

A History of Fire Service in McKownville

The year 1918 marked an important step in the growth and development of the little Hamlet known as McKownville. In that year it assumed its first legal status as a political subdivision, that of a Fire District. It also acquired its first nucleus of fire protection, the McKownville Fire Department, Inc.

The Hamlet had grown as a farming community during its earlier years. The old McKown Tavern, located on the Great Western Turnpike at Fuller Road approximately on the site of the present Kings Shell Service Station, was its nucleus. The Tavern at one time contained a post office with a post mark "McKownville" long since lost in the economies of the Post Office Department and never regained.

By World War I the character of the community had changed from farming to suburban-residential, probably spurred on by the opening of the Country Club trolley line in 1911. By 1916 it had become apparent that some form of fire protection was needed. In that year, the move which led to the incorporation of the McKownville Fire Department, Inc. and the establishment of the Fire District began.

On April 4, 1916 a group of residents met at the McKownville District School, known as the brick schoolhouse, on Schoolhouse Road to discuss formation of a fire district and organization of a fire company to serve it. A committee was formed, headed by the late Alfred A. Garrison, to circulate the necessary petition among the residents and to secure initial contributions.

On April 18, 1916 Mr. Garrison presided at a meeting held at the Witbeck Hotel (formerly McKowns Tavern) to organize a fire company. The late Milo Clark, for many years Town Clerk of the Town of Guilderland and a resident of Schoolhouse Road acted as Secretary. A copy of the by-laws of the Voorheesville Fire Company was presented for study and apparently served as the basis for the by-laws adopted for the McKownville Fire Department.

On May 9, 1916 another meeting was held at the Witbeck Hotel. A charter for the Fire Dept. was in preparation and a committee composed of W. Bryan, Jr., B. Witbeck, G. Ziehm and William Hein was appointed to look into purchase of apparatus. Mr. Garrison again presided at this meeting.

More meetings were held and on November 13, 1917 it was decided to petition the Board of Supervisors to establish a Fire District. On June 11, 1918 the certificate of incorporation for the McKownville Fire District was transmitted to Frederick J. Van Wormer, Supervisor of the Town of Guilderland.

The District, as originally set up, extended from the Albany City Line westward to Gipp Road in the area now known as Westmere. Later it was shortened when the Westmere Fire District was organized.