

Keith's Corner/McGill News

October 18, 2019

Phone Systems in McGill

The difference between the phones in my youth as compared to today's phones is profound. The new "smart" phones, as I think they are called, are marvels of science and engineering. One can actually place a phone call to the person sitting next to you. The call is sent to a satellite high above the earth and then back down to the phone of the person next to you, in a matter of seconds.

These smart phones are so advanced that you don't even have to strain yourself by talking. How does that work, you would ask. Well, it is simple. You learn and use the new, modern system of sign language. It must not require a lot of brain power to learn as evidenced by all the teenagers using it. Apparently, all you need is the ability to move your thumbs up and down on the phone pad. In a way, that is good, because it seems that is the only exercise modern day teenagers are getting. The new and latest way to communicate with others?? Not according to my memories from the old days. There was a thing called the telegraph with which folks "talked" with others. But, but, that meant you actually had to learn a code. The first telegraphs were of course done over a wire like our earlier phones. Then Marconi figured out wireless telegraphy. Now the phones are also wireless.

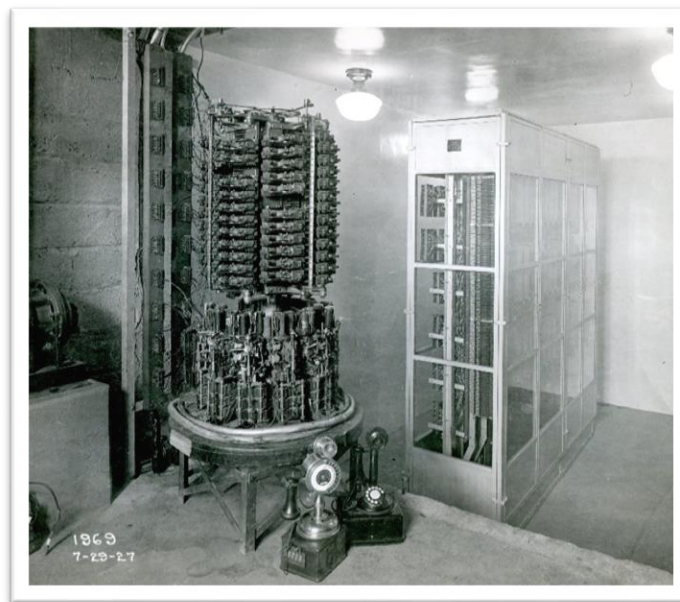
The phone systems in McGill years ago was restricted to the Copper Company phones. You had to be a big shot to have one. The only phone most of us had access to was at the Bell Telephone Company building on the corner below the Legion Hall. It was a pay phone and you had to have the live in operator place your long distance call for you, thru a complicated looking switchboard.

Now a lot of us heathen McGill boys decided that it wasn't fair, so we learned how to make our own phones. There were limitations of course. The phones didn't work around corners, as the lines could not touch anything. Their range

was about 50 feet, max. Now, don't everybody rush out and try building one, as it is a rather complicated and requires a great deal of engineering know how. You first have to scrounge up a head set for each end of the line. My favorite was Campbell soup cans with one end cut out. During the great WWII we couldn't use cans as they went into the war effort, so we switched to a larger unit—the empty oatmeal paper container. It had a few echoes and wasn't quite as crisp sounding as a good tin can. Next is to find a piece of string long enough, Then poke a small hole in the ends of the head sets and pull the string thru and tie a large know in the end. Now the trick was for the two communicators to keep the string tight. One drawback was that you couldn't put your phone in your back pocket. Speaking of that==it used to be a status symbol to have the circle of a Copenhagen can in the back pocket of your Levis. Now it is the larger smart phone. Wow, isn't progress wonderful.

Another new device on the smart phone is the digital camera. Now don't laugh but it was possible to use our oatmeal container as a camera. I never did it, but some kids made what was called a "pin hole" camera that actually worked in a crude sort of way.

Here is a photo of the first telephone in McGill. The switching unit was housed under the assay office. Date is July 7, 1927 on the photo,



McGill News

The weather this week is great. Monday was perfect. No wind, warm and no clouds. Since this is McGill, we will pay for this with some cold windy days, sooner or later. More than likely, sooner. Very quiet around the town.

Here is the update regarding the postcard of the USS Maryland from last week. I received an email from the Historical Society Museum stating that they have too many postcards in their collection and so decline my generous offer. Gee, I wonder if it is the eastern liberal anti- military PC at play here?? I will try a different source,

Mike Nass at the McGill Thrift Shop and Locksmith Shop is having his grand opening on Friday Oct 26.

Old Photo





Old McGill laundry. Was where the theater is now. I see the Commissary is there, and I am not sure just what year it was built. The Brunswick later became the Cononelos furniture store and is now the residence of the owners of Marie's Café.