

Keith's Corner/McGill News

April 5, 2024

McGill Suburbs

The famous town of McGill Nevada+ first got started in 1906, when Nevada Con. Copper and others bought out the McGill Family Ranch. In the early days, during construction, the workers were housed in tents on wooden platforms along main street. The only permanent housing being built was the large houses on the 'circle' for the top management. The workers were expected to find housing in East Ely close to shopping and the Nevada Northern Depot. There was a variety of stores on the street above the Depot for the housewives to do their shopping and the men were to ride shift trains to Ruth and McGill. The single men, (most of the workforce) found housing in hotels, apartments and rooming houses.

During the same period, small settlements started to spring up near McGill, (which at that time was called, Smelter Town). These settlements were atune to the gold strike camps and the railroad camps, in that they were mainly saloons and bawdy houses. On the north side of McGill there was Steptoe City and Ragtown or Ragdumjp. South of McGill the town of Smelervilled was laid out near the railroad junction. Just south of the mill cut was Canon Siding.

These settlements caused havoc with the housing plan by the copper company. A lot of the men rode the train to work but then stayed overnite at these saloons and bawdy houses. The company decided to

build permanent housing for the workers in McGill and this was started in 1907-08.

Steptoe City soon became the dominant one and real estate outfits started selling lots for \$25-\$50 and houses started being built. The real estates ads, (1909-10), stated that the 100 lots offered, were only 1,000 feet from the smelter.

Many families didn't have the money to buy lots in Est Ely and have to build a permanent house, so they opted to buy a lot in \Steptoe City and build a shack to live in, until a company house could be rented.

The first baby born in Steptoe arrived on January 23, 1910. She was the daughter of A. G. Kingsbury, who at the time was the manager of the American Trading Post, (later the McGill Club).

The workers were in a union and soon built a union hall and had their first meeting there on October 29, 1909.

There is a reference to a fight at the Athens Saloon on February 15, 1914. There were dance halls and these were put out of business in 1924.

Those folks that bought lots were soon faced with White Pine County property taxes.

July 6, 1920, Sheriff's deputies arrested Fred Pedros for bootlegging. They confiscated his still and 3 gallons of 'jackass brandy', which was made from potatoes and prunes and smelled terrible.

Since no one had a car, some of the stores in McGill delivered groceries etc. On January 4, 1923, Clarence Tucker was delivering some groceries and coal oil to a house in Stepto. As he walked to the house, the delivery truck starte rolling down the hill. He tried to stop it but couldn't and it crashed into a ditch just above the railroad track. The

truck was owned by Fred West, the manager of the Campton Store. The canned goods were saved but the coal oil wrecked the rest of the groceries. The truck was destroyed.

There were many colorful stories and events in the history of Steptoe City.

Reaching far back into the overly dusty square corners of my ancient McGill heathen memory, I found the following—

I remember visiting Dale and Emma Cottrell when they lived in Steptoe. My brother Paul and I walked down to the pipeline to get a cold drink of Duck Creek water from a faucet on the side of the pipeline. It was cold and very tasty. We carried a bucket of water back to the Cottrell house for them.

Another time my family visited Keith and Nonie Murphy. I remember going up some wooden steps to the house. There was a funny looking metal hose coming out of the house and down the steps. I put my hand on it and got a nice 2nd degree burn for my effort. It was the exhaust pipe from the gas engine powered washing machine.

There was no electrical power at that time. At night, most of the houses were had oil lamps and a few had Coleman lanterns. It was a rough way of life, but they did have an advantage over us modern folks. There was no TV, smart phones or internet, not even telephones.

The men walked to work. The children made their way to school via foot power.

In the winter the kids used the long dirt road leading up to Steptoe as a long and swift sleigh riding track.

There was a wooden bridge over the pipeline on the south end of Steptoe City.

Old Photo



As a personal favor to me, this famous international explorer found one of the places where a faucet was installed for the folks of Steptoe to get drinking water. This metal pipeline was built in 1928. I assume the Steptoe folks had access to the wooden pipeline built in 1906-08. There were no wells in Steptoe that I know of.

I will have some aerial photos of Steptoe next NL.

NOTE—I have heard of step ladder, step stool, but never a step toe. Any ideas???