

Signs of the times – William McKown; & the Patent of Jan Hendrickse Van Bael

presentation for the Guilderland Historical Society

16 November 2023 by Bill Kidd (authorship includes Susan Anderson)



No historical markers have existed in eastern Guilderland beyond the site of Tollgate No. 2

We thought that a marker for William McKown and his tavern, the first building in what later became McKownville, would be an appropriate addition

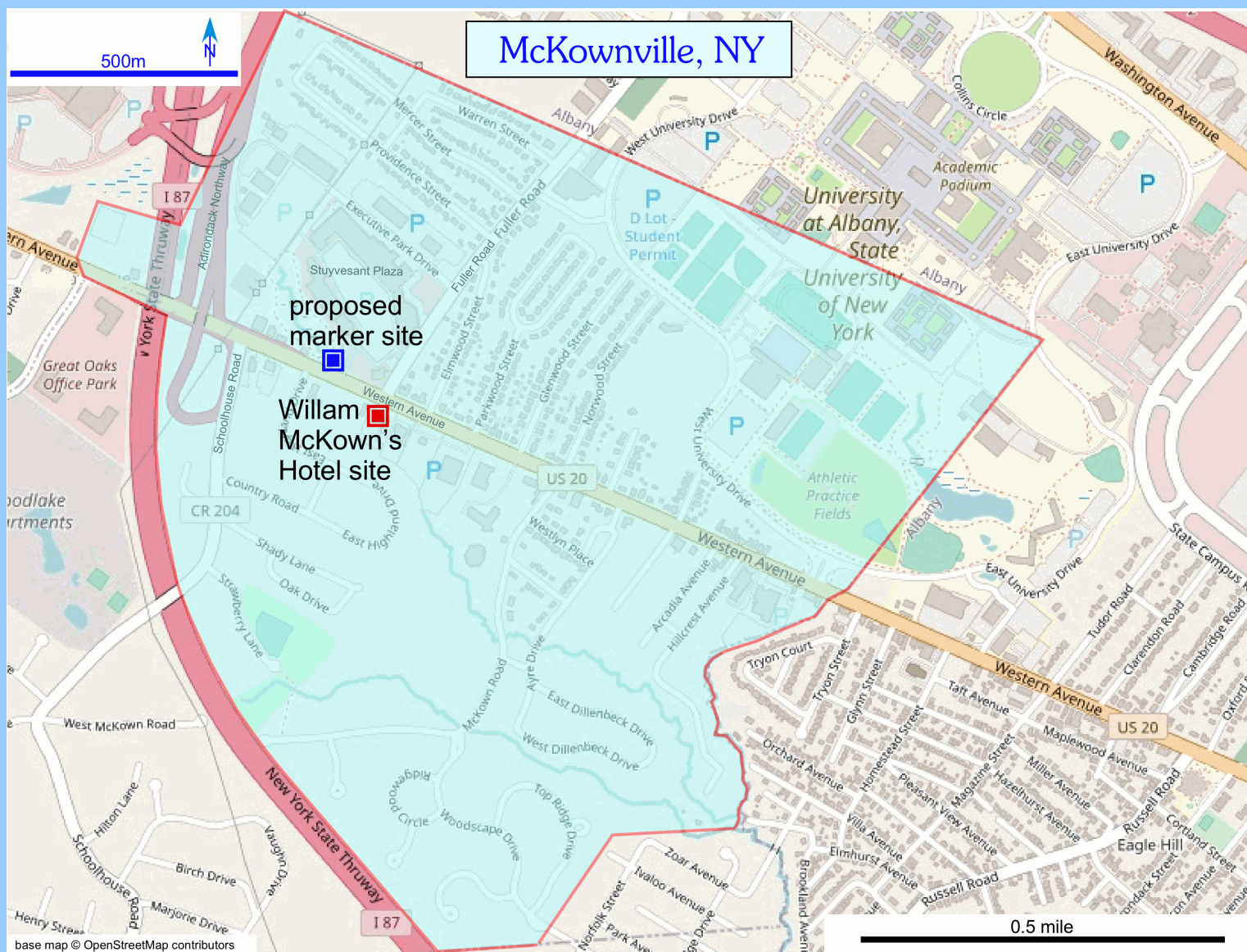
This marker is in manufacture and will be installed next year [Thank you to those who donated funds to pay for manufacture]



Guiderland Historical Society files

McKown's Hotel & Tavern, c. 1916

Since 1907, owned by William H Witbeck; he rented it from heirs of William J McKown before this, from 1884.
Burned down in October 1917.



The hotel site is where the B King is now; the landowner told us that getting consent from the Carrolls franchise to put the marker there “would undoubtedly be difficult”

So, the Town of Guilderland was asked if it could be placed in the McKownville Reservoir Park near Western Avenue, and they consented to this, graciously. This site was part of William McKown's hostelry, being stockyards, and the reservoir dam is where McKown first dammed the Krum Kill

Map made by W.B. Efner in 1940
of the McKown Hotel site

Dam on the Krum Kill
“great overflowing spring”

Fuller Road

Drovers cattle yards
north of Turnpike

Western Turnpike - US Route 20

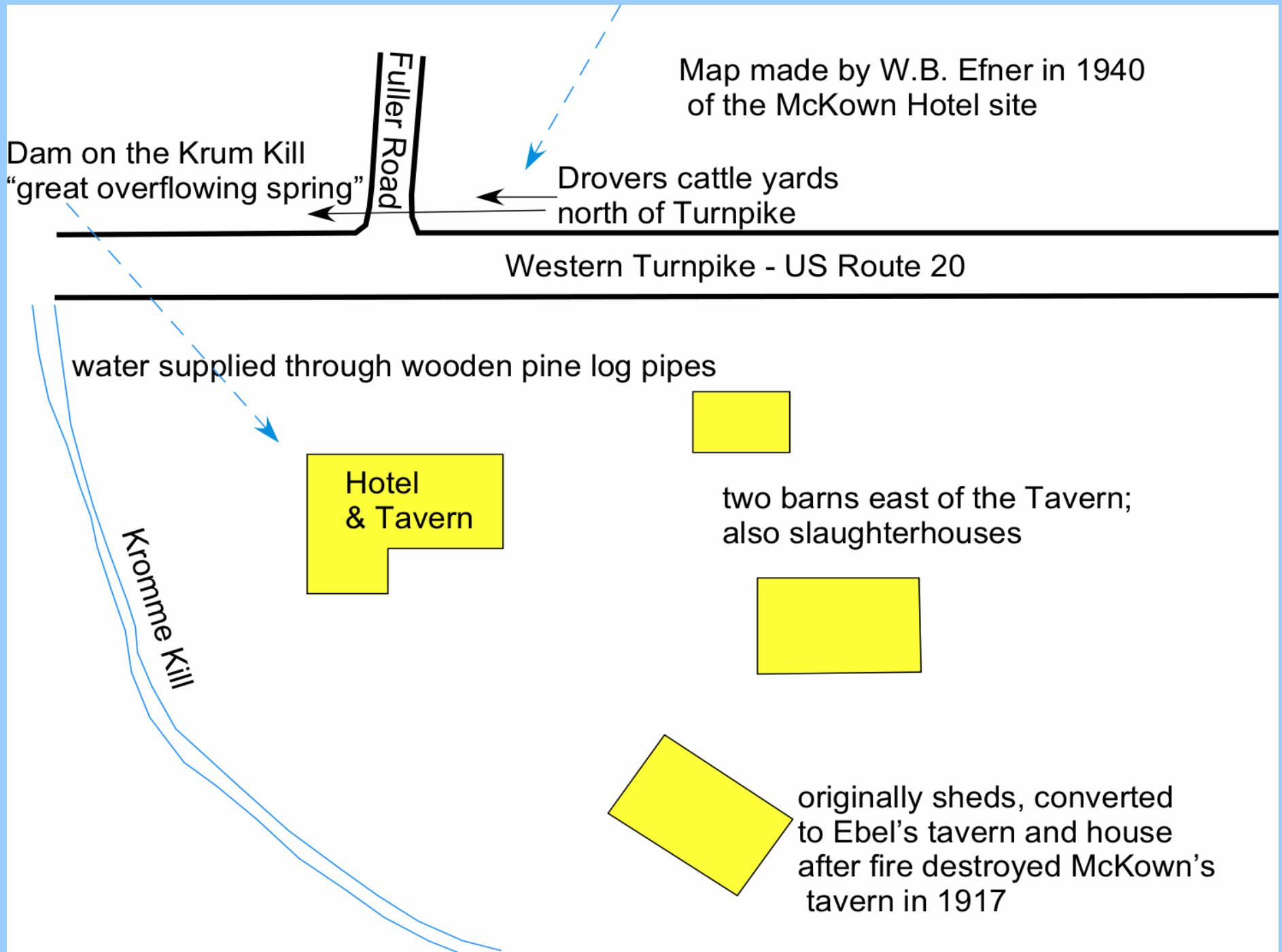
water supplied through wooden pine log pipes

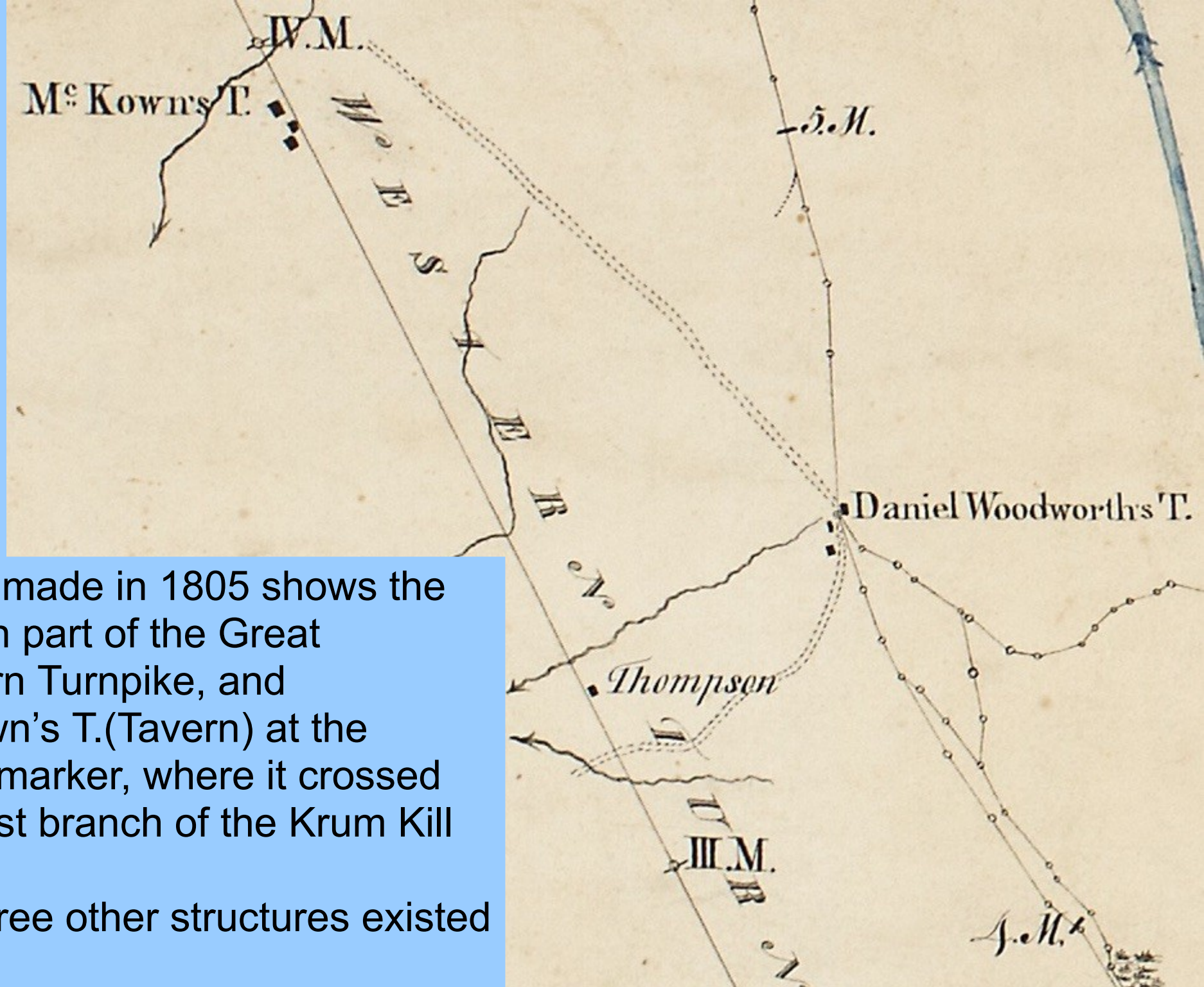
Hotel
& Tavern

two barns east of the Tavern;
also slaughterhouses

Krumme Kill

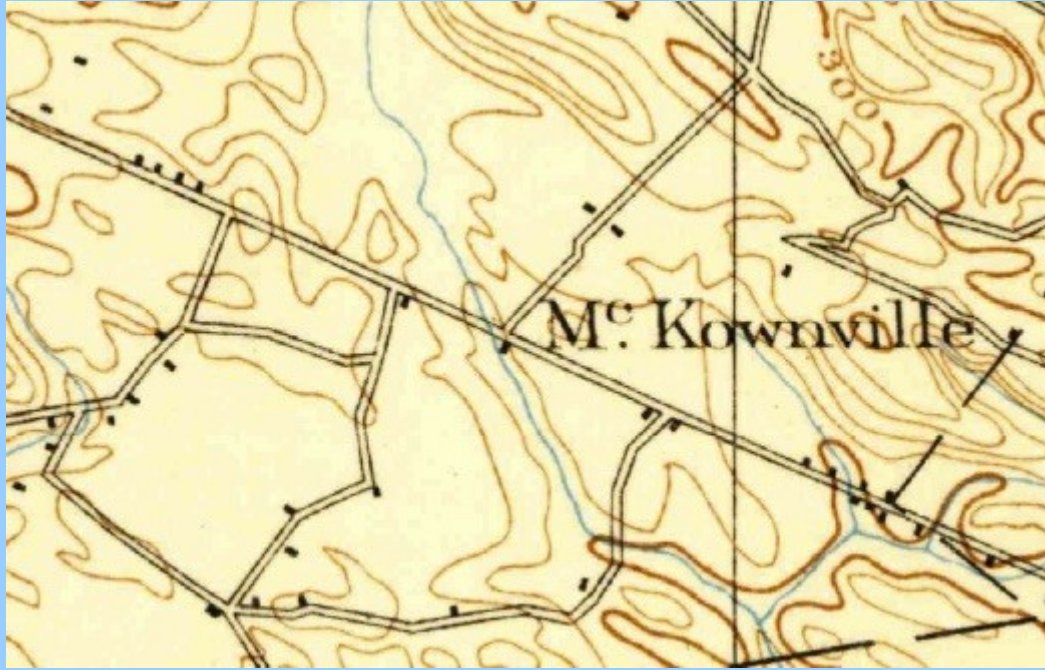
originally sheds, converted
to Ebel's tavern and house
after fire destroyed McKown's
tavern in 1917





A map made in 1805 shows the eastern part of the Great Western Turnpike, and McKown's T.(Tavern) at the 4 mile marker, where it crossed the west branch of the Krum Kill

only three other structures existed nearby



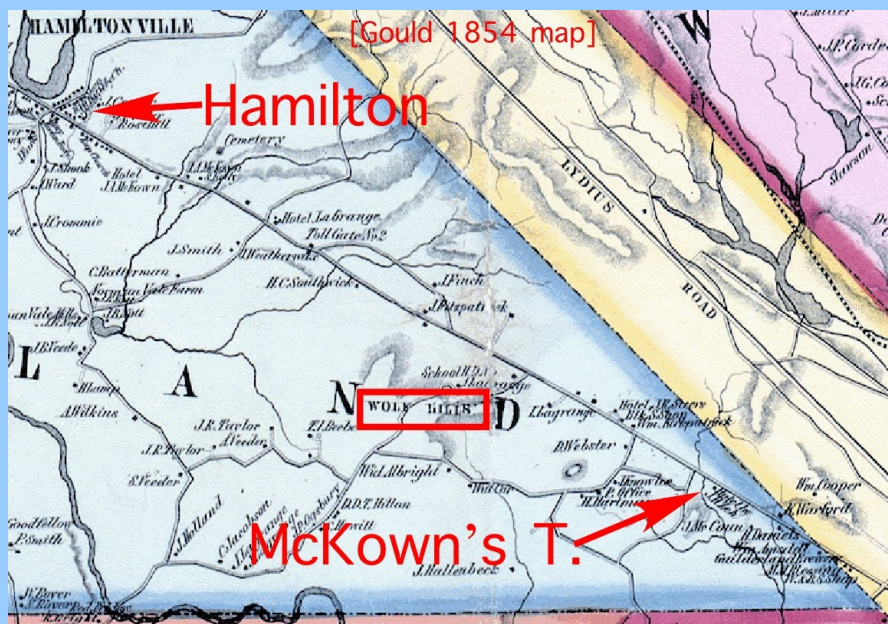
The earliest map showing the name McKownville is the USGS Albany sheet surveyed 1891; early Altamont Enterprise issues of around this date use McKownsville; the McKownville Post Office was first established 1862 located in McKown's Tavern (closed 1905)

A Knickerbocker Press article from 1928 includes the information based on interviews with older residents that in the early 19th C. the place was called by some West Brighton

this is why the marker says William McKown "began" McKownville

"It was late before we got out of the precincts of the city, and up the hill, and night overtook us away in the pine woods, at **Billy McKown's, a noted public-house** seated halfway between the city and losco [Hamilton], where it was customary in those days to halt; for besides that **he was much respected, and one of the most sensible and influential men in the town**, it was not thought right, what ever the traveller might require, that a horse should be driven eight miles without drawing breath, and having a pail of water."

Henry Schoolcraft, published in his story "The Rabid Wolf" (1845), speaking of the year 1807.



We the Subscribers Inspectors of an Election held at the
 House of the widow Appleton Tuesday the Sixth Day of April 1813
 For the purpose of Electing Town officers for the town of
 Guilderland the following Persons were Elected town officers
 Certified by us the said inspectors Given under our hands
 at Guilderland this Sixth Day of April 1813 to wit

Wm th McKown Super.	}	Overseers of Roads	
Andrew Astorider S. Clerk		R. D. S.	James Wilton
Peter Weggoner	}	2	Levi D. Aiken
Peter Livingston Junr		3	John Van Rensselaer
Abraham Bertlett		4	John Hann

Remains
by

Town Records of the Town of Guilderland 1803-1835
 page 112, entry dated 6th April 1813; Wm McKown Super.
 William McKown was elected Supervisor of the Town of Guilderland
 1813 and in each year subsequently to 1824.
 Member of the State Assembly 1822, with his nephew James McKown



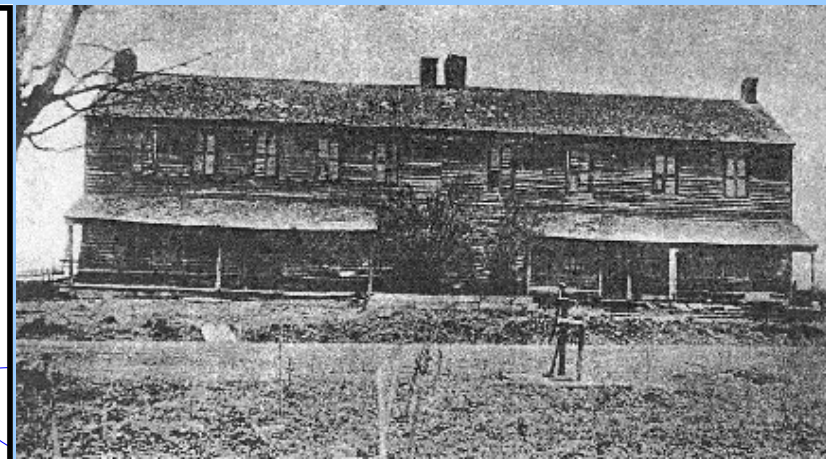
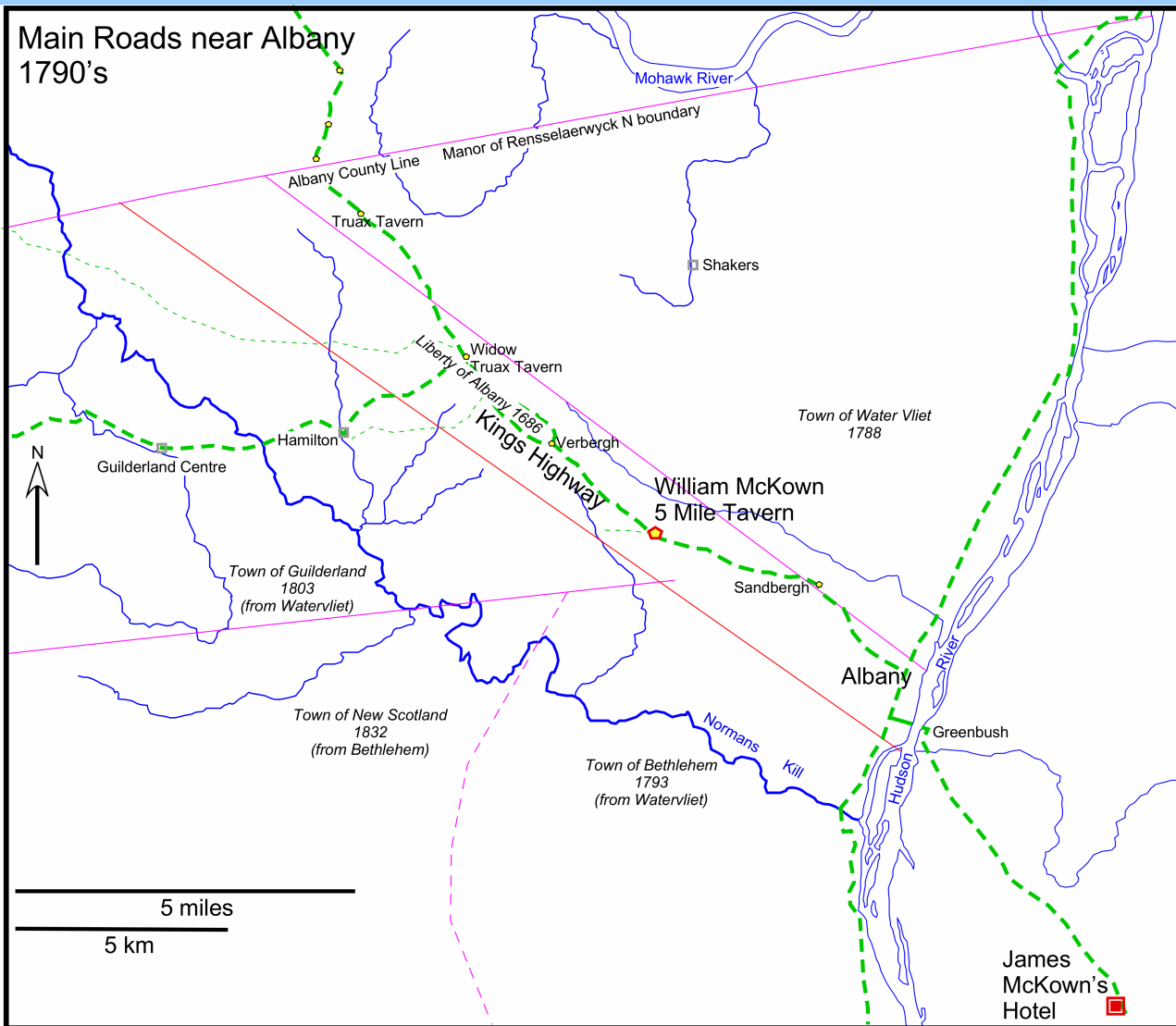
William McKown's gravestone
d. 1 Aug 1843, aged 80y 4m 15d
now located in the Guilderland
Water Dept building, Industrial Park

found and taken from cellar floor of
old house facing demolition in 1973
by Fred Abele & Russel Case
(across from Prospect Hill)

found broken on property near
State Farm Road 1996; preserved
by Water Dept employees

moved from McKownville in 1865;
remains reburied in Prospect Hill

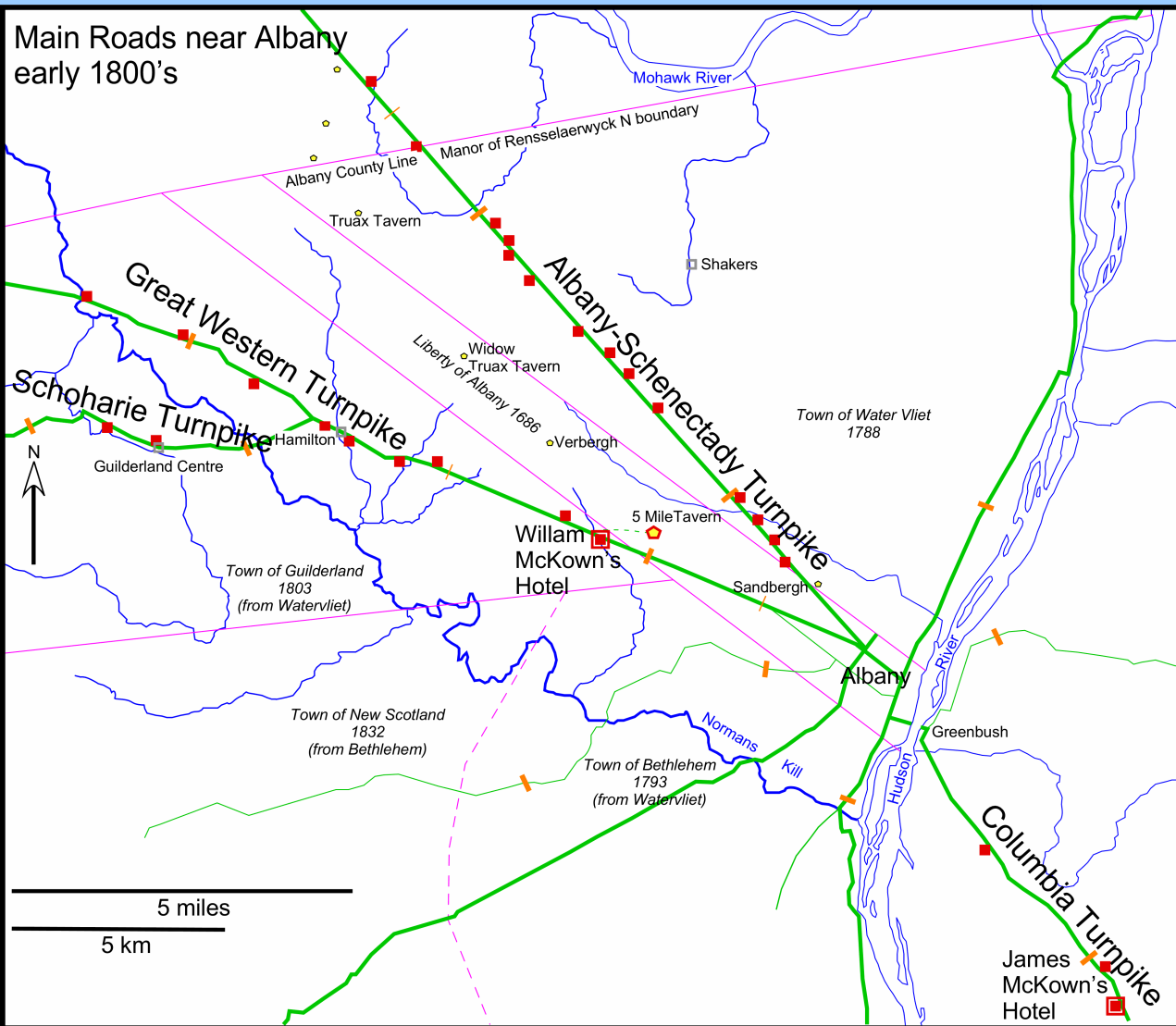
William McKown's older brother James also built and operated an inn, tavern and hostelry on the road southeast of Albany
They both had a strategic location, up the hill from the river at just the distance where the horse and rider needed refreshment



a review of this hostelry
23 May 1791: "... had our horses put out into good pasture... We had a good supper"
and
24 December 1791: "breakfasted at Mc Kown's: paid 9d. He has excellent brandy..."
Alexander Coventry M.D

William McKown built his new tavern, inn and hostelry to capture the traffic on the new Great Western Turnpike

This was a busy place: from the journal of Alexander Coventry 30 January 1828:
“Arriving at a very large house, and extensive (tavern) establishment, on inquiry found it was Wm McKown's....whom I had....not seen for the last 25 or 30 years...from the last time that I was at his house, till now, I had not seen so crowded a bar-room.”



a review of Wm McKown's
former hostelry in
23 Nov. 1797
“had a good breakfast at
McKown's 2/-...”
Alexander Coventry M.D

other tavern reviews from the journal of Alexander Coventry :

“24 May [1791]...rode 16 miles beyond Schenectady and **put up at an Englishman's who keeps but a poor Tavern.....**

Wednesday 25 May Set out this morning early: Bill 3/9”

“26 November. 1797. Clear, moderate and pleasant with Westerly wind. Slept at Hudson's in Kinderhook, last night: bill for supper, lodging and bitters 4/6. **This but an indifferent home: double beds, dirty sheets, and surlish landlord.**”

and then there is this (from a secondary source – Cuyler Reynolds, vol 4)

*“James, son of Johannes (John C.) and Anna Maria (Mordecai) LaGrange....
died at McGowan's, town of Guilderland, 1826. His death was caused by poisoning from eating cherry pies.”*

Van Bael Patent 1776
& area of grants 1789
Gore partition area 1807

Albany County Line
Manor of Rensselaerwyck N boundary

Jan Hendrickse Van Bael
Patent - 1776 arbitration

1000 acres
1¼ miles square

area enclosing grants
by S Van Rensselaer
to Van Bael proprietors 1789

16,640 acres
5¼ miles square

portion of the Gore
partitioned 1807

Shakers

Town of Water Vliet
1788

Liberty of Albany 1686
Corporation (Bleeker) Line 1800
Betty Line 1712

Schoharie Turnpike
Guilderland Centre

Hamilton

Town of Guilderland
1803
(from Watervliet)

McKown's
Hotel

Town of New Scotland
1832
(from Bethlehem)

Town of Bethlehem
1793
(from Watervliet)

Albany

Greenbush

Normans

Kill

Hudson

5 miles

5 km

William McKown made quite numerous and substantial purchases of land in and adjacent to the area that became McKownville between 1797 and 1806.

Many of these are in the Van Bael Patent, and in lands granted to the claimants of that Patent.



More extended explanations and links to sources are available at the McKownville Improvement Association website (history section pages) <https://mckownville.org/MIAhistory.html>

Acknowledgements

Thanks to:

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online resources including

[ancestry.com *subscription*]

[<https://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/>]

[<https://www.newnetherlandinstitute.org/>]

Stefan Bielinski [<https://exhibitions.nysm.nysed.gov//albany/pcalhindex.html>]

Albany Institute of History & Art [<https://www.albanyinstitute.org/>]

New York State Archives [<https://digitalcollections.archives.nysed.gov/index.php/>]

NY Public Library [<https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/lane/maps-atlases>]

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