

Newsletter163

## Keith's Corner/McGill News

June 23, 2022

### McGill Pipe Line Construction

An important conference was held on December 4, 5, and 6, 1906. It was a meeting of the American Smelting and Refining, head honchos. Those in attendance were Karl Elilers, W.S Morse and F.M Martin of AMR along with the newly named smelter superintendent, Walter Perkins and the construction head engineer, Thomas Cox. The decision as to the exact site of the smelter was established along with a plan to tap the Duck Creek Valley water supply.

There were many streams that fed into that one that flowed thru Gallagher's gap and then south about 5 miles to near the McGill ranch house and then turn northwest to cross over to the foot of the mountains on the west side of Steptoe Valley. A series of dams were built in Duck Creek valley, to hold the water. These were reported to store 260 million gallons of water by 1910.

One proposal was to tunnel thru the mountain above the smelter. This would provide enough head pressure to supply the town along with the smelter and mill and help generate power.

The other idea was to construct a wooden pipeline thru the gap to the smelter. Both of these ideas were formulated by a local engineer, Charles Vail.

Vail favored the tunnel system, but the company officials settled on the pipeline.

The first water flowed thru the pipe on December 25, 1907.

Some local officials, led by Yeatman revived the tunnel idea and started construction in 1907. It was stopped in 1908. Then due to the harsh winters of 1908-1910 it was started again. (Global warming had not been invented yet) There was fear that the waters from Timber and Berry Creeks would freeze and not be available. The construction was soon halted and abandoned for good.

The pipeline was 9 miles in length, consisting of 2 miles of riveted steel pipe and 7 miles of wooden staves held by steel bands.



The actual labor involved was immense.

It lasted until 1929 when it was replaced with an all steel one. The amount of water delivered has been rated at 8 cubic feet per second.

I have a picture of the mill area in 1907-1909 in my book, "Making America's Copper", p.87, loaned to me by Dianna Callaway. It shows what looks like a pipeline which would be above the mill. I think it was to supply the new townsite houses.

When the wooden pipeline was replaced a lot of the wooden staves were used to build shacks in Steptoe City. Also, many were used in the construction of the so called "Deer Lodge" on upper Berry Creek.

When one looks at all the construction that went on in 1906-1908, the sheer genius of the planning and engineering is obvious. The civil engineering just on the water system by Vail is astounding. When you add in the construction of the ore train tracks, the smelter, the mill, the trestle, the town and office buildings it boggles the mind. Everything was done at the same time and yet everything fit. I think the main reason was that it was done by private business without the constant interference of different gubbermint snoopers and regulations.

## McGill News

The McGill Town Council added a new member the other night. Rudy Herneden is now on the council.

I was at the meeting and asked for a volunteer to work with me on the Heritage Center. Rudy volunteered. He came into the Drugstore

Thursday and we spent an hour going over some ideas and different ways to raise money for the center.

I also met with Tim at the Art Gallery in the old dorm building across from the old Club House. He is doing a tremendous job on the place. It really looks great.

McGill is roaring back to life. Rudy's Music Festival brought in a lot of folks from all over the country and should be even bigger next year. Tim's Gallery will pull tourists off the road Tim's idea is to make McGill a "destination" instead of just a quick stop on the side of the road. I hope other McGillites feel the way we do and will help McGill thrive again.

## Old Photo



Know what the purpose of this unit was?