Water Witching

Water witching, or dowsing, is the process of divining underground water with the use of a rod or other implement. It can be done over the ground, or over a map. There is no scientific evidence that dowsing works any better than guessing where water might be, and yet there are many generations of people who have been successful water witches.

Some believe that science has snuffed out folk beliefs in the supernatural. Not so, for science has been around for a long time, and it still cannot explain how something such as water witching could possibly work. A few large water companies and mining companies pay for the abilities of a water witch to find water and other resources for them. Though science has come a long way, sometimes a good water witch can work just as well, and be far less expensive.

The first mention of using a rod to discover water, besides the Bible, came in 1630. Before that, there are tales of divining the future with a rod, as well as lost objects and detecting coal veins. Those who can find water can usually also find oil. Many who claim the gift of water witching also claim some other gift as well, whether the ability to heal or a psychic relationship with the world.

The folklore of water witching exists in Utah because the need for water was great, and the ability of scientists to discover that water was not faith promoting.

The Gift of Water Witching (FA 01 124)

The rod that a water witch uses is normally some kind of forked tree branch, though wire or other methods can be employed. When using a branch, a new one must be picked for each witching, because the branch can break a bit upon discovering water.

Occasionally people who live near water witches think they are a bit crazy, though that does not stop them from soliciting their services when a new well is needed. Many people accept the practice without much ado.

Some water witches can witch other things, like eggs and minerals, though they get a bit closed mouthed when asked to speak about their abilities in too much detail. Beliefs about the power are highly individual, and ideas about things they must do or not do to keep their powers vary widely between individuals. Some water witches have found that their abilities are always in place no matter what they do, while others have specific behavior codes they must follow to retain their powers.
Some feel that their power lessens if they use it for material gain, while others have made quite a business of flying all around the world to help businesses and governments discover the resources within their lands.

A small town in Idaho had trouble with the well location that a geologist had picked out that turned out to contain only enough water for eight households. Through a thorough discussion of their options, the name of a local water witch came up. He agreed to witch the land, and though initially the spot he picked was on private property, he eventually found a water vein on the public lands, and they drilled there, providing over a hundred new water hook ups.

An English water witch became well so known for her work that she received offers to be flown to other countries to witch water for them. She went to both Canada and Australia, and was very successful helping with public works projects.

The town of Woodruff, Arizona was sold to settlers who decided to live there after water witching. Unlike many of the other settlements, the town had abundant water, and even experienced regular floods.

**Water Witching In the Scientific Age (FA 01 209)**

Some water witches believe their gifts come from a higher power, and they are more wary of using it lightly. Some who already believe in a God before they discovered their abilities have difficulties reconciling their beliefs with their gift. Some are reluctant to share the details of their gift, but a few are loquacious enough to grant interviews and reveal insight on their process.

Water witching does not appear to have any direct genealogical progression, though those who have relatives with the ability seem more likely to try their own hand at it and discover their own powers. The ability to water witch depends somewhat on the lifestyle of the witch. Each water witch discovers though trial and error, what makes their gift go away. For those who believe water witching to be a spiritual gift, their faith is an important factor in their ability, and must be consistently strengthened if they want to use their gift.

Others believe that there is a scientific explanation for water witching. They believe that water sends out electric waves, and some people are more skilled at picking them up than others. One particularly scientific minded individual claimed that Moses was only able to find water in a rock through this method, not through any sort of miracle. When witching for water, this man chooses to search
geographically for the area most likely to contain water, then witch the area to see where the two methods overlap. Only there will he drill for a well.

Some people can witch for minerals. A woman in southern Utah discovered her ability to witch for expensive materials like gold and platinum, and used it to find a vein for a mining company. She doesn’t use a stick; she uses a brazing rod fixed into a C clamp. A brazing rod is usually an accessory to welding. It is the filler metal that is melted onto the fixed pieces of metal to stick them together.

After the location of the water is witched, the depth can apparently also be witched. A coiled wire bobber can be held above the location of the water, and the number of times it bobs correlates to the number of feet that the well diggers will have to dig to get to the water.

Unsupported by any legitimate scientific studies, it is easy and even tempting to dismiss the art of water witching as a bunch of luck and guesswork. Whatever it is, it is part of a cultural heritage that does no harm, and has helped many people when they needed precious water to survive, and will continue to help people as long as people still believe in it.