

Stoves and Fire-building

There are four indoor heating stoves, two kerosene and two wood. The two kerosene are located side by side next to the head and connected to the flue which is a part of the building. The stoves are fed from two tanks, one on each stove which hold about seven gallons each. They are turned on in five steps: First, turn the metal rod sticking out of the top of the tank counter-clockwise until it can be lifted (then release); second, depress the small metal finger which sticks out from the control housing (away from the stove) until it clacks; third, turn the heat control knob (or the long rod itself if the knob is loose) until the dial on the control housing reads "6"; fourth, wait -- that's right, just sit back and relax for about five minutes; and fifth, open first the outer door and then the inner door on the side of the stove, light a small piece of paper (about half a napkin) and drop it into the center of the stove. If you are lucky you can watch the kerosene start. There is no danger in this operation if the stove has been off for more than an hour. If the stove does not start, stir the ashes around with a long stick and try lighting it again. If that fails you must wait longer -- up to fifteen minutes.

The tanks are filled from the copper tubing which enters the building at the same place that the water supply does, in the corner, on the floor, just outside the head wall. To turn on the supply first the valve at the top of the hill on one of the two 55 gallon ~~tanks~~ drums must be turned on. Then a second valve must be turned on just where the line enters the building near the floor. Finally the valves which empty into the tanks on the stoves may be opened. DO NOT LEAVE THE STOVES WHILE THEY ARE FILLING! This has led to large and dangerous pools of kerosene on the floor. To turn off the system it is only necessary to turn off the valve near the floor and the valves at each tank.

To insure proper heating some maintenance is required. About twice (at least) a year the ashes collecting in the bottom should be vacuumed out. Under normal conditions this is sufficient unless a loss in heating ability becomes apparent. One other step of importance is the cleaning of the pipe system. If carbon is allowed to build up due to over-heating it will fill the pipe completely and force all the fumes into the room, creating a choking atmosphere and distributing a black soot over everyone and everything in the room -- avoid this at all costs. Take the whole system apart (remembering where each piece goes) and hold it over a large garbage can, then scrape the inside with a long stick. Replace the pipes and connect them with nails in the holes which are already in place (or should be if they are put together properly.) These pipes should be wire-brushed and painted once a year, usually the fall.

Finally, a word or two about the operation of the stoves. After they have been lit and are running at full tilt, they should be turned down to a lower level. The stove with the wire fuel gage should be run at about "3" and the one with the glass gage at "5" (or "6" if really needed). Do not run the former at "6" for any length of time or carbon will build up rapidly.

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To turn the stoves off the first three steps are repeated in reverse. Three, turn the heat control toward "1" and beyond until it stops. Two, push up on the metal finger on the control housing until it clicks. One, (and here's the tricky one) replace the metal rod into its socket at the bottom of the tank. This must be done by feel and often will require a minute or three of playing before you can screw it in (clock-wise). When it is seated, turn it snugly into place.

The wood stoves are in the boat deck area, between the workbench and the ^{kitchen} east wall. They are connected to five inch pipe (the kerosene pipe is six inch) which passes through the wall about three feet above and four feet to the ~~sights~~ left of the stoves. Outside the pipe rises about fifteen feet to a "T" section aligned parallel to the east wall. The shorter, rectangular stove is affectionately called "The Great Pumpkin" and was reserected from under Norm Carpenter's house in Springfield, Vt. during the winter of 60-61. The round stove is the better for quick fires and in general, throws less smoke and is easier to control than The Great Pumpkin. Wood for these stoves is piled along the kitchen wall and in the corner created by fiberboard. The wood is best stored split in at least quarters. Separate piles should be maintained for the split, unsplit and finely split pieces of wood. A box of chips and bark from the chopping and splitting is kept in the corner nearest the stoves.

To start a fire in either fireplace the following steps are recommended (all Boy Sprouts lend an ear --): First, clear all the ashes from the previous fire off the parts of the grate which have holes in them -- this provides plenty of air for your fire and will greatly reduce the chance of filling the room with smoke -- which has driven more than one date from the room screaming for the odor of her hair!) Be sure that all the bottom openings of the stove are open; this gives you light to see by and allows air to enter. Second, you are ready to start building -- use thin slivers of wood and bark criss-cross or tepee style right on the grate. Ball about three pieces of newspaper and place them under the grate (in the round stove) or under the pile (before you make it) in the Great Pumpkin. Then ball another piece of paper and put it on top of your fire. Finally, light the piece on top first and when it is going, light the bottom pieces. This will start the draft with hot air which is relatively free of smoke before the smoke from the wood begins and it will rise instead of leaking out through the cracks -- in very cold weather you might even burn about five or six pieces of paper to start the draft and melt any snow which has gathered in the pipes. Do not try to start two fires at once, make sure one is burning with little or no smoke before the second is lit.

Once this small pile is burning, add small pieces no bigger than two fingers wide, making sure that they do not crush the little fire. Once these are at the height of their usefulness and embers are visible, add pieces which are about 1/8 of a small log. These rather small pieces will guarantee a hot fire with little smoke in the shortest time -- do not try to rush things.

DCYC Continuity Folder

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When the fire is burning brightly, it may be slowed down if desired by closing the doors at the bottom of the stove. This will reduce the supply and partially choke the fire -- it will tend to cause smoke if there is wood which has not started burning yet or if the pieces are ~~very~~ larger than an eighth of a log. The damper in the pipe at the left should not be used unless there are only coals and embers in both fireboxes. A hint for reducing smoke when only the round stove is in use -- close the drafts on the Great Pumpkin so that cold air cannot be sucked into the pipes by the hot air from the round stove.

The only care these stoves require are a yearly or twice-yearly wire-brushing and painting with a good black stove paint. The pipes should be checked at least once a year and should be painted also -- don't forget the outside sections while you're at it. A warning - when the paint is new (after two days drying) it will smoke and give off fumes for the first few fires;; this is normal but not exactly recommended for parties! It is a good idea to keep a supply of matches in a glass jar (with a lid) hidden somewhere where it can be found if no one has brought matches.