

Keith's Corner/McGill News

July 26, 2019

Keith's Corner

Rock Wall of Mystery

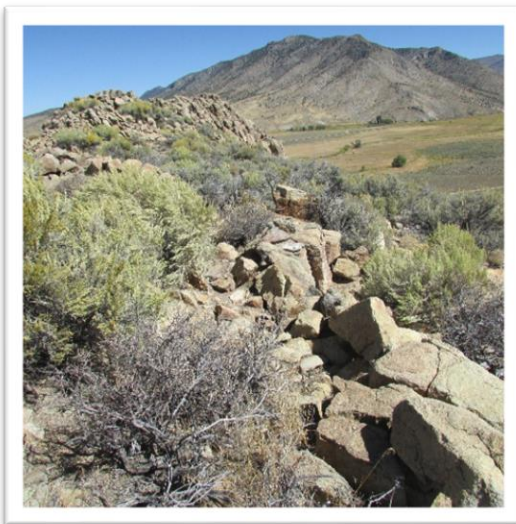
Here is something I never knew about, until a year ago. A rock wall that is on the small hill just to the right as you go into Duck Creek.



It has been called snake hill, as years ago snakes were trapped there for their venom. This rock wall I don't think was built for trapping snakes. It was built a long time ago. I cannot find any info on it and several old timers didn't know either. Some speculated that it was to fence off horses or cattle, but it is not high enough for that. Plus, the fact that there are cow chips on both sides. It runs the length of the ridge on the east side.

I worked on the ranch below that was always called the Jap Ranch. Mr. James Bell had the lease on it during the early 50s. He grew some very nice hay there. It was very thick and sometimes hard to cut with one of the old side sickle cutters. I remember seeing lots of rattle snakes in the fields as we were haying. We had to buck the bales by hand with a hay hook, onto a flat bed truck. We always tipped the bales over, towards us, to check and see if any snake was under the bale. Saved getting bit several times. So, I do believe that the nickname , “snake hill “ is correct.

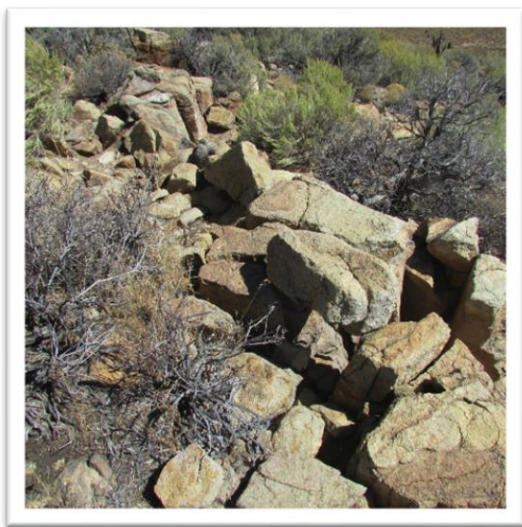
One winter in the late 40s a bunch of us scouts from Troop 64 spent a few days during Christmas vacation, camping at the ranch. We stayed in the old house. I believe it was mostly built of sod and cedar logs. We spent a lot of time on snake hill building a toboggan run on the east side. Kennecott had built us a toboggan out of corrugated tin. It was curved up at the front and had a piece of rubber tire on it, to cover the sharp edge of the tin. There was a small rope that ran thru small eye bolts on each side for us to hag on with. We heated the tin over a sagebrush fire and then, with a pile of rocks on it for weight, we slowly pulled it down the hill. This gave us a corrugated track to stay on. To add to the excitement, we built a ski jump to fly off. That usually ended in a crash, but hey, it was fun. There was plenty of snow that winter and it was fairly deep on the hill, so I don't ever remember seeing the rock wall or even aware of it being there.





My father, Bud Gibson, told me one time that the man who ran the ranch in the old days would bring fresh vegetables into town on an old horse drawn wagon. Dad said that there were watermelons, cantaloupes and many other tasty items. Some other stories I have heard over the years were that it was a pig farm. Now if it tat was true, then maybe the rock wall would stop a pig. Other stories are told today about the wall being built by ancient people. It was also rumored to be involved in a battle between the Indians and the US Calvary. I doubt that story for two reasons. One reason is that it is not high enough to protect anyone. The second reason is that the man who showed me the wall has in the past gone over every inch of the ground on both sides of the wall with a good metal detector and has found nothing.

Whoever did build it, had to have put in a lot of effort. A lot of those rocks are not of the light weight type.



I am sure that there are other theories, such as it had a religious significance or was formed by an act of Person Nature, (the modern PC name for Mother Nature as it has always been called for centuries).

I personally tend to agree with the pig farm idea. If anyone has a theory, let me know and I will pass it along.

McGill News

Not much going on, except the heat, so this may tickle your fancy or whatever you call it. My maternal Great grandfather, Bill Hayes, who died in 1954 at the ripe old age of 89, left an old trunk full of stuff he accumulated. There were two postcards of two rabbit hunts conducted on two separate days in 1908. There must have been a lot of rabbits in that area, as the photo indicates this was an annual affair. Some wild looking gents and all armed with mean looking weapons. My mother, Ada Gibson, kept these photos in her stuff and I never saw them until after she and Dad passed. I never gave much thought to them, other than several times I looked at the phot with a magnifier glass to find grandpa Hayes. Never could. It wasn't until a few years ago when I started writing books, that I researched the photo. Turns out that Bill Hayes was the photographer. He had a photography business in Kansas at that time. I e-mailed the photo to the Kansa Historical Society and asked them for some info. I was able to confirm that he was my grandpa and so they asked if I would donate the picture to them, which I

did. They sent me a nice thank you letter and told me that it was in their Kansa State Museum.

A few months later I got an e-mail from a lady in Kansas that had visited the Museum and spotted what she thought was a relative. The museum director arranged to have the photo enlarged and the lady did find her grandfather and was able to confirm it. She told me it was the only photo they had of him. Small world we live in. Especially if one likes to look into our history.



Until next time, have a great week. Who knows what it will bring. Only the Shadow knows.