

The Amazing Talking Machine Cometh

Echoes From the Past – Essay #6



Most folks in present day Hammonds Plains would be surprised to hear that the community at one time owned its very own telephone company. But yes indeed, the Hammonds Plains Phone Company once was an integral force within the community and here is its story.

By the late 1800's, a new invention (the telephone) had taken the world by storm and finally found its way to Nova Scotia. The Nova Scotia Phone Company was set to service the larger communities in the province while the smaller rural communities had the option of setting up their own phone company, while hooking into provincial lines. Several folks in Hammonds Plains, particularly several of the saw mill owners saw this as a golden opportunity for enhancing their businesses. So the Hammonds Plains Phone Company was born.

The Hammonds Plains Phone Company was established in 1902, and started with just 3 phones. A telephone line was connected to an existing line at Mill Cove in Bedford. Typical of the times, the company had its own operator within the community, with a telephone connector (switchboard) in their home. Anyone wanting to make a phone call within the community would call the operator by dialing '9'. If folks wanted to contact someone outside the community they had to dial an operator in Halifax first for long distance charges. The Hammonds Plains operator used a special switchboard with retractable plugs to connect local calls, and when the conversation was completed, the operator pulled the plug connection. The phones used in one's home or business were mounted to a wall (also called a wall phone). Not quite like our cell phones of today.

As the phone became more main stream during the early 1900's, more phones were added to homes and businesses in Hammonds Plains. By 1945 there were 22 phones. The party lines of the later years led to some uncomfortable moments for neighbours as folks on the party connection could listen in on other phone conversations. Residents at the time were often surprised to find how fast news of engagements, pregnancies and new purchases spread throughout the community. This leaves one to wonder if Facebook hadn't arrived years ago under the disguise of the party line.

In 1947, the provincial phone company Maritime Tel & Tel bought out the Hammonds Plains Phone Company, thus ending the 45 year history of our very own talking machine company.



The Wall Phone of the Early 1900's.