

SEWERS

Los Angeles had little need for sewers as the 1880s opened. More traditional methods of disposal proved sufficient for the city's few thousand residents. Most still used outhouses, while wealthier individuals with newer homes connected their indoor plumbing to cesspools.

Efforts to provide sewer service for the business section had already begun, however. The Bella Union Hotel, the first commercial building to have a sewer connection, provided its own system consisting of a small, square wooden pipe crossing Los Angeles Street to a connection with the zanja. Harris Newmark recalled that when it burst in early 1860, flooding a building owned by pioneer resident Francis Mellus, Mellus took matters into his own hands and plugged up the sewer. The Bella Union's proprietors promptly sued him.

Construction of a municipal sewer began under Mayor Joel Turner at the end of the 1860s. The first project was a wooden pipe 500 feet in length along Commercial Street. That early-day muckraker Horace Bell claimed that the sewer, which only served one property owner, emptied into a cesspool which soon became clogged and created such a health hazard that the court ordered it filled. Bell estimated the sewer's expense at no more than \$400 but he claimed the council paid for it in scrip that cost the city nearly \$53,000.

In the 1870s sewer construction continued in fits and starts: a block-long sewer on New High put down shortly after the one on Commercial; a brick and wood sewer on Los Angeles Street, between First and Second, in 1873; brick conduit down Main from the corner of Arcadia to Winston, and then to Los Angeles Street in 1875; in 1879 on Los Angeles from Commercial to Arcadia, connecting with the Main Street sewer.

In the 1880s sewers were extended piece by piece over the business district. Parts of Spring, Fort, Hill and Olive were sewerred, but as late as 1887 Hope Street still had no sewer, nor was there any significant sewerred south of Seventh or west of Flower.

What to do with the sewage at the end of the line was a question easily resolved at first: the sewer ended in a large field and the effluvia was dispersed on the land. When complaints from nearby residents became so vociferous that they could not be ignored, city authorities simply extended the sewer a short distance to a more thinly populated section of town. For some time the sewer terminated near Los Angeles and Ogier Streets {Ogier was between the present Fourth and Fifth} and emerged onto the surface there. As a result of complaints it was extended to Seventh Street where Chinese gardeners used it to irrigate and fertilize their lettuce, radishes and other vegetables. This practice created such a stench that those living in the vicinity complained until the sewer was once more extended, this time to Washington Street, midway between San Pedro and Alameda Streets, where it was again spread on the land.

The growing problem of sewer waste disposal became one of the major topics among the city's residents during the 1880s, a concern that was reflected in the letters columns of the daily press. As that decade ended the Times was printing more communications about sewers than any other subject. Complaints did not come only from residents. Visitors, too, groused to the paper about the city's lack of modern sanitation practices, as exemplified by this letter early in the decade.

{Times, Oct. 13, 1882, p. 3}

The Sewerage Question.

To the Editor:

The first thing a stranger does upon entering a town is to look into the health of its people. If a person is looking for a home he is more anxious to learn if there is a perfect system of drainage. He looks about to find the source of water, and if plentiful and pure. No town can be healthy with impure water. If he finds neither he is quite likely to leave, to find a better locality, and when leaving he is certain to influence Tom, Dick and Harry, who are

contemplating settling wherever he does. A town is never so thickly populated but there is room for more, and it behooves the settlers to encourage, rather than to drive people away. But, one says, what is to be done if we cannot arouse the proper authorities to give us a good sewerage? One says the evil is a glaring one, and our city fathers know it, if they don't help us, and we can't get away from it, it is our bounden duty to keep others from suffering, so we advise our friends to go where the health of the people is made a consideration; thus hundreds are driven from your lovely city that otherwise would settle here could they be assured of good drainage and pure water.

The question is a serious one. How long can Los Angeles remain even as healthy as now, with China town with all its filth and stench under the nostrils. I've traveled much and can safely say, Los Angeles has the dirtiest streets of any town of its size I have ever seen. I have noticed daily the water carts turning on the water onto the filth thus laying and packing it in, and in some localities the stench is intolerable as the sun pours its rays upon it. Let the "City Dads" bestir themselves. I predict that in three years Los Angeles will be a very unhealthy city.

VISITOR.

By 1883 residents near the Washington Street sewer outlet demanded its removal. Two proposals were put forth: extend the line to a new sewer farm in Vernon, near the intersection of Jefferson and Alameda, or build the sewer east to the river, thence south along the river some four miles to a sewage farm. The estimated cost of the Vernon line was \$4000, half that of its rival.

Responding to the proposal that a sewer farm be established at Vernon,

former councilman Jesse Butler, a frequent contributor to the letters column, offered this opinion as to how Vernon residents would react.

{Times, Oct. 24, 1883, p. 3}

The City Sewage--A Voice From Vernon.

To the Editor of the Times--Sir: I find in the columns of your daily, date of October 20th, quite an interesting article upon the present and future sewerage of Los Angeles city. I most heartily indorse everything therein contained, and can further add that Jefferson street will not only be in the near future, but is at this present time, the home of quite a number of the most respected and respectable families in this county, all of which lands are today improved after such a manner as makes them not only ornamental but profitable to the now happy and healthy occupant.

I take, sir, this means of notifying the public generally that the good people of Vernon District are fully alive to their own interests, notwithstanding the fact that a few of the would-be moneyed men have seen fit for (mistakingly) individual gain to scatter broadcast over our entire neighborhood, the seed of disease, ruin and desolation. The same people are almost to a man solid against the introduction of the sewerage into this locality, here to be emptied or used for any purpose whatever, and today stand ready with a protest which I now hold in my hand, signed by over fifty sound, solid and sane citizens, who are not only willing, but determined, when the proper time comes, to contest the right of any corporation or individual to do aught that will depreciate the lands or impair the health of our prosperous little community.

J. H. B.

October 22nd, 1883.

Vernon got its sewer farm when Los Angeles extended the line to Jefferson and dumped the outflow on the several hundred acres owned by Andrew Briswalter. For four years that solved the city's problem. By late 1887, as Butler had predicted, Vernon's residents echoed the complaints heard over the years from others who had been at the end of the line. More compelling than complaints from Vernon was the impact of the real estate boom, which found the city with a sewage collection system as inadequate as that of its disposal. With the city at the peak of the boom, the council was anxious to move forward with sewer construction.

City Engineer Fred Eaton, later a prominent figure in the Owens Valley aqueduct project, developed a plan calling for a sewage farm west of the city at the Cienega, near what became the intersection of La Cienega and Venice Boulevards. In addition, the Eaton plan included an outfall sewer line paralleling Ballona Creek to carry surplus, untreated sewage to the sea near Playa del Rey. Mayor William Workman, whose term was noted for improvements in the infrastructure, was as eager to sewer the city as he was to pave its streets. "B," however, questioned the need for haste.

{Times, Oct. 17, 1887, p. 6}

Sewer Connections.

Los Angeles, Oct. 14.--[To the Editor of The Times.]

Are there not many hundred houses in this city that can connect with existing sewers, but which have not connected with them? And if we had a million dollars' worth more sewers, would they be any more likely to make the connection? Why this unseemly haste of the Sewer Committee that the Mayor and the people must be permitted only ten days to study the matter and make up their minds? It will not take but a little more show of what looks mightily like "forcing the

issue" to tempt the people to vote the plan proposed down when it comes before them.

B.

Unlike "B," most Angelenos agreed with municipal authorities that the situation required immediate action. They were divided, however, regarding the proper solution. From early 1888 on through 1889 the pages of the Times reflected an intensifying debate over the merits of an adequate sewage farm that could accommodate a city several times the population that Los Angeles then had versus an outfall sewer to the Pacific. While most city officials supported the outfall sewer, letter writers chose sides. Dr. Francis F. Dole, a physician, supported the sewage farm. J. H. Marvin urged support for the outfall system.

{Times, Jan. 23, 1888, p. 3}

Los Angeles Sewerage.

Los Angeles, Jan. 19.--[To the Editor of The Times.]

There is no doubt but every gallon of sewage of this city, until its inhabitants number double its estimated increase to 200,000, can be so utilized at some profit to the city. Not that I mean that any money can be made from it over and above the expense, but that some income can be received to meet expense and interest and save completing the outlet sewer to the ocean for quite a number of years.

The composition of sewage varies much less than might be expected. The difference is one of degree rather than of kind. There is little difference between the sewage of a watercloseted town and a non-closeted.

There is no doubt that the solid excrement forms the most important polluting agent of the sewage, yet it is by no means the greatest in aggregate amount, and is indeed but a

small fraction of the total polluting material which comes from the innumerable articles of domestic economy.

Sewage when fresh and freely exposed to the air, as in sewers only partially filled, has little odor and can scarcely be considered offensive, but once let it accumulate in large quantities and come to comparative rest, putrefaction sets in and it becomes vilely odorous, a seething mass, full of those minute organisms which live and grow and multiply in airless deoxygenated mediums.

Sewage has thus far been disposed of in one of three methods. (1) It may be turned into a river or the ocean, where it can be carried by currents, diluted by diffusion and oxygenated by dissolved oxygen, without appreciable nuisance. (2) It may be applied directly to the land, if sufficient area may be obtained to dispose of it without offense. (3) It may be treated with chemical agents, such as directly destroy organic matter.

Los Angeles has no river with water sufficient the year round to dilute her sewage. This is no misfortune. The great question of Massachusetts today is how to purify her streams and rivers, made vile by sewage.

It is feasible to carry our sewage to the ocean, but not without future danger, should our coast become densely populated.

The processes, inorganic and organic, by which effete matters are got rid of by the soil can be but feebly imitated by man, hence the value of the 6000 or more acres in the Centinela ranch, which the City Engineer specifies as ready for irrigation, an area capable of disposing of the sewage of a city with nearly 500,000 people, in this climate.

There is no agent which so efficiently deodorizes sewage as the soil, which acts not only as a check to putrefaction, but also absorbs the gases of sewage. This action, it has been proved, is limited to the more superficial layers of the soil, which indicates broad irrigation rather than deep infiltration, thus saving in the expense of deep excavation and preparation of the soil. It has been demonstrated from experience that simple straining of sewage is all that is needed to fit it for broad irrigation. The solids can then be cremated at small expense.

It is an erroneous idea that sewage can be effectually treated by chemicals alone. Any chemical that will effectually destroy the spores of bacteria or deprive them of potential life will certainly render the sewage unfit to be disposed of anywhere, for by such addition it becomes a virulent poison.

F. F. DOLE, M. D.

{Times, Jan. 30, 1888, p. 6}

The Sewer Question.

Los Angeles, Jan. 28.--[To the Editor of The Times.]
Will you please state the amount of bonds voted two or three years since by the city for its improvement, how apportioned, and what has been done with that part intended for a sewer system? There is no subject of so much moment to our citizens as this one of sewerage, and there certainly seems to be something radically wrong somewhere, that a matter of such vital importance is so delayed or neglected. Can you tell us the fault? Does our city government fail to comprehend the situation, or, understanding it, is there a

lack of ability to take hold of the business and carry it to completion? This city cannot long afford to remain in its present unprotected state. Thousands of vaults and cesspools, with their foul and deadly gases, are crowding one another in the thickly settled districts, spreading disease with every breath. What is to be done? What is being done? Why not a public meeting about this matter, to arrange to carry the filth of the city to the ocean? It should not stop short of there.

It is the duty of every good citizen to urge upon the Councilmen of his ward the necessity of thorough and speedy sanitary legislation. And, Mr. Editor, no newspaper of our city can do more good than by keeping this burning question strongly and constantly before those in authority and property owners until relief is given. If we expect to continue our growth we shall have to keep pace with that growth in public spirit and public works. All progressive cities look to this emergency and meet it. I sometimes think we have very little to show for the vast sum of money annually amassed by taxation.

J. H. MARVIN

By ordinance No. 175, entitled an ordinance to provide for the use of bonds for the purpose of making certain necessary improvements, adopted by the Council at its meeting June 30, 1885, and approved by Mayor E. F. Spence on the 6th day of July, 1885, bonds to the amount of \$245,000 were issued. These bonds are known as the general improvement bonds of the city of Los Angeles, draw 6 per cent. interest, payable semi-annually, and are payable on or before the expiration of 20 years from the date of their issue. These

bonds were apportioned as follows;

To the improvement of irrigation system.....	\$120,000
To construction of street sewers.....	40,000
To completion of City Hall.....	65,000
To building and repairing bridges and street improvement.....	20,000

Of these several amounts, \$55,000 of the irrigation bonds have never been put on the market, and are now in the City Treasury. The \$40,000 set aside for sewers was originally intended solely for the brick sewer on Main street, but between \$18,000 and \$20,000 has been expended for pipe, the remainder still being in the treasury. The proceeds of the other bonds were expended for the purposes for which they were issued. This is the entire bonded indebtedness of the city. A few months ago \$150,000 bonds for school purposes was voted at a special election but some doubt having been cast as to the legality of the securities they have never been issued.--[Editor Times.]

For the January 1, 1913 midwinter edition of the Times the editor chose as the issue's theme the question: What would Los Angeles be like twenty-five years hence, in 1938? A staff artist envisioned a city of great skyscrapers lying at the edge of a harbor, with large freighters moored nearby. Twenty-five years earlier G. W. Briggs had foreshadowed that artist's conception in this letter to the Times proposing another solution to the sewage problem.

{Times, April 7, 1888, p. 5}

Suggested Canal to San Pedro or Santa Monica.

SOLUTION OF THE SEWERAGE DIFFICULTY.

Los Angeles, April 6.--[To the Editor of The Times.]

The difficulty experienced in providing Los Angeles with

commercial facilities in order to develop her resources and place within reach of millions of Americans her vast climatic advantages has not been overestimated by either the press or the prominent patriots who have an interest in her welfare. Her want of efficient sewerage arrangements, and the expensive machinery which will shortly have to be adopted to provide this great essential to the development of the people, has been and will continue to be not only dangerous, but a positive hindrance to the highest interests of the city. Our banks are choked with idle capital, while the commercial magnates are unable to find an outlet for their enterprise. Could not the very favorable position for developing a canal from here to the Pacific be taken advantage of? A variety of means, in addition to the fact of transit, could be adopted. It could be made the means of conveying our sewerage to the sea; it could furnish the means of irrigation and thus aid in the cultivation of thousands of acres of rich land, and it could also add the great jewel of attraction to this very highly-favored land by providing the City of the Angels with a lake. No engineering difficulties stop the way. It is a straight line to the sea, and a gradual fall for the water to travel. The Los Angeles River could be utilized instead of allowed to waste and filter through the gravel and sand until it is lost. It would flush the canal and a series of sluices could be arranged, whereby its waters would be a source of fertility throughout its course. The sewage could be conveyed beyond the city limits to join the water, and a large basin of water for ships to load and unload their freights would add beauty, harmony and advantage to a landscape which otherwise is far beyond

comparison with any yet inhabited by man. Twenty miles of canal, with no aqueducts or expensive bridges to erect, could be easily accomplished. The capital required for such a project could be secured in the city. An income from travel, sewage irrigation and the vast increase to business which the construction of the canal would insure, would soon provide an ample return for the capital required for its construction. The hygienic requirements of 60,000 people are such as to require a speedy and efficient system to be adopted, or some great calamity will be reaped as the reward of our negligence. A sewerage system to provide for a wealthy community like Los Angeles will not have to be a half-and-half measure. It must be thorough and complete. This will involve a cost which, in all probability, will be equal to, or may even exceed, the construction of a canal, and which will possess no advantages nor bring any return for the large outlay necessary for sewerage construction. It will also be a continual source of expense, and no small amount of danger as well. Dangerous gases collect, especially in immense sewers, and carry, too frequently, disease and death into every household. An open canal appears to be the most natural, can be easily constructed, is without danger and its construction would give a great charm to the district, and cannot fail to be a source of pride and profit to the citizens of Los Angeles. If a few public-spirited men, like our worthy Mayor, would take on the project, its success would be insured, confidence established and the capital stock subscribed for without delay or hesitation.

G. W. BRIGGS.

While other writers supported Briggs' suggestion, most attention focused on plans for moving the sewage to the west, either to the Cienega sewage farm or into the Pacific. In 1888 the council's sewer committee formally adopted a plan utilizing both a sewage farm and an outfall sewer. Ballona Lake, some fourteen miles distant, was to become a settling basin. That drew this response from "Citizen."

{Times. July 9, 1888, p. 3}

The Proposed Sewer--A Word of Warning.

Los Angeles, July 8.--[To the Editor of The Times.] In last Sunday's Times I read an article giving a somewhat extended account of the proposed outfall sewer to the sea. This is a subject of vital importance to every citizen, or prospective citizen of Los Angeles, and permit me, Mr. Editor, as one deeply interested in the future of your splendid city, whose growth and prosperity have been almost unparalleled, to venture a few remarks on this subject.

In the outset, the writer of the article above referred to, states that "there is likely to be any amount of worry before the thing is finally gotten through." Undoubtedly this is so, but, in my opinion the trouble of putting it through will be no comparison to the great harm which will accrue to this city after it is completed, if it is built in the manner proposed. It is a matter of surprise to me that intelligent people will for a moment consider the plan of allowing the sewage to be turned into a "dead lake," but a few miles beyond the city limits, thus forming a hotbed of disease in the direct line of the ocean breeze, which, instead of coming to us laden with pure, life-giving air, will sweep over our city tainted with the deadly poison of foul drainage, and scattering broadcast the seeds of disease

and death. Once published in an eastern paper the fact that the sewer system of Los Angeles finds its outlet in this way, and the hitherto enormous immigration to this place will receive a decided check. Your reputation for healthful climate is worldwide, and this city is destined in the near future to take its place, not only among the great cities of the world, but as one of the most noted sanitariums on the earth, and she is deserving of a sewer system in keeping with her pretensions and advantages. If you allow a foul, malaria-breeding lake to be planted here, for the sake of saving a few dollars, and bringing into use a few acres of alkali land, you commit a grave error--you cripple your business interests, your commercial interests, your financial interests, in fact the very life of your city.

Statistics, as published a few weeks ago, show that in the Vernon district, where this system of irrigation from sewage has been practiced, in a school of 80 pupils 75 per cent. of them were unable to attend on account of illness. This in itself proves, if common sense does not, that it is but a disease-breeding nuisance. Your city does not wish, I am sure, to derive a revenue at the cost of human life.

Your correspondent says: "The volume of sewerage is sufficient to irrigate the whole district, and after it is turned on and the beneficial (sic?) results become apparent, it is said that the city may derive a handsome revenue from its sale," and further argues that "a big saving will be made."

Very likely, and the undertaker will also "derive a handsome revenue," as well as the doctors. I would suggest that a new cemetery also be laid out, as soon as practicable,

for it will undoubtedly be needed if this order of things be carried out.

We do not care to earn the reputation for unhealthfulness and malaria, which our sister city of San Diego enjoys.

A friend wrote me not long since, setting forth the advantages of that place, remarking that a relative--a physician--had recently established himself there, and was "so much pleased with the city," and innocently added: "His business is wonderfully good."

We want a sewer, by all means, and that right soon; but let it terminate in the sea. This city, with its wealth, its climatic advantages, and its beautiful location, should have one of the most perfect and complete sewer systems that can be built. Your population is largely made up of people of leisure, people who come here for the express purpose of enjoying the delightful and healthful climate, and who, with large means at their command, are not tied here by business interests, or by any means permanently located, and all such will speedily "move on" to some place where more regard is paid to the laws of health, if you persist in using your "balmy sea breezes" as an escape valve for the noxious drainage of the city.

I came here for the benefit of my health, and have been completely restored, and there is not a more enthusiastic lover of Los Angeles in the city today than myself.

It is, therefore, with pain that I see you about to commit such an unmistakable error. The question is being agitated to a great extent among your citizens and visitors, and I have met not a few who stand aghast at the very idea,

and who signify their intention of a speedy removal, if the project is carried out as suggested.

One gentlemen of wealth, who came here with the intention of making this his home, said to me the other day: "I had intended building here a handsome residence, at a cost of \$8000 or \$10,000, but I have made up my mind to wait and see how this sewer business develops."

Many of the citizens who would readily vote for \$1,000,000 bonds to build a good, substantial sewer to the sea will not vote a penny of the \$250,000 required to construct this pestilence-breeding, irrigating canal.

CITIZEN.

Objections to the cost and continued disagreement between advocates of a sewage farm and an outfall sewer delayed action for another year. In the summer of 1889 Abbot Kinney, who would a few years later develop waterfront property at Venice, voiced a vigorous objection to the outfall plan. A recreational gun club owned acreage considered essential to the construction of the outfall sewer.

{Times, July 2, 1889, p. 6}

The Outfall Sewer--Some Views Worthy of Consideration.

Los Angeles, July 1.--[To the Editor of The Times.] In the editorial of the Tribune this morning on the gun club's proposed sale of its useless lands to Los Angeles city at an exorbitant price, the position of Santa Monica has been misapprehended.

The citizens of Santa Monica, after due deliberation, are determined to prevent, by all legal means, the dumping of the Los Angeles sewage anywhere in their neighborhood. The situation of the outlet of the sewer at the gun club's ground

has been fully discussed and fully condemned by the people of Santa Monica.

The city authorities of Los Angeles seem to be pursuing a course that gives no expectation to us that the outfall sewer can ever be located in our neighborhood. The strategy of the Santa Monica position I do not feel at liberty to disclose, but I may safely call attention to one point that has been overlooked. Col. R. S. Baker, one of our public spirited citizens and also one of our citizens determined to maintain his own right, owns a portion of Santa Monica and of the San Vicenti rancho. He also owns a portion of the Ballona rancho, where he keeps a yacht and a number of pleasure boats. This land fronts on the ocean adjoining the gun club property. Col. Baker has expressed himself as thoroughly decided to use every possible means to protect his rights both at Santa Monica and at the Ballona.

The city of Los Angeles has now an opportunity to break up forever the Chinese monopoly of market gardening in this county, and of placing that lucrative business in the hands of our own population.

This can be done by the city purchasing 1000 acres of land, planting a heavy belt of eucalyptus around it and then of letting the inside lands in blocks of five, ten and twenty acres to the highest bidder, excluding Chinese.

Or the city can plant the whole place to the Jarrah eucalyptus, which resists the teredo, and is the best piling known in the world. The eucalyptus is known everywhere that it grows as the greatest disinfectant of marsh or sewerage water in the world. In sufficient quantities it does away with malaria. Such a plantation would therefore provide

security against unhealthy emanations, and at the same time be a source of revenue of considerable amount. The trees with sewage irrigation would grow phenomenally, and would give a prompt return. This piling is of great value, as it is practically permanent when placed in a wharf.

Or the city could deodorize and dry the solid fertilizer in the sewage. The sale of this and of the water thus purified for irrigation on the dry lands to the southwest of the city would again pay all expenses and yield a revenue to the city sufficient to pay the interest on the bonds.

Another point to consider is that there is no such hurry for rushing with our shirts off into a sewer scheme as some interested parties make out.

According to the last report of the Health Officer of Los Angeles, the death rate of the city was 8 in 1000. This is the lowest death rate of any city in the civilized world. Our death rate has been materially lower than that of any sewered city in this State for years. Oakland, San Diego, Sacramento, etc., have death rates generally double, often three times greater, and sometime exceed our death rate by four times. Baltimore's death rate averaged 18 in 1000, for the 10 years before the sewers were put in. The year its sewers were completed, it rose to 26 in 1000, and never has been as low as before the sewer system. The difficulty with the sewers is that every house in a sewered city is connected with every other. Therefore, a disease in one house, if the traps be sucked out or temporarily defective in other houses, at once renders these subject to infection.

That the surplus water together with the sewage of Los Angeles is of value in a dry country like ours is too evident

to demand exposition. It is not so clear to the people that our sewage can be easily deodorized, dried and made of market value. The proposition of the West system, however, shows that this can be done at a cost of \$50,000 for construction, labor, etc., for, I believe, ten years.

Vernon is always cited against any utilization of the sewage. This district, of course, objects. One man takes sewage, the next one does not; one lives on a little place without any idea of making it productive, another wishes to earn his living from his land. So the whole district is checkered with conflicting interests. Besides this, the method and manner of application of the sewage is crude and bad in the extreme. But because these imperfections exist in the Vernon district is no reason for not establishing a sound sewerage system--sound sanitarily, in not destroying forever miles of sea shore, and rendering the place where the sewage is dumped a desert.

Sound financially, in that the proceeds and rents of fertilizers, or irrigation water and timber and of lands, should pay in 10 years the total cost of the sewer.

Thus the city would possess a valuable property, its tributary country would be from five to ten times as productive as it would be without water, and good, sound, business sense would be our characteristic.

The City Engineer, the City Attorney, and, in fact, all the intelligent men in the city, such as Andrew Glasell, John Hanna, Judge Walter Van Dyke, etc., are opposed to the outfall sewer, as compared to one that will be both a benefit to the city and to the country around it as well. That is to say, of one utilizing the water and sewage.

When we consider that 10 years of litigation must result in attempting to force the city sewerage down Santa Monica's throat, some more reasonable and less wasteful plan of disposition of the sewerage may well be thought of.

ABBOT KINNEY.

Also objecting was J. S. Wakeman, who supported flushing the sewage south to Long Beach in the Los Angeles River rather than development of a sewage farm or outfall sewer on the westside. The "Trombone" was Editor Otis' belittling nickname for the rival Tribune, published by his former partner at the Times, Col. Henry Boyce. For a similar view, see the letter by "Cosmopolitan," published the same day and included in the chapter on the river.

{Times, July 24, 1889, p. 3}

The Bray of the 'Bone.

Santa Monica, July 22.--[To the Editor of The Times.]
The notes being blown by the Trombone on the sewage question sound so unmistakably like the braying of a donkey that one feels more inclined to pity than be angry at their author. As a sample of what the 'Bone is giving forth the conclusion of the editorial in Friday last's issue is noteworthy. The writer says: "Let the work be done and then if there should be any damages Santa Monica can carry the case to a higher tribunal and there settle the matter."

A wise remark, forsooth! Build a \$500,000 outfall sewer with the probability of having to tear it up again. This much is certain, the residents of Santa Monica are united as one man in opposition to the present plans, and the issue will be fought tooth and nail from here. Apart from the contamination of the water, which is certain, Mr. Eaton's many excuses to the contrary, the very association of the

sewage with the name of Santa Monica is damage enough, and in addition to deterring immigration to this place would be a trump card in the hands of those interested in other seaside resorts in that part of the country.

In point of fact it is by no means assured that the sewer can be constructed as easily as Engineer Eaton claims. The Southern Pacific officials are reconsidering the question as to whether or not they will grant the right of way, for it has been shown to them that by so doing they will be dealing a death-blow at one of their most paying branch towns. Why is it that the natural outlet for the sewage from Los Angeles by way of the river is set aside in favor of a more expensive route and one that bids fair to destroy the reputation and prospects of the natural seaside resort for this part of the country?

The claim that the river-bed is 30 feet too high at one place is simply an excuse, and a bad one, too, for what is there to prevent the sewer being constructed across country to a junction with the river in the vicinity of Florence? There filtering-beds could be established, and in the summer the needed water could be turned onto the thirsty lands adjacent, whereas in winter the flood-gates could be thrown open and the refuse run into the river, which at that time of the year is naught but a muddy torrent.

The prevailing winds would drive all unpleasant odors away from Los Angeles, but in the case of the present plans the coast breeze would carry the obnoxious vapors toward the town.

The citizens of Santa Monica are anxiously awaiting to see what stand The Times will take in the matter, and trust

that it will be for and not against them.

J. S. WAKEMAN.

The council set August 30, 1889, for a vote on a sewer bond measure totaling nearly \$1.3 million. This included \$1/2 million for a storm drain, slightly under \$1/2 million for an outfall sewer and \$1/3 million for an interior sewer system. Readers W. T. Spilman, who years later would be a outspoken opponent of the Owens Valley project, and "Taxpayer" found fault with both the sewer farm and the outfall sewer. Dairyman Anderson Rose owned a large parcel of land, through which the sewer would run, four miles east of Santa Monica.

{Times, Aug. 5, 1889, p. 5}

Mr. Spilman's Opinions.

THE SANITARY ASPECT OF THE CASE CONSIDERED.

Los Angeles, Aug. 4.--[To the Editor of The Times.] It is being urged upon the taxpayers and voters of the city of Los Angeles, that the construction of the outfall sewer to the ocean is a public necessity, on the ground of preventing sickness and disease in the city, and that by carrying the sewage away by the outfall sewer all danger to health in the city from the sewerage will be averted. This argument appears to be the strongest thus far advanced by those who are in accord with the City Council in this matter, and who desire to see the outfall sewer built to Ballona.

Now, it appears to the undersigned that not only is this argument unfounded in fact, but that the facts directly prove that the outfall sewer will be directly the cause of the sickness and disease in the city, which the advocates of the outfall sewer claim they wish to prevent. What are the facts? It is asserted, with a probability of truth, that the

difference in altitude between the level of the sea and the level of the low ground on which the largest part of the city of Los Angeles stands is about 400 feet, the intervening distance being a gradual slope, unbroken with any steep or high bluffs or hills, and that the ocean wind rolls up this incline into and past the city of Los Angeles without an obstacle to break or divert its course. The rules of philosophy teach us that air is a gas, and although an imponderable substance is yet heaviest at the lowest point, or at the sea level. Now, when from the ocean a current of air is forced over the surface of the ground up this inclined plane to the city of Los Angeles, it rolls over and over, grinding into the ground surface, and sucks and absorbs under a law of philosophy all the moisture it is capable of holding, and with it all the germs of vegetable and animal decay that lie in its pathway. This current of air being in constant commotion becomes thoroughly impregnated with these germs, and carries them with it into the habitations in the city. Eminent medical scientists unite in the conclusion that these germs floating in the atmosphere and inhaled into the lungs carry disease and death. The deadly typhoid and scarlet fevers, diphtheria and malaria are thereby brought into the homes of the most careful, only to carry off its members, and particularly the little ones, who have not vitality enough to resist the presence of these poisonous germs. The wind currents at Los Angeles come invariably from the west or from the direction of La Ballona, and these wind currents are almost constant, as any one can readily perceive by going upon the hills west of the city at the westerly end of the cable road.

The question then arises if the City Council of Los Angeles shall purchase land for a place of sewerage deposit at or in the vicinity of Lake Ballona (and it is rumored that it has contracted to purchase some 2000 acres for that purpose in the event that the bonds are voted), will not the deposit of that sewerage of the city at such place not be followed by the transmission back to the city, not only of the sewerage gases, but of the germs of the decaying sewage material that will be there deposited? The soil all around the vicinity of Lake Ballona is understood to be adobe in character, therefore there will not be a percolation of the sewerage waters into the earth there, but on the contrary the sewage water will stand upon its surface and become a stagnant lake wherever it may be deposited. The effect of the hot sun upon the deposits will be to cause it to become putrid, and with every wind from the ocean, over the surface of this decaying filth, the air will take up and become saturated with the poisonous germs of this wholesale atmospheric poisoning manufactory, only to bear them onward and upward into the residences of the people of Los Angeles.

Will this not bring a pestilence in the track of this deadly current? Will it not prepare Los Angeles for the inroad, at a moment's notice, of yellow fever, or other infectious diseases equally disastrous? The scourge of cholera that only a few years ago wiped out so many lives in Italy was directly traced to the bad sewerage and filth of the Italian cities where it existed. Even in those cities where the cholera was the most widespread and fatal, those portions of them that were kept clean were hardly visited by this disease.

Only a few years ago, yellow fever was brought by ship to Guaymas, Mexico, and its widespread deadly march caused the utmost alarm in California, for fear its germs would be carried across the border and into our own cities. Because of this alarm, the State Board of Health established a sort of quarantine at the State line, and Los Angeles did not escape the fear of its visitation. Suppose those fever germs should again visit the lower Mexican coast, and despite all precaution, make a lodgment at Los Angeles. Would not the existence of this putrid mass of sewerage at our very doors afford, as in those Italian cities, the very food on which these germs would fatten and multiply, and thus secure such a foothold as would render their extermination difficult before much of our population went down in the face of death?

This is not overhighly drawn. Only a few years ago the people of the city of Memphis fancied themselves secure from pestilence, but the omission to provide for the proper removal of its filth, and the germs of disease thereby engendered, caused the loss of hundreds of its people when the germs of yellow fever once found lodgment there.

Again, the fogs that roll up from the ocean and envelop Los Angeles city during a large part of the year, drag along with them whatever impurities there may be in the air. These fogs come directly over where this sewer farm would be located. These fogs alone cause some sickness with many people, and unhinge and debilitate many others as long as they last. It is a common thing to have people complain of headaches caused by these fogs, and during the times of the prevalence many persons are obliged to seek a temporary home where the fog does not reach. Will not these fogs, then,

rolling over and over this bed of sewage, become saturated with these poison germs from the decaying mass, and become still more obnoxious and unhealthy?

The sanitary questions that occur in considering the proper disposal of the sewage of Los Angeles city are more important to that city than any question of expense to the city, for Los Angeles has acquired what reputation it already has, and whatever of business growth and importance it now has, because of its unrivalled climatic conditions. Now, can we afford to take a step that will imperil our future growth, by the adoption of a system of sewerage that will directly imperil the very conditions and reputation that have brought people here from all over the world?

W. T. SPILMAN.

{Times, Aug. 5, 1889, p. 5}

A Strong Argument

AGAINST THE BALLONA SEWER ROUTE.

Los Angeles, Aug. 3.--[To the Editor of The Times.] It is stated by the Tribune, and the friends of the proposed Ballona sewer route, that it is the cheapest and only available route; also that none of the sewage will reach the ocean except during the winter months.

Statements are easily made; their value, however, depends upon the reliability of the parties who make them. Figures don't lie, but liars will figure. I challenge an investigation of the situation. None of the land along the Ballona route is suitable to take and absorb the sewage, and the entire sewage is not contracted for, as stated by the Tribune. The land-owners along the line, with few

exceptions, are opposed to its being used on the land for the above named reason.

After leaving University Station the Cienega is soon reached. This is boggy land and cannot take sewage. From the Ballona road No. 2 (next west of the Cienega) to Mr. Rose's place the route is along the county road. The land on each side is a mixture of clay and adobe; in most places very heavy adobe. Between Mr. Rose's and the ocean it is heavy adobe all the way, covered principally with salt-grass.

As to the Ballona route being the cheapest: Between three and four miles of the route is over ground that to build a substantial foundation capable of sustaining a heavy brick sewer will be attended with enormous expense, swamp, mire, bog and quicksand being the difficulties to overcome. Nearly the whole valley to the south and west of Mr. Rose's place is overflowed during the winter, forming a lake three miles square, which is a favorite hunting ground for ducks and geese. At this season it is crusted over and covered with salt-grass. A brick sewer over the ground will be constantly settling and cracking, and the leakages will be a continual source of damage to adjoining property. The difficulties to be overcome along this route will be attended with a series of experiments and patchwork costing a large sum of money.

It is no argument in favor of the Ballona route that the right of way costs nothing except the modest sum paid the gun club for the privilege of running a trestle over its flooded fields (the club not parting, however, with its hunting privileges--the only value to the land.)

The Times and Herald have not sold themselves to this

scheme, but have allowed all sides of this question full discussion through their columns. An article was written upon this subject and given to the Tribune, over the signature of the author, for publication. The Tribune refused to publish it, stating that the article was too strong an argument against the proposed Ballona route, and while admitting the value of the claims set forth, the editor stated that the Tribune had pledged itself to the City Council, and therefore could not allow the article to appear in its columns, even over the signature of the writer.

There are large tracts of land west of the city needing irrigation, with a sandy or gravelly soil that will take sewage. These lands are also in direct line of an ocean outfall. Shall we adopt a route requiring enormous expenses over land that cannot take sewage, subject to constant and expensive repairs, just to sustain a pet scheme of the present City Council, which is being boosted by a paper pledged to its plans?

TAXPAYER.

Bond advocates, including the Express and Tribune, argued that approval of the bonds was in the interest of the city's workingclass residents. Jesse Butler, once a Greenback Labor Party leader in Los Angeles, "Taxpayer" and "Workingman" believed that labor's welfare would be better served by a "No" vote. "F" reached the same conclusion regarding both the bonds and the sewer itself insofar as women, who were not eligible to vote, were concerned. "Hazard's bombshell" was the phrase the Times used to describe Mayor Hazard's revelation that the contract with Rose needed only the signature of the city clerk, not the mayor. The South Side Irrigation Company, a sewage farm of some 2000 acres in nearby San Antonio Township, had a contractual right to the

city's sewage.

{Times, Aug. 17, 1889, p. 6}

The Outfall Sewer.

JESSE H. BUTLER EXPRESSES HIS SENTIMENTS.

Los Angeles, Aug. 12.--[To the Editor of The Times.] As I belong to that despised and often-abused class called the working men, and as some of the same class, in their honest zeal for a job, have been apparently going it blind, for any sort of bonds, to make work for the honest worker, I feel it my duty to say, through your influential paper, something to those men on that badly mixed-up question.

There is no use ignoring the fact that our lords of the Council have been working with indecent haste, when they did work, and with a stubborn persistence, on a pet scheme to sewer this city in a way that does not sewer it, and will not be worth a cent for a long time to come.

All the western hill part of the city has no signs of an attempt to sewer it, on the part of the Council and this same Council will not lay down a sewer on Downey avenue, where they are clamoring for it, and need it immediately. Now, what is the use of a sewer anywhere in this city, when the western winds, which blow forever over us, except a few days in the year, just preceding our few rains--what is the use of sewers whilst our winds shall be contaminated every day by the cesspools that already, and shall soon, much more abound? This policy simply means contamination, sickness and death for the inhabitants east of the western hills, and the same in a milder form for the westerners themselves.

Why did not this Council come to the people and say:
"We know you want a good thorough sewerage system for this

city; we will get your choice of the plan of sewerage; we will issue the question of bonds to you in two forms; the first shall be for a thorough system of sewerage that shall include every street of the city, to be immediately sewered, and a system of outlet that may be the best adapted to convey, give or sell the sewage to outsiders, to the best advantage for the city. Secondly, the plan of an outfall sewer to the ocean, ignoring as at present, the full sewage of the outlying portions of the city, till a more convenient season.{" - Ed.}

In this, there would be a choice, but the present mode of bonds is, heads, I win; tails, you lose. There is no choice about it. It is only saying to the people: "You vote for bond and we will give you an outfall sewer to the ocean and as much inside sewerage as we may see fit to give you. But, if you do not vote for the bonds, we shall get no money and shall give you no sewerage system." And to the workers and mechanics it says: "You dare to oppose our bonds and our pet outfall, and we will give you, the worker, no work and no money, and you, who sell goods, shall have no money from the workingman."

Isn't this sweet legislation for a free people in a government by and for the people? Why, this is worse than even Napoleon did, except in the forced loan he made on the Netherlands, and that was because he considered them enemies, since they were determined to remain neutral.

Now let me say to the worker: All the good you will get from city sewerage will be done in the city limits. All this outside business will be managed (if to the ocean) by large contractors, who will work you like slaves and board you as

such, away from your homes, and either import their labor or make you work at their own price--degrade you into the dirt and filch the scanty bread from the mouths of your wives and children. I know you have had a long outing from labor. God knows I pity you, and if I had the power and was in the Council, as I once was, I would give every willing, honest hand plenty of work at a good price, as I once did when there. But I do not want to see you vote for bonds, that are only a mock, a cheat and a snare to you, and will only get you deeper into idleness, higher taxes and poverty. This sewerage business will have to be done, do not fear; you reject these tyrannical fool bonds, and they will have to submit honest ones, that will give you work and fair wages, sooner than the money from the proposed bonds will do. And the merchant shall get the money for the clothing and food that goes on and into the sweet children that go to our schools, with good clothing on their well-fed bodies, and the shining, smiling faces of happy contentment.

In this article I do not intend to censure the workers, white or colored; they are hungry, and the vile contractors and political jobbers are exciting their fears and feeding them on false promises, but I know, and I hope these persons have found out by the past, that the threat of the jobber and contractor have never done much harm, and their promises have always deceived and disappointed them. Vote, no, boys, and show them you have brains as well as hands, and mean business!

JESSE H. BUTLER.

{Times, Aug. 17, 1889, p. 5}

How a Taxpayer Views It.

Los Angeles, Aug. 10.--[To the Editor of The Times.]

The absorbing topic of the hour is the sewer. It is discussed on the street corners, in the stores, shops and hotels. The advocates of the route to the sea say if the river route is taken and the water run upon the land, it will stink the city and whole country out of existence; but just here steps up one who lives there, and on whose farm the sewage runs, and says his farm is worth more by 100 per cent. than it was before using sewer water, and so little offense is there that strangers never discover it, and often water their horses in the sewer ditches, and the trouble is they cannot get enough of that kind of water. But if running the water to the river will stink up that section of country and city when the wind is in south, why will not the smell be the same if the sea route is taken, and 50 inches of this same water be spread over the land on the way, with the prevailing westerly wind?

The fact is, the stink problem cuts but a small figure in this question. The motive to run the sewer to the sea is deeper, broader and more offensive than any smells that may arise therefrom.

The misfortune is, that our city government is composed of mushroom statesmen, whose peculiar fitness seems to be to demoralize the police organization, plan to lay out drives, boulevards and parks, where it will do most good to replete their impoverished pockets on the receding swell of a busted boom.

If the Council, in a sanitary and financial point of view, wish to promote the health and monetary interest of the

class of people in whose interest they profess to legislate, why do they not put the city's money as the law provides, where it will return some revenue to benefit the poorer classes of taxpayers? Why do they persist in a desire to bond the city to that extent, that taxes for years to come will be a burden to thousands who have come here and invested their all in little homes yet unpaid for, and that for some time to come will deter capitalists from abroad investing in manufacturing, building mammoth hotels or any other enterprises? Do they persist in that route to the sea because the cost is greater, and that greater sums of money will be handled, great contracts awarded, and hence a great chance for untold sums of "swag" and "boodle" to find its way into the pockets of some of those whose boom in corner lots has gone "where the woodbine twineth"? Can't they make enough out of the boulevard, park and other little schemes to let up on this, or would they rather wreck the city? It's true a sewer must be built; but why the long, expensive route, when the shorter and cheaper from a practical standpoint is just as good? Suppose it should happen that the sea route pollutes the beach at Santa Monica; it would be an untold misfortune to this city. The plea of the sea route is that a "big job" will be given to the laborers of this city, and hence the pledge of the Republican party will be redeemed. All things being equal, would not the laborer of the city be satisfied with a shorter job if by that route taxes were less burdensome? Business might revive, people and capital come in and investments be made that would make property a more sure thing. A city with a bursted boom, buried in taxes, never is inviting to business or capital.

The powers that be must put self out of the question in this sewer business as well as politics. Thousands of people in this city today are struggling to live; they can't pay for their homes nor the taxes now levied against them without suffering in their families.

TAXPAYER.

{Times, Aug. 30, 1889, p. 3}

Will They Do It?

Los Angeles, Aug. 29.--[To the Editor of The Times.]

The following is being circulated among the workmen of the city:

"PUBLIC WORK.

"We are of the opinion that in all public work the citizens of this city should always be given the preference, and we would therefore recommend that in letting contracts for any kind of city work that there shall be a clause inserted that the contractor will at all times give the preference to citizens of this city, and that he will not employ labor from other cities and counties, and will not hire persons who are not upon the Great Register, unless he has been unable to obtain a sufficient number of laborers from the citizens of this city, and also, that no Chinese be employed or material made or manufactured by Chinese be used in the construction of any public work.

(Signed)

"Theo. Summerland,

"C. McFarland,

"A. C. Shafer.

"R. E. Wirsching."

Now suppose the sewer and the school bonds are voted, as

the parties named above desire, what assurance have the laboring men of the city that the pledge thus made will be kept?

Did not the same members of the Council vote for and indorse a contract with Rose, that, if carried out, would beat the city out of anywhere from \$20,000 to \$50,000? Have not the same men, in violation of the city charter, refused to place the city funds where it would draw interest for the benefit of the city and the relief of the taxpayers?

Have not these same men, by these and other acts, and refusing to act, proved themselves to be untrustworthy, dishonest, scheming, deceiving, misrepresenting, and a set of unstatesmanlike imbeciles?

Do the laborers of this city dream for a moment that if these bonds are voted, and contracts let for the schoolhouse, sewer and storm drains, any contractor will be bound by the Council as set forth in that circular addressed to the workmen of the city?

Have not a large number of mechanics and general workmen of the city often experienced the fact that at least one of the Council, whose name appears signed to that circular, has been in the habit of hiring the cheapest labor he could get to do his building, putting on men to do a regular mechanic's work at \$1 a day, when wages were from \$2.50 to \$2.75 per day, and thus turning out "snide" work, to impose upon an innocent purchaser?

Do you think a man that will do that himself would be over-zealous to tie up a fat contractor, particularly if it was made worth his while not to do so? Don't be deceived in this matter; vote intelligently, vote honestly, vote without

the influence of boodle, and vote for posterity.

The Tribune of today claims to have destroyed the effect of Mayor Hazard's bombshell by having secured the right of way from Mr. Rose for \$12,000. Can't the Tribune see that Mr. Rose is still ahead? The interest on that money at the usual rates will annually pay for more water than he requires. But the Tribune also attacks the Mayor in his official relation. The writer has mingled among the voting people of the city for the last two weeks discussing the bond question, and he has never heard a word of condemnation against the Mayor, but on the contrary, that he was the most honest man in the city government. On the other hand, he has heard hundreds say they wanted the sewer and wanted to vote for the bonds, but they were afraid to trust the Council to handle that sum of money. That is the plain situation of facts.

WORKINGMAN.

{Times, Aug. 28, 1889, p. 6}

On to Bankruptcy.

Los Angeles, Aug. 24.--[To the Editor of The Times.]
Workingmen, your own small homes must pay 25 per cent. extra taxes--\$1 a front foot assessment, and the additional \$50 for connections if you vote the sewer bonds. Stop and consider!

I do not belong to any woman suffrage club, though I believe every practical and just woman should, but I wish to say a word for women property-owners in our city, many of whom do not yet seem to realize what voting the sewer bonds means for them. As for the workingmen who own a home, the present plan will bring them a little work, but out of the

money paid them they must pay a large sum in assessments and increased taxes for many years to come.

To condense the points against voting for the bonds:

They provide for but one payment.

They do not provide sewers where needed; and it will take three times this sum to do so.

They will bring interest to some of the members of the Council in whose banks they will lie two years.

They will benefit the City Surveyor and the contractors, but only in small degree the men who work under the contractors.

The plan proposed binds the city to buy a worthless piece of land for a large sum, part of which goes to some of the Councilmen.

It binds the city to pay damages to the South Side Irrigation Company, whose contract, which runs fourteen years longer, will be broken if the new plans carry.

It binds the city to pay any and all damages to the railroad company, along whose roadbed the sewer will run, and to any and all persons who may be injured by any accident caused to the road by the sewer.

They bind the city to supply forever 50 miner's inches of water for irrigation to land which, in return, only gives the privilege of sinking a conduit. Forever, in this land of water scarcity, and possible convulsions of Nature that may change the water courses.

This plan throws away a large annual income, which could be laid out in paying for needed work, instead of for what will not be required for 30 years, and not then if we drive away our citizens by taxation and schemes like this.

The storm water is needed to cleanse the paved streets, a work the contractors do not succeed in.

This large sum of money will be locked up for two years, drawing interest only for those who still have the city funds in their possession, in spite of the repeated protest of the Mayor and the indignation of all honest citizens.

The money will be secured by mortgage, subject to foreclosure 60 days after it falls due. It cannot be paid; or, if it is, there will be no equivalent to the city.

The diversion of the waters of the river will cause lawsuits between the city and those having riparian rights on the river. As is plain to all but the willfully blind, "this Council cannot be trusted with such a sum of money, which offers great temptation to misappropriation."

Now, in looking over the list of transfers of real estate in the papers one finds that a large number of names that appear are those of women. Of the many lots too low in value to appear in the list, many are now owned by women. Many of these women have no means of earning money. They must pay on their cheap lots just what a man in profitable business will have to pay on his, to help build the sewers. They will have no chance whatever to save their lots from condemnation on account of the sewer assessments and increased taxes which they, in very many cases, cannot pay. {In the? - Ed.} same way, assessments that were laid upon many lots on or near (illegible} street, if that cruel ordinance {illegible} that section is carried out {at?} present, will be beyond the sum that these women-owners can pay, and they will lose those lots, when, a year or two from now, they might pay and hold their lots.

Now, who is it that may possibly be led to vote for these bonds? The workingman who does not own one foot of land and who, if the bonds are voted, may not hope to for many a year, also the small property-owners who may not yet realize that sewer and grading assessments are not made in proportion to value of property, but all must pay alike. These and the roughs and toughs can wrest the money from the woman's purse, and the land, for which she has sacrificed everything from her grasp; she, the hard-working woman, who, in many cases, can earn nothing; who, in other cases, has to support herself and her drunken husband and little children, can have no vote against this injudicious, extravagant scheme, which is already being read about in eastern cities, and considered enough to retard the growth of this city for years if it is carried out.

F.

The bonds failed to receive the necessary 2/3 affirmative vote although a majority of the voters supported them. The Times claimed that upwards of 1000 "repeat" voters cast ballots in favor of the bonds, though it conceded if such was the case it was done so cleverly that no arrests were made for illegal voting. Joseph Mesmer, son of a pioneer family and a leader in the anti-bond campaign, presented this election post-mortem in a letter written immediately after the vote. In the 1880s ballots, or "tickets," were still provided by parties involved in the election.

{Times, Sept. 1, 1889, p. 6}

Mr. Mesmer Discloses Some Ugly Facts.

Los Angeles, Aug. 31.--[To the Editor of The Times.]

The people of Los Angeles may well have reason to congratulate themselves on the defeat of the \$1,280,000 sewer

bonds, and specially those who asserted their independence in defiance of the city authorities, who, with all of their employes, were out in full force, working, influencing and intimidating voters. As chairman of the Anti-sewer Bond Campaign Committee, I was an observer of what I consider the most disgraceful contest ever witnessed in this city, and those who aided in this unfairness ought to feel ashamed of their acts. Owing to the uncertainty of having justice done, we had appointed, through the courtesy of Constables Clement and Smith, two special deputies for each precinct, 30 in all, at \$3 per deputy. We also selected 18 challengers at the polls to prevent illegal voting, and notwithstanding our united efforts, I have reason to believe that there were over 500 illegal votes cast for the bonds out of a possible 1500 contemplated. Why, even a policeman was challenged and denied a vote in precinct A, Fourth Ward. J. W. Brady reported that a policeman approached a voter in precinct B, Seventh Ward, within 10 feet of the poll, telling him he was voting the wrong ticket. It is customary of all elections to have an equal division of election officers at each polling place. This allotment of fairness was not considered. The two chairs and two tables furnished each precinct by our committee were taken by these election officers, and our men were deprived of our lawful property, plainly marked, "For Anti-sewer Bond Committee." This occurred in precinct B, Second Ward; precinct A, Third Ward; precinct B, Sixth Ward; precinct B, Seventh Ward; precinct B, Eighth Ward.

Our tickets were stolen and hid away in precinct B, Eighth Ward. I caught a fellow in precinct B, Seventh Ward, holding down our tickets with the seat of his pants. In

precinct C, Second Ward, our tickets were taken from the table, taken to around the corner of College street, where they were torn in two. Our Deputy Constable was ordered to make the election officers disgorge our tickets in another precinct. Posters were pasted around, "Beware of Illegal Ballots! Get your Tickets at the Polls!" This subterfuge was resorted to in order to intimidate voters for asserting their rights and privileges, in order that they might see who dared vote against the bonds. Did any one see an illegal ballot? Had the full vote of Los Angeles city been recorded yesterday, as it should have been, we would have overwhelmingly defeated our opponents on an even issue, notwithstanding the powerful aid rendered by some of our county officials. Without organization the will of the people is absolutely powerless unless all dare assert their rights at the polls. Such a combination as developed on yesterday was unknown, even to the wideawake Los Angelenos. Why did they not array themselves equally in favor of the school bonds? Let the echoes reply.

Respectfully submitted,

JOSEPH MESMER.

While one anti-outfall sewer spokesman, engineer John Hall, referred to the Ballona outfall proposal as "defunct" after the election, the council was unmoved. By December, 1889, with most Angelenos supporting development of a sewer system and only disagreeing on the method of disposal, the council still was inclined to move the sewage westward to a sewage farm and an outfall sewer. The Times strongly opposed the outfall plan, preferring that the sewage be disposed of through an irrigation method. "Citizen" and "Another Citizen" raised questions about the judgment of city officials in this matter.

Particularly singled out was City Engineer Fred Eaton, a self-educated professional who had held the position of superintending engineer with the Los Angeles City Water Company for several years prior to his election as city engineer in 1885. The "Dutchman" referred to by "Another Citizen" was Rudolph Herring, whom the city council brought to Los Angeles as a consultant in December, 1889.

{Times, Dec. 24, 1889, p. 5}

The Old Question Again.

Los Angeles, Dec. 23.--[To the Editor of The Times.]

Now that the important question of sewerage is again agitating the minds of the citizens of Los Angeles, would it not be well to put some pertinent questions to be answered by the intelligent readers of your valuable paper? We are passing through a terrible financial maelstrom, in which hundreds of dollars are being engulfed. Whether this is due to the natural depreciation of values, after the unnatural inflation of values during boom times, or to other causes, is unnecessary for us to determine.

In these times of greatly depreciated values hundreds are on the verge of bankruptcy, and taxes are already high. This being the case, is it wise to burden the already overburdened and oppressed people with a million and a half of debt, which is at best only an estimate, and our city officials never over-estimated the cost of public improvements,

Would it not at least be well for the tax-payers (without regard to party) to look to the efficiency of the men into whose hands it is proposed to place the immense sum of \$1,500,000, to be expended at their own option in an outfall sewer. An engineer who cannot grade streets one-

third of a mile over our magnificent hills and valleys without leaving sinkholes at almost every intersection, or a dead level where the water cannot flow off (see intersection of Bellevue and Holliday streets, Kellum and Edgeware, Bellevue and Water, Water and Temple, etc., etc., all over the city) is hardly the man to intrust with the engineering of the city's sewerage system, involving, as it does, the health and financial interests of the entire city. When the impracticability of the scheme is grasped and the certainty if once attained the people have a long and {perilous? - Ed.} litigation before {them?} with the probability of {defeat?} in which case the expenditure is a dead loss, it looks like corporate suicide, paralyzing every industry and leaving the people to bend under a load of taxes they can never pay. The result will be the wealthy citizens who have come here to enjoy this beautiful land and who have helped to make Los Angeles what it is today will invest their moneys elsewhere, and this now promising city will be as dead to enterprise and thrift as it was ten years ago.

Is there no better way? What is the objection to surface drainage into the river, thus rendering our streets delightful all the year round? What is the objection to selling sewerage to those who are anxious to take it and who are willing to guarantee that it shall offend no one? What is the objection to the city's purchasing sufficient land to utilize its sewerage, thus avoiding extensive law suits, saving the public money, reducing taxation and holding itself ready to grasp the water system in its own hand at the expiration of charters, thus securing to the city a revenue which will render possible the prosecution of every public

improvement which must result in the healthy growth of all the interests of this our beloved City of the Angels.

CITIZEN.

{Times, Dec. 27, 1889, p.3}

What He Was Elected For.

Los Angeles, Dec. 24.--[To the Editor of The Times.] In Citizen's criticisms of the City Engineer and the Sewer Committee, he does not seem to understand that the City Engineer was elected to put in a sewer and not to attend to such small matters as establishing street grades. He may not know that the City Engineer was urged for election because he had evolved a system of sewers which, it was claimed, no one else could have planned, or was able to construct without his aid, and not for his engineering knowledge or experience. In his own language: "By G-d, I told them when they asked me to run for the office that I would not take it just to monkey with their d--n streets, but if they would agree to put in my system of sewers I would consent to run, and they promised to do so, and by G-d, they have to do it." Citizen probably does not know that the City Engineer's knowledge of, and experience in engineering is confined to, and has been paid for by the city of Los Angeles, and that about every dollar that he has earned by his profession has been drawn from the treasury of this city. Citizen must consider that few men so educated, elevated and rewarded would condescend to waste their genius on things so filthy as our streets are at present. Unfortunately for our sewer matters, the United States does not produce engineers, and the 20 or more able and experienced American engineers now residing in Los

Angeles, many of whom are heavy taxpayers, and are now unemployed, are not the men that the City Council could trust to devise a sewer system, so they had to import some wise Dutchman, who knew by intuition just what we want and what amount we ought to pay for our sewers, and what is Citizen, or any other American-born fool, going to do about it?

ANOTHER CITIZEN.

An advisory board of engineers, appointed by the council to review the rejuvenated sewage farm/outfall sewer proposal, rejected the farm and opted instead for an outfall system as the sole solution to the disposal problem. The bonds were split into three separate issues on the ballot - an outfall sewer, interior sewer system and a storm drain - but while all three won the support of voters in March, 1890, only the interior system received the required 2/3 majority. In 1892 the package was resubmitted to the voters who finally approved it. The outfall sewer at Hyperion went into operation in two years, dumping untreated raw sewage into Santa Monica Bay. On occasion, when the system was unable to handle all the sewage, engineers diverted the surplus into Ballona Creek. Coastal communities protested, and after prolonged litigation that lasted far beyond Abbot Kinney's prediction the city installed a modern sewage treatment facility at Hyperion, although occasional failures of the system resulted in the dumping of untreated sewage into creek and bay a century later.