

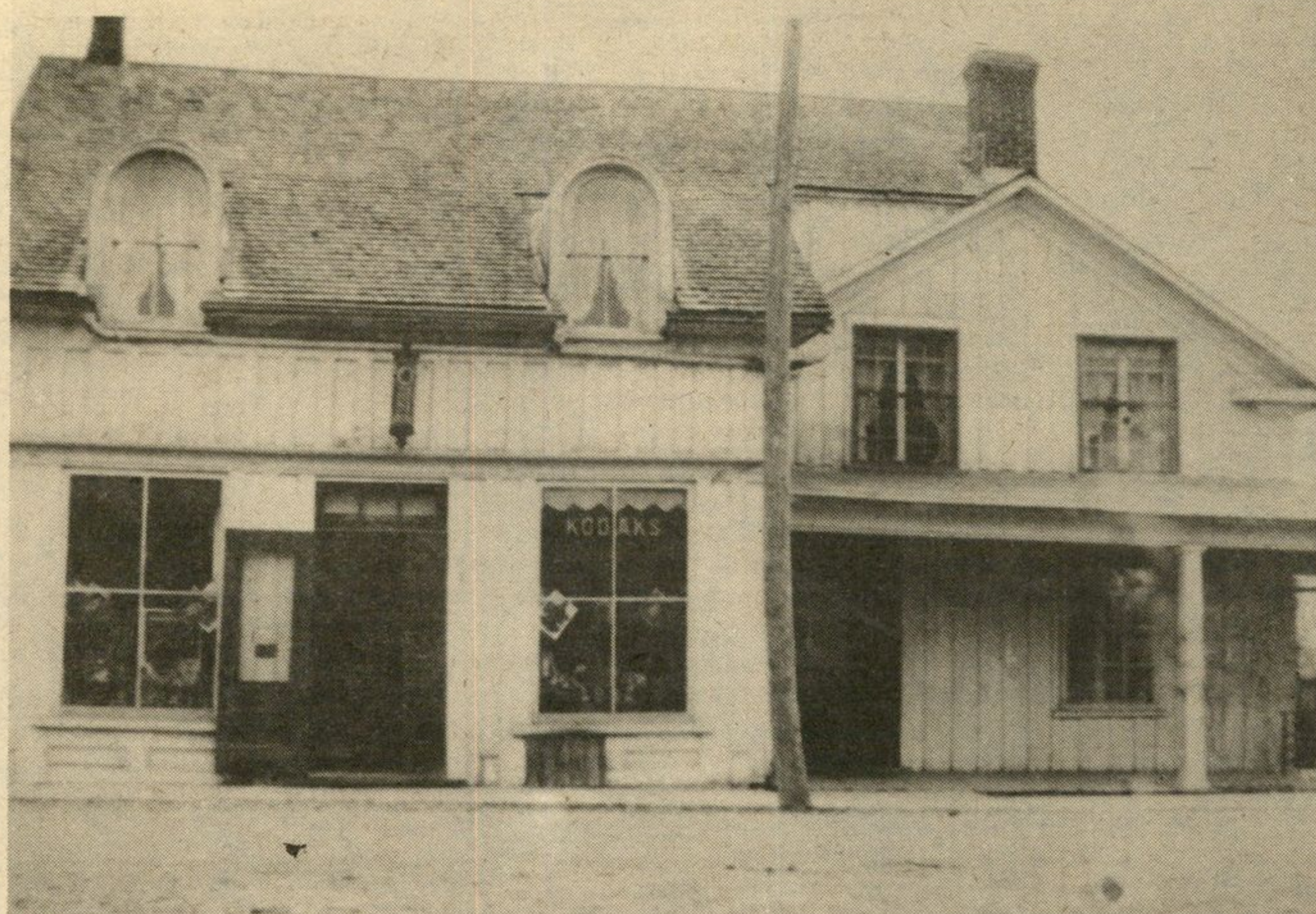
Hold the phone (2)

Operators help hook robber

By Donna Bond

On August 16, 1947, a robber forced a taxi driver, Harold Malette, into the Royal Bank in Embrun and requested the Manager, J.A. Clouthier to hand over \$26,000. Mr. Clouthier reached for a gun under the counter and fired at the gunman, but missed. The robber and taxi driver ran toward the door. The Manager fired another shot accidentally hitting the taxi driver, who then collapsed, and the robber fled in the taxi towards Russell. Miss Ella Hamilton, a Russell operator on duty, learned of the holdup and also that a strange car seen whizzing through Russell had overturned outside the village. A call from Constable John Buchanan stated that he had been shot at by a man who had crawled out from under an overturned car, uninjured. The constable, with his car keys, eluded the robber by plunging into the dense bush and prevented the robber from taking the police car. Miss Hamilton called police and residents in order to form an armed posse and other operators volunteered their services by relaying directions and search progress to posse and O.P.P. By nightfall, the search was about to be called off until daylight, when Mrs. R.W. Gamble, the operator on duty, received word that a suspicious stranger was on the outskirts of a neighbouring community. Police investigated and captured the bank robber. The Police returned to the Bell Office in Russell to call in their report concerning the capture and to personally thank the operators. The operators later received \$25. each for their help.

The operators also received their share of nuisance calls. There was a man who called every day at 4 a.m. and asked for the time. Dorothy always told him and he always called back the next day. Finally, she'd had enough and she gave him the wrong time; he never called back.



The Russell telephone office was once in this building which still stands near the corner of Mill and Concession Streets. (Courtesy Keith Boyd)

Operators had to use their own judgment in situations when drunks called and asked them to place a call. An unimportant call during the night hours disturbed everyone on the party line and so the operator rang the New York Central Railway Station which they knew was deserted at that time. The drunk heard the ringing and received no answer, but was satisfied that the operator had at least tried.

When Russell's 200th telephone was installed in 1919, the telephone exchange moved to the corner store of the Flynn Block located at Broadway and Mill Streets (where the Hardware Store is today). It moved again to the centre store in the same block in 1925. Mr. Ronan was replaced by Florence Booth in 1922 as Branch Manager and in 1935 she became Local Representative with Russell Manager and in 1935 she became

Local Representative with Russell exchange reporting to the District Manager in Ottawa.

The number of telephones declined during the depression and it was not until 1947 that Russell regained its 200th customer. During this increase in customers, in 1945 to be exact, the exchange moved to the Robert Atkinson Building on Broadway and Mill Streets (where Lorne Wade's shop is today) and the No. 1240 magneto switchboard was replaced by the No. 105B magneto to serve more customers when needed. In 1964, the telephone system went from different length rings to the dial operation as we know it today. Russell reached the 500th mark for telephones installed in 1968 and ten years later there were 1077 phones in service and it has been increasing ever since.

In 1964, the Russell telephone exchange moved to Ottawa and Dorothy Marquette went too. The job of telephone operator was as different as day and night compared to that in Russell and Dorothy had to be retrained. It

was a different board and the calls were all long distance. Each board had 15 pairs of cords and when they were filled, the vacant cords in the next position were used. One hundred operators for long distance would be working at one time. Long distance calls were made to the West Indies and across Canada and the United States whereas calls from Russell went as far as Prescott and Cornwall. The operators in Ottawa filled in the tickets with the length of the call and from here the tickets were placed in a pigeon hole for someone else to look after.

Operators: Kathleen Fraser (Mrs. Herb Miller); Hazel Moak (Mrs. Lawrence Brown); Florence Booth; Florence Rombough; Margaret Forsythe; Frances Forsythe; Georgina Cherry; Edna Curry; Edith Loucks; Dorothy Marquette; Joyce Boyd; Carrie Hall; Janet Fraser.

Part-time Operators: Evelyn Savage; Evelyn Dey; Ruth Gamble; Ella Hamilton; Shirley Sterring; Unita Shahan.

So you want to be a writer?

Conducted by the editors of the *Castor Review* for the benefit of those interested in the art of writing, or other aspects of the Media. From time to time, different members of the *Castor Review* staff will contribute based on their own personal experience.

Writing is the art of communication. Communication is conveying information. Your daily newspaper is communication, so is television, so is radio. Most of what you hear and see on radio and television has been written by someone.

The next time you watch a TV situation comedy or other program, look for the names of the writers. On shows like Carol Burnett or Johnny Carson, there may be as many as a dozen. Sometimes, that's not enough.

Other aspects of communication are the telephone, telegraph, jungle drums, smoke signals, and shouting.

Some people communicate with their eyes or their hips as well as with words. This is known as body language. You don't get paid for it, usually. If you want to get paid, it usually has to come off a typewriter.

What is a typewriter? It is a machine which uses metal keys to punch out letters on a ribbon. This sounds elementary, but try writing without a typewriter.

A typewriter is important, because if you want to be a professional writer, you have to use one. The reason you have to use one, is because people in a hurry cannot be bothered trying to make out your scrawl. There is no journalism course specializing in chicken tracks.

In the old days, great correspondents like William Howard Russell of the *London Times* would take along a portable writing desk to the battle of Bull Run, or Sevastopol and scribble out their impressions by hand and send it back using relays of horses. It's not done that way anymore. The telegraph made it possible for readers in London to read about the battle in the *Morning Post* or *Daily Telegraph* the next morning, while Russell's horses still hadn't gotten out of Balaclava. Such is progress.

One of the finest war correspondents was a young fellow called Winston Churchill. Recently graduated from Sandhurst, he accompanied Kitchener to Omdurman in an attempt to rescue General Gordon. The attempt failed but Churchill wrote some terrific dispatches for the *Morning Post* and he wrote a book called "The River War", still a classic of its kind.

Gerry Leroux



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