

Newsletter110

Keith's Corner/McGill News

June 25, 2021

Plane Crash-April 10, 1935

The young, 5 year old boy, Dale Clays, was beaming with pride as he helped push the orange and black J-5 Stearman plane out of the Salt Lake City hangar and on to the nearby runway. The plane lifted off at 11:30 a. m., headed for McGill.



Figure 1-The Stearman J-5 .

Tragically it fell from the sky, two hours later in McGill, killing both Clays brothers.

This bi-winged airplane was commonly called a tail dragger. It was a very popular plane and a very rugged one. I am sure the open cockpit was fun to ride in as long as the weather was fairly moderate. The plane always reminds me of the WWI fighter squadrons. The famous Red Baron and his counterparts



Figure 2-Ernest with glasses and Leonard on crutches.

Dale's two uncles, Ernest and Leonard Clays, had flown the plane from Reno to visit their brother Clifford. They had agreed to let Dale help them. It was a two seater, open cockpit with the older brother Ernest at the controls.

Dale told me the story in an interview in 2015 for my book, "Making America's Copper". Dale recently passed away.

On July 23, 2017, I spoke on the phone with Barbara Grant Shawcroft. Her mother Mrs. Grant was a well loved, teacher at the McGill Grade School. Barbara was nine years old at the time of the accident. She had just finished lunch at her home on E Row and was returning to the grade school, when she saw the plane come down. She went to the scene and watched as the Dale brothers were carefully transferred to the pickup of the Assuras Brothers Market. They were taken to the emergency hospital at McGill, where Dr. Hovenden and Nurse Netty Bruce made a valiant but unsuccessful effort to save them.

The accident was apparently caused by the engine stopping suddenly, as they circled over the north east part of McGill just south of the slag ditch flume. One witness said he heard the engine quit and the pilot trying to restart it. They were at a low altitude and couldn't recover in time.

My father, Earl Gibson, had told me one time, that he was at work, at the smelter and had watched the plane circled over the houses on the "circle" and especially over the Inwood house. Ernest, knew the Inwoods and was a very close friend of their son, Ernest Inwood during high school and at the U. of Nevada. They were close 'buddies'.



Figure 3-Crash site is just south of the reverb slag flume.



Figure 4-Closer look at the plane crash



Figure 5---Another view of the plane.

The WP County Judge, Johnson, convened a 3 man jury to rule on the accident. The three men were Henry Clark, W.S. Patterson, and E.T. Gibson. They had witnessed the accident and ruled it as such. They are standing at the middle right of the picture.

I never got to talk with my grandfather about the accident and didn't really know about it until just a few years ago, when David Robb showed me a picture of the plane. He contacted the FAA and using the number off the tail, traced it to, Keith Scott, owner of Scott Motors in Reno. David talked with Keith's son and verified the details.

I was able to speak with some other witnesses such as, Solon Cononelus, Mr. and Mrs. Steve Bakaric and Bonnie Mesic, but other than seeing it crash, they had no other details.

Information about Ernest and Leonard Clays.

Ernest was born on June 27, 1905 in Bingham, Utah

Leonard was born on August 2, 1911=-----

Parents were—William D. and Mary Ellen Bennett Clays.

Other children—Sons, Clifford and Lavar.

Daughter, Mrs. Wanda Ruth Airth.

Ernest and Leonard attended schools in Utah and McGill.

Leonard graduated from Whit Pine High school in 1923 and later from the U. of Nevada, Reno in 1927 with a Commission in the ROTC. He attended Boeing Flight School in Oakland, Calif. In 1931. He worked at Scott Motors in Reno-1931-35.

1931—June 29—Ernest flew the plane to Yelland Field and visited his folks in McGill

1932-May31—He flew again to visit his folks and brought his close friend Ernest Inwood with him. The media articles at that time mention that Ernest owned the plane. It was thought that Keith Scott of Scott Motors gave/sold him the plane.

Doug and Kathleen Harwood, who graciously shared the photographs, have been a great help in researching this event. Doug is Dale's nephew. More information can be found in the April 12 , 1935 issue of the Ely Record newspaper. This story appeared in my book, "making America's Copper", on page 75. My thanks to all who helped in the research.

McGill News

It was another quiet week in the old town. By that I mean, no earthquakes, forest fires, floods, murders, rapes, explosions and of course, no traffic jams. I often wondered how many minutes a day, city folks wait at stop lights/signs. Over a year, that adds up.

A tourist at the drug store last week asked me what this was. Any ideas?



Answer, nest week.

Oldies

1909—November 24—The Steptoe Valley Mining Company turned over the deed to a lot-266 ft. X 150 ft. to build a grade school.

1911—July 30—Catholic Church almost finished.

Old Photo

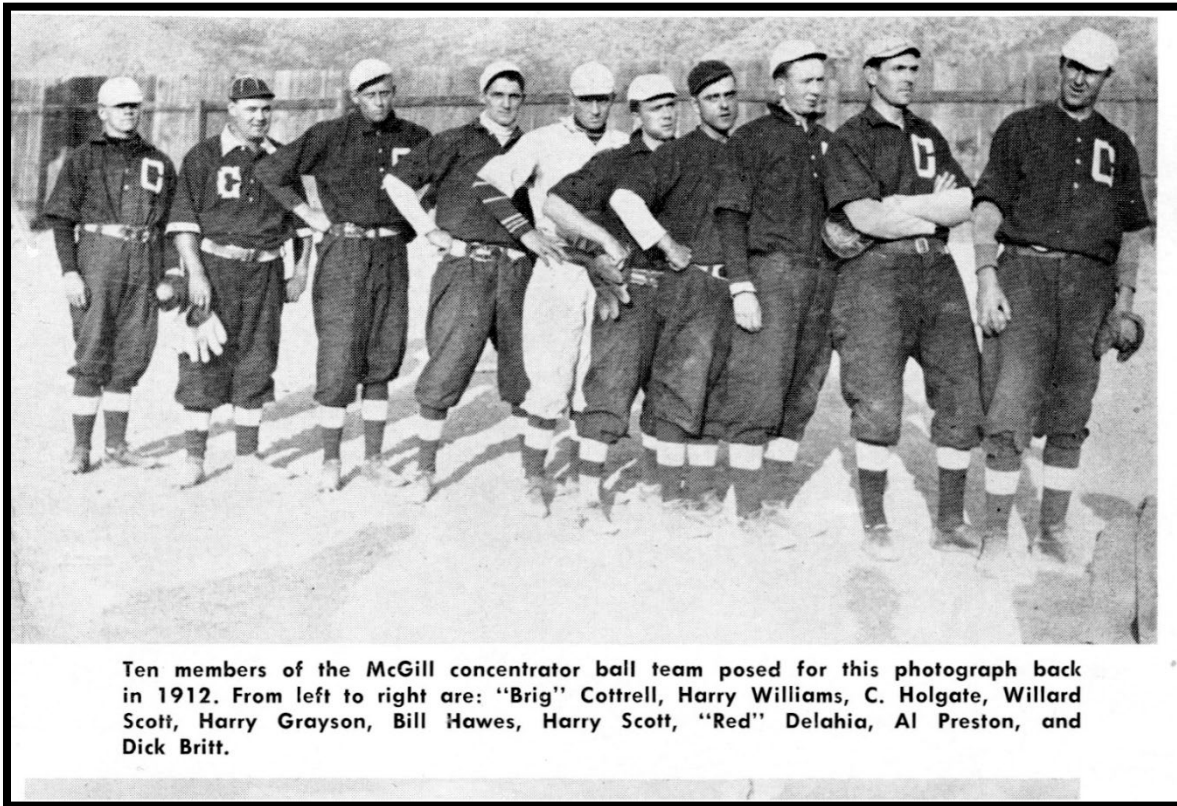


Figure 6--This was taken in 1912. The team is the Concentrators. That was that the mill was called in the old days.

This photo I believe, agrees with my theory of an old ball field, (Newsletter106) Notice the wood fence. I would love to go back in time and watch these guys play. They did it for the fun of the game. That is what I call the "Real" baseball. They worked very hard at the mill all day and then had some fun at the ball field. I think that Birg Cottrell might have been an uncle to Dale Cottrell.

