

ecumenical task force
of the niagara frontier

Love Canal Collection

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LOVE CANAL CHRONOLOGY

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Below find the Love Canal chronology reprinted with permission from the Niagara Gazette, May 23, 1980. Within the Ecumenical Task Force collection, are several chronologies representing various views of organizations which produced them. One of the most comprehensive, produced by the ETF itself for yearly progress reports, can be accessed through the following links.

[\[Chronology I: 1836-June 1980\]](#) [\[Chronology II: August 1980-September 1981\]](#)
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(Originally published in The Niagara Gazette, May 23, 1980. Reprinted with permission.)

- 1894 William T. Love begins the man-made canal that he envisions linking the Niagara River to Lake Ontario, providing water and hydroelectric power for a model industrial city.
- 1947 to 1952 Hooker Chemicals and Plastic Corp. takes over the 15-acre site and by 1952 has buried thousands of tons of toxic chemicals there.
- 1953 Hooker sells the canal for \$1 to the Board of Education (City of Niagara Falls, New York) and writes into the deed a disclaimer of responsibility for future damages due to the presence of buried chemicals. The board subsequently builds a school there and sells off land that is developed with residences.
- October 3, 1976 The Niagara Gazette reports that materials from a chemical landfill between 97th and 99th streets have been seeping into basements of homes in the area. Reports of illness and injuries to human, animal and plant life.

- November 2, 1976 The Gazette reports chemical analyses of residues near the old Love Canal dumpsite indicated presence of 15 organic chemicals, including three toxic chlorinated hydrocarbons.
- November 4, 1976 The Gazette reports that toxic chemicals seeping into cellars of homes are being carried through city storm sewers and improperly discharged into the Niagara River.
- September 1977 Rep. John J. LaFalce, D-Town of Tonawanda, and federal Environmental Protection Agency begin looking into problems at Love Canal. The Gazette continues investigations on its own and urging governmental action.
- April 1978 The New York State health commissioner (name???) orders county health department To restrict access to the area and begin health studies.
- May 1978 Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) concludes from air sampling in basements at Love Canal that toxic vapors are a serious health threat. State health department reveals plan for medical studies of residents.
- June 1978 State continues studies and does some house-to-house sampling and collecting of blood samples for analysis. Pentagon officials deny any knowledge of records pertaining to possible disposal of U.S. Army wastes at Love Canal.
- July 1978 New York State Governor Hugh Carey signs legislation granting additional emergency powers to state health commissioner to deal with Love Canal problems and appropriates \$500,000 for long-range health studies.
- August 2, 1978 Acting under wider powers, the state health commissioner, declares a state of emergency exists at the Love Canal and orders closing of 99th Street School and evacuation of pregnant women and children under 2.
- August 7, 1978 United States President Jimmy Carter approves emergency financial aid for the area so New York State can start buying homes of 236 families eventually relocated at a cost of \$10 million.
- November 10, 1978 200 tons of dioxin, a lethal chemical are reported buried in the canal. Residents fears heighten.
- November 22, 1978 Over 200 chemical compounds are identified as being buried in the canal.
- December 8, 1978 Reports of findings of dioxin and other chemicals and state's refusal to relocate another 54 families on the outskirts of the contaminated area bring vehement protests from residents. One protest leads to the arrest of 7 Love Canal homeowners. Charges are later dropped.

- January 23, 1979 Dr. Beverly Paigen, a cancer researcher at Roswell Park Memorial Institute, Buffalo, urges evacuation of more families in light of her study revealing a high rate of birth defects and miscarriages among Love Canal families.
- January 29, 1979 The Federal Disaster Assistance Administration rejects a state appeal to reimburse it for \$22 million spent on the Love Canal relocating residents and cleaning up the site.
- February 8, 1979 State announces it will pay temporary relocation costs for about 30 families with either pregnant women or children under age 2 between 97th and 103rd Streets after documenting claims of birth deformities and pregnancy-related problems outside the first ring of the Love Canal.
- March 21, 1979 A House subcommittee begins hearings into Love Canal problems. Hears residents and others argue that the state underestimated the scope of health problems and failed to respond in an efficient and timely manner.
- March 29, 1979 Bruce Davis, executive vice president of Hooker's Industrial Chemicals Group, tells the Senate Subcommittee it has no legal liability for last summer's Love Canal environmental disaster. The State Legislature grants a property tax rebate for Love Canal residents for five years, retroactive to 1978. ...releases Operation Bootstrap, a 1975 company management study of the Niagara Plant documenting obsolete equipment, substandard environmental conditions and massive discharging of waters into sewers leading to the Niagara River.
- April 11, 1979 Rep. Albert Gore, D. Tenn., charges Love Canal was avoidable had Hooker paid attention to danger signals. He cites an internal Hooker memorandum, dated June 18, 1958, which described three to four children burned by materials at the Love Canal.
- April 14, 1979 Reports that dioxin levels at Love Canal are 100 times higher than previously reported. Reports that contaminant is also found at Bloody Run Creek near Niagara University.
- April 24, 1979 EPA approves \$4 million for remedial work at the Love Canal. City receives \$1 million in Federal Disaster Assistance Administration funds to help pay debts incurred at the Love Canal.
- May 4, 1979 State finds traces of highly-toxic chemicals around 93rd Street School and orders more tests to determine extent of contamination.
- May 26, 1979 Fifteen bids are received for abandoned Love Canal homes. Future of sales and relocation of houses in doubt as former residents protest action.

- June 14, 1979 State Legislature extends property tax exemptions to another 300 families in area of Love Canal. Carter Administration reveals plans for a \$1.63 billion Superfund for hazardous waste clean-ups across the country. Fate of that plan still hasn't been resolved, although funds were proposed from the 1981 budget.
- July 12, 1979 EPA announces creation of a special task force to aid in identification and clean-up of toxic waste sites, including 36 on the Niagara Frontier [western New York State].
- August 30, 1979 The City of Niagara Falls Board of Education closes 93rd Street School pending the outcome of further studies of chemical contaminants. Students are transferred to various schools throughout the City.
- September 4, 1979 Over 200 canal residents take up residence at Stella Niagara Education Park [n.b., Route 18F, Lower River Road, Lewiston, New York] over the Labor Day weekend after being moved out of hotels and motels in the area. They had left the canal area after complaining of noxious odors from the remedial work.
- September 13, 1979 State Supreme Court orders extension of state-funded relocation of residents for a few days to allow the residents time to submit statements signed by physicians that they are unable to live in their homes due to remedial work.
- September 26, 1979 The first Love Canal lawsuits naming Hooker and three public agencies are initiated.
- October 3, 1979 State Supreme Court rejects a \$2.5 billion lawsuit filed on behalf of 900 Love Canal residents.
- October 5, 1979 Actress Jane Fonda and activist husband, Tom Hayden visit the Love Canal.
- October 14, 1979 House subcommittee recommends relocation of another 140 families after reviewing research by Dr. Paigen that chemicals from the Love Canal are migrating.
- October 31, 1979 Over 800 lawsuits have been filed naming Hooker, the city, county and Board of Education totaling \$11 billion.
- November 1979 A federal report indicates the odds of Love Canal residents contracting cancer is as high as 1 in 10.
- November 6, 1979 Remedial work on canal is said to be completed and state says 110 families temporarily relocated can return.

- December 20, 1979 Federal Justice Department initiates a \$124 million lawsuit against Hooker in connection with chemicals buried at four sites in the city.
- December 23, 1979 Albert Elia Construction Co. awarded a contract to operate an on-site treatment facility at the Love Canal for one year.
- January 1980 The city sells \$6.5 million in bonds to pay for remedial work in the south portion of the Love Canal.
- February 1980 EPA announces it's found four chemicals suspected of causing cancer in air samplings at Love Canal.
- March 1980 State declines participation in a Love Canal revitalization program initiated by the city.
- April 1989 State files a \$635 million lawsuit against Occidental Petroleum and two of its subsidiaries. Hooker Chemical Corp. and Hooker Chemicals and Plastics Corp. claiming they are responsible for Love Canal disaster.
- May 13, 1980 Niagara Falls City Council creates the Love Canal Revitalization Authority, a non-profit corporation. The Town of Wheatfield later joins.
- May 17, 1980 EPA announces chromosome damage has been found in 11 of 36 residents tested in the Love Canal.
- May 19, 1980 Demanding immediate action on evacuation of another 710 families, angry residents detain two EPA officials for about six hours at the Love Canal Homeowner's Association offices. They urge the declaration of a national emergency.
- May 21, 1980 President Carter declares Love Canal a national emergency paving way for relocation of another 710 families. Niagara County Legislature incurs wrath of Love Canal residents by again refusing to join the Love Canal Revitalization Authority.

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