! And that was unheard of—going that deep. Still no water and finally dad said, "Well, go 450." And he didn't have any idea how he was going to pay for a well that deep cuz it was very expensive. And, uh, the driller got down to 450...then dad says, "Drill until you get to 460 and if you don't have it, well shut 'er down." And he drilled to 460 and there was no water. But dad was gone and it was about four in the afternoon and the well driller thought, "Well, I just as well keep drilling until six o'clock if I have to because the day's about shot anyway." And so, he went to 465 and nothing....no water! He decided to extend it further because he had nothing better to do that day and he went down another 2 feet and suddenly water came flying out of the hole! And it pumped itself up that 400 and actually it was 467 feet—the depth of that well. And it was powerful! It would pump water about 30 feet above the ground so that's how much pressure it had. It kept flowing and flowing and we thought, "This is too good to be true!" And all this happened back in about 1940. I was there visiting that old farmstead just last year and that well that we drilled some... what... 40, 60, 70, 80 years ago is still flowing...still pumping water out of that old well!

Texture: Grandpa was sitting on a sofa in his study. He was looking forward to this experience. He loves to tell stories and he had a very relaxed demeanor. He seemed a little tired, even though he told the story with poignant feelings and clear remembrance. His tone was peaceful and the reminiscent look on his face made it seem as if the story took place yesterday.

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