

and agencies in the Provinces of Quebec and Ontario. Telephone crews worked with home made tools and strung lines over rooftops and on trees. Telephones were crude instruments but had developed from the box telephones and rubber hand instruments of 1877 to the Blake instrument so-called after the inventor of its transmitter, Francis Blake.

The Blake was made up of three boxes mounted on a back-board. The top box contained the magneto generator for cranking power; the middle box held the Blake mouthpiece and the bottom box was occupied by the batteries for "talking current".

In the eighties the network of telephone lines spread into more and more cities, towns and villages.

Telephone service in the smaller towns and villages was made possible through independent telephone companies which early in the 1900's were formed by groups of neighbours, doctors and businessmen.

In 1905 the Belmont Telephone Co-operative Association was so formed and in May of that year about 68 persons bought shares in the new organization at \$10.00 a share.

The \$680.00 obtained through the sale of stock was the capital of the new company. A.W. Venning was

made secretary-treasurer.

Mr. Venning travelled along the telephone lines with his horse and buggy making repairs with a hammer and screwdriver. Many of the subscribers built and maintained their own lines which were built along fence posts along the side of the road. On his 87th birthday Peter McMillan of Belmont recalled digging the post holes for the telephone poles and declared that it had been the hardest work he'd ever undertaken. He said that in the early days of the Belmont Telephone Association it was necessary to have three subscribers within a mile sign a contract before the company would do the work of installation. There was only Mr. McMillan and one neighbour within the mile so that they had to dig the post holes from the main line to their homes.

✓ Charles Jones of Marmora was later hired to manage the building of the municipal telephone system and was the repair man for 20 years. J.W. Russell, Christie Steenburgh and H.W. Brown were the first commissioners for the municipal system.

Operators gave personal and friendly service in Belmont and could be called upon for the time of day, the health of the sick, and the time of church services.

Long distance connections were made over Bell company facilities.

By 1916 the company had 170 subscribers with 80 miles of poles carrying 181 miles of wire in and around Belmont. Telephones increased in number until 1931 when the total reached 338. The depression brought a decline in instruments which fell below the 300 mark and did not again reach that point until 1932. That the decrease in sets was not far greater was due to the efforts of the directors of the Belmont Association who visited all the subscribers and worked out payment plans with them. Many were allowed to retain their telephones on the understanding that they would pay half the rental. Later when prosperity was restored customers repaid the company.

In 1939 under F. Yorke as manager a cable was installed in the village and was later extended to the north and south. The company received a setback in 1950 when an ice storm on Valentine's day flattened miles of poles with attached wiring. It took eight weeks to restore the service and damages amounted to thousands of dollars.

Managers who served the company over the years included Dr. A.J. Meldrum, H.J. Barons, John Dawes, F.J. Yorke, who served the longest; Harold Farquhar, and in 1946 William Silverthorn.

Early directors included John Brodie, William Campbell, John Ferguson, J.S. Cousins, Skene Smith, J.A. Moore, F.R. Taylor, W.A. Dumaw, G.E. Faulds, J.C. Jenkins, George Wilcox, Robinson Thompson, R.Y. McGregor, Clair Carrothers and Harold Jenkins.

Auditors were George Brodie, Andrew Dodds, Mr. McGregor, Bruce Hawley and W.C. Barons, the latter serving for 33 years.

Operators who served the company included among others, Mamie Watcher, Edith Forsyth, Mrs. Lillian McTavish, Sarah McCallum; Muriel Verna and Roberta Floto, Beatrice Harkness and Kay Barons.

Operators in 1962 included Mrs. Gladys Anderson, Mrs. Clara Weldhen, Mrs. Shirley Silverthorn, Mrs. Emma Langford, Mrs. Evelyn Shain and Mrs. Constance Legg. Mrs. McTavish served the longest, and was given a golden watch upon her retirement.

The Belmont municipal telephone system was sold to The Bell Telephone Company of Canada in 1962. Directors at that time were F.R. Taylor, president; H.W. Jenkins, vice-president; Mrs. George, secretary-treasurer; Roy McGregor, Clair Carrothers and Robinson Thompson, directors.