



# Dots & Dashes

*What*

*Hath*

*God*

*Wrought*

The Official Publication of the Morse Telegraph Club, Inc.

Vol. 41, Issue No. 3 • Summer 2016

## REMEMBERING WITH HONOUR

*By Pat Kelly*

**H**er name was Maude Elizabeth Steane. Born in Toronto on July 11, 1916, she was the youngest child of Frederick William Steane and Elizabeth Steane. Maude had one older brother, George. Growing up in the city, she found employment as a clerk with the Toronto Hydro Commission. While continuing her work, Maude enrolled in June of 1942 in a night school course at the Radio College of Canada studying wireless telegraphy. On completion of her course fifteen months later, she received her certificate as a trained radio operator, graduating second in her class.

In May of 1944, she joined the Norwegian merchant ship *Viggo Hansteen* in New York as Second Radio Officer. Presumably, the ship, like others of her kind carried three Radio Officers. The ship was named for a young Norwegian Resistance member who was murdered by the occupying Germans during the early part of the war. To digress a little. In the first world war several women served on board Allied vessels as cooks or stewardesses but not as officers. In World War II Norway was the only Allied country that permitted women to serve at sea as Radio Officers. In Canada these women were not allowed to serve on or even to join ships in Canadian water. Hence Maude's trip to New York.

She travelled fairly extensively during her time on the vessel which in August of 1944 was lying

off Puortofino not far from Naples, Italy. Sadly on the 14th of that month, Maude was cruelly murdered by a crew member who then committed suicide. She was buried in the Florence War Cemetery, Plot VI C.2. located on the right bank of the Amo River, just south of the road to Pontassieve and Arezzo about five kilometres east of Florence. It is recorded that the ship's Master,

Captain Torbjom Thorsen, later gave high praise to Maude for her character and professional skills. I believe about twenty two Canadian women served as radio operators on Norwegian vessels. Apparently Maude was the only casualty. Some of these ladies married and remained in Norway after the war. Statistics show that of nine thousand foreign workers on Norwegian vessels during the war, about two thousand of that number were Canadians, and twenty two of these were young women who served as wireless operators. Surely one of the best kept secrets of the war. Radio Officer Steane is

one of eight Canadian women mariners killed in action during World Wars I and II. They are commemorated on a Memorial in Veteran Park in the city of Langford, near Victoria, B.C. Ceremoniously unveiled on May 19th 2002, the Memorial is attached to a bandstand in the park, in a truly beautiful setting. It is believed to be the first world-wide war memorial dedicated to Canadian women merchant mariners who died at their posts in the two world wars.



*continued on page 4* ➤

# Dots & Dashes

The official publication of

## The Morse Telegraph Club, Inc.

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*Position open to anyone interested*

**Local Chapter Members:** Members of local chapters should send all correspondence regarding address changes, membership renewals and similar information to their local Chapter Secretary/Treasurer. If you do not know your Chapter Secretary/Treasurer, please inquire with the International Secretary/Treasurer to obtain the necessary contact information.

**Your Articles and Stories:** MTC is always looking for original photographs, stories and articles about your experiences in telegraphy or radiotelegraphy. Please send articles and news stories to the Editor of *Dots & Dashes*.

**Telegraph Talks and Demonstrations:** If you or your local chapter should schedule any demonstrations, talks or other special events, please notify the International President so he can publish your event in our on-line calendar.

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The next issue of *Dots & Dashes* is scheduled for publication on September 30<sup>th</sup>, with submission deadline three weeks prior to that date.

☛ This ad runs routinely in the *World Radio News*:

## Morse Telegraph Club

### Landline Morse is Alive and well!

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Learn more about the history of the telegraph or simply enjoy using American Morse Code and authentic telegraph equipment.

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## Sidewire

Comments from the  
Editor of *Dots & Dashes*

By Jim Wilson



Can summer be here again? Yippee! That 1935 song from the opera “Porgy and Bess,” written by George Gershwin, states that summertime is “when the living is easy.” Break out the barbecue grill, the hammock, the sun block lotion and the mosquito repellent and enjoy

this glorious warm season. Take time to catch up on all those magazines, including *Dots & Dashes* journal. Savor the stories written by our MTC members, stories about their exciting telegraph days of yore. Consider writing your own story about your interesting experiences that you lived as a telegraph operator and/or railroad employee. Our readers will anticipate your article and photographs.

If you are able, plan to demonstrate the electric telegraph to the curious public. You can do this as a small team or independently on your own as a one man show. All you need is a table and chair and a telegraph key with sounder plus battery. If your chapter has scheduled events, join the fun. Read our Chapter News to see how or members routinely demonstrate the electric telegraph.

If you haven't yet sent in your 2016 MTC dues, please write that check and get it in the mail to your chapter secretary-treasurer. We know that you want to support the preservation of Morse code and the wonderful craft of the telegraph operator.

My small MTC Chapter, the Washington-Baltimore Chapter, has already completed several telegraph demos for this year and has more planned. Check with your chapter to see what upcoming events they may have in the works.

That documentary film, “Great American Railroad Journeys and the Telegraph,” filmed months ago by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) has already been shown in Britain. Recall that this film includes interviews by MTC International President James Wades and by WA Chapter President Hubert Jewell. The Public Broadcasting System (PBS) will air this film in the United States this fall.

Also, do you have the time, the skills, and the motivation to become the new MTC International Secretary-Treasurer? Here is a wonderful volunteer opportunity to serve our members. Step up to the plate!

*Jim Wilson*

## President's Line

Jim Wades, President  
Morse Telegraph Club, Inc.



*“We lived in Indian summer and mistook it for spring...”*

Many years ago, the historian Bruce Catton wrote a wonderful book entitled “Waiting for the Morning Train” describing his boyhood in Northern Michigan at the turn of the 20th Century. Like all good writers, Catton had a gift for metaphor and imagery and he used them with a sense of balance that was exquisite. One of my favorite chapters in the book is entitled “Under the Lilacs.”

In this chapter, Catton describes the slow but inexorable passing of the U.S. Civil War veterans who heavily influenced him as a child. He writes well of the passing of a generation and with it the loss of sense of certainty in the progress of a nation toward its ideals and the ability of mankind to overcome any challenge triumphantly. In a sense he describes the passing of not just a generation, but the passing of a decidedly 19th century perspective on humanity.

Catton was a member of what was perhaps the first or second generation to see technological progress as not just a potential benefit to mankind, but a peril. While coming of age, he witnessed the excesses of the lumber industry and the economic uncertainty of “progress” that went forward unchecked and at an ungovernable speed. It's a perspective that is all too familiar today.

It is probably safe to assume that most of our members have witnessed similar rapid progress, only in the field of telecommunications. Within one lifetime, many of us have witnessed the transition from simplex telegraph circuits to fiber optic cable and cellular mobile data networks. Yet, despite this fascinating progress, I can't help but feel something is in peril. In Catton's youth it was trees and natural resources. Today, it often seems to be the essence of our humanity.

As a society, we are so enamored with technology, we see it as the sole measure of our progress. It overshadows the classical measures of a civilization's progress, such as



moral or philosophical development. In our brave new Internet world, an entertainment culture that rarely uplifts has replaced genuine art and literature. Entire art forms, which require quiet thought or reflection, have been pushed to the margins of society. We have created the most advanced technological society in history and, while it "entertains" us constantly, it "enlightens" us rarely.

It seems that man's ability to express himself and communicate with intimacy and insight diminishes with each text message sent. The mobile data technology that was supposed to unite us instead seems to isolate us. Our humanity seems to diminish with the isolation. Perhaps we were better off with the telegraph, bicycle messengers and the rotary phone.

For Catton, the faith his generation lived by "sleeps beneath the lilacs." Perhaps it is natural to mourn the loss of a sense of certainty as one grows old. However, it is also decidedly unnatural to not question progress when so much evidence points

to unintended consequences. Are we really better off today than we were in the telegraph era? It's a question worth contemplating.

### *Dodge Institute of Telegraphy*

Many of us are familiar with Dodge's Telegraphy, Railway Accounting and Radio Institute," later known as "Valparaiso Technical Institute."

MTC members may be interested in attending the upcoming VTI reunion on August 13 from 10 AM to 4 PM. During the reunion, I will be presenting a talk entitled "Canst Thou Send Lightnings (2-PM)," followed by connecting to MorseKOB Wire 11 to demonstrate telegraphy. I would like to invite MTC members to get on the wire and converse with us at the reunion.

*If you would like to attend the reunion, please contact Lee Hite at:*

*leland.hite@gmail.com or 513-677-0543*

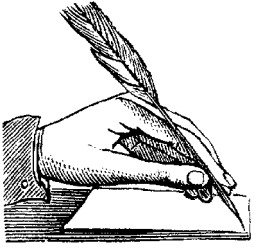
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### *Remembering with Honour continued from front page*

The ship, Viggo Hansteen, was a seven thousand ton Liberty ship built in Baltimore, Maryland in 1943, and launched as the George M. Shriver. Shortly after completion she was transferred to Norwegian registry and renamed. After the war she was sold to Greek ownership and again her name was changed, this time to Alkimos. The vessel continued in her trade until March of 1964, when, after encountering very severe weather, was eventually driven on shore and wrecked near Fremantle, Australia, and subsequently broken up for scrap. Ship wireless operators have now completely disappeared, overtaken by modem technology, but they formed an important chapter in maritime history. Canadian women operators were pioneers whom played an significant part in the annals of sea-going "sparks". They are worthy of our gratitude.

This then, is the brief story of a brave and dedicated lady, a credit to her family, her country and her profession. May she and all women who served so selflessly be long remembered.





# Letters to the Editor

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## February 19th

I found another one; this is insane!  
Learn the Morse code at <https://youtube.com/watch?v=6XHwygN9CKM&list=RD6XHwygN9CKM&index=1>.

*John Underwood*

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## March 22nd

Hello again and just a short note to apologize for the delay in getting you copy for your newsletter regarding my great-grandfather's telegraph key/sounder combination and some background history. I had promised you something at the Richmond "Frostfest" back in February.

I have included a recent Google image of the old railroad depot at Meredosia, Illinois where my great-grandfather worked for the Wabash Railroad. Other exciting news: I found his initials carved into the bottom of the sounder's wood mounting plate. All exciting stuff. What's really going on is a delay with finding a picture (it's somewhere and close by I hope) of my late grandmother at the age of 3 with her father, my great-grandfather, as they are walking on the tracks towards the rail bridge at the Illinois River there at Meredosia. My great-grandfather also operated the bridge when needed.

*Duane Morrison*  
*K4WAB*



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## April 22nd

Today I received my first copy of the Morse Telegraph Club's publication, *Dots & Dashes*, and just read the interesting article, *My Memories*, by

Bernard Rochefort. In the article, Bob mentioned that he had come in contact with the term "Gandy Dancers, but didn't know where the term originated.

The term came from the name of the Gandy Manufacturing Company that manufactured the tools used by the railroad maintenance crews. It applied to the dances the crews, mostly black, performed in order to coordinate their movements. The songs allowed the workers to synchronize their movements; this resulted in combining their individual forces into the enormous forces needed to move heavy objects during the maintenance of the track. You can view a very interesting movie about the Gandy Dancers at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=3r\\_cl3kYYhM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3r_cl3kYYhM).

*Sincerely,*  
*George Averill*

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## May 2nd

Attached is the article that I mentioned while visiting the Morse Telegraph Club table at the "Frostfest" in Richmond last February. I realize that we are making every effort to keep the club primarily focused on the history, tradition, and preservation of the land Morse code telegraph services. This article is more related to the radiotelegraph services. However, I did try at least to draw the comparison to the telegrapher's Phillips Code abbreviations and the Q-Code.

By the way, I downloaded the KOB computer and am having a lot of fun getting back into the swing of copying American Morse. I am working on getting the interface connection to my left handed Vibroplex connected to my computer.

*Regards,*  
*John Reiser*

*(Read John's article on page 10)*

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## May 3rd

In addition to the *Silent Key* of Dan Kollasavich of Winnipeg, I should have added that Dan was an International Director, both President

and Secretary-Treasurer, for many years of the Winnipeg MB Chapter. Dan was also the organizer/director of the Slow Speed sessions on the Canadian Hub. He was a real asset to the Morse Telegraph Club and will be greatly missed. Also, I attended a few demos of the Winnipeg Chapter organized by him. Dan was an excellent telegrapher. His death was caused by an aneurysm.

*Larina Shaw*

## June 23rd

Just a note from Iowa. I have been contacted by the Jasper County Museum here in Newton, Iowa. The museum director asked if I would give a talk on what I believe is their general meeting. So I will do a talk and demonstration during or after their luncheon. I have not yet decided exactly what I will say. I will make a chart of the alphabet with dots and dashes by each letter. Perhaps they could learn what a couple of letters would sound like, maybe the whole alphabet. Who knows; we could start a Morse club right here!

*Ron Kollmann*

# CHAPTER NEWS

## CD Combs Memorial Chapter

The CD Combs Memorial Chapter "FN" held their 31st annual Morse Day meeting from 11am to 2pm on April 30, 2016 at "The Depot" restaurant in Missouri Valley, Iowa. Not the best weather occurred as it rained most of the night and then all day Saturday. President McMillan called the meeting to order around 1130am with fifteen members and 15 spouses or friends attending, a good turnout even with some late cancellations. One member, Bob Kies, attended for the first time. Non members attending for the first time were; Ralph Erts, who joined the club at the meeting,

Larry Bailey and Dan Peters. Each member and others briefly introduced themselves and spouse or friend and gave some of their history. This always makes for interesting news about people and part of their life. The oldest person attending was Delmar Gifford, age 96, from Boone, IA. Delmar dispatched trains, using the telegraph for the US Army, during WW II in France.

Before lunch, the prayer was keyed by Ron Peters. The buffet was started about noon which included boneless chicken, roast beef, mashed potatoes, etc. For desert, Wanda McMillan and Carol Behrens provided about 7 dozen homemade cookies that were almost all consumed. The meal fee was \$9 as



Front row L to R: Darlene Ailbin, Lorraine Peters, Wanda McMillan, Carol Behrens. Second row: Jean Weaver; Pauline friend Larry B, Sandy Zdan, Alinda Lager, Rose Kollmann. Third row: Gary Kies, Gene Gifford, Missing from photo: Mary Diersen



On floor: Ron Kollmann Newton IA. Front row L to R: Charles McMillan-Omaha, Roger Sogard-Ames IA, Delmar Gifford- Boone IA, John Albin-Valparaiso-NE, Robert Kies-Omaha, Robert Lager-Logan IA. Second row: Jim Kilby-Omaha, Ralph Erts-Omaha, Roger Hinz-Manning IA, Larry Bailey- Bellevue NE, Russ Weaver-Omaha. Third row: Richard Behrens-Omaha, Dan Peters-Manning IA, Brian Zdan-Omaha, Tom Batten-Valley, NE, Lowell Diersen-Boone IA, Ron Peters-Lincoln NE

# CHAPTER NEWS *continued*

it was the previous two years. The meal cost was subsidized by one dollar from the chapter treasury.

After lunch, Ron Peters played his accordion. At the business meeting, the minutes of last year's meeting and a financial report were given by the Sec/Treas. Chapter membership was 36 before meeting. The current officers were reelected for the coming year. They were: Charles McMillan as President, Donald Tucker as Vice President and Richard Behrens as Secretary/Treasurer. After some discussion, it was decided to hold next year's meeting at the same place. There was considerable room in this restaurant for people to move around, including those with walkers. Tables were also available to display and play with telegraph related material. Ron Kollmann, Larry Bailey and the secretary had brought some telegraph keys and other material. Group photos were taken of those attending. The meeting was dismissed about 2pm.

## **Calgary CG Chapter**

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With the help of their families providing transportation, the spring get together at Central Alberta Railway Museum turned out well for members. We enjoyed a couple of train rides and a general get together. Bill Wilson, manager for this event, did a good job of cooking hamburgers and hot dogs. An enjoyable time was had by all, a total of about 50 people.

*Bill Tchir,  
Wainwright, Alberta*

## **Florida Chapter**

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Florida Chapter has gained several new members recently. The following new members joined Florida Chapter during the "Hamcation" Amateur Radio even held in Orlando, February 12-14: James F. Bishop, Maria Estolt, John M. Glassberg, Victor R. Johnson, Kevin Kalil, Vincent Kondracki, Gary Liljegren, Russel Turpin and John Zimmerman. In addition, Abram Burnett transferred his membership from At Laerge to Florida Chapter. Members of Florida Chapter extend a warm welcome to these new members and invite them to join in any of the scheduled events to become acquainted with current members and to lend moral support to the participants. Information regarding future events can always be found on the CALENDAR page of the Chapter's website [www.FloridaMorse.com](http://www.FloridaMorse.com).

It is always great fun when the younger visitors to this annual Florida Christmas Remembered event stream into the old Pierson depot, now located on the Pioneer Settlement grounds, in Barberville, FL to prepare their Santagrams for transmission by electromagnetic telegraph to Santa Claus at NP (North Pole). Horses and unicorns were in great demand by little girls this year, while boys wanted bicycles and sports equipment. No promises were made, but the Santagrams were returned to the children, after being sent, as a souvenir and so that parents might learn of their children's wishes. While in the depot, the children and their parents were able to learn about telegraphy and its historical role in railroading and the development of the country.

Beautiful weather brought a large turnout to the annual Folk Festival at Pinellas County's Heritage Village in Largo, FL, in late January of this year. Chapter members were kept active, serving as both the Sulphur Springs depot's docent and as telegraph demonstrator. Amongst the interesting people met this day was a woman who for six years was a Chinese Morse code interceptor for the U.S. Air Force; a current Navy Signalman who knew nothing about Morse code (everything is digital now); and a recent high school ROTC graduate who was required to learn International Morse code as part of her training. Demonstrations always bring interesting insights into the past and present state of Morse code.

Florida Chapter members assisted International MTC President James Wades at the 70th annual amateur radio "Hamcation" in Orlando, FL, Feb 12-14, 2016. It was the first time for the Morse Telegraph Club to be represented. Antique and replica telegraph instruments and equipment were displayed and demonstrated as well as a Morse KOB set up with a news feed running a sounder. All of this generated considerable interest from the many visitors to the event, many of whom thought that International Morse Code was the original Morse Code. Despite this misunderstanding, a considerable number of attendees signed up as new members of the Morse Telegraph Club. Among the many interesting visitors was a man who said that he was the radio operator on the Ballard crew which located the sunken Titanic.

The Cracker Cattle Drive and Cowboy Round-Up, a relatively new annual event, is held in mid-



# CHAPTER NEWS *continued*

February in a city park near downtown Ocala, FL with many 'cowboy' related activities to celebrate and remember Ocala's early history as a center for raising cattle. The event culminated with a small herd of cattle being driven through the heart of the city, much to the delight of the many visitors who had never seen such a sight. Despite the competition, Florida Chapter members were kept busy throughout the day responding to visitor questions, talking about the role of the telegraph in the development of the railroads and the cattle industry, demonstrating the art and skill of Morse telegraphy, and instructing visitors, especially the younger ones, on how to send their names in American Morse code on a genuine telegraph key.

The original Florida East Coast Railroad Station Master's house and the reconstructed FEC depot, both from Homestead, FL, but now located on the grounds of the Florida Pioneer Museum, Florida City, FL, were the scene of the Museum's annual antique quilt show and the display and demonstration of antique and replica telegraph instruments and equipment by Florida Chapter members. Homestead was the last mainland station stop for the Florida East Coast Railroad before beginning its "Overseas" run to Key West. The line, which was completed in 1912, was partially destroyed by the devastating hurricane of 1935. It was converted to the "Overseas Highway" a few years later. The Homestead depot was destroyed by Hurricane Andrew in 1992 and later rebuilt. One of the antique items on display was an operating 1860s Willcox Gibbs sewing machine. The Morse KOB Internet 'wire' was in full action, creating the sound of American Morse coming from a sounder and resonating once again through the old depot. Chapter members demonstrated the various instruments and equipment while informing visitors about the role of the telegraph in the development of the rail network in North America and also the history of the Florida East Coast Railroad.

Florida Chapter members had an operating telegraph display set up at the semi-annual Florida Citrus Model Train Society model train show in Pembroke Pines, FL, in late February. The show always attracts a large crowd. Visitors, young and old, were given the opportunity to try their hand at sending American Morse code while they learned about the role of the telegraph in

the spread of railroads in North America and its importance to that development.

The H. B. Plant RR Historical Society's annual model train show has for many years provided the Florida Chapter members an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the art and skill of Morse Telegraphy to the large number of visitors in attending, while at the same time informing those visitors of the role of telegraphy in the spread of the railroad system and the subsequent role of that system in the economic growth and development of the United States and Canada. This year's event on March 19 at a new venue in Lakeland, FL, was no exception. Good attendance, a good location, and an interesting telegraph display made this another very successful event for Florida Chapter.

Rain had a negative impact on early attendance at the annual Hernando County Model Train show, held on the grounds of the Pioneer Florida Museum and Village, Dade City, FL on April 2, but as the day wore on, the number of visitors increased, most of whom made their way to the preserved Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Trilby, FL depot, also located on the grounds of the Museum. Florida Chapter members had the old depot open and served as both docents and demonstrators for the day for the visitors, while informing them of the critical role of Morse Telegraphy in the spread of the railroad system in North America.

After a slow start to the day, a large number of visitors found their way to the old Tavares and Gulf Railroad depot now home to the Central Florida Railroad Museum, and located in downtown Winter Garden, FL, during the annual Springtime In The Garden event on April 9. Florida Chapter members displayed and demonstrated antique and replica telegraph instruments and equipment for entertainment and education of the visitors. Every visitor who wished to do so, was given an opportunity to learn how to send American Morse code, using a genuine, antique, telegraph key. Many who tried to send their name were able to do so in such a manner that Chapter members could recognize the names. A feat which never failed to surprise the younger visitors, many of whom had never even heard of electro-magnetic telegraphy.

For the second Saturday in a row, the Chapter had a presence at the preserved Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Trilby Depot now located on the



# CHAPTER NEWS *continued*

grounds of the Pioneer Florida Museum in Dade City, FL. This time at the request of the Museum for a special event they were hosting on April 9. Although attendance was less than expected, turnout was sufficient to justify the presence of Chapter Members who explained the workings of the depot and the role of the railroads in the development of that part of the state, a role which would not have been possible without the communications provided by Morse telegraphy. The rhythm of American Morse code coming from sounders in the old Pierson depot was a perfect counterpoint to the sound of music coming from fiddles, guitars and other musical instruments in various locations on the grounds of the Pioneer Settlement during the annual Spring Frolic event on April 23. Florida Chapter members used the antique telegraph instruments in the former ACL RR depot to demonstrate the art and skill of American Morse telegraphy while explaining to visitors the role of the telegraph in the development of the railroads in the United States and Canada, and how that development furthered the economic growth of both countries. Visitors, both young and older, were also given the opportunity to learn to send their names in American Morse code on those same antique instruments.

Florida Chapter members celebrated Morse Day April 30 at the Plantation (FL) Historical Museum, with assistance from museum staff and volunteers. A connection was established to the Internet and the Morse KOB "wires" so that Morse Day telegraphic greetings could be exchanged with other chapters throughout the United States and Canada. The connection also allowed Florida Chapter members who could not attend in person to participate in the activities. The many museum visitors were amazed, and delighted, to hear, and see, Morse telegraphy in actual use, albeit with an assist from modern technology. Lunch was graciously provided by Cathy Feeney for all those present. After lunch, a brief business meeting was conducted, during which Chapter officers were elected for the 2016-17 term. Those elected were Robert Feeney, President; Warren McFarland, Vice-President; and Clyde Francis, Secretary-Treasurer.

Although AMTRAK has withdrawn its support of National Train Day, the Friends of Tampa Union Station were determined to continue the

tradition of a "Train Day" event and did so with Tampa Train Day on May 14. The large number of people in attendance justified their decision. There was a large variety of train-related exhibits and demonstrations, with the model train layouts and the Florida Chapter's telegraph demonstration being among the most popular. Visitors were given the opportunity to learn how to send their names in American Morse code while learning of the role of the telegraph in the history of the United States and Canada, and its role in the development of the railroad industry in both countries.

Florida Chapter members were among several Living History demonstrators featured at the third annual Celebration of Old Florida at the Pioneer Settlement, Barberville, FL, June 11. Chapter members had the old AC: RR Pierson, FL depot, now located on the grounds of the Settlement, open, and, using the antique telegraph instruments in the depot, demonstrated to visitors the art and skill of American Morse telegraphy. Visitors were encouraged to try their hand at sending their names in American Morse code, a feat which delighted many but dismayed a few. Visitors also learned of the role of the telegraph in American history and its role in the expansion of the railroad system in the United States and Canada. Among the many visitors was a school teacher from Lake County who displayed a remarkable beginner's touch at the key and who declared that she would include a section on the telegraph in future classes.

## **Washington-Baltimore WA Chapter**

On April 30th, several chapter members attended the annual Morse Day celebration at the Railroad Postal Service Museum in Boyce, Virginia. MTC



# CHAPTER NEWS *continued*



Member Dr. Frank Scheer owns and operated this interesting museum.

On June 4th, MTC WA Chapter President

Hubert Jewell and Chapter Secretary-Treasurer Jim Wilson, participated at "Civil War Camp Day" at Fort Ward Park in Alexandria, Virginia.

Although the threat of rain kept the crowds down, Hubie and Jim, both dressed in 1860's attire, educated and entertained many groups of people who were curious to learn more about the electric telegraph.



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## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE INTERNATIONAL Q-CODE ABBREVIATIONS FOR RADIOTELEGRAPH USE

*By John W. Reiser, WQ4L*

Most American Morse telegraphers are familiar with the Phillips Code, a set of contractions of hundreds of common words standardized and published in 1979 by Walter P. Philips. This telegraphic shorthand was primarily intended for use on news press circuits to improve the transmission efficiency of news press circuits.

Both professional and amateur radiotelegraphers using the International Code also use many common contractions of common words and abbreviations but are also familiar with another set of codes known as the Q-Code. This code is an international standard first established as part of the International Radio Regulations (IRR) at a radio conference held at London in 1912, and was primarily intended for maritime radio communications. However the International Q-Code differs from the Phillips Code in major ways.

The Phillips Code is primarily a listing of

standardize contractions of words by deleting letters thus shortening the transmission time of messages. Skilled telegraphers would write or type the full standard spelling of the intended word. On the other hand the original Q code contained only 47 three-letter (trigraph) signals starting with the letter Q with each representing a brief message itself. Although this publication is primarily directed to those of us who are in the tradition of the American Morse Telegraph line service, many of members use the International Code as amateur radio licenses or hold commercial radiotelegraph licenses. The Q-code was first intended for use in maritime communications and intended to be understood by ship operators having different national languages. However amateur licensees still frequently use a subset of the code in their regular operations.

The 47 abbreviations within the range of QRA through QTA provided a universal method of

exchanging brief messages in the following general areas:

- To assist in establishing and maintaining radio communications
- Ship navigation, search and rescue operations,
- Managing and relaying message traffic.

Each Q-Code abbreviation was express in two parts. When followed by a question mark (?) the abbreviation represents a question. Without ending question mark the code is an answer to the question, a specific statement of information, or a direct command to the receiving station. Some of the codes required an additional numeral, or word information. For example:

QSY? “Shall is change to another frequency?”

QSY 8335kHz “Change frequency to 8335kHz.”

QRT commands “Stop sending (you are causing interference.)”

Each independent country or governmental administration of the world has been assigned a specific alphabet letter, a numeral, or a combination of 2 or 3 letter or number combinations as the first characters of call signs for identification of the radio transmitting stations it authorizes.

The U.S. may assign calls starting with the letters K, N, W and letters AA through AL. The letter Q has not been assigned to any country or administration as the starting letter for call sign identification and is exclusively reserved for this code use. Also to avoid any possible misunderstanding in communications, particularly in distress or difficult reception conditions, official station call signs are not to include any of the three letter Q-Code combinations. (The FCC seems to have overlooked this restriction and has issued a few amateur calls containing Q-Code Signals as suffixes.)

Because of changes in radio communications technology and maritime operations after 1912 the Q-Code has been a modified a number of times. The next international radio conference was not held until 1927 and took place in Washington, D.C. At that conference the Q-Code text was extensively revised and expanded, however two of the existing Q signals were deleted. The first was QSR asking:

QSR? “Will you forward the telegram?”

QSR “I will forward the telegram.”

The second deletion was QST, familiar to all amateurs and is the title of the American Radio

Relay League monthly journal. Although never returned to the official ITU list, it is used by the league station W1AW and others to initiate general messages address to all amateur licensees. The code adopted in at the 1912 radio conference read:

QST? “Have you received the general call?”

QST General call to all Stations.

The 1928 revised code abbreviated messages now totaled 67 with the 45 of the original and 22 new ones, within the expanded range of QRA through QTU. In addition, 24 codes (QAA through QAZ) were added for aeronautical station use. The wording of some of the abbreviations was revised but the conference documents did not explain the deletion of either QSR or QST. (Perhaps it was just an editing or typographical error.)

The next radio conference held five years later at Madrid in 1932 significantly revised the code again with additional deletions and additions resulting in a total of 63 codes in the range QRA through QUJ. The special QA series for aeronautical stations were not included in the final conference documents. Another five years passed before the 1938 conference held in Cairo revising the code to 66 abbreviations in the range QRA to QUM. QSR was restored with a new meaning that would be a useful for amateur operations in requesting a repeat of a call sign that is not clearly copied:

QSR? “Shall I repeat the call on the calling frequency?”

QSR “Repeat the call on the calling frequency did not hear you or had interference.”

The first post WW-II conference held in 1947 at Atlantic City (USA) again expanded the Q-Code to 87 abbreviations in the range QRA to QUX. The next conference was not held until 1979 in Geneva when the code was modified and published in two separate listings; one for the maritime mobile services and one for all other services. The maritime list included 96 abbreviations QRA-QUZ and 19 additional ones in the QOA-QOT range. The Q-Code list for other stations totaled 99 starting with QRA and ending with QUY. The two lists were essentially the same.

Because the Q-Code was part of the official ITU Radio Regulations having the status of a treaty, it could only be modified a formal International Radiocommunication Conference. In the early 1990's, the ITU attempted to simplify the work of the radio conferences by deleting from the official

regulations many operational provision that did not require treaty status and that could more efficiently managed as an ITU Recommendation. ITU Recommendations are modified by Study Groups that specialize in particular types of radio services. Thus, in 1995 the Q-Code abbreviations became Recommendation ITU-R M.1172 with 96 abbreviations QRA-QUZ plus the additional 15 signals QOA through QOT intended for maritime use..

The official wording of many of the Q codes seems somewhat awkward, probably due of the multiple translations during the editing process. Amateur operators using radiotelegraphy have adapted their own variations in the meaning of Q-Codes, differing somewhat from their official wording. The official meaning of sending QRT is a directive to the other station to cease or stop transmitting if it was interfering with an existing communication. Here are two examples. First the official definitions:

QRP? "Shall I decrease transmitter power?"  
QRP "Decrease transmitter power"  
QRT? "Shall I stop sending?"  
QRT "Stop sending"

The current amateur use of QRP and QRT:

QRP? Are you operating at low power of 10 watts or less?  
QRP I am operating at low power of 10 watts or less.  
QRT? Are you going to cease operating or close your station for now.  
QRT I am going to cease transmitting and am closing the station for now.

One could list some other amateur variations. Amateur traffic networks and the military or other organization used Q-Code type abbreviations in other letter ranges for their particular applications.

The official ITU-R Recommendation of the Q-Code can be found in amateur publications and on the internet. Each of the previous official versions of the Q-Code abbreviations can be found in the radio conference final documents available at the ITU web site upon which this article was based. In addition to the Q-Code, the Radio Regulations and subsequent Recommendation includes the many other operating abbreviations and operating signals. As a concluding comment, the International Morse Code used for radio communications was never a part of ITU radio regulations until the mid 1990's. The code was included in the treaties governing international telephone and telegraph services. The land telegraph services were out of business and the telephone system operators had no use for the code so it was finally removed from the telephone regulations, transferred to the Radiocommunication Study Groups and became Recommendation ITU-R 1667. The code was officially modified for the first time in many years in 2009 to include the "@" symbol. The ITU Morse Code history--well that's another story.



# Welcome Aboard!

## NEW MEMBERS OF MTC

### MAPLE LEAF CHAPTER

**PHILLIP KING** of Willowdale, Ontario joined the Morse Telegraph Club on May 20, 2016. Phillips tells us that he is not a telegrapher but that he has a great interest in Canadian railroads. In the future, Phillip says he hopes to learn the Morse code and become a telegrapher to serve the chapter.

### KN Chapter

**FRED ABONYI** joined the KN Chapter in February.  
*Welcome to MTC, Fred!*



# WELLS FARGO HISTORY MUSEUM TELEGRAPH DISPLAY

By J. Chris Hausler

Wells Fargo was an early adopter of the Morse telegraph. By 1853, descriptions of stagecoach robbers were sent out by telegraph and the company started offering secure money transfers by wire in 1864. With this history, in 2013, Steve Greenwood, manager of the Wells

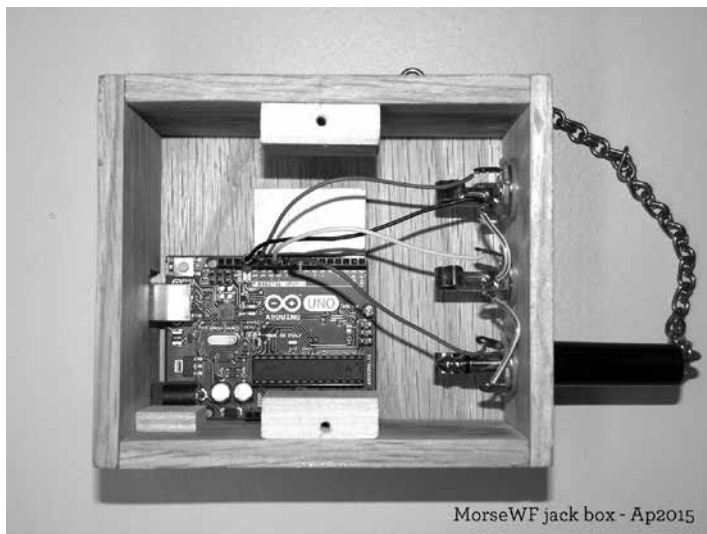


MorseWF jack box - Ap2015

Fargo History Museum in Portland, OR, contacted Les Kerr about the possibility of setting up some kind of interactive telegraph display at his museum. A few years previous Les had met with the then curator of the Wells Fargo History Museum in Old Sacramento, CA to talk with her about Morse telegraphy but nothing came of it. However, this information eventually got to Steve and he came up with the idea of linking museums together with telegraphy. Originally he proposed linking his museum with OMSI, the science museum in Portland, but they were not interested. When the Wells Fargo History Museum in San Francisco underwent a major remodeling, Steve saw an opportunity to link the Portland and San Francisco museums together. To accomplish this Les wrote a special version of MorseKOB 4.0, written in the Python language, called MorseWF. John Keibel, a museum exhibits specialist, was brought into the picture and a two station configuration was designed and implemented. The display at each museum includes a key for sending, a sounder for receiving and a video display showing the decoded code just as MorseKOB does.

One of the major goals of the Wells Fargo telegraph display is to encourage visitors to actually try their hand at sending code. Although they originally tried to use American Morse, experience led them to decide that the displays would use International Morse. Most visitors were not familiar with either code and requiring them to send the different length dashes as well as the spaced characters in American Morse was proving problematic. Further, with only the difference between dots and dashes to detect, the timing of the code display reader could be loosened up providing a better chance for less than perfectly timed code to be correctly displayed by the MorseWF computer. This would likely make for a higher rate of success for the visitors and thus encourage even more interaction with the display.

Well, the word got around and several other Wells Fargo museums wanted to join in. This led to a discussion about how telegraph offices of old would be connected to one another and how Wells Fargo could do this with their displays in an authentically representative manner. At this point in early summer 2014 I was brought into the discussion as a sort of historical consultant. Just weeks earlier I had acquired a couple of three wire



MorseWF jack box - Ap2015

telegraph “cordless” jack boxes (385D’s) and thus had studied up on how they worked and were used. So while trading emails with Les, Steve and John I started discussing how multiple wires would typically be routed through each office and that the

operator would then select which wire to work by plugging the cordless plug into the jack associated with the selected wire.

Wells Fargo was interested in this idea as not only was it authentic but it would provide an additional way for visitors to interact with the displays. A three wire jack box would allow a visitor to not only switch between two working “wires” connected to other Wells Fargo museums but also to a third with a broadcast on it such that visitors could hear how authentic Morse coded telegrams sounded. However, real jack boxes and the complex jacks used in them are difficult to locate these days and so it would be necessary to manufacture replica jack boxes.

With the decision to add a replica jack box to the displays it fell to Les and me as to how to actually implement it into the Wells Fargo configuration. We discussed various options and eventually decided to use an Arduino Uno Rev 3 microcontroller to perform the jack box function. It would read the status of three “phone” jacks mounted in the replica box and then communicate that status to the main MorseWF program running on the PC through a USB cable which would also power the Arduino.

Unlike with a real jack box installation, the Wells Fargo displays only include the “working set”. There are no “calling sounders”. All the jack box function needed to do was to send an indication to the main MorseWF program indicating whether or not the plug was in one of the jacks and if so which jack was plugged in. This would tell the MorseWF program to which of the three “wires” to connect. A further refinement is that with no plug in any jack the working set would still operate locally so that visitors could practice sending before going “live” on one of the Wells Fargo wires. Since solid brass “cordless” plugs are no longer available a standard two conductor quarter inch “phone” plug with the contacts shorted within the handle of the plug would be used. The jacks would just be standard two conductor open circuit jacks. Thus putting the plug in a jack would short the two connectors on the jack together. This action would ground the Arduino digital input pin connected to that jack.

It fell to me to write the code to be run on the Arduino. Although aware of the Arduino as they are quite popular and readily available from Radio Shack stores as well as from various on-line sources, I had not previously looked at the device in any detail. However, being aware of the complexity of even simple microcontrollers

due to some previous experience with other microcontrollers and their associated IDE’s (“Integrated Development Environment’s”), I was a little concerned about taking on a new one. The learning curve can be steep and time consuming.

What I discovered is that the whole Arduino package is intended to appeal to hobbyists and other amateur experimenters who might not have a lot of experience with microcontrollers and so much of the complexity of the environment has been hidden by the Arduino IDE. In addition to finding the main Arduino web site at: <https://www.arduino.cc/> from which you can download the Arduino IDE for free, I tripped across a web site titled, “The Absolute Beginner’s Guide to Arduino” at: <http://www.forefront.io/a/beginners-guide-to-arduino>. Reading this site, I was convinced that what I needed to do would be simple to achieve. In fact the resulting program was trivial (See the sidebar article if you want to learn more about the program.).

With the jack box program developed, Les modified the MorseWF software to read the status, a single ASCII character transmitted from the replica jack box every half second, and take appropriate action. Wells Fargo manufactured very attractive and realistic looking wooden jack box replicas to house the jacks and the Arduino microcontroller as can be seen from the photographs. So far, as of this writing, the telegraph display with the jack boxes has been successfully rolled out to the Wells Fargo History Museums in Portland, OR; San Francisco, CA; Phoenix, AZ, Old Sacramento, CA and Los Angeles, CA. Wells Fargo plans for 2016 include adding the display to its other museums.

Visit: [www.WellsFargoHistory.com/museums](http://www.WellsFargoHistory.com/museums).

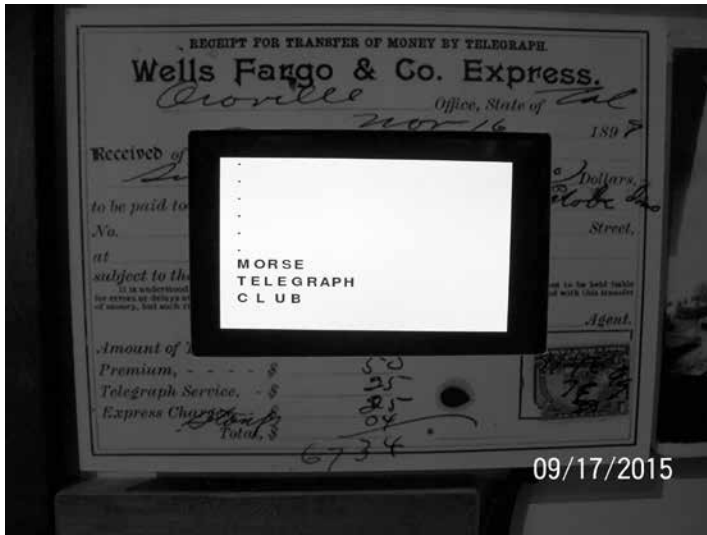
### *A Visit to a Wells Fargo Museum*



Last year during my usual fall train travels I got to spend a week with friends in Phoenix, AZ and finally got to see one of the telegraph equipped

Wells Fargo museums. The telegraph display in the Phoenix museum is very attractively laid out as my photos show. Looking out the ticket window from

the telegraph office, the far wall in the hallway beyond the office is covered with a large image of an old railway facility giving a very realistic feeling to the configuration. Stepping out into that



hallway and looking back at the office, that wall is configured as the front of a country railway station complete with both a Wells Fargo Express sign and one of those blue with white letters enameled Western Union signs. If you visit the web site for

this museum at [www.WellsFargoHistory.com/museums/phoenix/](http://www.WellsFargoHistory.com/museums/phoenix/) you will see more photos of the display including that “outside” wall of the office. The telegraph display is one of the exhibits featured on their web site.

While there I was able to use the telegraph display to communicate with the Portland, OR museum. I also met the two young ladies who had worked to implement the telegraph display at the Phoenix museum, Connie Whalen who is manager of both the Phoenix and Charlotte museums and Amanda Walters also a museum manager responsible for running the operations of the museums and who was instrumental in the installation of the telegraph display at Phoenix.

Although I was obviously focused on the telegraph display, the rest of the museum was a treasure to behold as well. Of course, being Wells Fargo, it features an authentic antique stage coach. Also unique to this particular Wells Fargo museum is the largest public display of N. C. Wyeth’s western themed art work which I quite enjoyed. I think if you visit this museum, or any of the Wells Fargo museums, you will have a very pleasant experience and you may just come in contact with that clicking sound we all enjoy.

## ORLANDO HAMCATION

*By James Wades*

For some years now, members of the Morse Telegraph Club have been exhibiting at the Dayton Hamvention. The Hamvention is the largest Amateur Radio convention in the World, and the exposure at Dayton has paid some dividends in the form of new MTC members. It has also been beneficial for our education and historical outreach mission.

Unfortunately, the Dayton event is very costly. Several MTC members were spending upwards of 400 to 500 dollars each to support our presence at the event. These personal funds, combined with travel and

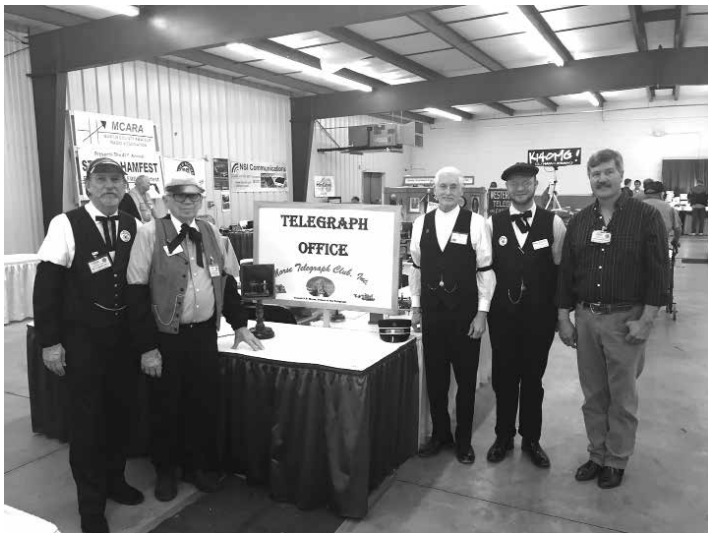


a significant time investment, meant a major commitment for the three primary individuals supporting the event. Because of the cost and time involved, it was decided to not participate in 2016.

With the loss of our presence at Dayton, we decided to try some other options for outreach to the Amateur Radio community. One appealing option was the Orlando Hamcation. The “Hamcation” takes place during the early Spring and attracts radio amateurs from throughout the Southeast. While not as large as Dayton, it has a reasonably large and loyal

attendance. It also provided a forum in which there would be fresh exposure to a new audience.

Thanks to the efforts of our very active Florida "FX" Chapter, an excellent display was provided.



MTC volunteers were kept busy for two days answering questions, explaining telegraph history and demonstrating Morse instruments. We even met a couple of former Morse operators.

As with all ham radio events, the "CW" operators are often fascinated by American Morse on the sounder. It's somewhat entertaining to watch radio amateurs cock their head and listen for a while, trying to discern the characters and determine the difference between dots and dashes.

Over the years, we have noticed that more and more radio amateurs are aware of the existence of the different codes. This is evidence of our successful efforts to educate the Amateur Radio



community about telegraph history. While many of these men and women know there are differences, many nonetheless remain mystified by the telegraph sounder. The most common question asked is "how does

one differentiate a dot from a dash." This question is easily answered when a key and sounder are available.

The Hamcasion Exhibit also gave us an opportunity to expose a very new audience to telegraph history. The usual myths were dispelled, such as "didn't the telegraph disappear in the 1870s" or "only the railroads used the telegraph," and so forth. Best of all; we obtained a sizeable number of new members for the FX Chapter, many of whom live in Florida and were therefore more likely to be active members.

In the future, we may try to visit some other regional ham radio events, including those in Dallas and Seattle. With a fresh audience and a good display, one can not only educate and inform, but often attract a significant number of new members for MTC.

Our thanks to the members of the Florida Chapter who made the Hamcasion event possible.

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# THERE'S A SECRET MESSAGE WRITTEN INTO THE SANDS OF MARS

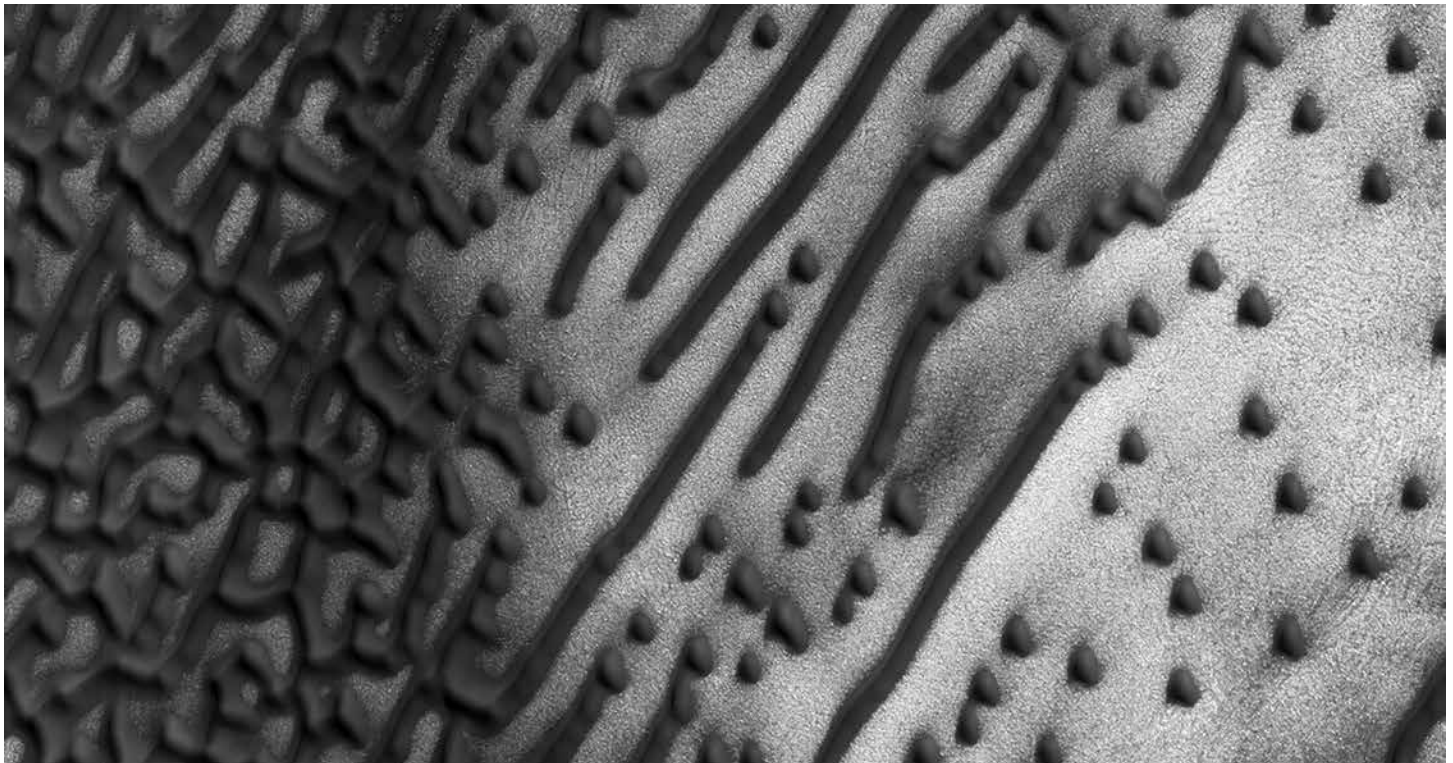
*By Maddie Stone of Gizmodo.com*

NASA has spotted something strange and beautiful in the sands of Mars—a remarkable dune field that looks eerily similar to Morse code. And it has a message for us.

The dunes in this photo were recently spotted by Hi-RISE, a visible light and near-IR camera that's been snapping stunning portraits of the Red Planet's surface

the dune itself, which funnel sand into a line. The dots (technically “barchanoid dunes”) are what happens when something interrupts this line-drawing process, although the exact mechanism remains unknown.

Bray, not herself a dune specialist, speculates that the barchanoid dunes could be the result of dashes getting stretched out by winds.



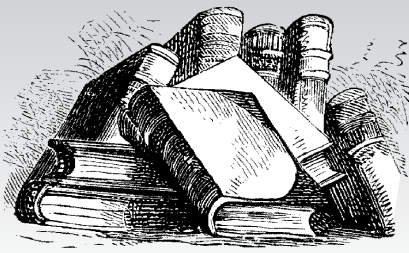
from its perch aboard NASA's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter since 2006. According to Veronica Bray, the Hi-RISE targeting specialist who analyzed the image, dot and dash features like these have been spotted on Mars before. But in this photo of the Hagal Dune field just south of Mars' north polar cap, the code-like pattern is especially clear due to unusual topography.

Specifically, a nearby circular depression (probably a sand-filled impact crater) has “focused the wind, and also limited the amount of sand available for formation of the dunes,” Bray told Gizmodo.

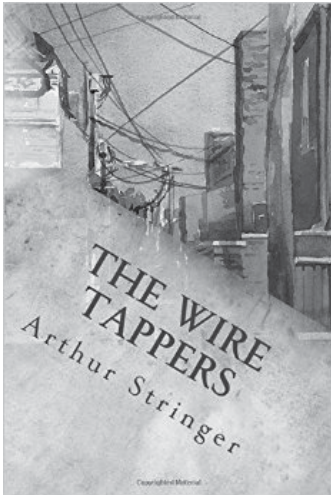
The dashes are formed by bidirectional winds—that is, winds coming from either direction perpendicular to

Dune formation and migration on Mars is a hot field of study, because the barren, (mostly) water-free surface offers a natural test lab for understanding how wind sculpts landscapes. But in many ways, the dunes of Mars are fundamentally different from the dunes of Earth, owing to the atmosphere's low density. Often, Martian dunes look more like features we'd expect to see underwater.

While geophysicists continue to work out exactly how Morse code dune fields are forming on Mars, Bray took it upon herself to decode this one's message: NEE NED ZB 6TNN DEIBEDH SIEFI EBEEE SSIEI ESEE SEEE !!



# J. Chris Hausler's BOOK & MOVIE REVIEWS



The book I'm reviewing for this issue is *The Wire Tappers* by Arthur Stringer, originally published in 1906. The author, a Canadian by berth who eventually moved to the U.S., wrote in many genres, mostly fiction and poetry but he also wrote many screenplays as well as a couple stage plays and non-fiction works.

This book might be described as a "crime romance" novel.

The principal characters are a man named James Durkin and a woman named Francis Candler. Both are former telegraph operators who have fallen on hard times and are brought together early in the book by a crime boss named MacNutt. Their job is to assist him in the nefarious task of tapping betting and other broker wires so to place bets or transactions before others and thus reap the rewards of such foreknowledge. Durkin has this dream to develop something that today we would recognize as a sort of fax machine but needs the funds to do so and has fallen to criminal action to achieve these ends. Chandler's history is more obscure. She seems to think she did some great wrong in the past but I don't recall it ever being explained in the book.

Down on their luck, both now feel condemned to work in the underworld but both feel that if they could just get one big break they might be able to get out and live the respectable lives they both think they deserve. They both realize that by working for MacNutt they will never achieve this goal and so conspire together to steal from MacNutt by playing his own game against him.

Being thrown together, they develop an affection for each other as kindred spirits. As they develop their schemes, they continue to run into problems

which keep them from quite achieving their goals, not infrequently due to their own indecision. They continuously bemoan their fate but also wonder if the "normal life" will be as exciting as a life of crime. Eventually they come to be pursued by both the authorities as well as MacNutt. In the end they get married and as the book closes are seen to be sailing away from North America to escape prosecution and possibly worse from the underworld.

Although tapping telegraph (and telephone) wires would seem to be the major function of our two protagonists, in my opinion, the characters spend too much of the book ruminating on their hard luck and other misfortunes. I found it to be a somewhat slow read. There was too much talk and too little action for my taste. Reprints can be purchased from Amazon and it is also free to download from the Internet Archive at: [archive.org/details/wiretappersillus00striuoft](http://archive.org/details/wiretappersillus00striuoft). It seems our author was not quite done with these characters at the end of this book. A year or two later he published a follow-on book which at least in reading the first few pages brings our two protagonists back together in some manner. You should probably expect that this next book will be reviewed in this column sometime in the future.



The film I'm reviewing is *Wyoming Mail* released by Universal in 1950. It stars Stephen McNally as Steve Davis, a prize fighter and former military intelligence man and Alexis Smith as Mary Williams, a dance hall singer with whom Steve develops a romance early in the film. This film, like the above book, could also

be viewed as a "crime romance" and was also mentioned in one of MTC member Gene Wood's

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“Morse in the Movies” columns in *Dots & Dashes* a couple decades ago.

The story concerns the development of the railway mail service in the west in 1869. In fact, one real character, George Armstrong, assistant postmaster at Chicago, played by Dan Riss, appears in the film. Armstrong was the one to propose to have the mail sorted while it was on board the train. He eventually became the head of the Railway Mail Service. The film, however, is fictional.

As the film starts, this railway mail service has become all too attractive to a gang of train robbers who are successfully and repeatedly getting away with the goods thus threatening the future of the service. Steve is hired by George as an undercover postal inspector to investigate these robberies and hopefully bring the bandits to justice. Early in the film he determines a tie in with the territorial prison and goes undercover as an inmate to determine what is going on. While there he befriends another inmate Sam Wallace played by Whit Bissell who had been a member of this gang and a telegraph operator. While both are “in the hole” Sam teaches Steve Morse Code and although we only hear A, B and C, the C is the American Morse C. An escape is arranged during which Sam is fatally wounded and dies. With knowledge of the gang however, Steve successfully infiltrates them because in part he now knows Morse code and the gang’s modus operandi involves the use of the telegraph. The gang arranges for him to be taken on as an operator on the railroad at Crystal City.

As the movie develops, Steve also learns that his new girlfriend, Mary, is a key member of the gang. In fact it seems almost everyone in the film he meets up with is somehow involved including some of those hired to protect the mail shipments. The film progresses to its logical conclusion, the good guys win and the bad guys lose. If you want to learn more you’ll have to watch the film. In the end love conquers all and the postal officials, because Mary at the last moment chooses to cover for Steve and help him take down the bandits, is given a reprieve. As the film closes, the happy couple ride the train off into the sunset, or at least to San Francisco.

What little is telegraphic in this film is somewhat strangely portrayed. In addition to the training Steve gets from Sam while in the prison (done with tin cups), we only briefly see any telegraph set-ups. All feature a weird very large telegraph key unlike anything I’ve ever seen. I wondered at first

whether it was an old “spark” key as some of those were quite large but with what research I’ve done, I’ve seen nothing like it in the records. One of the set-ups is a strange portable set used later in the film by the “bad guys” to tap the wires and another is in the little station at Crystal City. In addition to the large key in all these set-ups, the Crystal City office features an authentic Skirrow patent pedestal resonator although we never see if there is a sounder in it. The good news is we do hear a little American Morse there. The first message heard at Crystal City appears to be, “EAST V2 ON TIME” to which the other operator there, Ben (and part of the gang), responds “I BE”. One assumes BE is the office call for Crystal City. There is some more Morse later in the film also at Crystal City. Although it is somewhat indistinct, I do believe that message also ended with “ON TIME” although the O sounded more like an I and the ON together could have been a Q. The sending was poor.

About a decade ago I bought a DVD of this film quite inexpensively from a mail order house. The DVD’s were obviously produced on demand by the sellers and I wonder whether they had copyright permission. Unfortunately this mail order house seems to have disappeared. At least I have been unable currently to find them. You can buy a DVD of it from Amazon but unfortunately only in the European PAL format, not usable in North America without special equipment. However, if you don’t mind occasional embedded commercials, which can be skipped after several seconds you can watch the entire film “for free” on YouTube at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=b8t10xth03E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b8t10xth03E) . Despite its telegraphic weakness, it is a pretty good western.

Once again I’m running short of good ideas for items to review in this column. So if any of you know of books or films with land line telegraphic content worth reviewing, please let me know. My contact information, both email and snail mail, is on the D&D masthead. And, please, if you want to write your own review, do so. Your editor will welcome your submission as will this tired scribbler.

# “30” SILENT KEYS

*News of our brothers and sisters who have closed the key*



## **Don Waturus RF Chapter**

**ROBERT C. FINLEY** of Goldsby, Oklahoma passed away in April 2016. Bob was born on October 30, 1938. He worked for Illinois Central before and during the time he was attending Mississippi State University. He was a telegraph operator and he loved it. After graduating from college, he went to work in Mobile, Alabama for the Air Force, where we met. I think Bob loved his job with the railroad more than anything else he did. Bob worked in New Orleans and points north of Mississippi.

*Thanks to Patricia Finley, Bob's wife, for this brief notice.*

## **Vancouver DI Chapter**

**JOSEPH PEHOWICH** passed away on June 26, 2015 of a stroke and Alzheimer's disease. Joe was a former Canadian National Railroad train dispatcher. He also served as President of the Vancouver Chapter for several years before he moved to Qualicum Beach, British Columbia.

*Thanks to Lavina Shaw for this brief information*

**WILLIAM THOMPSON**, age 89, passed away in West Vancouver, British Columbia on April 16, 2016. Bill was born in Melville, Saskatchewan. He started working as a messenger boy on the Canadian National Railways. He began his railroad career as a yard clerk, where he learned telegraphy. When servicemen returned from overseas during World War II, he was displaced, so he went to work on a construction crew, building telegraph lines. Later he became a lineman. With the advent of the 40 hour work week, people were needed for testing and regulation, so he was sent to a concentrated communications course at Western University in London, Ontario. Subsequently, he worked as a Repeater Attendant, then Radio Attendant, and then Wire Chief at various places in the Prairie Provinces and Ontario. In 1955, he was made the Installation Inspector. In 1956 he was made the Inside Plant Inspector, covering Winnipeg to the Alberta border. In 1958, due to the construction of the Micro Wave System from Grande Prairie to the Alaskan Boarder and the importance for a defense

system, he was sent to Whitehorse, YT as the Area Manager. When this task was completed in 1961, he took over the position of Sales and Operations Supervisor at Dawson Creek, BC. Bill resigned from the CNR in 1966 and joined Plessey Canada, a British electronic firm. He moved to Vancouver. Bill's wife predeceased him; they had no children.

*Thanks to Lavina Shaw for this information.*

*Lavina adds, "Bill was a faithful member of the Vancouver Chapter, having attended most of the meetings and several demos." Lavina further adds, "I met Bill first when I worked in Port Authur (now the Lakehead). I was the evening operator and he was still a lineman. My husband knew him in Melville, SK, so it was nice for both of us to renew acquaintances with bill in Vancouver after 50+ years."*

## **Edmonton MO Chapter**

**BILL FISCHER**, age 87, passed away on June 25, 2016 in Edmonton, Canada

**HARRY GREGORY MISECK** of Spruce Grove, age 91, passed away on September 27, 2015. He was born in Postupel Poland on November 24, 1924. Harry came to Canada with his family in 1930. He learned Morse at the age of 17 and began his railway career with the Northern Alberta Railways as a telegraph operator at the Waterways railroad in Fort McMurray, Alberta in 1942. During autumn of 1943, he left the NAR for a three year tour with the Royal Canadian Air Force. Returning to the railway in 1946, he worked many stations as a telegraph operator and station agent, mostly in the Peace River Region. In 1955, Harry was promoted to Supervisory Agent in Fort McMurray. He then left that position to serve the Committee for Centralization of the NAR. In 1975 Harry was promoted to inter-modal Manager at Fort McMurray. His last promotion was in 1977 as Operations Manager with the NRA at McLennan, being responsible for the Northern Division of the NAR. Harry remained in this job until the Canadian National Railways purchased the Northern Railways. Harry then worked as Train Master



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with the CNR until his retirement in January 1983. Since his retirement, Harry was active in the Edmonton Chapter of the Morse Telegraph Club.

Harry leaves behind his wife Agnes of 67 years and his two daughters and several grandchildren and great grandchildren.

*Thanks to Agnes Miseck, Harry's wife, for this interesting information*

### Montana MA Chapter

**JAMES B. FARGHER**, age 85, of Ronan, Montana, passed away at his home on November 10, 2015. James was born on October 38, 1930. He attended schools in Puyallup, Washington. He married Elizabeth Guenzler on June 6, 1950. James served as radioman on board the USS George DE 697 during the Cold War of the 1940's and on the USS Bayfield APA33 during the Korean War. He then went to work for the Northern Pacific Railroad as a telegraph operator in 1953, during the steam power era. James retired in 1991 with his wife Betty's support.

Jim was also a member of the Ronan Volunteer Fire Department from 1960 to 1984, serving progressively as fireman, assistant chief, and then captain. He was also among the first volunteer ambulance driver attendants. In addition to MTC, Jim was also a member of the American Legion. Betty and Jim enjoyed fishing and traveling the western states. They were also active in baseball.

*Thanks to Burt Stenslie, Secretary-Treasurer of the Montana Chapter, for this information.*

### Maple Leaf Chapter

**PAUL A. LEGER** of Timiskaming, Quebec died on January 19, 2016. Paul learned telegraphy at Bearn, QC and started with the Canadian Pacific Railway as a telegraph operator in 1951. He worked at various stations in Northern Ontario and Quebec. In 1956 he became an Agent at Nemegos, Ontario. During 1974 thru 1978, he served as Relief Dispatcher in Sudbury, ON. Paul retired as an Operator He was well known in the north and will be greatly missed.

**WILLIAM J. RUPERT** of Toronto, Ontario deceased on April 3, 2016. Bill was born on July 26, 1931. He learned telegraphy in Belleview, Ontario in 1950. After working many Operator positions on the CNR London Division, he became a Dispatcher for the London Division. Bill came from a railway family. His Dad was in management at London and other offices. Bill was not only active with the MTC Maple Leaf Chapter but also

with the Canadian National Pensioners Association.

*Thanks to Don Laycock for this interesting information.*

### Saskatchewan KN Chapter

**DONALD LOW**, age 90, passed away January 2, 2016 at the Yorkton Regional Hospital. He was born on the Low farm north of Foxwarren, Manitoba on March 7, 1926, the fifth son of six boys and two girls. Don was active in sports, played the trumpet in his high school band and became Lieutenant in the Army Cadets. In 1942, at the age of sixteen, he was awarded the silver watch as a sharpshooter. At age eighteen, Don joined the Royal Canadian Air Force with intention of becoming a pilot. Instead, he became a wireless gunner and was later transferred to the Army. Upon discharge in December 1945, Don returned to Fowxwarren, where he courted the love of his life, Elaine. Don and Elaine were married on August 25, 1951 in the new Foxwarren United Church.

Early in his career, Don made his living as a mechanic and cabinet builder. Then in 1948, he began working for the Canadian Pacific Railroad as an Assistant Agent, later becoming an Operator and Station Agent. The last sixteen years of his career included a move to Yorkton and a promotion to Mobile Supervisor, retiring in 1988 after forth years with the railway.

Don was an avid sports enthusiast, enjoying hockey, curling, golf, bowling, hunting, fishing, swimming, and horseshoes. He and Elaine were also a travel enthusiast, visiting across Canada and the USA as well as Europe and Panama. Don was a dedicated family man, a great inspiration to others and coach to his children and grandchildren. Don was a member of the Royal Canadian Legion, a member of the Board of Trustees at Westview United Church, a member of the Masonic Order and of the Scottish Rite, as well as a member of the Morse Telegraph Club, Saskatchewan KN Chapter, and of the Yorkton Horseshoe Club.

*Thanks to Len Solomon for this interesting information about Don.*

### Chapter Unknown

**GARRY PHIPPS** passed away on April 2, 2016 from cancer. His amateur radio call sign was KD8GMS.

*Thanks to Helen Phipps, Garry's wife, for this brief information.*

# TELEGRAPHERS TAP OUT TRIBUTE TO INVENTOR MORSE

*Reprinted from the May 2, 1995 edition of the Vancouver Sun. Submitted by Gren Schrader*

It was 40 years ago when Don Duquette brought a heavyweight prize fight to life for townfolk in Dalton, Ont., west of Chapleau.

Donning his best sportscaster's voice, he gave a blow-by-blow account of the match.

But the audience never heard the rain of jabs, upper cuts and left hooks the boxers threw. Instead, what they listened to was the rapidfire rat-a-tat-tat of a telegraph key.

Radio signals weren't strong enough to reach the remote northern Ontario community located on the Canadian Pacific Railway line. Heck, there weren't even any phones yet, although it was already the mid-1950s, he recalled.

"Rocky Marciano was fighting in Chicago. I gave a play-by-play for a roomful of people," chuckled Duquette, 62, who manned the railway's telegraph office back then, translating the stream of sounds into an intelligible voice over.

For decades people in communities like Dalton learned of news from the outside world from dots and dashes carried through a thin strand of wire.

Enthusiasts like Duquette, who retired from his job as a train order operator with the CPR five years ago, gathered last weekend to mark the 204th anniversary of the birth of Samuel F.B. Morse, inventor of the telegraph and of Morse Code.

Some of the dozen telegraphers in this city turned the North Bay Area Museum into an old-fashioned telegraph office, hooking up with other enthusiasts from Schreiber to Saskatchewan and Edmonton to Toronto.

They're all members of the Morse Telegraph Club Inc., formed in 1942 to perpetuate the traditions of the telegraph profession and keep alive the memories of the touch of a telegraph key.

The last Saturday in April of each year is reserved to commemorate Morse, who was born April 27, 1791.

The first transmission was made May 24, 1844, between Baltimore and Washington, D.C., Duquette said.

"Up till that time, communication depended on a guy standing on the top of a pole, or on the pony express or smoke signals," Duquette said. The telegraph, which came a full four decades before Alexander Graham Bell perfected the telephone, opened the world to instantaneous communication.

Morse developed a system of dots and dashes, which made up letters, numbers and even punctuation marks. An operator would tap out messages on a telegraph key, and the electrical impulses would be carried through a wire -- usually iron or copper -- and translated by an operator at the other end.

Perhaps the most famous code is the internationally recognized distress signal three dots, three dashes, three dots -- SOS, he explained.

There are other short forms too, said Duquette, who followed in the footsteps of his father and grandfather to work for the railroad. Like CU, a sign off for see you, cmg for coming, or gg for going. Then there's KMA, a not-so-nice goodbye meaning kiss my a---, he grinned.

Stock quotations and race track results were also carried through telegraph lines. And news stories were also filed via Morse code before the teletype came along.

The lowly telegraph was still being used in the late 1960s and early '70s to track rail traffic.

"The reason they wanted us to have Morse Code is that if any-thing ever happened and the {two-way} radios or the phones went out, we could still work." Besides which, "it was the only means of communications in some towns," he added.

## DO YOU KNOW?

*Do you know if any of the thousands of telegrams sent during the American Civil War (1861-1865) were encrypted?*

The electric telegraph was demonstrated to the U.S. Congress on May 24, 1844. Less than twenty years later, in April 1861, the American Civil War began. During that tragic four year war, both the Confederacy and the Union militaries strung thousands of miles of telegraph wire and sent tens of thousands of telegrams. About 25% of these were encrypted by ciphers to protect the sensitive content of the messages. The Union cipher system was more complex and difficult to decode.

# HOUSE TRACK **Want Ad Section**

For Morse Telegraph Club Members

**AVAILABLE:** Book *Tales of the American Telegraph*. Issue #3 includes a photo layout. John B. Ryan, 11017 E. Sprague Avenue, Spokane, WA 99206.

**WANTED:** Re-enactors for Locust Grove, the Samuel Morse Historic Site in Poughkeepsie, NY. Please contact Andrew Stock, Curator of Education and Public Programs at a.stock@morsehistoricsite.org or (845) 454-4500 x13 if you are a Signal Corps re-enactor who may be interested in participation in history of telegraphy, including the annual Civil War weekend.

**AVAILABLE:** I can duplicate small wooden resonator boxes for both 4 ohm and 30 ohm main line sounders. You will varnish or paint these to suit your desires. The cost is \$25 each. Milton Hegwood, 206 Kleven Avenue, Culbertson, NE 69024, telephone (308) 278-2152

**AVAILABLE:** Period attire for telegraph operators of any era. Authentic reproduction hand crafted clothing will be made to your exact fit by a certified seamstress at reasonable prices. Several MTC members already have attire provided by this talented and well educated lady. Contact Valerie Mathers at (410) 768-3162.

**AVAILABLE:** Pen & ink railroad drawings on stretched canvas, frame print, art print and greeting cards. See these on the website of *Dots & Dashes* member Peter Hamel at Peter Hamel Fine Art American.com. Telephone (705) 472-8860.

**AVAILABLE:** Book. Hubert Jewell, President of the Washington-Baltimore Chapter, offers us his biography titled, *Working on the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac*

*Railroad*. This book is chalked full of facts and descriptions of railroading and of Morse code communications. Hubert's book is available from the RF&P Historical Society, Inc. PO Box 9097, Fredericksburg, VA 22403-9097 or from the web site www.frandp.org. The price is only \$25.15 postage paid.

**AVAILABLE:** Crests, "Order of Railroad Telegraphers" with emblem in the center, \$12 each. Email Mary Roy at terttu@shaw.ca or mail Mary at 3874 Winlake Crescent, Burnaby, BC V5A 2G5, telephone (604) 420-1292.

**AVAILABLE:** Vintage Rule Books of North American Railroads, at least 30 volumes, as far back in time as 1890. To purchase this valuable set of historic documents, call, e-mail, or write to James Gaw at 54 Colonial Drive in Kemptville, Ontario, Canada K0G 1J0, j.gaw@bell.net, or (613) 258-0243

**AVAILABLE:** Old telegraph and railroad books. For a list of these items, send a SASE to Eugene Wood, 104 Sunset, Madill, OK 73446. (Eugene does not have an email address).

**AVAILABLE:** "Morse code machine" and old billing forms from the estate of Jack Griffin. Phone Kay Griffin at (321) 231-0447 or write to Kay at 12239 Montevista Road, Clermont, Florida 34711.

**AVAILABLE:** RR car passes & trip passes, also old Union (ORT) cards, (some over 100 years old), Postal & Western Union paper items and some WU copied on RR telegram blanks. Send a SASE for a list to Gene wood, 104 Sunset, Madill, Oklahoma 7346-2051

**AVAILABLE:** Book titled *Principles of Telegraphy* by the Department of the Navy. Teletype – Printing Telegraph Systems. Description and Adjustments, Signal Distribution Test Set Teletype – general description and theory or operation for Model 28 printers. Teletype Adjustments (2) Type Bar Printer Page Printer Models 15 & 20. Maintenance Track Bulletin #248. Parts Transmitter Distributor Bulletin 1041. Tele printer Circuits and Equipment by the U.S. Army. Call Hubert Jewell at (504) 423-7023 and make him an offer on these rare items

## Reproductions & Other Items for Telegraph Demonstrations and Displays

### Turnkey MorseKOB Interface

- Fully assembled and tested
- Integrated USB adapter – no external cable adapter required
- Also available in RS-232 version

See <https://sites.google.com/site/morsekob/interface> for more information.



Flimsies & Other Forms



Reproduction Fountain Pens and Stylus from early 1900s advertisements



Always willing to discuss and address unique requirements

Contact Chip Morgan at [MorgansElkCreekEnterprizes@verizon.net](mailto:MorgansElkCreekEnterprizes@verizon.net)



## KEEP IN TOUCH...

Your participation in *Dots & Dashes* is important. We need your stories, club news, announcements and reminiscences to keep it lively and interesting for everyone.

**Jim Wilson**  
*Editor*

*Dots & Dashes*

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*For membership changes, address updates, dues and other information dealing with membership or with chapter operation, contact your local Chapter Secretary or:*

*International Secretary-Treasurer*

*Position currently open to anyone interested*

*Please do not send address changes for Dots & Dashes, dues renewals, etc., to the Editor. All mailing lists and membership rosters are prepared through the office of the International Secretary.*

## Ham Radio Web Sites

For those of you who are amateur radio operators, here are four current web sites that I find useful:

[www.arnewsline.org](http://www.arnewsline.org)  
[www.usrepeaters.com](http://www.usrepeaters.com)  
[www.qth.com](http://www.qth.com)  
[www.qrz.com](http://www.qrz.com)

## NOTICES & INVITATIONS

**Morse Telegraph Club, Inc.**  
**Dial-Up Information**

**U.S. (KB) HUB**

1-269-697-4506/4508/4513  
(Michigan-Ace Holman)

**CANADIAN (HN) HUB**

1-888-822-3728 (toll free)

**MORSE KOB PROGRAM**

on the web at [www.morsekob.org](http://www.morsekob.org)

**DUES**

U.S. First Class postage \$20.00

E-mail delivery \$12.00

Canadian is now by chapter

Foreign Air Mail postage \$26.00

**ZITS** By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

