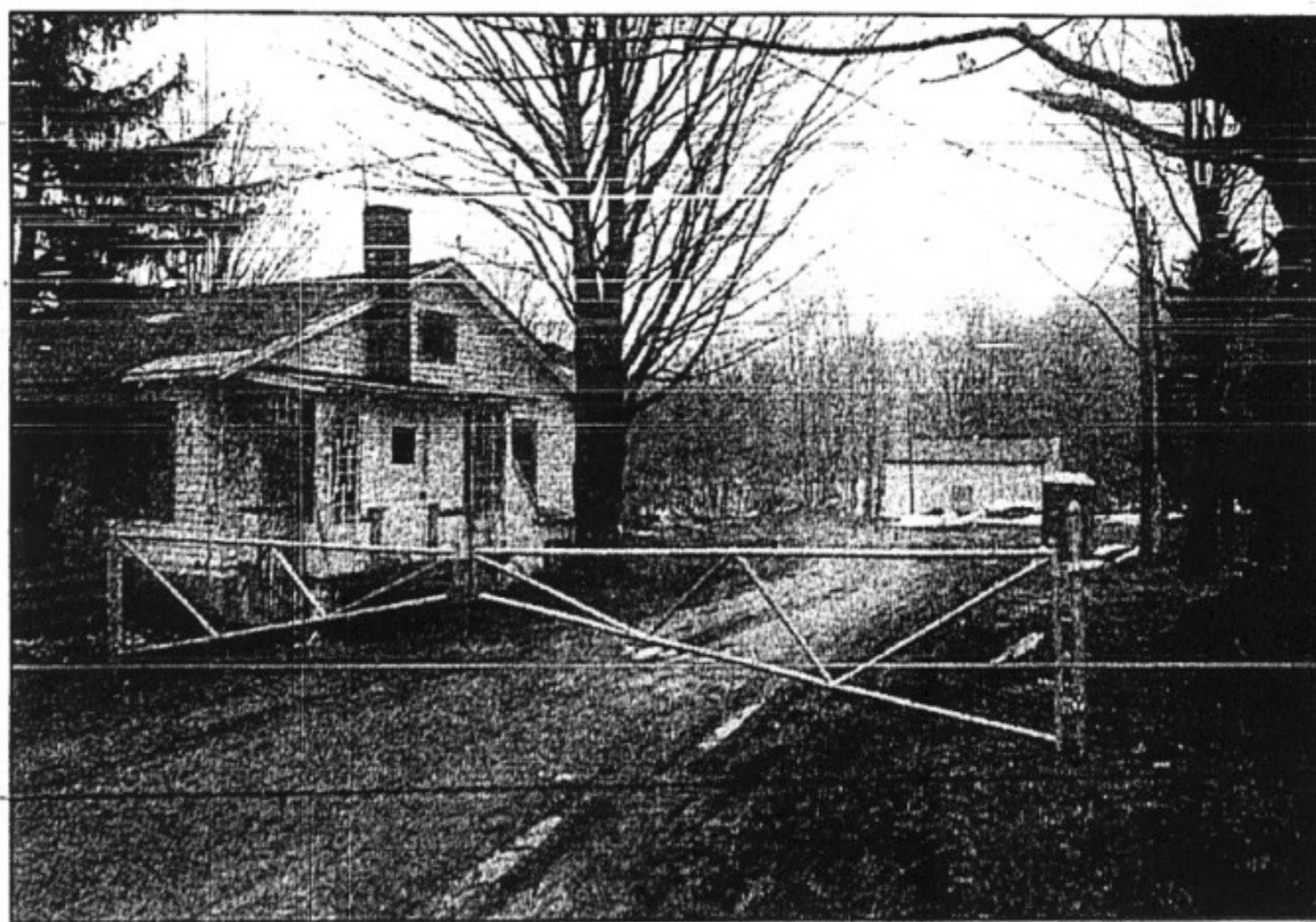


LOCAL

OBSERVER-DISPATCH

'We've been very lucky at this site'

PCBs contained to hazardous waste area on Valley View Road, says DEC



By BRADFORD S. LUPPINO, Observer-Dispatch

The Valley View Road site in New Hartford where PCBs have contaminated the soil.

Water board assures residents of water's safety

Environment: State and city officials are downplaying the problems at a site contaminated by toxic pollutants.

By NOELLE CROMBIE
Observer-Dispatch

NEW HARTFORD — Leland Jones has been drinking well water on Valley View Road for 25 years.

During that time, over two acres of soil at the bottom of his street have been declared a hazardous waste site, contaminated with toxic solvents and PCBs dumped there between 1966 and 1973.

"It concerns me," said Jones, who has not had his water tested for traces of the suspected carcinogenic polychlorinated biphenyls in four years. "It's just too darn expensive to test for pollutants."

But officials from the state Department of Environmental Conservation — who last week approved a multi-million dollar cleanup project — and Utica Board of Water Supply officials say residents adjacent to the 4-acre S.O.S. Septic Tank Service are not at risk for water contamination.

"According to all the studies that have been done ... there is no (PCB) migration to

any private homeowner wells. The results have come out clean," said Peter Ouderkirk, the DEC project manager overseeing the cleanup. "We are very comfortable with the cleanup. We have done extensive ground water monitoring."

The city-owned Southern Reservoir is situated about ¼-mile from the site. Utica Water Board Principal Engineer Donald Welmer said contamination of the water supply is "impossible."

"We have a mechanical device which makes it impossible for any type of contamination to enter our water system," he said.

The now-defunct septic service was contracted to dispose industrial waste for the General Electric Aerospace Division plant in Utica. Martin Marietta, which acquired the division last year ago, will finance the \$3.1 million to \$4.3 million cleanup.

The comprehensive filtration system is expected to take 20 years to complete.

Ground testing, according to a DEC statement, showed that about 300 cubic yards of soil, particularly in the driveway, is contaminated with PCBs at levels over 80 parts per million; the acceptable PCB level for a waste site is 50 parts per million.

Martin Marietta spokesman David Waller

said an additional 3,500 to 5,200 cubic yards of soil in an adjacent empty lot also contains hazardous organic compounds.

The filtration system now being installed is designed to cleanse the soil and the shallow groundwater, which also contains PCBs above state standards. The cleaning system is slated for operation sometime this spring.

DEC has classified the site — which is surrounded by homes, most of which are connected to the city's water supply — as a class two hazardous waste site.

"If left unremediated it poses a significant threat to the environment or public health," the DEC report states.

Ouderkirk said the long-term presence of PCBs have not affected the fish and plant life in the area. "Both the state Health Department and the Division of Fish and Wildlife have studied a sampling of the fish and we've seen no effect," he said. "We've been very lucky at this site. The PCBs have kept on the site or in the soils. There's no documented health effect on fish or on human health."

DEC spokesman Charles Nevin said the contaminated soil will be extracted and, depending on the concentration of PCB, will be burned or sent to a sewage treatment plant.