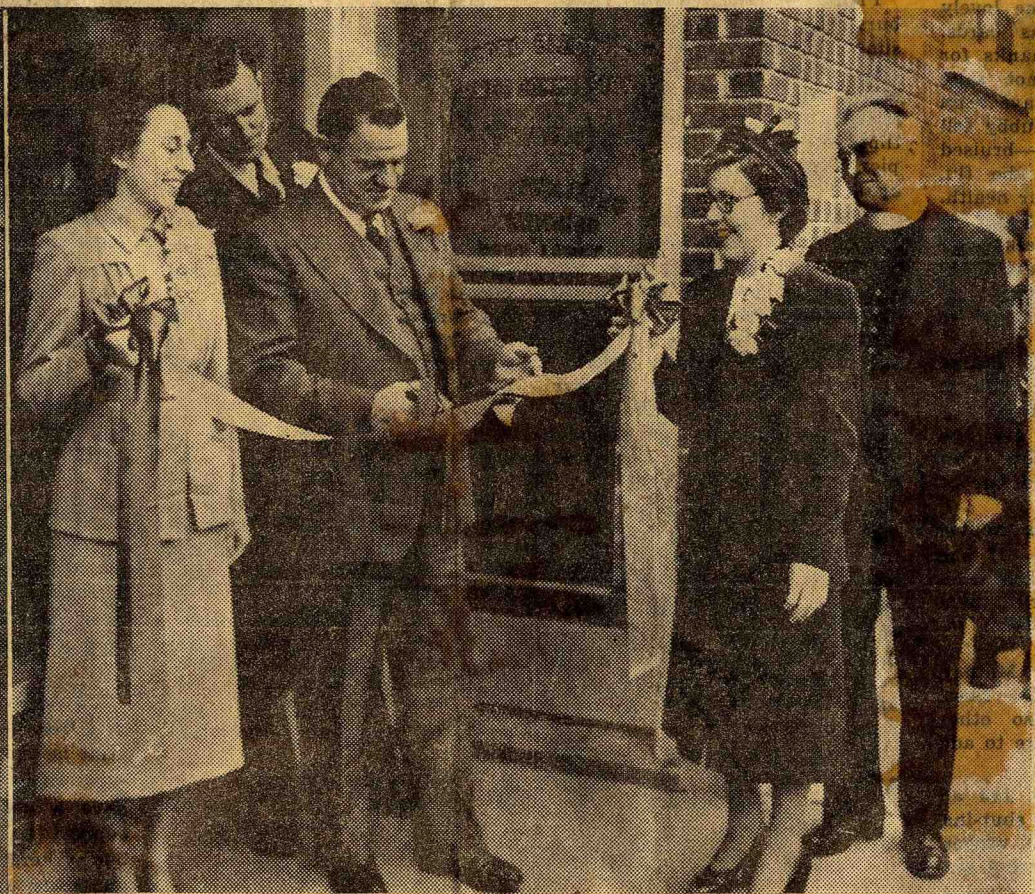


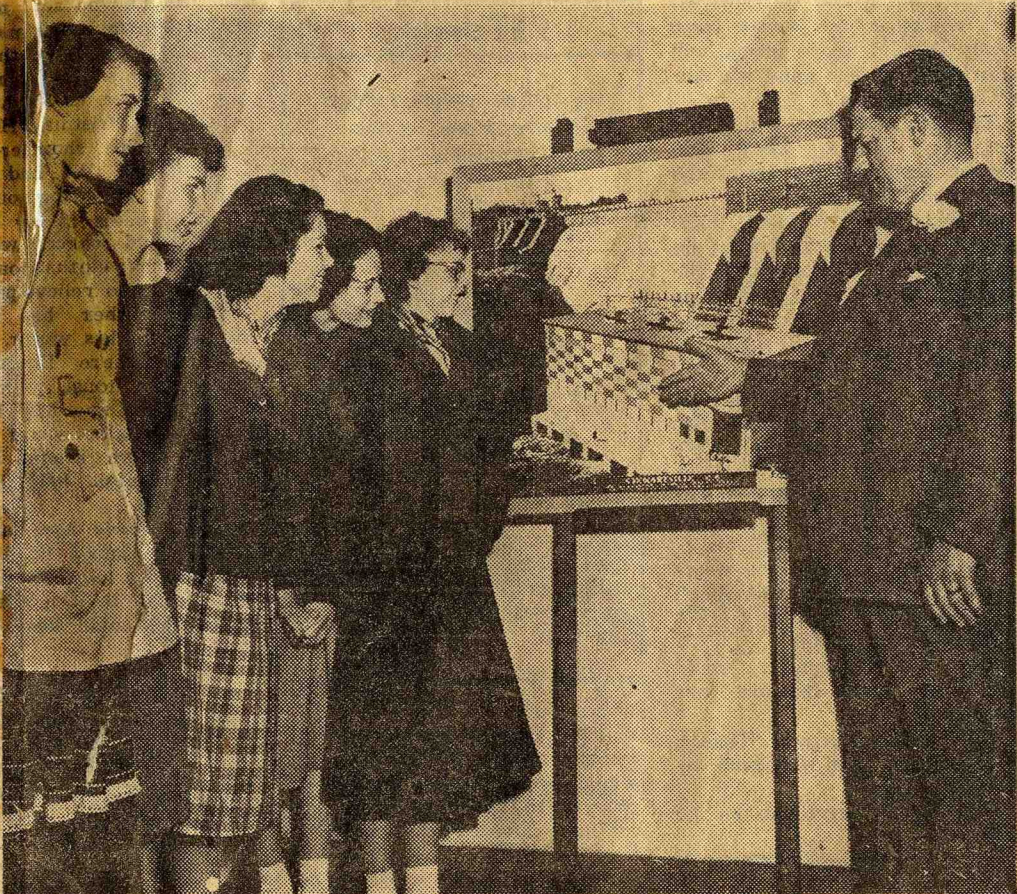
Hydro Chairman Opens \$25,000 West Lorne Utilities Building



Flanked by village and district leaders, Robert H. Saunders, chairman of the Ontario Hydro Commission, inspects West Lorne's new \$25,000 Public Utilities building after officially declaring it open. Left to right are E. B. McMillan, M.L.A. for East Kent; P. R. Locke, St. Thomas P.U.C.; A. V. Coulter, warden of Elgin; J. W. Peart, St. Thomas P.U.C.; W. B. Curtis, Aylmer P.U.C.; Mr. Saunders; T. L. Barnecott, mayor of Aylmer, and Ken Phoenix, West Lorne area hydro manager.



While scores of citizens looked on, Mr. Saunders snipped a ribbon stretched across the entrance of the new Public Utilities building to officially open it. Holding the ribbon for the hydro chairman are Mrs. Margaret Cummings (left) and Miss Marjorie Walker, both employees of the West Lorne Public Utilities Commission. The Rev. W. K. Morrison, rector of Grace Anglican Church, right, dedicated the building after its opening.



The hydro chairman took time out on his way into a theatre to address a mass meeting of citizens and school-children and explain some of the features of the giant Stewartville hydro project to this group of West Lorne students. Mr. Saunders is seen here as he points to a picture of the development with, left to right, Pat Graham, Lois Baker, Joyce Downie, Jill Arnold, and Diane Nasickas. All school children got a holiday for the occasion.

West Lorne Has a Modern Phone System; Change-Over Today in Official Ceremony

WEST LORNE, March 18.—West Lorne's telephone system was changed from magneto to common battery operation at two o'clock this afternoon, closely following similar modern changes made in Dutton and Rodney.

It is no longer necessary in West Lorne to turn a crank in order to ring the operator. The operator now receives an automatic signal whenever the caller lifts the receiver from the hook.

Norman Walker of the West Lorne Municipal Council officially opened the new service by placing the first long distance call through. He conversed with Reeve Dougal Carmichael of West Lorne who was in Newbury, Ontario, on business.

William H. (Bill) Bell, manager of the West Lorne branch of the Bank of Montreal, placed the first local call over the new system. This was made to Dr. D. F. Webster, veteran general practitioner of West Lorne and one of the first telephone subscribers in the village.

R. A. Mercer, Bell Telephone manager of the area, was in charge of the cut-over to the new battery operation. Other Bell officials who attended the ceremony were F. F. Brittain, traffic superintendent, London, Ont.; R. S. Leith, wire chief, St. Thomas; J. S. Rolfe, commercial representative, St. Thomas; R. L. Stratton, London, district manager; W. J. A. May, London, district commercial representative; C. A. Ruppel, St. Thomas, plant foreman; and Miss L. Gale, traffic instructress from London.

Guests Attended

Guests were invited to the telephone office to witness the actual cut-over and hear the inaugural calls put through. The cut-over required less than a minute as telephone workers quickly performed the few last details to bring the new switchboard into operation. Almost immediately some of the tiny switchboard lamps began to light up, indicating that West Lorne subscribers were eager to try their new telephone system and service.

Chief Operator Mabel Gammon handled the opening calls, while other members of the West Lorne staff, including Viola Staddon, Fay Maxfield, Mary Atkinson and Mrs. R. Kimmerly, were present to witness the proceedings. All the operators had previously received spe-

cial instruction in the operation of the common battery equipment.

Installers have already begun replacing West Lorne's present telephones in homes and business places with more compact sets. The old instruments had previously been modified for use during the cut-over period. Until the new sets are installed, callers are being cautioned against moving the crank on their telephones while a conversation is in progress as this might result in the call being disconnected. Of course it will take some people some time to get out of the habit of turning a crank or attempting to turn a crank in placing a telephone call.

Early Phone History

The conversion of West Lorne telephones to "common battery" operation, eliminating the familiar crank, will recall to old timers the early days of the telephone in West Lorne. It was in 1891 that the first telephone line was built here, a long distance line that ran from St. Thomas to Ridgeway, passing through Fingal, Shedden, Dutton, West Lorne, Rodney and Highgate.

In the days when the telephone first came to this district, young men wore walrus mustaches, slicked their hair down with oil, and courted young women who wore puffed sleeves and squeezed them-

selves into steel-ribbed corsets. The linemen who brought the telephone into West Lorne probably hummed "The Man That Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo" and "The Picture That Is Turned to the Wall," both hit songs in 1891.

Skeptics in those days thought the telephone was a mere fad, and looked on the construction of the new telephone line as a waste of time and money. The new means of communication, they thought, would never grow into a serious and useful part of business life.

Transmission was poor, at that time, by our present-day standards. Noises like the sizzling of frying bacon were heard on the line, and sometimes the voice faded out entirely. But even then, scientists and engineers were at work on the job of improving voice transmission, a job that continues today, and were steadily developing methods of expanding and improving service.

In the early days, the telephone office here was in the Harvey Brothers' drug store. There is a record of a fire in 1901 which destroyed "the booth and instrument in it and five bottles of battery solution and the arresters." E. C. Harvey was then local manager.

In 1907, J. M. Kelly became local manager when he bought out the Harvey Brothers' stock and business. He resigned in 1911, when Loyal Brown became manager, and the switchboard was moved to his store.

In May, 1913, service at West Lorne became continuous. However, it was the practice to shut the office on Sundays to allow the staff to attend church services and meals. In 1914, subscribers sent in a petition pointing out that the service was being shut down from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and from 5 p.m. to 8.30 p.m. on Sundays. As a result, the practice of closing the office for any period at all was discontinued early in 1915.

One of the earliest available lists of West Lorne telephone subscribers was published in 1907. The seven listings shown were: E. C. Harvey, local manager; 5, Hussey, Rev. Father, residence; 1, McKillop, A. & Sons, Lumber; 6, McLandress, J. A., Grain Broker; 4, Merchants Bank; 2, Michigan Central Railway Station; 3, West Lorne Wagon Company.

The number of A. McKillop and Sons, and J. A. McLandress are still listed, unchanged, after 41 years.