



From Your Commissioner

## Innovations on the Farm



I imagine that as long as man has been plowing fields and raising livestock he has been looking for ways to make farming better and easier on our bodies. As I was working on putting some conduit in the ground a few weeks ago I was reminded of one innovation, from over a hundred years ago, when we hit two lead pipes. This was on a farm my grandfather bought in the 1930's from the Dooley Family.

George N. Dooley was, aside from being a farmer, a Selectman and a State Representative. Since I have held both of those jobs, I have always thought of him fondly, even though he died more than 25 years before I was born. He was also a bit of an innovator. The farm house and the barn were both on a higher elevation than the well. I have never found any evidence of a well at higher point, so I am sure that it must have been a lot of work getting water to the cows and to the house. There was no electricity on the road at that time either.

Sometime early in the last century, George purchased a galvanized steel windmill and put it on top of the well. He then dug a trench from the well to the house and then from the other end of the house up to a cistern he built on a hill about 150 feet from the house. This was a high quality structure about 12 feet square and eight feet deep, built of concrete, lined and topped with brick and a good roof.

The line going up to the cistern was  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch lead pipe. I am sure that the windmill didn't pump a lot of water and there was no need to waste money on bigger pipe, as the total distance to the windmill must have approached 300 feet. Coming back down from the cistern to the house and then to the barn, was a  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch lead pipe. The Dooley Farm now had running water in both the house and in the barn.

I can tell you that it wasn't all easy digging either. While most of what we did last month was with a machine, there was some hand work, some of which required me to use a pick. I can only imagine how long it took to dig those trenches with just a pick and shovel. My father always insisted that we put our water lines down five feet, but when we hit those lines they were only down about three feet. On one hand that surprised me, but given the material they had to dig through, it was understandable.

Being poultry farmers having a tractor on the farm was not a high priority, but in 1956 my father, much to the disapproval of his father, purchased one. My dad told me that one of the first things he did with it was to take down the windmill. It had not been used in decades and it had become a nuisance; kids were always climbing it and it was in the way. He dragged it across the street and put it on the side of the hill right near the cistern.

About 20 years later he gave it to someone who planned to fix it up. I never did find out if that plan came together, but I like to think that windmill, with the name George N. Dooley stenciled on it, is still standing.

**Shawn N. Jasper-Commissioner**