

## Vernam Spring - Kanouse Spring Water Co.

....another business giving employment to more than a dozen people was the Knouse Water Supply and Bottling Co. In 1912 Andrew Spear (Drew) as he was often called, leased his sawmill property to the Kanouse Spirng Water Co. The old sawmill which was located off present day Long Hill Road had originally been built before the Civil War era by Henry I. Spear, Andrew's great grandfather. The mill which was located approximately a quarter mile below the natural spring, known then as the Remington Vernam Spring, was situated in such a way that the water would run by gravity down the grade and into the mill, where the water was further purified and bottled in large glass jugs. At this point it was loaded on horse drawn wagons and shipped either to Paterson, or was freighted to New York by the train. The water was said to be the best in North Jersey, a true source of rare natural mineral water.

(The spring still bubbles today although the entire area is in a sad state of dis-repair) The operations continued like this for two years. In 1914 Kanouse, built a larger and better equipped bottling works on the west side of the Ramapo River, off Colfax Ave. It later became the site of Plastic Engineering Corp of Oakland. Kanouse made a contract with Andrew Spear to lay a three inch iron pipe line from the site of the Vernam spring to the new building. Andrew complied with the contract and during the summer and fall of 1914 he and his men dug the trenches and laid down the heavy three inch iron pipe. It ran from the Spring, across the surrounding bog land, and crossed the Long Hill Rd. at a point abreast of the present Nielson Ave. entrance off Long Hill. The pipeline was then laid down the side of the mountain, across the back of the then Lilac Manor (presently where the Shope Rite is) where it crossed the Valley Rd in the vicinity of Pleasureland and continued on to the river. It spanned the river at this point, continued southward approximately a hundred yards then turned westward, crossed Colfax Ave and entered the water works at its lower level. This entire pipline of a mile in lenth ran water without the aide of pumps. Due to the way the line had been laid, by the precision work of Andrew, the line served the Kanouse Bottling Co. for many years with it's gravity feed from the old Spirng. In 1927 the Kanouse Spirng Water Co. went bankrupt and folded, a victum of the impending depression and collapse of the stock market in 1929.

(Recollections of Oakland in Past Years, David H. Spear as told to Robert H. Spear, his son)

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Earlier during the 1890's the ancient spring had been owned by the Vernam Estate. Mrs. Remington Vernam, a millionairess at the time built several fine homes and profited by several businesses. One being the Vernam Spring Water Bottling Co., known as the Crystal Spring Bottling CO. During the 1890's Mrs. Vernam had a wooden structure erected over the spring to keep it free of debries. It was here that the water was bottled in glass jugs and loaded on

wagons for its trip to New York. Vernam's Crystal Mineral Water was known in many of the fine NY hotels and boarding houses and it was also shipped all over the eastern United States. Here also the Vernam's raised water cress in the runway which was built for this purpose. Wild mint also grew in abundance and it made a spicy and tasty additive to drinks on hot summer days. Mrs Vernam was a bit of the eccentric, In the back of the spring, along the neighboring hillside, she had imported Swiss cattle and grazed them in a barbed wired enclosed pasture. After the years the farm, the cattle and the spring were neglected so badly that many of the cattle died from starvation, the spring gradually was overtaken by the surrounding woods, and the old building neglected. Mrs Vernam turned from the bottling business and sold the property to the Kanouse Water CO. The farm fell into decay. The house situated on the property was built originally by Mrs. Vernam. It has changed hands through the years several times. Mrs. Vernam built another very large home along the Valley Rd. just west of the old Pond's Church corner. It later became a Mental Institution known as the Lilac Manor.

In the course of the years the old spring has been used as a trout hatchery, a goldfish hatchery from 1950-52. In 1935 The spring was a source of public water supply for Oakland. A large three cylinder belt driven water pump was placed in a small pump house addition on the rear of the old building. The same three inch water main that had been used by the Kanouse Co. was used to connect it with the town's water main on Long Hill Rd. A large water storage tank was constructed on the summit of Long Hill and water from the spring was pumped into it by this three cylinder pump. The pump was driven by a twelve horse power electric motor, and drove the pump by a large flat belt. My father told many times of how he use to run the pump to fill the tank on Long Hill.

With the coming of Artesian wells, the old spring was no longer needed and it was abandoned once again.. In the early 1950's it was used as a goldfish hatchery, where many exotic fish were raised, however, the extremely cold water proved to severe for many types of the fish, and in 1952 the hatchery moved to Saddle River. Since 1952 the spring has been completely abandoned and has now become a wetlands area.

(Robert H. Spear/Lyda M. Spear - from recollections of their father, David H. Spear)

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In re-examining the interview of Henry Hopper from 1956 and graciously provided by Mr. Kevin Heffernan of Oakland, there is mention by Mr. Hopper that "MacEvoy's Spring" which had been the old Vernam property at earlier times; This "natural spring" had been located in the basement-cellar of a large house owned by the Martin family"... .. it is known the Martin family owned the adjoining property and have several houses and barns therein. The "house" which Mr Hopper mentions was thought to be the building, that was constructed in 1906. This was built by Mrs Remington Vernam to protect the Spring and later her Spring water bottling

works. If it was indeed owned previously by the Martin family is a vague point. The small pond rearward of the concrete lined Spring itself was during my youth, known as "the Martin Spring" or "the upper Spring" The water that filled it bubbled up from the ground toward the rear of this small pond that was made so by a small concrete block faced dam with spillway board. Around three sides of this "upper spring" there was "tiered stone steps" that climbed that embankment and blended with the terrain at the top.

At some point in time , a huge cleft in the earth had been dugged by some sort of early-day steam shovel machine, the purpose of which was to lay a "gravity water line" of three inch tile pipe to the west which provided water to Mrs Vernam's barn and a large swimming pool that had been made from the foundation ruins of the house that had been consumed in a fire some years before. As I was a kid at the time, I likened this large excavated channel as similar no less to the Panama canal!. A large valve was installed on this clay pipe line with an ornate cast iron wheel that controlled it's flow. It appeared to me there were more than just one clay pipeline laid in this dug channel and indeed there also was a iron pipe line that also went out and across Long Hill Road and provide water to the swimming pool at the house across the way (formerly the home of Jacob Speer) For many years I observed a Belmar Spring Water Company; of Ridgewood; truck filling it's tank from this metal pipe!

Around that area of the old Martin homes and the Springs there were many remnants of Mrs. Martins love of flowering trees and shrubs. Lilacs still grew there of both white and pink varieties and provided elegant bouquets for our kitchen table!. Large reed-like plants resembling bamboo we called "elephant ear" for their large almond shaped leaves that grew thick and fast like a South American rain forest would. The dried stalks in the fall of the year were fun to explore through as we envisioned ourselves as intrepid "explorers" in a jungle-like maze of these tall plants. Mr. Hopper also relates to a large barn-like structure not far from the Spring that was used as a dance hall. My father I recall telling about this also although no evidence of it remained- it being all excavated away in a soil mining operation there later. I often remarked about the "unknown and forgotten" history of this corner of Oakland that had all but vanished even as I was growing up there. There were also spots where ancient home-fired bricks could be dug out of the ground and my father had told of "green houses" that had also once stood. There was almost nothing left of any of this in my boyhood days there and my imagination worked over time it seemed to try and figure it all out with the scant facts available.

The land the Spring was situated on had once been part of a 55 acre woods and pasture lot owned by Henry I. Speer who had established his saw mill on the lower stream-way. In the 1840's it seems, his two sons; John and Jacob raised trout there in hand dug ponds carved from the wetlands. Still later, it was owned by the Martin family who were French people, and later still by Mrs Remington Vernam. After that, Clifford F. MacEvoy, an area developer who had excavated the Wanaque Reservoir basin and was a large land owner came into possession of the property. This

eventually passed down to his son in law, Arthur Vervaet. Since then, its ownership was unclear but eventually the McBride Agency became the owners and I believe today its wetlands have been identified as a "town park".

Henry Spear (1795-1887) had most likely purchased the land from an even earlier owner with land that was also associated with his farm along the Valley Road. In pre-Colonial days when the Ramapo valley was home to native American tribes, this was no doubt an "Indian Spring" a source of water and forage for Lenni Lenapi who lived and hunted the surrounding woodlands. It's water source is most likely from a deep aquifer, fed by the sand deposits and drainages of the entire region. An area dotted with cold upwelling natural Springs has abundantly furnished water power for mills along it's length, ultimately emptying to the Ramapo River.

\*recollections of Bob Spear; August 2013