



Drawing by Donald R. Barbeau of "fire car" equipped with chemical tanks and placed in service by McKFD about 1926. A modified Packard, it served the area until 1931 when a much larger Brockway truck replaced it.

McKownville: News And Comment

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ville, is preparing a publication which will include historical facts of the various cities and towns of which the county is composed. In his research, Mr. Roseberry has uncovered some historical facts about Guilderland and its formation.

A petition was circulated and signed by a group of residents of the Norman's Kill valley and the land below the Hellebergh and was presented to the legislature by Nicholas V. Mynderse, builder in 1802 of the Mynderse-Frederick House and tavern in Guilderland Center. It was introduced into the legislature by Jeremiah Van Rensselaer, himself a resident of the valley of the Norman's Kill. It was passed by the Assembly and confirmed by the Senate and signed into law 180 years ago this Saturday, (Feb. 26) by Gov. George Clinton.

The petition did not designate a name for the new Town and it must be assumed that the name "Guilderland" or "Guilderland" was supplied by VanRensselaer, for the name of the family's ancestral home in Holland. The petition carrier, Nicholas Mynderse, became the town's first supervisor in 1803, chosen at the organizational meeting of the first Town Board at the Apple Tavern.

On Friday, Feb. 18, the Board of Fire Commissioners of the McKownville Fire District signed a contract with American LaFrance for a new 1250 gpm Century model pumper. It is expected that the truck will be delivered in late October.

Evaluation of the bids eliminated some bids which ran over the estimate and others which did not comply with the features required by the specifications. Three remaining bidders were very close in price and the deciding factors were such features as wheelbase and turning radius (important on

McKownville's narrow streets) and other desirable features which deviated from the specifications. The products of American LaFrance have served the District well since 1957. The truck will be painted in the traditional color, red.

As has been previously noted, the Packard chemical fire car placed in service by the McKownville Fire District in June 1926 seems to have never been recorded on film and no one left seems to remember its details. We are indebted to a co-worker and very good friend of this writer, very talented at sketching, who produced the accompanying sketch of what it must have looked like. The sketch was prepared using information gleaned from district records and photos of Packards of that year and should pretty well resemble the vehicle.

The artist, Donald R. Barbeau, also of New York State DOT Rail Division, has produced a large number of high-quality sketches of various types of steam locomotives and accompanying detailed information which have recently made their appearance in a book titled "The Eccentric Crank" (a part of the locomotive mechanism) published by the Mohawk and Hudson chapter of the National Railway Historical Society. The book is available from the society at P.O. Box 523, Schenectady, N.Y. 12301 at \$6.25 per copy plus 75 cents postage.

McKownville's Packard of 1926 was described in the records as a "fire car." It contained chemical tanks mounted and had necessary hose and equipment. During 1927 a siren was purchased and installed and in September of that year a bell was added. The 1928 budget for the fire district of \$300 included \$50 rent to house the Packard for the year. In the fall of 1927 a turkey raffle was authorized for the fire department, probably the one which established that long standing tradition in the hamlet.

In 1929 the commissioners authorized a siren to be mounted atop Holmes Garage (Country Club Garage) where the fire car was quartered. In 1930 compensation insurance was first authorized by the district to cover the volunteer firefighters.

In 1930 repairs to the Packard fire car became necessary, and the fire commissioners took the initial steps toward replacement of the Packard with the Brockway chem-

ical fire truck (1931-1957) which this writer remembers.

This writer enjoyed the comments of Newton Ronan of Altamont in his recent letter to the editor recalling old McKownville. Not only was Newton a member of McKownville Fire Department but his father and brother, Jack, as well. Their mother was well-known by her presence each year at the old firehouse as an election inspector for District 1. Are there any old McKownville snapshots or photos in your collection, Newton? If so, they could be photocopied and returned and would add valuable material to the archives.

Members of the Guilderland Historical Society at its recent February meeting enjoyed a presentation by Rev. James K. Hilton, pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church, Altamont, and his cousin, Mrs. Gibbs, on the history of St. John's (1872) and the parent St. James's (1787) which sat along the old Schoharie Road

overlooking the settlement below the Hellebergh. The original congregation of St. James's was split into St. John's, Altamont, and St. Mark's, Guilderland Center.

Society members also recalled that on their June 18, 1981 field trip to Schoharie they visited the old Lutheran parsonage of 1743 there. Here the first Lutheran minister, Rev. Peter Nicolas Sommer, took up residence and it is recorded that he was the first circuit-riding Lutheran minister to hold services in the land below the Hellebergh (now part of Guilderland) before a permanent church was built.