

Belmont Telephone Co-operative Association - started 1905

<u>Year</u>	<u>Secretary Manager or Owner</u>	<u>Number of Telephones</u>	<u>Number of Poles</u>	<u>Miles of Wire</u>
1913	A.W. Venning	194	52	80
1916	"	270	80	180
1919	"	346	80	181
1925	"	370	82	193
1926	"	366	82	193
1927	"	366	82	193
1928	"	360	82	193
1929	"	360	82	193
1930	"	360	82	193
1931	Nellie M. George	338	82	193
1932	"	317	82	193
1933	"	298	82	196
1934	"	294	82	196
1935	"	286	82	196
1936	"	296	82	196
1937	"	298	82	196
1938	"	286	82	196
1939	"	287	82	196
1940	"	288	82	193
1941	"	284	82	193
1942	"	300	82	193
1943	"	310	82	193
1945	"	338	82	193
1946	"	344	82	193
1947	"	386	82	193
1948	"	389	82	193
1949	"	417	193	211
1950	"	420	193	211
1951	"	420	193	211
1952	"	425	193	211
1953	"	440	195	211
1954	"	460	199	214
1955	"	460	199	217
1956	"	473	199	223
1957	"	498	193	228
1958	"	515	193	228
1959	"	525	195	210
1960	"	528	195	210
1961	"	545	195	210
1962	Sold to B.T.Co.			

-- From the Annual Report of The Ontario Municipal Board
(Ontario Telephone Authority)

THE BELMONT TELEPHONE CO-OPERATIVE ASSOCIATION LIMITED

prepared by - Nellie M. George

In 1905, Dr. A. J. Meldrum, family doctor, residing in the north end of Belmont, conceived the idea of a rural telephone system to help him in his demanding practice of far-flung rural patients.

A group of interested residents got together and by their own efforts built a short line. An annual meeting was first held on May 31, 1905 and sixty-eight names were registered.

By-laws were drawn up to govern the newly formed association, one of which reads: "Each and every signer of these by-laws agrees to pay into the hands of the Treasurer the sum of ten dollars, being the amount of one share, as a membership fee, such sum to be expended for the purpose of purchasing line supplies and all necessary appurtenances to the carrying out of the object of this association, always provided however that work done by anyone for the benefit of the association, or money paid previously by him or her towards the association shall count as a part on the whole of his membership fees and that every such subscriber who was entitled to a vote at the annual meeting of the so-called Belmont Telephone system held on May 31, 1905 shall be held when he has signed these by-laws as having paid his membership fee."

Each subscriber agreed to pay in advance the sum of \$4.00 quarterly for the purpose of maintaining the system and should this not prove to be enough each subscriber agreed to pay his or her pro rata share of whatever might be necessary.

Dr. Meldrum was the first manager and A.W. Venning the first secretary treasurer and remained as such until 1931 when ill health prompted his retirement and his daughter Nellie M. George was appointed secretary-treasurer, and so remained until the system was sold to Bell Telephone Company of Canada effective June 29, 1962. Mr. Venning's sole equipment was what he called his "satchel" - a small leather valise containing little besides a screwdriver and hammer and he travelled the circuit with his black pony "Topsy" and buggy.

Following him as managers were H. J. Barons, John Dawes, F.J. Yorke, Harold Farquhar and in 1946 Wm. Silverthorn, who remained until the closing of the company. Mr. Yorke's service was the longest and much credit is due him for his untiring work in keeping lines in good condition.

Besides maintaining the lines, it was the duty of the manager to collect all long distance bills rendered quarterly. Early in its history these bills were mailed but as long distance was little used the bills were small and largely ignored. Personal collection was found to be more profitable. In the early years, the chief long distance call was Mr. John McNicol's call to the Packing Co. in Ingersoll.

Much labour in building and extending the lines was done by subscribers in the beginning and frequently a share was given in payment. Some of the lines were built on fence posts along the roads. Shares were \$10.00 each and 255 were issued mostly two to a subscriber.

Early directors were John Brodie, William Campbell, J.S. Cousins, Skene Smith, and J. A. Moore, followed after their deaths by F.R. Taylor, W. A. Dumaw, G. E. Faulds, J. C. Jenkins, Geo. Wilcox, Robinson Thompson, R.Y. McGregor, Clair Carrothers and Harold Jenkins. Auditors were Geo. Brodie, Andrew Dodds, R. Y. McGregor, Bruce Hawley and W. C. Barons, the latter serving for thirty-three years.



LEFT TO RIGHT. F. R. TAYLOR, president; MRS. E. E. GEORGE, SEC.-TREAS.;
HAROLD JENKINS, VICE-PRES; DIRECTORS, STANDING; ROBINSON THOMPSON
CLAIR CARROTHERS; and ROY MCGREGOR.

One of the earliest operators was a much-loved and respected little dwarf - Mamie Watcher. Other operators included Edith Forsyth, Mrs. McTavish, Sarah McCallum, Muriel, Verna and Roberta Floto, Beatrice Harkness, Kay Barons and others. Operators in 1962 and previously are Mrs. Anderson, Mrs. Weldhen, Mrs. Silverthorn, Mrs. Langford, Mrs. Shain and Mrs. Legg. The longest service was Mrs. McTavish who on retirement was given a gold watch by contributions from subscribers. They rendered a very personal service. The story is told that some one wished to call Mrs. Luton. The operator, glancing out of the window of the office reported Mrs. Luton's dog was on the Post Office steps so she must be in the Post Office and advised subscriber to call later. Such service is beyond the call of duty.

For many years central office did not operate at night and not even local calls to a doctor were possible as no operator was on duty - just 2 day operators.

During the depression 1929, 1935, many subscribers fell behind in their rentals. Many dollars were on the books with little hope of recovery. The directors visited each such subscriber and offered to retain his service if he could pay one half his account. This was accepted in most cases and in a few cases full payment was made as prosperity increased. Also during those years every one on the payroll accepted a 10% decrease in pay to help the financial condition.

In 1939 under Mr. Yorke's able supervision cable was installed in the village. Later, during Mr. Silverthorn's time this was extended north to Highway #401, and south two and one-half miles.

A major catastrophe struck the company on Valentine's Day, 1950, when a terrible ice storm occurred. Miles of poles with attached wires were flattened. It took eight weeks of arduous labour under very trying conditions of deep snow and ice to restore the lines. Many people along the roads lightened the task by providing the men with coffee and sandwiches during morning and afternoon work shifts. Six to eight extra men were employed during that time and the cost ran into thousands of dollars in material and wages.

In 1960, the Bell Telephone Co. made an offer to buy our system but it was not until the annual meeting of February 7, 1962, the shareholders agreed to sale of the system and equipment for the sum of \$100,000.00 effective June 29, 1962. It was felt necessary to sell due to encroaching dial systems surrounding our company and too costly for a small organization to finance.

It was a fine, compact, well-run little company and many who served faithfully for many years will think back over the years with nostalgia as we dial the fine new Bell Company telephones.

