## Drinking Water at its Best by Carol (Klenk) Heck

Madeira didn't always have city water piped into every home and building like it does today. In fact, city water was not available in Madeira until 1924-25. Before that, Madeira residents had wells and/or cisterns.

Wells operate by digging into the ground to a depth a little deeper than the water table. This is where the water naturally forms an aquifer; an underground water source. The aquifer is formed as rain and storm water seeps through layers of rock and soil acting as a natural filter. Pumps or other devices can be used to bring the water up out of the wells. (Electricity could have been used to pump the water from the wells as early as 1905-06.) As water is pumped out of the well, underground water from the surrounding aquifer seeps back in, replenishing the supply.

In this first picture (circa 1940's) is a very fine gentleman, Emil Klenk, my grandpa, who lived with his family at 7018 Miami Avenue. The 20th century pump that he is standing next to was made by David Kennedy Keller, known as the Colonel. It was made out of wood with sheet metal wrapped around it. It was not operated with electricity. This pump worked by cranking a handle which moved a chain down into the aquifer with cup-shaped attachments spaced evenly along the chain. The water would come out of the spout in spurts. (Incidentally, in the photo, the cast iron spout is detached and lying by the base.)

Charles, Maude, and Cleo Hosbrook lived next door to the Klenks. They had a well outside behind the kitchen and it had a stone wall around it. There was a pump on the back porch (seen to the right with Cleo) that got the water into the house. The Hosbrook's also had a cistern.

A cistern is an underground tank which collects and holds rainwater to be used for household and other uses. A system of gutters and downspouts direct the rainwater into the cistern. As a matter of health concern, cistern water that has run off from the rooftop, could contain contaminants from dirt, bacteria, mold, and bird droppings, therefore not readily used for drinking water.

I found a lovely article entitled "A Look at Yesterday" written by Regina Villiers in *The Memo,* a Madeira Schools Newsletter in May of 1991. She wrote about an interview that she

had with Durwood "Brownie" Morgan. "Brownie lived in Madeira since his childhood starting in 1921, until he left Madeira in 1975. When he was an adult, he and his wife Helen, owned a gift shop at 7122 Miami Avenue about where Stockyards Bank sits now. Brownie was remembering all the wells in Madeira that supplied 'the coldest and best water he ever tasted'. As a boy, Brownie Morgan lived on the corner of Laurel and Center where the post office is today. They had a cistern but not a well. Bill Watson's family had a well and lived a couple houses east of Brownie and shared his well water with the Morgan's. Brownie would fetch the water and carry the bucket home. He described the Watson well as follows; 'it was an old well covered with mossy, hand-split shingles, properly weathered. It was partially enclosed up to about waist high where there was a wide shelf for resting a bucket of water. The enclosure served to keep animals, debris, and humans from falling in. The space from the shelf to the gable roof was wide open. There was one support on each side. Those supports held the hewn-log windlass, with an iron clamp on one end to raise and lower a bucket tied to a rope. That's it! No buttons to push, no computers employed, and no higher education needed to operate it! You just lowered the bucket into the well and pulled it up, filled with water'. Another well that Brownie remembered was located in the Dones Avenue area at an old home that had been the residence of a family named Black. Their water bucket worked off of a pulley in a partially opened enclosure. Two more wells he remembered were on the Frank Curee property, (my own great grandfather), at 7000 Center Street at the right-angle bend of Railroad Avenue, and the second, was a standing hand pump alongside Camargo Road in the vicinity of the present-day Traditions. The Camargo Road pump had a watering trough below it. The most revered well was located on the east end of the railroad depot. It was a water pipe with a valve that let out more than an adequate supply for passers-by, school kids, workers, and baseball and soccer players. It was great water for drinking, and by throwing it on your face, it provided a wonderful cool-down. Brownie finished by saying 'none of the Madeira wells ever did run dry'." *[1] I would imagine this would be a correct statement since I had written previously that "fifteen feet below the surface of this area was an inexhaustible supply of pure water." *[2]

In the booklet, *Madeira Milestones*, it is written, "in 1869, a well was dug along the rail line in order to secure a water supply for the locomotives". *[3] The steam locomotive trains would stop here and take on water from the old water tank that was once located on the south side of the tracks close to the Madeira depot.

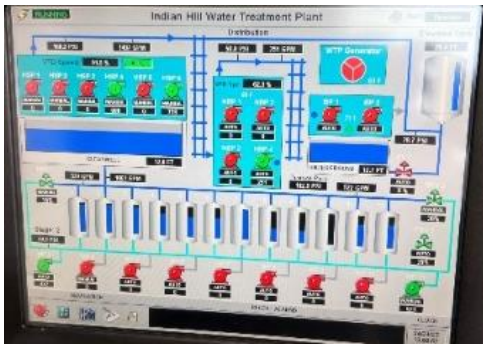
Regina Villiers reported in the *Suburban Life* newspaper, in 1995, that "a well (that had been) in Homer Hosbrook's back yard still exists in the back yard of a house there, now." *[4] Since the farm was gone by 1995, the well would have been a few lots west from Hosbrook Road on Miami Hills Drive. Maybe current homeowners don't even know wells and cisterns could be right below the surface in their yards today.

Which then brings me to Madeira city water. Madeira and Kenwood were getting water from the City of Cincinnati. In 1950, while H. Russell Brown was serving as Mayor of Madeira, "the city of Cincinnati had adopted a policy, that in order to secure water service from the city, those people building new homes were obligated to sign a statement to the effect, that if the time ever came when the city of Cincinnati attempted to annex the territory in which those homes were located, the signed statement to obtain water service was an affirmative vote that the signer

approved annexation of their property into the city of Cincinnati."*[5] That didn't feel right to Mayor Russ Brown, so he made sure to contract water service, from there on out, from the Village of Indian Hill.


I took a trip to Indian Hill Water works and got a very informative lesson. Indian Hill has 9 drilled wells, and because of the location of the plant, 6 are in Hamilton County and 3 are in Clermont County. Their turbine pumps get the water from the aquifer into the plant where the raw water is treated with a salt brine that acts as a water softener. The softening process is a back-and-forth mixture through 12 different tanks inside the building. Refer to the picture with the light blue tanks.


Fluoride for your teeth, chlorine for disinfection, and zinc for corrosion are then added for health and safety, (see white tanks). Fluoride occurs naturally in water. So even if it wasn't brought up to a beneficial level, we would still receive some fluoride as we drank the water. Indian Hill monitors and checks all component levels 4 times a day in their lab. There is also a live feed computer screen, seen here on the right, monitoring all aspects of the water system.




The pumping building has 6 pumps that supply water to residents and fill offsite holding tanks and the water tower on Miami Avenue. See picture at left.

This French Provincial style water tower was built in 1936 by The Public Works Administration. It was purchased from Cincinnati Water Works in 1949, as Indian Hill was establishing their own independent water works company. Now, there is also an underground holding tank at their Glendale Milford Road plant location.

Indian Hill now serves 15,000 customers with an average of 2.257 million gallons of clean water daily to the majority of

Indian Hill, Terrace Park, Camp Dennison, sections of Milford, about 2/3 of Madeira, a small area of Montgomery and parts of Columbia Township.

When I asked about well water being tastier than what we have today, I was told that well water contains natural minerals, calcium and magnesium being the most common. The degree of water hardness becomes greater as the calcium and magnesium content increases. Many bottled water companies put minerals into their water to achieve a certain desired taste. And while minerals make water more flavorful, it also increases the hardness.

Another thing that Indian Hill Water Works, and other companies have revolutionized is the hydrant systems. Without adequate water supply and pressure, firefighting would be compromised greatly. I don't think we want to go back to fighting fires without the hydrant systems.

We have come a long way securing this vital natural resource that is so necessary for life. Not only for drinking, cleaning, cooking, growing, flushing, electricity, and industry, we use our water for many things. Let us take a moment to think and appreciate clean water and how much it impacts us every hour of every day. Water…it's the best!


1. *Memo*-Madeira Schools Newsletter, "A Look at Yesterday" Wells and Water Remembered, by Regina Villiers, May 1991.
2. *Suburban Homes for Business Men*, by Richard Nelson, entered accordingly to Act of Congress in 1874.
3. *Madeira Milestones, prepared on the Occasion of Madeira's 75th Anniversary of Incorporation,* forward by Frank Bostwick,
4. *The Suburban Life,* "Farming, Love for Animals all in the Hosbrook Family", by Regina Villiers, July 26, 1995, pg. A3.
5. *Written remembrances of former Mayor H. Russell Brown*, by H. Russell Brown, speech delivered on October 15, 1975 at a Madeira Historical Society dinner at Madeira Manor honoring former mayors.



Special thanks to Ron Freson, Chief Water Plant Operator, at the Village of Indian Hill Water Works.

Photographs courtesy of Carol (Klenk) Heck and Cleo Hosbrook.
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Also see, "Water, Creeks, and Ponds" under Drinking Water, Creeks and Ponds.