

Love Canal Waste Might Have Been Dumped Elsewhere

Gannett News Service

WHEATFIELD — Wastes encountered during the construction of the LaSalle Expressway in 1968 were excavated from the Love Canal and buried in a town dump on Nash Road, the Niagara Gazette reported in today's morning editions.

The expressway ran across the Love Canal area in the city of Niagara Falls. At the time of the excavation, no one knew of the dangers posed by the canal.

In a copyrighted story by reporter Ras Tyson, state environmental officials said yesterday they were unaware of the disposal at the Nash Road site, just north of the North Tonawanda city line and abutting a Forbes Street-Forbes Terrace residential area.

Since 1978, the year Love Canal hit national headlines, state Department of Environmental Conservation reports have listed a former county dump on Witmer Road as the recipient of the excavated canal wastes.

Contrary to DEC records, 1968 documents obtained by the Gazette, the newspaper reported, clearly show that an estimated 2,600 tons of Love Canal waste was hauled to the town dump, with permission from local, county and state authorities.

DEC officials said they would launch an immediate investigation, including a review of all previous

testing data from the Nash Road site.

"I'm not aware that this disposal activity took place on Nash Road," said DEC engineer Peter Buechi.

"We are certainly going to do some checking on this," Buechi said, noting that county officials previously ordered the town to develop a plan to seal off the leaking dump.

The dump was cited as a potential environmental threat following a county Health Department inspection report in 1961 that recommended additional tests because of "the proximity of houses along Forbes Street and the potential for (chemical) migration," the newspaper said.

North Tonawanda Mayor Betty Hoffman expressed disbelief, saying "Oh my God, how could they ever have allowed that?"

Hoffman said the construction of homes on Forbes Street was approved by a prior administration, but may have been done without knowledge of the nearby dump.

She also said the Town of Wheatfield should be held responsible for the dumping activities.

"If the Town of Wheatfield did approve it, then I assume they took the liability," she said.

The Town Board, according to records, voted on May 6, 1968, to allow the disposal of canal wastes in the Nash Road dump.