

Keith's Corner/McGill News

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Pool Playing

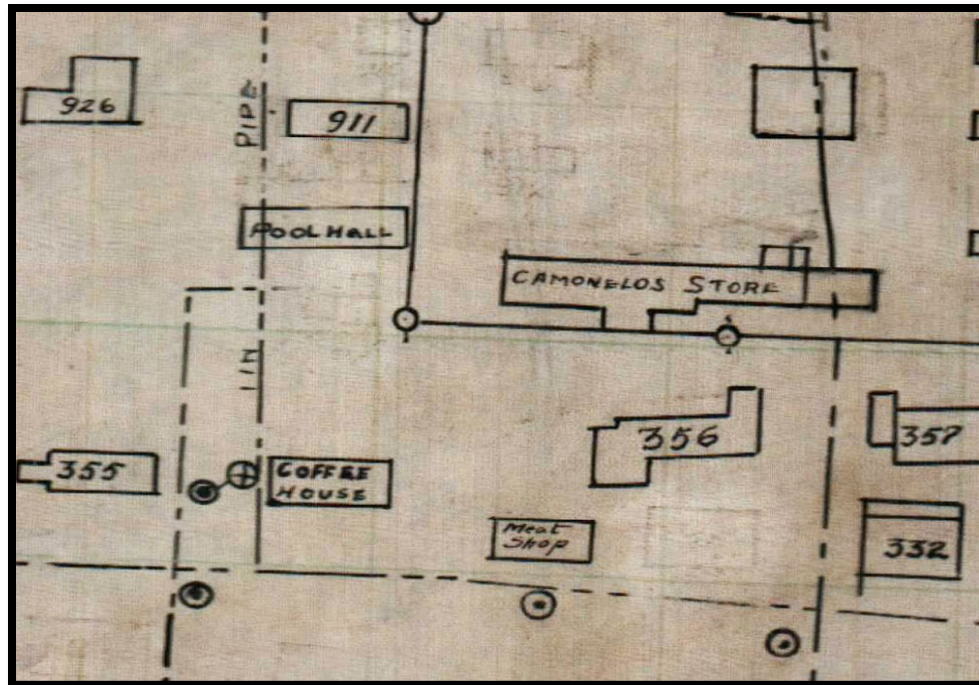
Pool playing does not mean going for a romp in a swimming pool, playing water polo. It means using a five foot long, tapered cue stick to hit a white cue ball and send it to strike a numbered ball and put that ball into one of six “pockets” on a pool table. The table has a smooth slate surface, covered with felt and the sides or “rails” have rubber cushions.

There are various games, such as, “eight ball”, rotation, “golf” etc. Then there is a game called “snooker” that is played on a bigger table with smaller balls and smaller pockets. The top game of skill is billiards.

During my formative years as a McGill heathen, I learned the game at the McGill Rec Hall. There were other pool tables in town at the McGill Club and the Victory Club, but you had to be 21 to get in. I think there might have been a pool table in the Clubhouse and the Legion Hall, but I don't know for sure. Upon entering White Pine High School, we urchins could play at Steve's Pool Hall in Ely, during our lunch hour. We would take our sack lunch and sit on the benches at Steve's Pool Hall and try to get a game in before lunch hour was over.

It cost 15 cents a game. That was very hard to come by in those days.

In the early days of McGill, 1906-1920, I think the only pool tables were in the American Trading Post (McGill Club), The Copper Club (Post Office) and the Greek Pool Hall on 7th street in 'Greek Town' as shown in this early plot map, circa 1920



I haven't found any more info that that small bit.

In my day we called the Victory Club the Greek Pool Hall as it was owned by Greeks. I don't know when it opened, but in 1925 an ad by an Ice Cream supplier listed The Victory Club and The McGill Club.

I don't know when the American Legion Hall opened, but in the plot map above, it is listed as the Melrose Dormitory.

I attended Boy Scout Troop 64 meetings in the hall in the 1940s, but don't remember a pool table. Maybe there never was one.

All in all pool was a popular game before the boob tube came along. Now, people have them in their homes and the only place to shoot pool in McGill is at the McGill Club.

I was doing some research on the pool halls and got into the story of Steve Demos, the owner of Steve's Pool Hall when I got a phone call from Electra Larsen, telling me of the death of Jerry, who was Steve's son. I will have the complete story next week.

McGill News

I just heard that Jerry Collis recently passed in Bakersfield. He was a winning coach there for many years. Every time I get a visitor at the drug store from Bakersfield, I ask them if they know Jerry. Several guys have told me they played football under him in high school. They all raved about what a great coach he was.

I remember watching Jerry play baseball in McGill. He was one of our heroes.

Jerry was a terrific ballplayer and swung a mean bat. I remember him braking several bats during a game. The next time he came to the plate he was holding and swinging a bat and had another bat stuck in his hip pocket as a spare. That provoked a large laugh from the McGill folks. He was a very fun loving and funny guy.

One time my close friend Pinky Krmpotic told me that he had been in Bakersfield and had visited with Jerry, whom he had played on teams with him. They were sitting on Jerry's back deck having a nice visit. Pinky told me that he saw the back fence gate open and this guy came into the yard pushing a large lawn mower and started mowing the lawn. Pinky kept staring at the guy and then told Jerry, "that guy looks just like Buck Owens the country western star. Jerry told him that it was Buck and introduced Pinky. Buck lived down the street and liked to mow lawns for relaxation. Jerry was honored several years ago for his coaching and I think a sports field was named after him. Anyone know for sure??

Jerry was a great football player and he and his friend Gordon Cooper set many passing records in high school and college.

Old Photo



Just found this photo of one of the two old stacks. The notes on the back of it, state that this stack was shortened from 360 feet down to 300 feet because the top 60 feet were crumbling. Steel bands were put around the stack to hold it together.