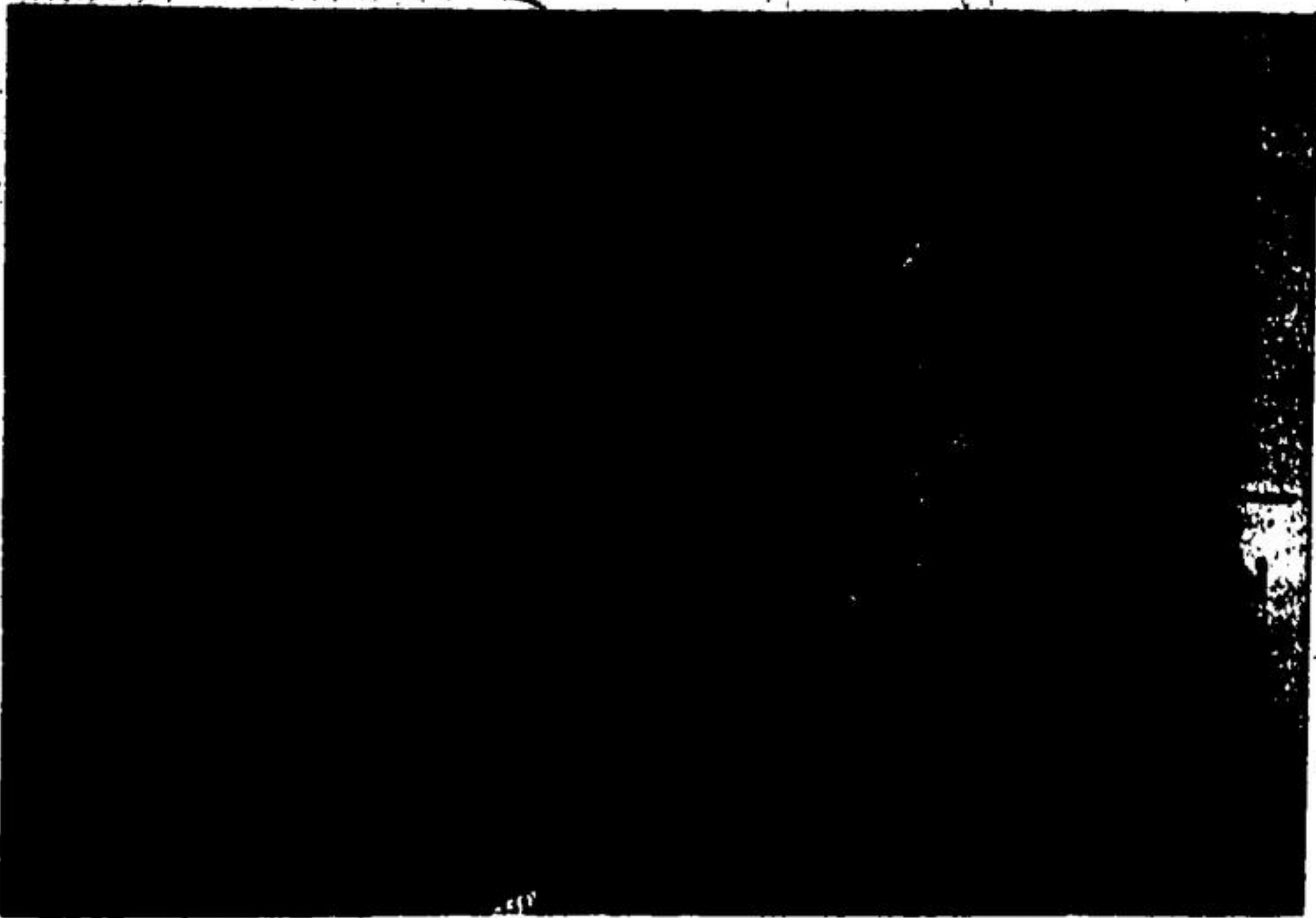


The Acton Free Press.

Eighty-Seventh Year.—No. 25.

ACTON, ONTARIO, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14th, 1961

Second Section



EARLY IN THE CENTURY Acton subscribers were served through a switchboard like the one shown here. Operators in those days wore double-bun hairdos, long skirts and high buttoned shoes. The folding bed and razor strap were used by the male night operator who took advantage of a lull at the switchboard to trim his beard.

Fire, Police

Stress Emergency Calls

The introduction of dial service in Acton will result in changes in the method of handling emergency calls to the Fire Hall and to the Ontario Provincial Police.

For fire calls, the Bell Telephone Co. has installed an emergency reporting system which includes seven telephones. One of these is located at the fire hall, one at the home of the fire chief, one at the tannery, and four at the homes of members of the volunteer fire department.

Calls to the fire number, 853-1212, will ring all seven telephones, including loud-ringing bells in the volunteers' homes. The call can be answered at any of the telephones and the person answering will take details of the call and ring the siren, alerting all other firemen.

Call Police

The Ontario Provincial Police office has been equipped by the Bell Co. with automatic answering and recording equipment which will "take" calls when the police office is unmanned.

A call to the police number, 853-1250, will trip a relay, setting in operation the answering and recording unit.

A caller will hear a message, recorded by the constable before he left the office, which will tell the caller that the police officer is absent, and which will invite the caller to leave a message, which will be recorded.

Meanwhile, the same action that caused the answering and recording unit to begin operation will also switch on a light outside the former telephone exchange building and another at the police office, telling the patrolling constable that there is a call for him.

Jack Bendig, Installer Busiest Bell Repairman When Switchover Happens

Jack Bendig, Bell Telephone installer-repairman who handles most of that type of work for telephone users in Acton, will be one of the busiest people in town the night of the change to dial operation.

He will be located in the manual exchange where, on the signal to "cut" to dial, he will be among the Bell craftsmen pulling out fuses, cutting the manual office out of operation. This will be done immediately before the dial office is placed in service.

Then, he will proceed to check the essential lines, such as those serving the fire hall and the Ontario Provincial Police offices to

make sure they are functioning properly.

Mr. Bendig will also visit public telephones and private branch exchange equipment to make adjustments so that they will function under the dial system.

KNOW EXITS

Are you baby sitting this Christmas? The fire chief says it's your duty to know where the exits are and where the telephone is. Also, write down the fire department's phone number and phone number and address of the place where the parents are going. Keep Christmas safe for children — firesafe!

"If in Doubt" Check Directory

All telephone numbers in Acton — including those for police and fire calls — will be changed coincident with the switchover of the local exchange to the dial system shortly after 2 a.m. on Sunday, C. S. Keith, Bell Telephone manager for this region, reminded telephone users this week.

The new Ontario Provincial Police number will be 853-1250; the Fire Hall number, 853-1212.

"If you have any doubt about a particular number, the phone directory is your best guide," Mr. Keith said. "All the new numbers, as well as special instructions, are included in the 1961 edition of the directory."

Telephone users served by the Acton exchange will receive telephone numbers consisting of the prefix 853 and four other figures. For local calling, telephone users will be required to dial all seven digits, and the full seven-figure number will also be required for both placing and receiving long distance calls. They should appear on any stationary signs or advertising matter.

Area Code

Mr. Keith pointed out that another three-figure code, the "area code", 519, appears on the telephone users' dial here. He explained that Canada and the United States are divided into about 120 numbering areas, each with a distinctive area code. This code is used for long distance calls and is, therefore, part of the telephone number for long distance purposes.

Operators and telephone users who have facilities for dialing long distance calls will dial the 519 before the seven-figure telephone number in order to reach Acton telephones if they are calling from another area. However, calls from other exchanges within the 519 area, such as Guelph, Brantford, Windsor and London, will not require use of this code.

Mr. Keith urged all telephone users in Acton to check the directory for the numbers of friends and business firms they call frequently and enter them in their Blue Book of telephone numbers. Additional free copies of the Blue Book are available in two sizes from the Bell business office in Guelph.

Telephone company service numbers are also listed in the directory. The long distance operator may be reached by dialing "0". Information about unlisted numbers may be obtained by dialing 113, and telephone repair service by dialing 114.

Install Switchboard System in 1884 Free Press One of First Subscribers

Soap, corset covers and cologne, "the imprisoned breath of blossoms", had never excited from J. E. McGarvin's drug store bell, the wear and tear caused it in November, 1884, by the curious coming to view Acton's first telephone switchboard.

From 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. on week days, the little old Gilliland could be seen in action if the first subscribers — the Acton Banking Co., the Free Press, Nelson, McRae and Co. and W. H. Storey — were in a talking mood.

On Sunday, the telephone office was open for business between 2 and 4 p.m. and on holidays from 10 to 12 p.m. and 2 to 4 p.m.

Held Demonstration

Telephones were not entirely unknown in Acton where, a few years before, a Professor Kent had held a telephone demonstration in Temperance Hall.

R. Gray, Grand Trunk Railway agent in the eighties, succeeded in making a pair of crude in-

struments which carried conversation over a three mile circuit. The first "talking box" had been invented by Alexander Graham Bell in 1874 and patented in 1876.

Demonstrations of the invention were popular across the country and primitive telephones became the subjects of speculation and conjecture.

After the first long distance test in 1876 and the completion of the first long distance line in Canada for commercial purposes in 1879, telephone connections outside village boundaries became a desirable possibility.

Long Distance Wires

Crews of bearded, over-clad men invaded the highways and by-ways to walk up the tall timber and precariously twist the long distance wires around the big poles erected by the dusty roadsides.

In 1884, such a crew built the line between Toronto and Guelph through Acton, Weston and Georgetown and long distance

connection became a reality here. The old Blake telephones installed in Acton that year for the transportation of its local and extended voice consisted of three boxes mounted on a backboard.

The topmost box contained the magneto generator, the middle box had a hole for the mouthpiece and the bottom box contained the battery for the talking current.

Telephone users held the receiver like a time bomb and shouted into the mouthpiece at the top of their lungs. In fact, within six or 10 blocks if the wind was right, they could be heard without benefit of the telephone at all.

First Manager

J. E. McGarvin, the first manager, was replaced in 1885 by Dr. N. McGarvin. The drug store was taken over by J. V. Kananwin in 1890 and later sold to A. T. Brown, manager here from 1900 to 1925. Other early managers were G. H. Lantz and Mrs. Bertha Lantz. The present chief operator is Mrs. Margaret Ford.

When Mr. Brown took over the telephone office in 1900, subscribers numbered 23 and a larger switchboard had replaced the old Gilliland. Night service was given on the "cot" system. This meant that a member of the family slept near the board in case of emergency.

In 1919, continuous service was officially inaugurated. The telephone directory for that year showed little resemblance to the miniature book of 1885 which carried advertisements for carriages, lap robes and washboards and showed Acton subscribers without telephone numbers.

Phone Books

By 1920, ads for Nash and McLaughlin automobiles, electric lights, fixtures and telephone numbers for every town and city in the book reflected the changing times. Some of the Acton numbers were to remain in use in the same homes and places of business for more than 40 years.

In 1920, the Bank of Nova Scotia answered number nine, as it does until the cut-over. The customers office was listed beside number 34 in the 1920 and the 1960 directory, number 56 is still listed beside W. K. Graham, as it was in 1920, while number 13, the Grand Trunk Railway is now the Canadian National Railway.

Robert Kerr, 41 ring five 1920, is now 41-W-5, and number 79 is still beside D. H. Lindsay, as it was 40 years ago. Symon Hardware answered number 49 in 1920 and is listed beside that number in the 1960 directory.

Connecting Agreement

A connecting agreement was made in 1911 between the Bell and the Consolidated Telephone Co., formerly known as the Caledon Telephone Co. Their 300 subscribers in the counties of Peel, Wellington, Dufferin and Simcoe connected with the long distance network of the Bell at Acton, Guelph, Rockwood and Orangeville.

In 1919, the company was purchased by the Township of Caledon and Erin and the name was changed to the Caledon Municipal Telephone Co. In 1918, the 100th telephone was installed and in 1953, the 1,000th was placed in service here.

The Acton exchange was converted to common battery operation in 1949, eliminating the necessity of turning the crank to signal the operator. Newer and more compact telephones were introduced.

Operation Enlarges

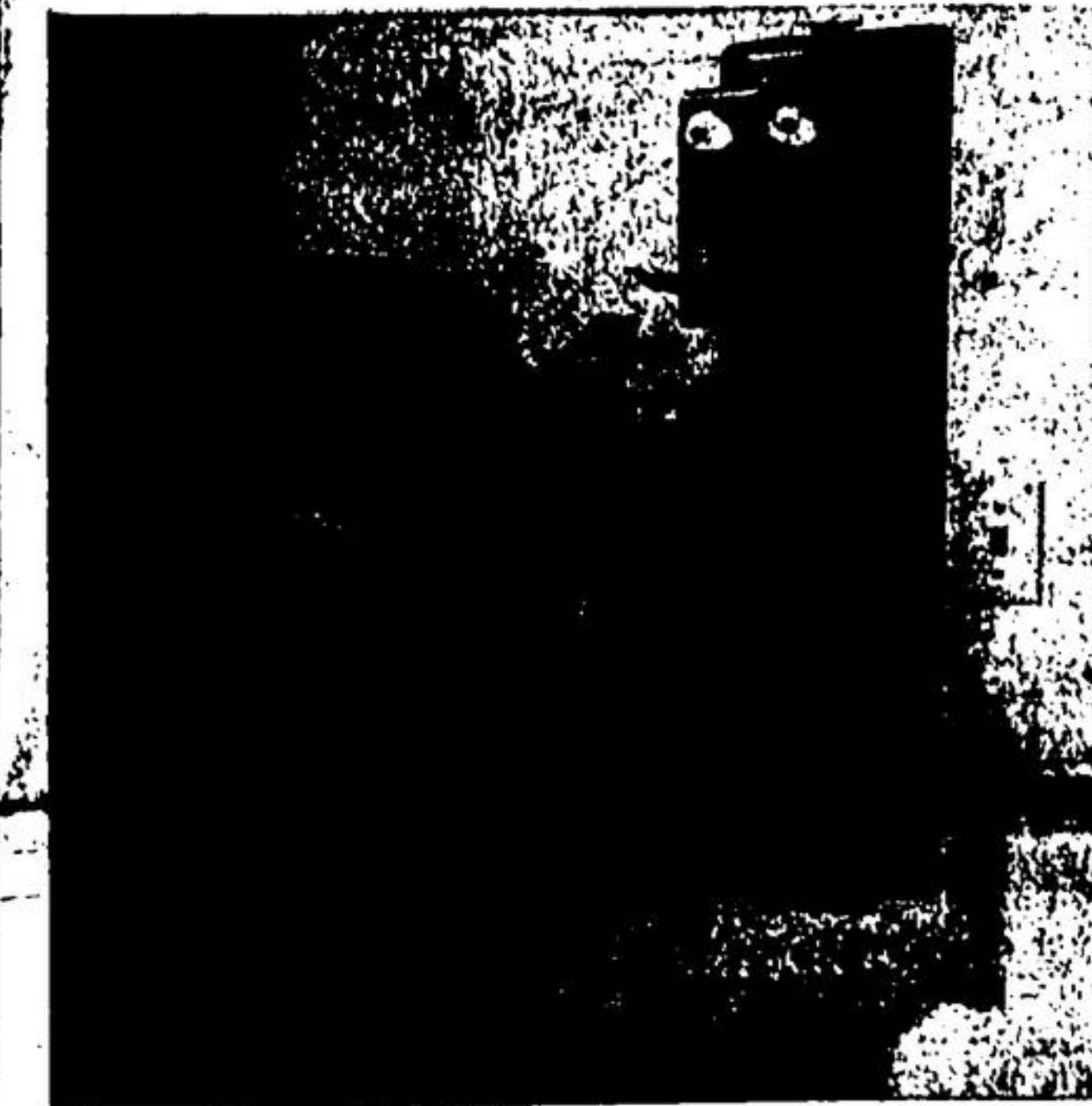
By 1955, Acton operators were handling 4,300 local calls and 215 long distance calls daily as compared with 80 local and 15 long distance connections in 1908.

Two more positions were added to the switchboard, which had been enlarged by one position in 1953 and now numbered five, enabling that number of operators to work at the same time. Acton had 1,134 telephone subscribers in 1955.

Since the first telephones were installed in Acton in 1884, there have been vast and continuing improvements in telephone service. Iron wire, originally employed, was replaced by copper, leading coils were invented, making telephone conversation over greater distances possible.

A microwave tower was erected near Acton in 1960 as part of the Windsor-Toronto microwave link to facilitate the handling of long distance calls.

Transcontinental telephony was made possible in 1915 when Alexander Graham Bell placed the first call across the continent from New York to San Francisco. It was not until 1920 that Acton subscribers could place calls to any point in Canada or the United States.



ACTON'S FIRST telephones were installed in 1884 after a long distance line was built between Toronto and Guelph through Acton, Georgetown and Weston. Here Mary Frances Johns, demonstrator in the Bell Panorama of Telephone Progress in Montreal listens in on an old Blake telephone like the ones which carried Acton's first message over the newly erected wire.

From Telephone Book of 1900

Acton's telephone directory listing of November 1900 included many names that will recall memories to some present day subscribers.

ACTON, A. T. BROWN, Local Manager.		
10 Acton Tanning Co.	Tannery	Main
16 Arnold Bros.	Tannery	Dolly Varden
19 Arnold Bros.	Glove Mfrs	Mill
17 Beardmore, A. O.	Residence	Church
10 Beardmore & Co.	Tannery	Main
Brown, A. T.	Druggist	Mill
1 Brown, A. T.	Residence	Young
5 Brown, Jas.	Saw Mill	Main
6 Clark's Hotel		Main and Mill
13 Grand Trunk Ry.	Station	
7 Henderson & Co.	General Store	Mill
3 Humphries & Hawke.	Millers	Mill
4 Kelly, Dr. C. I.	Physician	Frederick
20 Macdonald, Dr. J. M.	Physician	Mill & Frederick
9 McGrail, J. A.	Foreman Tannery	Main
12 McKeague, Dr. S. A.	Physician	Frederick
18 Merchants Bank		Mill
11a— Moore, H. P.	"Free Press" Office	Residence
11b— Moore, H. P.	Residence	Church & Frederick
7 Storey, Christie & Co.	Bankers	Mill
15 Storey, W. H. & Son	Glove Mfrs.	Bower Ave
2 Storey, W. H. & Son	Tannery	Main
14 Toronto Lime Co.	Lime Works	Luncheon

Fire Number New In Most Homes

Firemen calling door-to-door Monday received an "excellent" response from householders who gladly accepted their red labels for their phones. These red and white labels, pre-stamped, go on all telephones to list name, address and "For Fire Only Dial 853-1212."

About 15 men delivered as many as they could, and they hope to finish the whole town before dial switchover Sunday.

In the country, councils are operating to see farmers all receive their stickers.

If you don't have yours yet, be patient. A tannery or country neighbour will be at your door soon.

21 Years Service

Chief Operator Mrs. M. Ford To Work in Guelph Office

Mrs. Margaret S. Ford, who has served as Acton's chief operator since 1955, has accepted a position with the Bell Telephone Company's traffic department in Guelph and will serve there after the dial cut-over in Acton.

Mrs. Ford, a native of Meaford, has been serving telephone users for some 21 years. She joined the Bell in Meaford as an operator in 1927 and remained there until her transfer to Toronto three years later.

Became Chief Operator

She left the company when she married in 1942, then rejoined the Bell in Meaford in 1945. In 1952,

she became chief operator in Arthur, where she remained until she came to Acton.

Earlier this year, the Bell Co. announced plans to establish a major long distance centre at Oshawa in north-western Ontario. Mrs. Ford accepted the position as chief operator there, and left Acton to take up the post.

However, while Mrs. Ford was en route, the company changed its plans for providing long distance service in that section of north-western Ontario, and the position Mrs. Ford had accepted no longer existed, so she returned to Acton.



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Remington

W. S. ENRIGHT R.R. 4 Acton



TELEPHONE LINEMEN building Acton's first line camped out along the way. This telephone crew of the 1900's is complete with moustachioed cook and bearded blacksmith. Note the horse-drawn steam boiler for power for pumping and drilling.