

10-11-12 Shoes, Shovels and Champions

Picture a court trial in session. The evidence is heard but people have their own agendas and issues. Maybe it is even a really hot, steamy day and the jurors just want out; to see that baseball game or just go home. You know the movie I'm thinking of: *Twelve Angry Men*. Great movie!

Real life can be like a great movie, too: complicated, individual agendas and lots of emotions. Add to the mix a historical backdrop dating to the Post Civil War industrial era and we have tradition! It is challenging, to say the least, to change traditions but it can be done. Sometimes it must be done because time brings evidence necessitating it.

The Industrial Revolution was a whirlwind of changes in new directions. It brought work and innovations, along with sweat shops and child labor but that is a story for another day. It was a different time and people needed the work. Factories sprung up here and there, dotting New England wherever there was a stream for a wheel to provide hydro power. The Ames family made a fortune in shovels from such a stream, providing shovels for the world. The City of Brockton made shoes, another necessity. The shoe making work brought more people, many of them seeking respite from other countries. The people needed other basic necessities, including water. Brockton's water supply had outgrown its needs and so, way back in 1899, Chapter 356 Act approved Silver Lake in Kingston as an additional water supply for Brockton. It seemed like a good idea at the time. I guess.

As time marched on, though, the Industrial Revolution produced more than shoes and shovels; it produced pollution, sickness, poor housing and a host of public health problems. As a result, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other environmental agencies saw enough evidence to say Stop! We began to see the Water Pollution Act, Water Quality Act, Clean Water Act (so many ways to define clean water!), Safe Drinking Water Act, MA Inter-basin Transfer Act and more.

And yet, in 1964, the City of Brockton was given permission via an act of legislation, allowing water from the Halifax Monponsett Ponds to be diverted (within certain times and with conditions) to Kingston's Silver Lake, where it would be treated and sent over to the City of Brockton. In order for that to happen, a dam had to be built to prevent the Monponsett Ponds from flowing westerly toward the Taunton River, so that it could be diverted over to Silver Lake which flows to the Jones River. That legislature created the stagnation of the Monponsett Ponds because they could not flow as nature intended and it moved water from one watershed to another and over to another. It is not nice to fool Mother Nature!

Why was that legislature allowed? It was enacted, in response to severe droughts, as "an emergency law". That emergency ended a long time ago and yet the legislation remains. Both the 1899 and the 1964 legislature provide insight and foresight by giving oversight ; to the state Department of Public Health that is, and yet, that oversight has been lacking. Tradition and

letting things slide have resulted in a cascade of effects expanding well beyond the algae filled Monponsett Ponds, flooded yards and pollution diverted to Silver Lake. Water is wasted by being taken that is not even used by Brockton; instead flooding into the Jones River. Downstream ponds are also affected with stagnation. Some fish ladders have only a trickle of water, not enough for fish passage, while others are flooded and the herring cannot make it past the rushing water.

In order to make sense of all this crazy contentious mess, Halifax applied for and received a grant last spring for a SWMI grant (Sustainable Water Management Initiative: has a nice ring to it, doesn't it?). The company of engineers and scientists of Princeton Hydro reviewed decades of data to arrive at recommendations. And you know what? There are achievable ways to handle this!

This is not us versus them, although it feels like it much of the time. Brockton is the City of Champions and can achieve independence through cooperation. What should they do? What will work?

How does this real life movie end? Well, I'd like you to hear the evidence for yourself, as presented by Princeton Hydro on Thursday, October 17, 2013 at either 3:30 or at 7:00 p.m. at the Silver Lake High School conference room on the second floor. It is the same presentation; two opportunities to attend and to ask questions. It is great science presented in layman's terms.

I hope to see you there. You won't be sequestered. You will be informed and intrigued on this extensive and critical issue.

We want shoes but we would live without them. We want shovels but we could find a way to dig without one. We cannot live without water. Be a champion and learn how to protect our water supplies.

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