

excerpt from:

The Knickerbocker Press

Albany, N.Y., SUNDAY APRIL 8, 1928

Fourth Section – Real Estate – Financial

## **IMPROVEMENT LEAGUE TRANSFORMS THINGS AT M'KOWNVILLE**

By William W. Tyler

.....

The history of McKownville, were one but to pass a few hours in conversation with some of the "old-timers", would present a colorful story; one worthy of the telling because of the link which it forms between the Albany of today and that of the past.

### **Days Before Canal.**

That history recalls the days before the first rail was laid through the Hudson or Mohawk valleys and when the Erie canal was yet the dream of a few men, and they accused of visionary tendencies. McKownville then was but one huge farming space, the homestead of the McKown family. McKown's hotel, a part of the big estate, was known from Buffalo to Boston and equally far in other directions. It was a rendezvous for farmers and traders from all parts of New York, Massachusetts and Connecticut and, especially in summer, was seldom without a full quota of guests. Because of its fame as a meeting and trading point, McKownville became a stopping off place for the cattle and poultry droves, which in those days were herded on foot from Buffalo over the Great Western turnpike to McKownville. Here they were bivouacked until sold or traded and then driven down the Hudson valley to New York or east over the Boston turnpike to the Massachusetts slaughter houses.

It was years after these activities were discontinued that the section assumed its present name of McKownville. Until then it was known as West Brighton and took that name from its business connection with the city of East Brighton, Mass. The latter was then one of the foremost cattle trading and meat packing centers of the east. Most of the cattle and poultry sold or traded at what is now McKownville went over the "big trail" to East Brighton. Hence the name, at first Little Brighton and later West Brighton.

Then there was the famous plank road running through the section and laid primarily for the use of teams loaded with merchandise coming to market in Albany. The planks covered only one side of the road and were designed for the loaded wagons city bound; the other half of the road was sand and was to be used for by outgoing teams which were supposed to be returning empty. Many and humorous are the stories of the developments when a strong willed farmer, outbound with a loaded wagon and using the planks, met an equally strong willed farmer inbound with a load and fully conscious of his right to the way. There was not room to pass and it was often a donkey-donkey proposition.

A vestige of the old plank road remains, but the other scenes which then portrayed the life of the section have long since passed. They disappeared with the last of the cattle driven over the Great Western turnpike.

.....