

Memorabilia

Milton Sincell died in 1948, and I bought some engineering things from his estate; among them a four-foot-long tee square. He had salvaged it from the dam engineer's office when the work was completed. Now, each time I use it I recall the rainy day that I sat in his office and heard Milton, Frank, and "Mac" tell about what happened "when they built the dam..."

**Yough Hydro-Electric Corp.
Spillway Wall, May 2, 1925.**



Brenneman Well Drilling

Written by **Dan Whetzel**
New Photography by **Lance C. Bell**

The Brenneman family can proudly state that its business is closely associated with the development of Garrett County, Maryland. The Brennemens can also state that four generations have operated the well drilling company that began with founder Aubrey C. Brenneman in 1930, making it one of western Maryland's oldest continuously owned family businesses. Each generation has maintained the dedication to hard work established by Aubrey Brenneman more than eight decades ago when he became involved with the building of Deep Creek Lake.

Mr. Brenneman was born in 1901 on a farm located in Thayerville, Maryland. At the age of 21, he walked a distance of two miles from his family farm to the construction site of a dam being built by the Youghiogheny Electric Power Company. The young man's long walk was rewarded when he landed a job as fireman on a steam powered drilling rig. His 5:00 am starting time, 4:00 pm quitting time, and two mile walks made for long work days.

The Youghiogheny Electric Power company, through a Delaware chartered company called Eastern Land Corporation, began buying up real-estate for the development

of Deep Creek Lake in 1923, and subsequently started building the breastworks and other land features that would create the impoundment. The contractor used two steam powered rigs to drill holes which were blasted by dynamite, thereby creating the rock and earthen fill material necessary for constructing the dam's fortifications. Aubrey Brenneman's experience with the steam powered rigs later proved to be useful when a deep well was required on property he purchased in 1930.

Mr. Brenneman decided to take on the task of drilling a well if machinery could be located, so he returned to the dam site in hopes of securing a rig. Two machines remained at the area where he worked years earlier and a request for permission to rent one of them for personal use was issued through written correspondence; the contractor graciously agreed. While in the process of drilling a well on his property, two neighbors requested that Brenneman perform the same service for them. A second correspondence to the contractor arranged for the purchase of the used rig, and A.C. Brenneman was in business!

The Great Depression created economic hardship across the country and business owners worked extra hard to make ends meet. In 1932-1933, Mr. Brenneman coped with the economic downturn by making arrangements with the Works Progress Administration (WPA) to haul dirt from Piney Mountain, thereby enabling the purchase of a Ford dump truck that he used for the job. Over the years his company performed a variety of jobs, including drilling coal mine ventilation shafts, elevator shafts, blast holes for quarries, and foundation holes.



About 1932; Aubrey Brenneman and son, John, on a homemade tractor made from a Model T Ford. The front tires are solid rubber.

Right inset: An early drilling rig.

Bottom inset: 1943 GMC 6x6 truck with drilling rig.



In 1950, the company name was changed to A.C. Brenneman and Son for the purpose of incorporating John Brenneman, Aubrey's son, as part owner. The company continued to grow over the years, purchasing new equipment and increasing shop and storage space. Additional family members affiliated with the business during the next two decades included, John J. Brenneman, Daniel B. Brenneman, Larry D. Brenneman. In the 1970s, A.C. Brenneman and Son became Brenneman Well Drilling, Inc.

Today, Larry Brenneman and his sons, Mike and Doug, still own and operate Brenneman Well Drilling Incorporated in Accident, Maryland, thereby marking the fourth generation of family members to guide the company. Unlike Aubrey Brenneman who walked two miles before firing a steam boiler, the Brenneman's today operate 550 horse power diesel rigs for drilling jobs. While there are obvious differences between the generations and working



conditions, Larry points out that “Drilling wells is still hard work but it is rewarding work. We recognize that our work is life sustaining. If it weren’t for the well drilling industry and all its technology, everyone would have to live near a stream, river, or other sources of fresh water. Water is our most precious resource.”

According to Larry Brenneman, a majority of Garrett County residents use well water which keeps the current owners busy. They have also been doing Geo-thermal wells for heating and cooling. As he notes, “Our reputation goes back to 1930, so you can be assured of getting the best well system that is possible. The Brenneman’s have always taken pride in their work for four generations.”



Photo above: Larry Brenneman (center) and sons, Mike and Doug.

Right: Today’s equipment has come a long way from what it was eighty years ago compared to the original equipment shown on the previous page.



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