

Discharge of Raw Sewage Into the Eastchester Creek and the Bronx River by the City of Mount Vernon.

To the Honorable Members of the State Board of Health of the State of New York:

Gentlemen:—We, the undersigned, residents of the city of Mount Vernon and that portion of the town of Eastchester which fronts on, or is adjacent to, the stream of tide water known and designated on the maps of Westchester county as Eastchester creek, would most respectfully appal to your honorable Board for relief from a continual menace to the public health and property interests of your petitioners, caused by the emptying of the sewerage of said city of Mount Vernon into the water of said Eastchester creek.

The said nuisance as now existing is a source from which your petitioners fear may spring contagion and death to many who are now residents of the territory, as mentioned above, unless means of a speedy abatement of said nuisance is soon found. In explanation of the situation as has and now exists we would most respectfully submit the following facts as proof of the gravity of the danger from these ever-polluted waters, which is unquestionably caused by the vast amount of sewerage matter emptied into the said creek by the trunk sewer of the city of Mount Vernon.

The sewer in question has its outlet fully two miles and a half from the outlet of Eastchester creek into Pelham bay, which in turn empties into Long Island sound. The creek for a distance of two miles or thereabout, south of the outlet of the sewer, will in no part of it exceed 60 feet in width at low water and in many places it is not navigable for a flat-bottom row boat. At high or flood tide it outspreads salt meadows on either side of it, which lie adjacent to the territory named of

both Eastchester and the southerly portion of the city of Mount Vernon. In these meadows the waters have formed hundreds of natural basins and canals, which are covered entirely, in most instances, at high tide and left partly filled as the tide lowers. In these basins and over the meadows is left at such times a vast amount of the matter and filth from the sewers of Mount Vernon, from which on a warm spring, summer or autumn day, the deadly sickening odors that foretell pestilence and contagion sweep over the surrounding country, causing malarial sickness in many instances. It is well known here from experience that the bodies of animals drowned in the creek will never leave its waters unless by human aid. Foreign matter emptied into it likewise never leaves it, but floats on the surface until rotted by the warm sun. It compels the residents to close their windows and doors on the warm summer nights because of the vile stench that arises therefrom.

Aside from this great danger to public health of at least 50 families can also be added that of the children whose pleasures are derived from outdoor sports in the summer, yet must breathe the foul and disease-charged air permitted and abetted by the local health authorities and by the predecessors of your honorable Board.

As further proof of the dangerous pollution of these waters we would add that—

The health officer of the city of Mount Vernon, Dr. Archibald T. Banning, early this summer caused to be placed near the banks of the creek, and not a hundred yards from the town line of Eastchester, two signs warning all persons against "bathing in its waters, as it was polluted." Thus the health authorities of the city of Mount Vernon have erected a monument to their criminal knowledge that they are maintaining a nuisance that may cause sickness and death among their own, and adjacent people. In addition to the matter of public health may be added that of the property interests. As a matter of fact, property in both Mount Vernon and Eastchester adjacent to the Eastchester creek has decreased in value fully 25 per cent. and in one instance we can authoritatively state that a piece of property which could have been sold previous to the completion of the sewer for \$8,000 can not now be sold for one-half that amount.

Many instances of a similar nature can be cited.

Finally, we again appeal to your honorable Board for the relief asked.

(Signed)

NATHAN JOHNSTON.
 WILLIAM F. JOHNSTON.
 FREDERICK H. HART.
 LAWRENCE B. HOLLER.
 MRS. S. B. ODELL.
 ALEXANDER M. LANE.
 OTTO MARTINENGR.
 HENRY MAGUIRE.
 JOHN HANSON.
 THOMAS BEATTIE.
 WM. E. DAILY.
 HENRY A. FAY.
 JOHN GRIGG FAY.
 BAL. BERTEL.

STATE OF NEW YORK, }
 WESTCHESTER COUNTY, } ss. :

On the 17th day of October, in the year of our Lord, 1894, before me personally came Nathan Johnston, William F. Johnston, Frederick H. Hart, Lawrence B. Holler, Mrs. S. B. Odell, Alexander M. Lane, Otto Martinengr, Henry Maguire, and John Hanson, all of Eastchester, N. Y., and Thomas Beattie, William E. Daily, Henry A. Fay, John Grigg Fay, and Bal. Bertel, of the city of Mount Vernon, N. Y., who, being each and individually sworn, do depose and say that the contents of the foregoing petition, as hereunto annexed, are true, to the best of their knowledge and belief.

THOS. C. HITCHCOCK,
Notary Public in and for Westchester County.

NEW YORK, November 8, 1894.

HON. CAMPBELL W. ADAMS, *Chairman of Drainage Committee, State Board of Health:*

Dear Sir:—In the matter of the several complaints made by the mayor of the city of Yonkers and the inhabitants of Sherwood park relative to the discharge of raw sewage into the Eastchester creek and the Bronx river by the city of Mount Vernon, which matter was by you referred to me for examination and report, I would respectfully submit the following:

As alleged in the complaints, the city of Mount Vernon does discharge sewage, without being treated, into both Eastchester creek and the Bronx river, and it is also a fact that the State Board of Health, by resolution passed June 29, 1894, called the attention of the commissioner of public works of that city to the matter, with a request that they remedy the existing evil as speedily as possible.

At a conference had to-day with the health authorities of Mount Vernon I learned that plans are being perfected for a system of sewage purification by means of filtration, which plans will soon be submitted to the Board for approval. The proposed plan contemplates the discharge, after treatment, of all sewage into Eastchester creek, the sewage from the Bronx river slope being carried through the tunnel to the Eastchester creek side of the city.

I was assured by the authorities of Mount Vernon that the plant will be completed and in working order in the spring of the coming year or as soon thereafter as possible.

Comparative estimates are now being made by the city engineer relative to the cost of construction and maintenance of plants for disposal by means of chemical precipitation and by filtration, with every probability of the latter plan being adopted. The tunnel proposed for the purpose of conveying sewage from the Bronx river side of the town to the proposed disposal works will be a costly item, but its construction will obviate the necessity of discharging sewage into that river and the construction and maintenance of more than one disposal plant. The discharge of sewage into the Bronx was only intended as a temporary expedient pending the construction of the proposed tunnel. In view of the many complaints arising from the discharge of raw sewage into the streams named, I would respectfully recommend that the attention of the authorities of the city of Mount Vernon be again called to the importance of providing a remedy for existing conditions, and that they be urged to construct, without unnecessary delay, some means of sewage purification. The population along the Bronx river is large and rapidly increasing, and it is highly important that the water of that stream shall be kept in such condition as shall not make it a menace to the public health.

Respectfully submitted.

M. SCHENCK,

Consulting Engineer.