

**Halton's History**

**1884 marks beginning of Bell's 'social chats'**

by WALTER LEWIS  
Herald Special

The opening of the Bell Telephone exchanges in Georgetown and Acton in November of 1884 was greeted almost casually. The Acton editor reported a satisfactory "social chat" with his Guelph counterpart and went on in the next issue to complain that nothing had been done to fix a street lamp broken sometime previous by Bell's careless employees.

But why should anyone, at least in Acton, get excited about the arrival of the Bell monopoly, when just two years before this another telephone had been invented locally?

Acton's Early Days attributes the invention to Cy Stafford and Bob Rae. While Rae was never mentioned in the contemporary accounts of the new wonder, shortly after it was patented, he did take six months leave of absence from his post as the Grand Trunk Railway station agent. Most of the credit, however, was heaped on Cyrus V. Stafford, a 23 year old teamster, who announced his patent in December 1882.

Other men mentioned in connection with the new enterprise included Henry F. Hill, who came home from Buffalo to manage the office, and A.H. Selwood and James Matthews, who took up the rights to market the new product.

**ACOUSTIC TELEPHONE**

"Stafford's Acoustic Telephone" was described as being "on an entirely new principle, being on a wire without battery or electricity in any form." It was, H.P. Moore claimed, "much clearer on short distances than the electric telephone" and thus was ideal for private lines, say from home to office or factory, or from hotel room to front desk. To demonstrate its value a line was installed between Moore's newspaper office and J.E. McGarvin's drug store, another line between Matthews's post office and Nicklin's bakery and a third demonstration line in London, Ontario.

All three attracted considerable attention and much "hulloing" ensued.

**Limehouse gathering**

**'Scouting World' film**

By JEAN LAYMAN  
Herald Special

"Scouting World", the first segment of a series of films was shown to beavers, cubs, scouts, venturers, leaders, parents and guests at the annual parent and son banquet for 1st Limehouse Scouting group. The films were shown in St. Alban's Church hall Thursday evening.

A sumptuous dinner was enjoyed by all, put on by Elaine Hannah and Evelyn Owen in charge.

Group committee chairman Tom Hill welcomed the gathering. This was followed by Mr. Hill giving Thanks with the blessing.

Mr. Hill introduced head table guests which included Mrs. Cannon, president of the Women's Institute (the Institute being the sponsor for 1st Limehouse), Gord Douglas, president of North Halton District Council, Darren Hill, Jean Belshaw - District Service Team, John Sharples - District Commissioner, Jean Layman - Public Relations Officer, Sandy Booth - Venturer Co-ordinator, scout Dennis White, son Robert White, and scout Gerry Fish.

Mr. Hill introduced all section leaders and

thanked each and everyone for the time spent providing good programs, training and fellowship for the boys.

Mothers serving the dinner received a good round of applause, as well as Mrs. Hannah and Mrs. Owen. Mr. Hill presented gifts to Mrs. Hannah and Mrs. Owen for a job well done.

District Commissioner John Sharples was very pleased to present scouters John Grace and Dennis White with their Part Three parchment for their Wood Badge.

Mr. Hill introduced Dennis White who had two TV sets to show "Scouting World"

While the "Stafford Acoustic Telephone" ultimately failed to be competitive because it couldn't be integrated into the general telephone network, it certainly took the edge off the enthusiasm with which Bell was later greeted.

The new Bell agencies had been established in McGarvin's Drug Store in Acton and J.H. Jackson's stationery and furniture shop in Georgetown. Within a year these men had installed 14 phones in Acton and all of 20 in Georgetown and Glen Williams. The new service was principally a business tool, Acton having only two residential installations, at W.D. Beardmore's and H.P. Moore's and Georgetown three, John R. and Joseph Barber and G.S. Goodwillie.

It is not surprising that the Barber brothers so readily took the telephone into their homes. Apart from their pioneering work with electrification, just before the Acton version of the telephone was announced, they had petitioned Bell to establish a local agency.

In both places the medical men were early subscribers, as were the railway companies, manufacturers and newspaper offices. Thus it is not surprising that the major advantage was seen to be the direct communication with Guelph, Hamilton, Toronto and other communities.

By 1892 Bell hours were from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday to Saturday with shorter hours on Sundays and holidays. By that point the Bell rates had climbed to 25 cents for the first five minutes of a long distance call and were being closely regulated by a government committee.

Rural telephone service would not come to the Hornby, Ashgrove area until an independent company was set up almost 25 years after Bell started servicing the northern villages.

Within eight years of Professor Bell's invention of the telephone, there was regular service in Acton and Georgetown. But two enterprising young Acton inventors deserve the honour for first bringing the telephone to north Halton.



Staffing the switchboard in Halton Hills: two enterprising Acton inventors deserve the honor for first bringing the telephone to north Halton.

Roselands Junior Public School will be holding their 60th reunion Saturday May 23 from 2 p.m. until 7 p.m.  
Those requesting more information for the reunion at the school on 990 Jane Street, Toronto, can phone 416-823-7565.

**Kelso Conservation Area presents  
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KELSO TROUT FISHING DERBY**

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**Prizes:**

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For more information: (416) 878-5011

Halton Region Conservation Authority

**St. John's spring fair**

St. John's United Church is holding an annual spring fair and silent auction May 7. The fun and fellowship starts at 10 a.m. and continues until 4 p.m.

A list of the silent auction items will be available at the church office after May 1. Call 877-2531 for more information.

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**Monday, May 23**  
Sponsored by Georgetown Optimists

LAST WEEK'S WINNERS: SHIRLEY LOUISE JESSOP  
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