

Keith's Corner/McGill News

August 23, 2024

Where Is The Activity???

While working at the McGill Drugstore Museum, I meet people from all over the US and the rest of the world. They ask a lot of questions about McGill, but one question always disturbs me greatly.

Is McGill a retirement community?

When I ask why they think that way, the answer is always—there is no visible activity, other than the busy flow of traffic thru the town.

Several times, when I got off work at 3 pm, I drove around McGill. The tourists were correct, McGill does look like a retirement town.

Maybe the reason is that I remember when McGill was vibrant and busy.

Yes, it was a different time and just as we human creatures divide modern time into, BC and AD, why not divide McGill time into BT and AT. That is, before and after television arrived in McGill. Having lived in both times, I can relate the differences.

Before TV

McGill kids (heathens) were very active in many things. We were outside as much as possible. During the summer we boys were at the ballpark, swimming pool, hiking the peak, hunting/fishing, etc. We were in the alleys playing basketball, having rubber gun fights, riding bikes and building and racing carts. We ere always doing physical things and getting massive amounts of exercise.

It was the same in the colder months. We were outside doing things like sleigh riding, hooking cars, trail skiing, playing ice hockey at the dairy ponds, having huge snowball fights, etc.

In the evenings we headed for the Rec Hall for some basketball, billiards, roller skating and just hanging out with friends. We went to the movies at the McGill Theater when ever we could find a quarter for a ticket and a box of terrific popcorn.

We either walked or rode a bike to all these events.

We went to each other's houses to play board games, chess, Monopoly, build models or tinker in the basement.

Whatever, we were doing , it was usually with friends. We didn't have telephones so we visited each other in person.

The adults were busy visiting each other in the form of card parties, pot luck dinners or in social groups like the Stray Antlers, Elks, IOOF and various church groups. They were busy keeping up their yards and working in their gardens. I remember watching Fred Felt working in his garden. He would spade it up with a shovel in the spring, break up the clods and then rake it smooth for planting. In the fall he would spread manure from the dairy and then spade it up again. It was no small task as it covered a full house lot. The one where the Mannings live now.

Kids and adults went to all the ballgames, especially the many night games.

Recently, I drove around McGill and noticed several things.

There were very few kids outside, riding bikes, playing games etc. There were no older folks outside working in their yards.

Television and now smart phones have changed the habits of McGill folks, I think for the worse.

McGill News

During the last year we have scanned over 25,000 pages of old invoices at the Drugstore. These are from 1928-1945. These contain everything that was purchased for the store. These were in small boxes like tomes. The records from 1946=1980 are in large cardboard boxes stacked on shelves in the back of the store.



Most of the boxes are OK, but some have been damaged by water. Some were moldy, but were salvageable.



When I moved this box to another room, it fell apart. You can see the amount of records in each box. Many are rolled up and tied with string. These will be hard to scan as each page has to be peeled off the roll, then put on a towel and lightly steam ironed to get it straight enough to put thru the scanner. We did on box of 1973 invoices with this method and it took 9 hours. So we have a long way to go.

It is an absolute shame that these records were not taken care of properly.

After scanning they will be put in moisture proof plastic containers and properly stored. The scans will be in pdf so they can be searched in the future.

Old Photo



I get a lot of questions about the grassy area below the Legion Hall on J Ave. It was a Bell Telephone office. Before we got phones in our homes we had to make calls from this building. There was a switchboard lady that would place calls for you. A family lived there.