

Keith's Corner/McGill News

October 28, 2022

Spooks and Pumpkin Carving Time

It's time again, for the Jack 'O' Lanterns to show their hideous faces to scare everyone. It is THE holiday for spooks and ghosts to come out of the shadows and terrify folks. Nobody knows where they come from, except, maybe, the Shadow himself, but he never tells us.

Halloween in the 1940s/50s was a fun time for us McGill heathens. We didn't get any time off from the local gulag, but during classes we made Halloween stuff, instead of reading about boring European Monarchs like Henry the 25th or Richard the 10th.

After we were released back to freedom, we hurried home to bug our Mom's to take us down to Goodman's to pick out a great pumpkin. Then it was carving time. We didn't have any fancy plastic carving knives back now, but we heathens did have our favorite pocket knife that we never left home without. Many of us had Boy Scout Official ones. The ones with the can opener and a punch to make holes in leather. Most of them also had a slotted type screw driver blade. That was before some guy named Phillips, invented a better screwdriver.

Once the hideous face was cut out, the next step was to fix a place for the candle and cut a hole in the lid for the smoke to exit. Then we lit the candle and dripped some wax into the candle hole and quickly placed the candle. Usually got some manly hair burned off our arms doing that. Then we put our newly carved, sheer genius work of art on a shelf by a window to scare folks walking by the house. After Halloween, Mom made pumpkin pie out of our scary Jack-O-Lanterns.

Halloween night was the time to dress up in spooky costumes and go trick or treating around the neighborhood. We knew which houses to hit first, that had the best homemade cookies, fudge and my favorite, divinity with walnuts.

I remember one house that the lady gave us homemade doughnuts covered in brown sugar. Today's kids get storebought candy treats. I think the candy companies had a hand in making such a change.

Once we had our sacks full of goodies, we headed home to hide them from our other siblings and then a mad dash to the ballpark.

Kennecott had hauled many old railroad ties and stacked like teepees around the ballpark. These were set on fire and provided light and warmth for us to compete in games like apple dunking, footraces etc. KCC had erected a 20 foot pole with a \$10 bill on the top and then greased the pole. We all got greasy trying to climb up and get the money. The local Moms were not happy with the greasy clothes. There were no detergents in those days, just soaps like Fels-Naptha that didn't cut the grease.

In 1949 the ballpark was turned around and grass planted, so the great ballpark Halloween parties were no more. Sad.

Halloween was a good time to tell spooky stories like the Headless Horseman etc. My favorite story to scare the youngsters was about a hermit miner named, Henry.

He lived in a small cabin up high in the mountains of Alaska. He had a small gold mine that he worked every day of the week, except Monday. He always spent Monday cleaning his cabin and doing his laundry. He had a large tub outside the cabin that he built a fire under to get hot water to wash his clothes.

He did this for several weeks and then one day, he noticed a large bear sitting on a hill close by the cabin. The bear just sat there and watched Henry do his laundry. The bear left when Henry was finished. It bothered Henry for the first few weeks, but since the bear didn't do anything but sit and watch, Henry would even wave hello to the bear.

Then one Monday, Henry was very sick. He managed to get the front door open, but felt too sick to continue and so he went back to bed. He soon saw the bear sitting on the hill and figured the bear would get tired of waiting and go away.

However, the bear started to come down off the hill and head toward the cabin. Henry tried to get up and close the door, but he was too weak to get out of bed.

The bear stopped and looked at the wash tub and then started toward the cabin. Henry was getting very scared, but was too sick to do anything. The bear kept coming and was soon inside the cabin. Henry was terrified, but couldn't move. The bear slowly moved closer and closer to the bed. Henry could see the large teeth of the bear and decided the bear was going to eat him. He could feel the hot breath coming from the bear's large mouth full of giant teeth. It was the end for Henry.

THEN, the bear growled and said, "what's the matter Bub, you outta soap"?

The best way to tell the story is to have the kids in bed and the lights down low. You tell the story as you creep on hands and knees, like a bear, across the room toward their bed showing lots of teeth and growling, as if you were the bear. When you get to the bed, say the punch line. Kids love the story.

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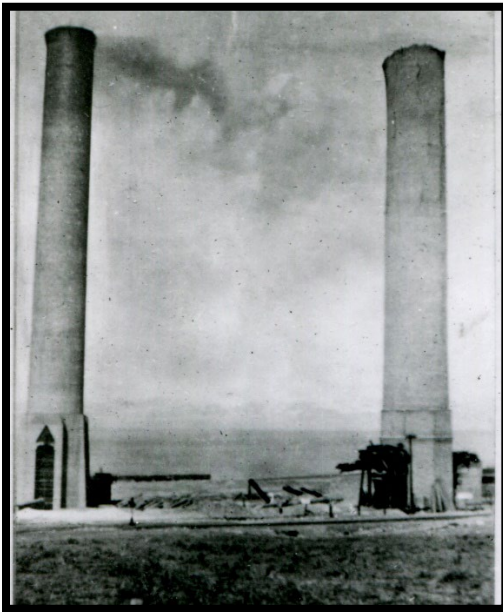


First snow October 23, 2022

Old Photo



First, one stack in 1907.



Then a second one and then, the second one was destroyed.
Not sure on the dates. Yet