

Waterford Echoes

Volume 8 Number 2

Fall, 1989

Waterford Historical Society

Hello - - - Central

The first telephone service was in Gay's store in Bolsters Mills before coming to Harrison between 1905 and 1910. There were three operators, two during the day and a night man. Genie Jocelyn and Gladys Ingalls were the day operator and Harrington Flint the night operator.



In 1910, when I was seventeen, I heard they needed a relief operator so applied and after two weeks training I was accepted. The pay was \$3.00 a week for twenty-four hours. The night operator worked seven days a week, two Sunday afternoons out of three for \$3.46. He also had to sweep and wash floors.

At this time there were twenty lines, four trunk lines and sixteen party lines. We had two lines to Norway, our toll center, and one to Bridgton and one to Cornish. I was surprised to learn that the toll lines first went to Waterford and North Waterford with a pay station in Ray's store and one in Rounds' store, then across to Norway.

The first person to have a private line was Roland Woodbury, engineer on the B & S R.R. Each line had a drop with a cover which came down showing the number which had rung. A plug was plugged into the jack below to answer. There was a clearing out drop which signaled the operator that the caller was through talking but hardly anyone rang off so the lines had to be watched.

Not long after this time Harrington Flint left and Percy Smith became night operator until he had to go into the service. We burned wood or coal which was kept down below the floor with a trap door. One night I went out to get my coat without putting the light on and Percy had left the door up. The next thing I knew I was down through the door! No broken bones but shaken up and bruised. Percy just laughed.

Lester Caswell was the next night operator. Gladys Ingalls left and Blanche Wood was there for awhile, then Bessie Chapman. We had a little trouble as Bert Hill ran a grain mill, and also H. H.

Caswell, Bessie's father. Bert thought Bess listened to his prices then told her father so he could undersell him.

Bessie left and I became head operator, working seventy-two hours a week for \$8.00. The New England Telephone and Telegraph Company took over the management of the Company and we got a raise to \$12.00 with overtime for Sundays and holidays. It was hard to find a relief operator so my sister Hazel said she would try it. As she was attending Bridgton Academy she had to walk to school in the morning, return home and work the lunch hour, then walk back to school. She stayed with the Company for thirty-one years.

The boys' and girls' camps were as follows: Camp Wildmere, Camp Zakelo, Camp Ropioa, Camp Newfound, Camp Hawaya, Camp Pinecliffe, Camp Bendito, all in Harrison. In the Waterfords, Camp Chickawah, Camp Ironwood, Camp Wigwam, Camp Kokosing, Camp Konawago, Camp Birch Rock, Camp Passaconaway, Camp Wazyatah, Camp Waganaki.

This increased business meant more lines to be built and divided as some had fifteen parties on them, so the construction crew came to town. In the fall of 1921 the block in the village burned and a new one built in 1922, the one now standing. When it was finished the company decided to move the telephone office to the second floor of the block, adding another position so we had two operators in the summer. The telephone bills were paid at my office and I was responsible for the money. We had no safe so it was kept in a money drawer. If your bill was paid by a certain date you could deduct twenty-five cents. Every month I had about twelve people I called to remind them that their bill was due.

The fire department installed an alarm system in our office for which we were responsible. Sometimes when a subscriber called they were so frightened that they would simply say, "My house is on fire, send the fire department" and hang up



without saying who they were. Most always we could figure out where it was by knowing where the bill went or by recognizing the voice.

The night operator was allowed to sleep having a bell to waken him when a call came in. He was supposed to test the drops when he came to work at nine o'clock but usually waited until midnight. On some lines the bell wouldn't stop ringing and then he would call me as I knew how to fix it; otherwise he would have to sit up all night. So I would get up, dress and go to the office. I had to take the back of the board off, take each strip of the drops off until I found the one causing the trouble.

When the doctors had to be out they would call us and say where they could be found or when they would return. Other people would also call us if they were to be away and when they would return.

Very few people called by number and when a new girl was on, it slowed up the service or, if the power was off, and we had to ring by hand. Hartley Pitts always called us and said "Give me my house".

A funny thing happened one day. Mildred Davis took the call and a voice sounding very frightened said "I am alone and I don't know what to do. My horse has gotten hung up by his halter and is choking to death". Mildred said, "Cut the rope!".

About this time, the New England Telephone and Telegraph Company bought out the Maine Company and Mr. Abbott came to see me saying my office was to be made an agency. I would be paid a certain sum and would employ the operators but he also specified how much I should pay them. We lost our overtime and holiday pay but it was take it or leave it, they didn't care.

The thunder showers were bad. Of course everything was grounded but the lightning would play around on the frame back of the board. At first the company told us to make no connections during a shower, then changed saying we must answer all calls as someone might need help. Every time it lightened, all the drops came down and we had to keep putting them up. On the frame back of the board, there were carbons between the metals and they would become very smutted making the lines noisy so if I had a minute between calls I would clean them. At the time a man was electrocuted in South Harrison, my head set was burned out.

Happy Hapgood had a taxi stand down in front of the block and when someone wanted him they would call us and we would call out the window for him to come to the phone. We answered all kinds of questions, for instance, "What time is it?" or "Is the mail in?", "Have you heard the weather report?", "Where's the fire?" and "What time is church?".

One of our summer guests upon leaving, gave us a fifth of whiskey and \$20.00 to go out to dinner. We were always remembered at Christmas with gifts of candy or fruit.

Current Notes

We are sad to report that Ethel Lovejoy, Waterford's oldest citizen and holder of the Boston Post Cane died this fall.

Early this year the post office which served East Waterford residents for more than 100 years closed its doors for the last time. Residents were given the choice of being served by other area post offices or rural delivery. Postmaster Maisie Murch has retired after more than 20 years with the postal service.

Selectman Charlie Fillebrown presented the Boston Post Cane to Waterford's oldest citizen, Iva Ray, on Wednesday, at the Norway Convalescent Center. Mrs. Ray, born in 1892, was thrilled to receive the cane and proudly walked it down the hall to show the other residents at the center.

The Town House is showing forth a new face with its recently paved parking area as well as a ramp at the side of the building which makes it accessible by the handicapped. The churches in North Waterford and the Flat also have ramps and we hear that the Wilkins House will soon have one.

As a result of the hurricane of 1938 the telephone service was rather poor. We lost the electricity so had to ring by hand. The only light was a kerosene lamp hanging from the ceiling and we couldn't see the numbers on the drops and, to make it worse, the second position lost its batteries so only one girl could work and during the disaster the business increased but we finally made it.

Another bad time was when they had sickness at Camp Wigwam. They had to notify all the parents and as soon as they received the word the parents began calling their boys. There was a private line and a pay station but Mr. Lehman told us not to put any incoming calls on the pay station as they would want to use it. You can imagine the delay on calls when the parents of 200 campers began calling with only one line. The long distance operators got angry when we said the line was busy as the subscribers were giving them a tough time, in fact, they didn't believe us.

The dial office was being built and in May of 1955, it was finished. For 45 years, I had shared the joys and sorrows of friends and it was with sadness that I made the last connection and pulled the last plug to turn you all over to "Ma Bell Dial".

By Elsie Spaulding

Editor's Note: Elsie is still living in her home in Harrison. She is Harrison's oldest citizen but refuses to accept the Boston Post goldheaded cane. "That's for men" she claims.

Museum Musings

The Mary Gage Rice Museum saw more activity than usual this past summer. In mid May we were stirred into motion by a request to be one of the sites of a tour of downtown Waterford sponsored by NCBB. Brooms whisked, vacuums roared, and dust cloths flew as the winter's accumulation of cobwebs and dead flies were hastily removed in order that we might present a clean and serene countenance for our public. On the appointed day a bus load of people spent several hours in the Flat, lunching at the Lake House, sitting on the green, visiting the museum, and browsing in Rounds' Store.

As an adjunct to the usual Fourth of July festivities we had the museum open from 10-12. This met with such favorable response that we opened each of the subsequent Wednesdays when breakfasts were held at the Wilkins House. Many thanks are due Mary and Bob Ross for playing host on those days.

It was gratifying to hear the reactions of first-time visitors. One would hear comments such as "I've always wanted to see what was in here" or "I never realized what this building was" and "I hope I can come back again because there's so much more to see". Here is an excerpt from a letter by Henry and Elizabeth Dabczynski who also enrolled as life members:

"As 60-year residents of Waterford (seasonally) we appreciate what the society is doing to preserve memorabilia of the past. We were happy to take advantage of visiting the Mary Gage Rice museum after a recent Wilkins House breakfast and renew our acquaintance with its contents which its owner had shared with us many years ago."

We in Waterford are blessed to have such a treasure trove of history. We have preserved it - let's not take it for granted.

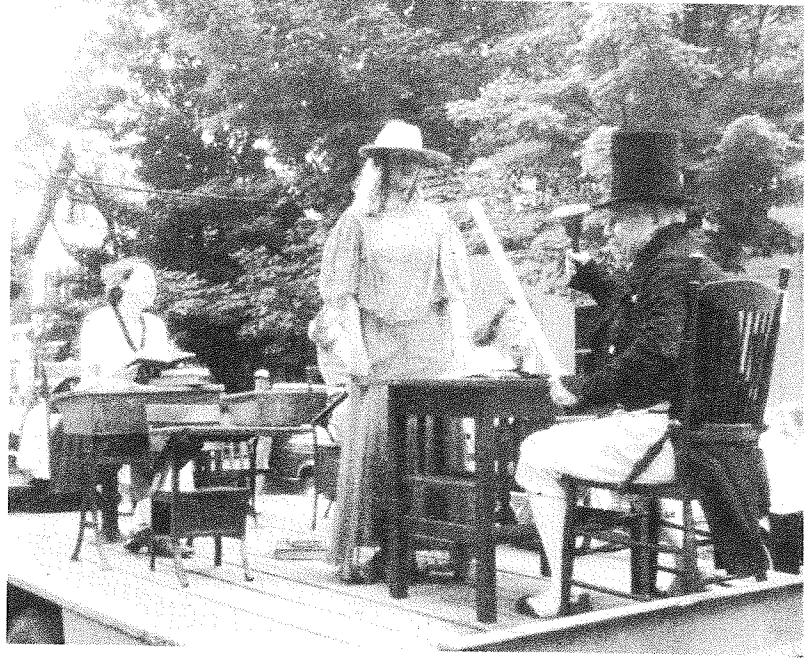
Join the Waterford Historical Society. Check appropriate category and mail to Box 2, Waterford, ME. 04088.

Name _____

Address _____

MEMBER CLASSIFICATION

_____ Life-Couple	\$75.00	_____ Senior Citizen	\$ 1.00
_____ Life	\$50.00	_____ Student	\$ 1.00
_____ Patron	\$25.00	_____ Sustaining	\$ 2.50
_____ Honorary	\$35.00	_____ Contributing	\$10.00



Bob Hanger makes a formidable school master in the Historical Society float on the Fourth of July. Our thanks to Leslie Rogers for providing as well as driving his flat bed for the parade.

President's Corner:

The changing of the seasons with its autumnal splendor reminds us that another leg on our life's pilgrimage has been completed. I hope that all of you will have an enjoyable fall and winter. Many of you will soon leave our beautiful region to spend a few months in warmer climates. We long to see you again in the Spring.

The Waterford Historical Society has had some excellent meetings with a remarkable attendance by members and friends. Thanks to each and every one who has made this possible. Special thanks to "Mac" and Eva Bean, Program Chairpersons. The Fourth of July float and parade were excellent and will be one of the things we shall think about during the bleak winter months.

I would encourage local members to attend our meetings, which begin with a pot-luck supper at 6:30 followed by the meeting at 7:30. If you can't make the supper, come to the meetings. We need your support and ideas. Meetings will be held in the Historical Society building in North Waterford for as long as we can, and then will be hosted in homes of our members. Watch the local papers for announcements.

Until next time, think historically!

Rev. Norman F. Rust
President

Tears of Prophecy

Once, when we were on our mountain
Enjoying the beauty and ourselves,
My daughter began to cry.
Tears, large and sorrowful,
Coursed down her troubled face.
Why do you cry? I asked her.
And this is what she said:
When I am big and old like you
This mountain, so beautiful,
Will be over-built with houses
And all the beauty gone.
I gave her words of comfort
And said that there had been no change
In all the view since I was a little kid
And that had been a long long time;
That I expected the mount would stay the same
Even after she became big and old like me.
But she was nearer right than I.
Now there are houses, roads, and man-made things
Which have taken from the beauty of our lovely
land.
And soon, none will remember how it was one-
upon-a-time.

Virginia Tyler Cutler
1989

New Members, 1989

Phyllis and Lawton Hammett, Waterford &
Boynton Beach, Florida
Mildred Howe, Norway
Frances & Richard Jones, North Waterford
Mary Nicklas, Orchard Park, N.Y.
Rev. Norman and Betty Rust, North Waterford
Dorothy Scribner, South Waterford
June H. Starbird, Norway
Annette T. and Bruno T. Tomaino, Chatham,
N.J.
Orpha S. Davis, Harrison

New Life Members, 1989

Nancy Brett, Waterford
Henry S. and Elizabeth H. Dabczynski, Columbus,
N.J. & Waterford
Margaret M. Doore, Waterford
Ginny Lou Raymond, Lynnfield, Mass.
Howard A. Stockwell, Waltham, Mass.
Marian L. Marse, Oxford

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Saddles, Bridles, Collars, Whips,

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Norway, Me.

Waterford Historical Society
Waterford, Maine 04088