

27 Warren Street
McKownville
Albany, N. Y.
March 18, 1955

The Editor,
The Times Union
24 Sheridan Avenue
Albany, N. Y.

Dear Sir:

This morning as I read my copy of the Times Union I noted with considerable annoyance G. R. Roseberry's latest article advocating the annexation of the McKownville district to the City of Albany.

Mr. Roseberry is a relative newcomer to McKownville and obviously an unhappy resident of the community. He seems to have a personal ax to grind and is using his column in your paper to do just that. Since Mr. Roseberry moved into the community a couple of years ago he has constantly tried to stir up agitation in favor of annexation through the medium of his column in your paper. He has used as his major argument the water situation. It is obvious from his writeups that he has made no effort to get or present all the facts involved.

Unfortunately the power of the press can be just as strong to sway public opinion with personally opinionated articles as with straightforward facts. It is time the Times Union starts printing all the facts before residents out here are duped into something which is not necessarily for the general good. It would seem that the situation would be best covered in the future by a disinterested reporter covering all facts, pro and con.

I wish to present here other facts and observations pertinent to the subject to annexation which should be taken into consideration.

As regards the water situation, the Water District had just completed modernization of its plant and facilities when I moved into the community. The water was plentiful at our home during the entire first year we lived here and was of not too bad quality. Then the New York State Thruway was permitted to cross through our water supply. Why this was permitted to happen without a fight I don't know but apparently the power of the press was not used to oppose such an unfair move. When grading operations started our water troubles began and they have never ceased. The engineers tell us the reservoir is half filled with sand and silt washed down from the thruway. This could be observed most of the time by just looking at the reservoir. It is my understanding that the Thruway Authority has agreed to dredge and clean the reservoir and return it to good condition. This will take several months, however. Meanwhile additional temporary moves are being made to endeavor to aid the situation.

During the summer of 1953 a severe drought occurred. Our reservoir, though small, never reached the critically low levels that confronted most communities throughout the state. Almost every water

district was forced to curtail use of water. These facts appeared daily in your paper. McKownville was no exception. Water consumption in the district tripled during the drought and the pumping and storage facilities were unable to cope with the demand. This is when restrictions were imposed to keep up water pressure in case of fire. The engineers tell us that the supply of water available is adequate and I believe they are qualified to do so.

If annexation did take place we would have Albany's good water. However, we would be still obligated to pay off the bond issue now outstanding on the system. Thus we would pay two water taxes.

As taxpayers of the Town of Guilderland we have just succeeded in installing fine modern central schools and facilities and have already paid a considerable amount on them. These we would forfeit in favor of the Albany Public School system which does not have any such modern facilities, at least in this end of the city. The nearest city school is #27 at Russell Road and it is doubtful if this facility would be able to handle such a sudden influx.

Under the present system our children are picked up at the door by school buses and transported safely to and from the school. I do not know of any place in the city where this is possible. In my own case the public bus line does not come near enough to be of use for this purpose and this situation would constitute a hardship.

McKownville now has a well equipped and well manned fire company known for its efficiency. Albany would have to provide us with a new fire house and truck to replace this facility which now renders protection with very little cost to the taxpayers. At present adjacent city property is protected only by engine 10 more than three miles away. Our fire insurance rates would undoubtedly soar if this condition were permitted to continue. Under the present mutual aid set up almost unlimited fire fighting equipment can be summoned to McKownville much quicker than additional Albany equipment. The hazard to life and property would be much greater with protection from Albany. As in the case of the water district we would be obligated to pay off the debts of the fire district.

It is very doubtful if taxes to be paid to the city of Albany would be as low as the taxes we now pay, even with the increased school tax now being levied.

It is improbable that we could be hooked up with the Albany sewer system without completely rebuilding the present McKownville sewer system. Present sewers are storm sewers, not sanitary sewers, although some of them do carry sewage. It is doubtful if this would be done very quickly as none of the adjacent Albany property has sewers except from the Western Avenue city line east. In addition to this residents of the area would have little to say about how it was to be done as they now can. Sewer and paving assessments would be merely levied to cover such moves.

We would lose the right to close self government which we now enjoy and which most of us moved to this community to enjoy.

Many other communities throughout the state have experienced the same growing pains and difficulties which McKownville is now facing. Most of them have overcome their difficulties without jumping headlong into the nearest large city. It would seem far more laudable for citizens of this community to spend their efforts to improve the community rather than to annihilate it.

I think we could well use the power of your newspaper to stand behind us to aid us in getting our reservoir put back in good working order and to expose the Thruway Authority for permitting their highway to impair water supplies of small communities. It could also be used to make our community seem as attractive as it really is rather than as a blighted area to be avoided. However, I think that you should be sure that what you print is fact and is all the facts.

Since Mr. Roseberry has been permitted the use of his column for personal opinion I believe I should be afforded the courtesy of having the foregoing facts printed in just as prominent a spot so that McKownville residents may be presented with the other facts of the case. I believe most of them will agree with me.

Very truly yours,

Paul H. ...