

Newsletter307

Keith's Corner/McGill News

March 28, 2025

Gardening-Fred Feld Style

Last week's Newsletter306, had this photo of a vacant lot on 1st street, when the tailings ditch was being removed.



The photo was taken in 1922, after the mill was re-built. The house to the left of the vacant lot was occupied by the Fred and "Toots" Feld. Fred took over the lot and brought in good top soil and converted the vacant lot into the largest vegetable garden in McGill. It was in full production when my family moved into the house across the street. I remember watching Fred working in the garden every day after he got

off work. He operated the old steam crane that rode on the railroad tracks. The unit had a steam whistle that was like a train whistle, but was a bit higher pitched. It was fun to watch him work the crane. He usually kept the sliding door open and we could see him sitting there and working all the levers. He sometimes had a helper to shovel the coal into the furnace under the large tank of water. Fred would work up quite a sweat and his face would turn bright red. I don't know if it was the strain of working the large levers or sitting close to that huge water tank that was making steam.

He would get off work at 4 pm and shortly after that, he would be out in the garden. In the fall he covered the area with leaves and then spade them under with a shovel. It didn't take long for his face to turn a bright red, but he worked until dark. In the spring he would cover the area with cow manure from the dairy and then hand spade the whole area. He was what I would call a dedicated gardening par excellence.

It shows what can be done by doing a little bit every day.

The vacant lot, remained vacant until circ 1956, when, his daughter, Toby Feld and her husband purchased one of the houses that were located at the McGill Dairy.

I don't which of the houses that Toby bought. There were 5 houses in a row along the road leading to the McGill pool.

The rest of the houses were moved to other parts of McGill. I do know that the first house, which the James Bell family lived in was moved up to townsite on the bottom of D Row. Mr. and Mrs. Bell lived there along with Mrs. Bell's brother, 'Billy' Franks.



I was home from college that summer and watched as the Hall Brothers construction outfit moved the house. They brought it up K Ave. and then along 1st. Street. There were several guys on the roof, that would hold up the power lines. When they 'jackknifed' the trailer to put the house on the lot, the house torn several limbs off the trees in our front yard. I hated to see the end of that wonderful garden, but it is called progress.

Most people in McGill had gardens and especially during WWII. The gardens in WWII were called "Victory Gardens".

My grandparents always had a large garden. They had elderberry, currant and gooseberry bushes for my Grandmother to make jams and pancake syrups. There were 4 large rhubarb bushes growing beneath the elderberries. My Grandmother would tie tin cans on the bushes to keep the birds away. In a large area behind their garage, they grew a lot of potatoes.

In the basement, Grandpa built a large fruit cellar for all the fruits and vegetables and meat that Grandma would put up for the winter. They were very self-sufficient.

Old Photo



Aerial photo, taken in the 1950s. It shows all the trees in the parks area. McGill was a beautiful town back then. Notice the trees along main street below the Clubhouse. Why can't it be that beautiful again???