



HALF MOON BOOKS

"In and Out of Print"

POST OFFICE BOX 444 ··· GUILDERLAND, N. Y. 12084

Dear Bill:

I am enclosing my notes on McKeenville and also Jack King's comments. On the phone Jack told me of a point which may clear up something on the old Witbeck Hotel. After it burned (Jack doesn't remember the date) a man named Charles "Oak" Ebel operated a grill in a smaller building which stood on the site of ^{approximately} the Aunt Jemima Pancake House (which apparently is being remodeled). Ebel's grill also burned about 1940. He kept his supply of beverages in his hen house

I've already told you about the place
where the tickets for the numbers game
were printed.

I hope you will find the material
of some use.

I suggest you or Fred go over
the old minutes of the Mt. Pleasant
Improvement Association.

Best regards
Bill Embler

June 13, 1969

John Hart Harris seems to have
some interest in local history and might
be helpful.

Recollections of McKownville 1942-1969

FROM
WHERE
?

We moved to McKownville in January 1942 (1447 Western Avenue) and moved in November 1943 to 18 Glenwood Street where we resided until 1960 when we moved to 117 Birchwood Drive near McCornick Corners.

When we came to McKownville most of the houses were in the area north of Western Avenue, between it and the Albany Country Club and on Providence, Warren and Mercer streets west of Fuller Road. - AND JOINING THE NEW N.Y.S. CAMPUS

South of Western Avenue from the City line were three or four houses, the Helme farm, a produce stand operated in summer by Jeannie Helme, the Finnegan drug store - DR. HELME
1st PHYSICIAN
Schwarz's market, a tavern and the Country Club garage with a gas station on the corner of Arcadia and Western. Much of this block is now occupied by housing on the Helme farm, the Sulo restaurant & the Dunkin' Donuts and the Travelodge Motel. Very few changes have taken place on Hillcrest and Arcadia except that the former fire house and meeting place of community organizations is now the Bryn Mawr Club book store.

↑
Along
Hillcrest
↓

ORIGINALLY
CHANGING

the Bryn Mawr Club book store.

The New Yorker beauty shop at the southwest corner of Arcadia and Western is comparatively new from a dwelling converted about 12 years ago and the new firehouse occupies the site of two former dwellings at the easterly corner of 18 Rookwood.

The development of Wesslyn Court took place during the late 1940s. Dr. Emory's place is

The Social Services building west of Thomson Sawyer was completed in 1968 and the Hancock house about 3 years earlier

new but Dr. Macomber's is unchanged except for an addition and the fence. The stores and gas station between it and McKays road are new (about 1950?). The old house which now stands on McKays road back of the gas station once stood on Western avenue and was occupied by the abbey, the Koon sisters. Insert! (1952?)

The present site of the Tom Sawyer Motel was an open field where wild strawberries could be found and was used at times for sandlot baseball. The next building on the north side of Western avenue to the west was a gas station operated by Frank Miller but owned, I believe, by the Wilbecks. Benjamin Wilbeck lived on the easterly corner of Glenwood Street and Western.

The major changes from the city line on the north side of Western avenue were Hannan's drug store, the development of the 30-acre of the Le Grange property between the Wilbeck development (late 1920s) and the Albany Country Club; and the discontinuance of the ^{street} bus stop at the easterly corner of Fuller Road. The Le Grange tract was partly wooded, partly abandoned orchard and partly open sandlot. When we moved to 18 Glenwood Street ^{November} in 1943 there was a road used by delivery trucks which connected the upper ends of Glenwood and Parkwood streets. A

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sandlot. When we moved to 18 Glenwood
street in ^{November} 1943 there was a sand road, used
by delivery trucks which connected the upper
ends of Glenwood and Parkwood streets. A
brook began on the Le Grange property and
ran behind what are now houses on upper Parkwood,
crossed what is now upper Glenwood and flowed

into an underground pipe ^{then} at the end of
Norwood street. This continued underground
to cross under Western Avenue at Acadia
and then into the open Krumkill near a branch
which was the outlet for the Country Club pond.

Fuller Road was a two lane ~~was~~ blacktop
road. One of the pastimes of that period and for
several years was to drive over the New York
Central at grade (two persons were later
killed there before the grade separation) and
watch New York Central passenger trains on the
evening - the 20th Century, Ohio State etc as they went
west.

The Thruway had not been built, of course, and
Washington Avenue ended at Fuller road where
Washington Avenue buses turned. There was a
small refreshment stand on the southwest corner.
The northwest corner of Fuller road and Wilkes
Avenue ~~was~~ where the Steveson Plaza is situated
was a tangle of brush and rather marshy. Dee
Ann, Belle and Bob, trapped muskrats there. Much
of the opposite side of Western Avenue where Dr. Wesley
Van Loan's dental office is and the site of the Lutheran
Church were vacant.

The "Little Red Schoolhouse" actually painted

Church were vacant.

The "Little Red Schoolhouse" actually painted yellow at that time was operated as a school until about 1951 when the central district was formed. In addition to those attending it, pupils from the district went to 20 other public and private schools in the Capital District.

One of the disadvantages of McManis's education

skip to next page

Insert 1

The Knowles farm was not developed. In 1943 we had a garden along the north bank of the outlet from the McKeanville reservoir and east of McKean road

X K X

Insert 2

The cost of bus transportation has increased greatly since 1942 when it was approximately seven cents to a route proposed 30 cents. At one time, around 1950, the United Traction Company proposed to end the line inside the city limits and a hearing was held in the State Office Building. The attendance was so great and the protests so effective that nothing more was heard of the proposal. After Shryvesant Plaza was completed the line was extended to it and the former turn-around on the easterly side of Fuller road became doctors' offices

was the "water system." Unfiltered water was piped to houses in the Wilbeck development (Country Club Highlands on the real estate map). The only treatment was by dragging a bag of Copper Sulfate through the pond behind a small row boat. This was done by Frank Miller who operated the gas station at the end of Fuller Road.

At the end of the war, the McKeonville Improvement Association determined to do something to remedy the conditions. A water committee was appointed, headed by Don Wilson and William J. Embler as co-chairmen. Because several previous efforts had come to nothing, after consultation with the engineering firm of Barker Wheeler they were not interested and the committee engaged the services of Benjamin Smith and Associates. All of the necessary legal steps were taken, petitions were circulated by volunteers, permission was received from the State Comptroller's office and the water system was completed in about 1948 with hydrants for fire protection. At the same time an effort was made toward construction of a sewer system but the petition for this was rejected by the State Comptroller on the ground that the cost, when added to that of the water system, would be an undue burden on the proposed district. The original system of outlets to capture tanks is

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be an undue burden on the proposed district.
The original system of outlets to capture tanks is
still in use. One outlet is into the Bunkell back of
the old firehouse and another is reputedly

follows the course of a one-time brook from Elmwood Street across Western Avenue and goes under the dam at McKeon Grove to empty into that branch of the Krumkill.

During the war years the need for zoning in Guildenland was discussed by the McKeonville Improvement Association and this finally got underway with a committee, headed I believe by Fred Cwas. Its recommendations were adopted by the Town Board in time, fortunately, to avoid some of the unfortunate developments in towns without zoning.

Other sources of information on the history of McKeonville: Records in the Town Clerk's office; minutes of the Improvement Association; the Fire Department;

* The two greatest influences for change in McKeonville in this period (1942-1969) have been the building of the New York State Thruway and the Northway and the relocation of the former site of the Albany Country Club for the campus of the Albany branch of the State University of New York.

Sheet 2

Bill

MY ONLY THOUGHT IS JUST

A WORD OF BACKGROUND FOR EACH

AREA & NAME YOU MENTION - IN

YOUR RECOLLECTIONS - WITHOUT
DIALOGUE -

ACK

P.S. YOUR RECOLLECTIONS ARE EXACT
& GOOD

P.S. - P.S. -
THERE ARE TWO FROZEN
TROUT IN YOUR FREEZER - FRESH SAUGHT -
"FOR BILL"

ROSE FOR MARBLE -

EVENTS & STRUCTURES THAT CAME TO PASS -
FROM 1944-1969 IN MCKOWNVILLE -
DR. HELME FARM ELIMINATED - THE BILD REST. &
TRAVEL LODGE TAKING ITS PLACE -

"TOM SAWYER HOTEL" - "WITBELKS"

ST. JUVESANT PLAZA - SWAMP AREA

NEW M.C. METHODIST CHURCH -

McKownville in my years of residence changed from a hamlet of semi country living to a suburb of business, plazas & finally a college campus area -

"Without Detiment"

The wholesome structure remains -

- CROUSE Honored -
Now Ackberg & Co.

RECOLLECTIONS

1969

William J. Embler