



**EVEN POWER DREDGES MAKE LITTLE IMPRESSION ON MOUNTAINS OF SILT LINING THE SCHUYLKILL**  
 Thousands of tons of mine waste still beflow the banks of the Schuylkill, despite efforts of shovels and dredges to restore the natural beauty of the stream. One expert has suggested that the city could burn the silt, which he indicated was more than 50 percent coal, as a cheap source of power. City officials doubt the proposal's value. At left, above, a dredge bites into high-piled silt on West River Drive below Columbia ave. bridge. Center picture shows towering banks of silt on West River Drive. At right, above, a dredge defacing the stream, shows how much the col-

JOHN M. MIMMINGS

# As It Is, Schuylkill Silt Burns Up Philadelphians

Silt in the Schuylkill River will no longer be a serious problem if the moment the process of reclamation is made commercially profitable. There is plenty of energy stored away in this waste product from the anthracite coal belt. Under forced draught it will burn. And the energy thus generated could be put to some useful purpose.

There is nothing especially new in the contention of John Phillips Badenhausen, a Wyncote engineer, that the banks of the Schuylkill are lined with tons of potential energy in the form of silt. There could, however, be something new in the system of reconversion which Mr. Badenhausen has devised. It would seem unwise, therefore, to shrug it off or belittle it as "experimental" as did Eibert J. Taylor, chief of the city's water bureau.

Uncle Dominic Says—



Nevertheless, there is in the prospective use of the silt as a factor tending to justify reluctance to install costly equipment in the hope the "black gold" at the municipal doorstep would produce results warranting the outlay. The coal companies, ever on the alert to turn an honest penny, would trap the silt in the upland waters long before it had a chance to clog the river here in the heart of the city. Then the silt problem, as far as Philadelphia is concerned, would be solved.

John B. Wise, Jr., for some years before his retirement as president of the Pennsylvania Power and Light Company, experimented with the coal-laden silt. He had no difficulty at all in solving the combustion problem, but the question of cost remained. For all we know he may still be experimenting in an effort to bring the cost down to a point that would tempt industry.

One of Mr. Wise's systems—he devised several—used the powdered coal dust just as oil is used in furnaces. It was fed to the combustion chamber under high pressure and burned with a fierce white heat.

If Mr. Badenhausen or Mr. Wise or some other engineer manages to devise a method which will combine thorough combustion with low-cost reclamation the Schuylkill will once again become the lovely stream of years ago.

Mr. Wise, as a matter of fact, can recall the Schuylkill when it was the boat racing center of the Republic. Back there in the '90's he was the coxswain of a famous Penn crew. It was not necessary, in those days, to have a dredge in constant service to keep the river channel open. And it was possible to skim over the clear water without fear of being trapped on a silt bar.

In those days the river was a recreational center. In their spare hours of a summer's day thousands of Philadelphians used the Schuylkill for fishing, swimming and boating. The river was famed for the quality of its catfish. Maybe you remember the song in praise of the Wabash River in Indiana. A parody included the couplet:

"I'd rather be a catfish in the Schuylkill,  
 Than a goldfish in the Wabash far away."

They still get catfish in the Schuylkill, but it's our information they're caught for their high fat content rather than for food. Used either way, of course, you get energy.

An inveterate Schuylkill fisherman told us the other day a five-pound catfish, will have as much as a pound and a half of high-grade silt in its system. He said that when anthracite was hard to get during war-time he kept his house warm by catching catfish in the river.

Under ordinary conditions this would be a costly and a time-wasting method of heating a home. That's always been the reason advanced for failure to take advantage of the fuel content of the stream—too costly. They say it's cheaper to buy the finely ground grades direct from the coal companies.

On the Susquehanna at Harrisburg coal "fishing" is a stable industry. Scores of boats with steam-propelled conveyor lines scrape the bottom of the stream, or cut away deposits of coal silt along the banks and sell it to Harrisburg industries.

It's the same kind of silt we have here in Philadelphia. In this town, however, we'd rather keep piling the stuff along the banks of the stream. Then when we get a heavy rain it all washes back into the river and we do the same old job over and over again.

## City Urged To Burn Silt From River

Thousands of tons of mine waste piling up on the Schuylkill could be burned in the city's power plants, providing a cheap and handy fuel, John Phillips Badenhausen, an official of J. P. Badenhausen, Inc., Wyncote, asserted yesterday.

Instead of spending \$100 per day for a dredge to remove silt from the Schuylkill, Badenhausen asserted, the city could burn it at the Queen Lane pumping station at an estimated savings of \$288,000 a year.

**CALLED 'GOLD MINE'**  
 He said that nearly 10,000,000 tons of silt, capable of producing 8000 to 9000 British Thermal Units of heat per pound, now were deposited on the river. He called this deposit a "gold mine at Philadelphia's door."

Badenhausen asserted that his Wyncote firm now was constructing test units capable of burning the silt at more than 50 percent.

**TESTS SHOW 53 PCT.**

The U. S. Army District Engineer's office said that tests conducted in May 1944, indicated that the Schuylkill silt contained about 53 percent anthracite coal.

Badenhausen said that inventions which he had patented in January, 1945, would facilitate burning of the silt, providing the city with an economic source of electric power, while leaving a residue of collected deposits.

**TERMED EXPERIMENTAL**

Eibert J. Taylor, chief of the Philadelphia Water Bureau, referred to the Badenhausen project as "experimental" and said that the anthracite silt could be used to extract coal from the river.

Badenhausen said, "I have already made an application to the city for a license to burn silt."

## State Board Gets Wallpack Water Plan

Philadelphia's formal application for permission to tap the Delaware River at Wallpack Bend in Pike county for a future new water supply was received yesterday at the Water and Power Resources Board in Harrisburg.

Mayor Bernard Samuel, with Councilman approval, signed the necessary papers on Monday and forwarded them to the State board.

Although Council has instructed the Department of Public Works to proceed with plans to improve this city's present sources of water, thus postponing indefinitely any concrete action on the Wallpack Bend project, the Mayor's action was important in that it was the first step in obtaining legal rights to the upper-Deleware River source.

**FAVORED BY COMMISSION**

The Wallpack Bend project has been favored by the special Mayor's Water Commission as the exclusive source of a new supply when this city abandons its Schuylkill sources. Commission members have estimated that Wallpack could provide 500,000,000 gallons of pure water daily.

The project calls for construction of a high dam at Walnut Bend near Bushkill, Pa., and the creation of a 30-mile-long reservoir north of the dam in the New York State at Port Jervis.

**7550 ACRES LEASED**

From the lease, water for this city could be taken by an 11-mile long pipeline tunnel to a storage reservoir near Warrington, Pike county, Philadelphia would then purchase 7550 acres for the reservoir.

In a final report of the Water Commission in April 1945, the project was estimated to cost \$1,629,000. Unofficial estimates since then have brought the figure to \$115,000,000.

## City's Water Pure? Yes, Says Bureau Fish Thrive In It

This being the season for the Schuylkill to become somewhat odiferous, it is timely to consider the question of fish in the city's reservoirs.

The mere fact that there are fish in the reservoirs, says the City Water Bureau, proves that our water is pure.

Fish also are cavorting inside the city's water mains but they never—well, hardly ever get into the households because the faucets intercept them. Tadpoles, however, occasionally manage to wriggle through.

How do fish get into the reservoirs? Well, fish rise is pumped in with the river water. The purification chemicals, mostly alum and lime, don't harm the roes or the resulting fish.

Among the varieties of fish now enjoying reservoir life are carp, pickerel and perch, but no trout.

Sportsmen who go after the fish at such places as the 32d and Columbia ave. reservoir are violating the law. The Water Bureau says they might kick dirt into the water.