

The History of the Silver Lake Association (SLA) Chapter #4

Silver Lake was noted as a vacation destination, ***“Vacationland.”*** The continuation of this title depended on the SLCOA. Communication to the cottage owners about the issues and the plan to remedy the lake pollution had to be accomplished. The SLCOA has already begun to petition property owners around the lake for a sewer district. Long before 1972 the SLCOA were taking steps to clean up the pollution in Silver Lake. The people involved dedicated their time and effort to a cause that was necessary to preserve the Silver Lake Community. This organization, formed with volunteers, used what resources they had to perform this very important task.

An excerpt from a letter written to the SLCOA (1970) from Mr. Dunkleberg stated: ***“Over fertilization from run-off and the leaching’s from hundreds of septic systems in the watershed, amongst the natural decaying of algae and water plants are the main source of these algae blooms. What does this mean for the future of Silver Lake? As the load of decaying organic material builds up in the lake through the next several seasons, the oxygen content of the water will begin to fall until the time comes when the oxygen falls to zero. In that summer most of the fish and aquatic plants in the lake will die. The consequences would be rotting piles of algae and fish, and a rapid drop in area property values. Silver Lake would possibly end as a vacation destination for many if not all.”***

In response to the letter sent from Mr. Dunkleberg. ***“The year you wrote your letter (1970), the SLCOA has already begun the investigation of what had to be done to clean up Silver Lake. This was under the leadership of C.P. Smith, the president of SLCOA, a man with extensive engineering background. Sewers were the answer and State and Federal money was available for this purpose. Petitions had to be circulated and signed by property owners to get a sewer district formed.***

Time was of the essence because each day that passes the cost of the construction of the sewer system increases. Three-hundred-fifty petitions that were signed at the time were brought to Attorney’s Brown & Brown of Warsaw, New York. Still, they needed more cooperation from the towns of Castile and Perry. More signed petitions were forthcoming from the Institute Campers, Country Club, and Silver Lake Marina. Mrs. Phyllis Brown (Austin Tract) and Dr. Humphrey (Luther Tract) finally received the petitions for the west side of the lake. The Drive-in Theater and the YMCA Camp declined to sign. The SLCOA needed to do more publicity about their programs of the Sewer System and the prevention of the lake pollution. The primary plan for the sewers was approved by the Department of Environmental Conservation. A debate was being made that the west side of the lake sewage flow is not enough to warrant inclusion. More time had to be made to study this matter.

The work to get a sewer system around the lake was just getting started. So much more had to be done for the planning and design of the sewer system. The property owners on the Perry side of the lake now had to have their septic tanks pumped and emptied into the Perry sewer system by individual contractors; this was ordered by the Department of Health. Fred Ball said that the area sewage contractors were all sent letters to submit a bid for sewage disposal; Mr. Thomas was the only contractor to reply. When the contractor started discharging waste into the Perry sewers, offensive odors were being noticed. Joe Elias said the matter will be discussed. Accommodations were then made for dumping at the sewage disposal plant on Water Street.

Consultants had stated that the Perry system is big enough to take the whole lake. Charles Denver and Laverne Ingraham, project engineers of McFarlin-Johnson, reported on the plan of study and the facilities plan for the sewers. It was said that the best alternative would be for the Silver Lake area be covered by the Perry plant. The original estimate was 2.7 million dollars for Castile alone, but at this date and time it is estimated at 3 million dollars. The cost of Perry being the sewer district will be less. The town Boards of Castile and Perry now assure their full cooperation with this effort.

As proof that the sewer disposal of waste was working, the Tucker swimming area now tests pure after using this system for two years. The design phase of the sewers was completed and would be hoped to start construction in the spring of 1978 once the facility plan was approved. According to the consulting engineer, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and the Environmental Protection Agency said the facility plan should be approved by August and the design plan in October.

The archeological survey work was done and the facility plan and money commitment should be received by the end of September. The sewer project should start next spring on the east side of the lake which is the most populated. The SLCOA was a huge player in getting this project initiated for the good of the whole Silver Lake Community. The relentless dedication of the SLCOA leadership dealing with all the obstacles and changing the culture of the community was just beginning. As of the 1981 Annual Meeting the sewer project was currently on schedule with a goal for bids by the Fall. In August of this year the sewer project passed the audit and control and was on schedule. Gil Landon reported the sewer construction bids would be advertised by mid-October and awarded by January of 1982. The low bid for the construction was \$3,708,625 which was \$780,530 under the engineers estimate. It is expected to award the contract between August 10th and 15th and the construction would start any time after that. One of the hold-ups is Mt. Morris who is one of the big users of Silver Lake water. At the June 11th, 1983 meeting, Guest speaker Jack Gilligan, Office Manager of CMH Construction Co., informed the directors that were present, the sewer construction was completed in the Institute and it was underway at the Old Orchard Beach area. The construction would also commence on the southwest side of the lake. Directors Jim Sorenson and Rev. Winters of the Institute commended the construction firm for their cooperation with cottage owners and their respect of property. The President's report stated: For the first time in nine years of being President, Dr. Humphrey saw tangible evidence that sewers were becoming a reality. He stated that it was most rewarding when he saw the work of the SLCOA Officers and Directors was finally going to pay off.

The schedule for completion was November of 1984. After this date the cottage owners would be able to hook up to the sewer line and be able to divert their wastes into the disposal plant. There were approximately 850 cottages that would hook up. They felt that the work would be done in early August which included restoration of roads and lawns.

The final message (July 1984) from the President of the SLCOA Dr. W.M. Humphrey read: ***“Ten years ago I was elected President of this association with a pledge I would push for programs to clean up the lake, namely sewers, a new dam, and curtailment of agricultural run-off. With tremendous help from the Officers, Directors, and members I have been able to accomplish most of this program. I have therefore tendered my resignation as of this year. I want to say this has been a great experience and I have enjoyed the people I have met. I have endured the frustrations of bureaucracy which I never knew existed. I thank all of you for putting up with me all these years. The new slate of officers will carry on this organization to even greater endeavors. I am sure you will give them all the support you have given me. Thank you.”***

The sewer system was not the only massive project the SLCOA had to endure. The Railroad service from Perry to Silver Springs was discontinued. A situation with the railroad property had to be resolved. This could hold up the whole sewer project if not cancel it altogether.