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Dots & Dashes

What Hath God Wrought

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MARY LEE EMBREY, AT 97, REMEMBERS HER THIRTY YEARS AS A RAILROAD TELEGRAPHER

At age 18, just after high school graduation, Mary Lee Embrey learned Morse code and became a telegraph operator for the Nelson & Albemarle Railroad in Virginia. Later she worked for the Southern Railroad.

Steam trains arrived daily at the Nelson & Albemarle Railroad depot in Schuyler, Virginia. One day they had a derailment. A railroad car crashed into the station, demolishing the freight room. But nobody was hurt. "I had right many incidents like that," adds Mary Lee.

Mary was born on December 18, 1924 on a farm in Schuyler, Virginia. Nobody else in her family took up the telegraph or railroading. This includes her two parents, sister, and two brothers. Yes, Mary was unique, the only telegraph operator in her family.

Mary says that her thirty years as a railroad telegrapher seemed to be routine. She says she just did whatever was needed.

So, how did Mary begin her career as a telegrapher? Somebody came to the house and asked her to learn the Morse code and become a telegraph operator. That was in an era when most telegraph operators were men. This made Mary extra unique.

Following her retirement from the railroad, about age 50, Mary became a worker for Social Services for ten years and also served as a volunteer with the Nelson County Rescue Squad. And Mary was active in the Nelson County Garden Club.

One of her two sons, Edward, was killed in the unpopular Vietnam War.

Her telegraph career is now a memory and the depot where she worked is gone, but Mary still remembers the code. When offered to try a battery powered telegraph key & sounder, Mary began to click out letters of the alphabet, click-clack sounds that she had not used in decades.

At age 97, Mary deciares, "I can do anything I've ever done."

She adds, "I love to keep busy by helping others."

Mary Lee Embrey currently resides at the modern Albemarle Health & Rehabilitation Center near Charlottesville, VA. She welcomes visitors. The interview by Jim & Becky Wilson was conducted on November 16, 2021.

Dots & Dashes

The official publication of

The Morse Telegraph Club, Inc.

Jim Wilson - Editor, *Dots & Dashes*

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Note: If possible, please include a copy of an obituary and other available information about his/her career and relationship to telegraphy and/or the telegraph industry.

Donations of telegraph instruments, telegraph ephemera, historical materials or requests for assistance with museum exhibits, telegraph demonstrations, or other consultation should be directed to:

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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.

In This Issue

ARTICLES

IN EVERY ISSUE

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

Sidewire

Comments from the Editor of *Dots & Dashes*

By Jim Wilson

Pandemic Update

Congratulations to you for surviving two years of the global pandemic! During 2020 & 2021, we endured isolation and we wore face masks and practiced social distancing. During that time, the COVID disease changed to the delta variant and to the omicron variant. World-wide, six million people have died from this deadly disease. Pfizer and Moderna and other vaccines have shown us that there is light at the end of the tunnel. However, the latest medical information indicates that we will need a vaccination for this pandemic once a year.

MTC Board Meeting

On December 9th, the Morse Telegraph Board held a quarterly meeting. This hour and a half long meeting by Zoom, provided us an update on important projects that MTC International President Jim Wades is working on. The meeting offered other useful information. Webmaster Chip Morgan described updates to the MTC website. MTC member John Springer volunteered to distribute ORT patches for a small fee. Read that notice on page 25.

New Column

"A penny for your thoughts" is an old saying that has relevance today. My mother used this phrase to find out what was on my teenage mind. I'm considering a new column with this title. You can email or write to me with anything that is on your mind. Perhaps it is price inflation, or perhaps you are worried about getting old, or perhaps you are concerned about the current political divide, or perhaps you worry about threatening nuclear war or drastic climate change, or about things that I haven't mentioned. So, please send in your thoughts about what is on your mind.

Letters & Articles:

This issue begins the New Year with optimism. Telegraph talks and demonstrations are beginning to resume. Each issue of Dots & Dashes requires about 40-50 hours of my volunteer time, but I very much like preparing each issue for you. Your valuable feedback is appreciated. Thank you for your interesting LETTERS and for your original ARTICLES. This issue is packed with fascinating items, sent in by you. Please keep sending your letters and stories.

Jim Wilson

President's Line

Jim Wades, President Morse Telegraph Club, Inc.

MTC was founded mostly by telegraph operators. Naturally, emphasis was on the art of telegraphy and the human-interest stories of those who worked in the various phases of the telegraph industry. Of course, this is the most compelling aspect of our history because of this shared experience. Yet, there are many other aspects of telegraph history that are being lost.

Many technical aspects of the telegraph industry have long faded from public view. The nuanced specialties of the industry, such as the methods used in brokerage and commodities work, the techniques used to transmit fast-paced sporting events via telegraph, such as hockey and basketball, and the nuances of undersea cable systems. Many questions about testing and regulating cannot be answered today, as the details are lost to the mists of time.

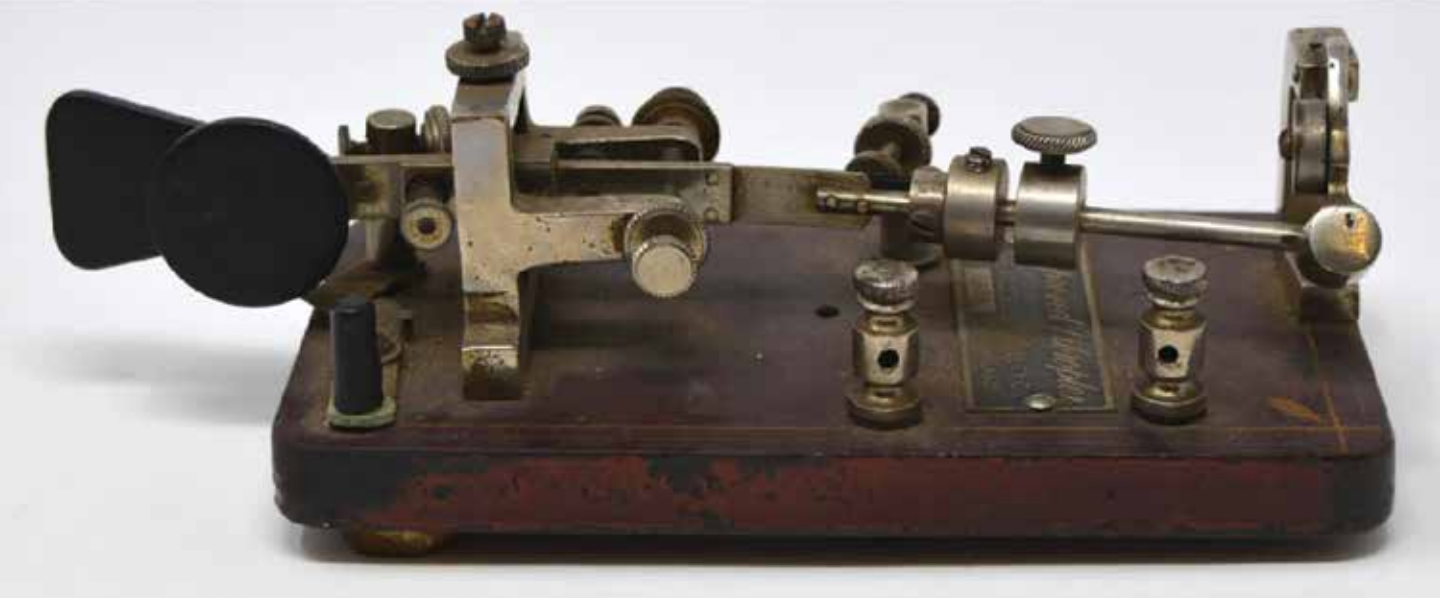
The photographic history of telegraphy is being scattered to the four winds. When former telegraph industry employees pass away, their scrapbooks often end up in the hands of "auction site scavengers" who cut them up, dispose of the less compelling photos and sell the better photos of relay offices, special events and the like on eBay or worse yet, make a business of selling duplicates. Undoubtedly, many who worked in the industry never stopped to consider the importance of preserving such a visual record.

Other phases of telegraphy are also disappearing from the record. Recently, your president took on the project of rebuilding the telegraph office at a historic Milwaukee railroad depot. The depot was moved and lovingly restored by the local historical society. Included in the various donated artifacts was a fairly common self-winding clock of the type used by Western Union. Fortunately, there's a fair amount of data on these clocks thanks to horologists and clock collectors. However, the story of the telegraph and the standardization

continued on page 6 ☛

WHY MORSE CODE ENDURED AFTER THE DEMISE OF THE TELEGRAPH

by Jaclyn Pollock



The invention of the telegraph was so revolutionary that it's often referred to as the "Victorian internet." The discovery of electromagnetism and its use in telegraphs forever freed communication from reliance on transportation. This transition radically transformed the technological, social and economic aspects of long-distance communication by providing fast and efficient communication across vast distances. It effectively annihilated space and time.

Electromagnetism allows pulses of electric current to be transported along a conductor. This discovery was used to develop the telegraph, which transports an electric current along telegraph wires to a receiving instrument.

The first working optical telegraph was introduced in 1794 by the Chappe brothers. But the first electromagnetic telegraph was developed by Samuel F.B. Morse. Morse is said to have had the idea for the electromagnetic telegraph in a "flash of genius" at a dinner party in 1832, which earned him the nickname Lightning Man. In 1838, after six years of experimentation, Morse applied for a patent for his "American Electro-Magnetic Telegraph." The patent was officially issued in 1840. Morse's telegraph offered simplicity, and what Mossoff calls an "elegant solution" to the telegraph in the book A History of Intellectual Property in 50 Objects. Unlike other early telegraphs, his invention could operate in many conditions, including at night and in any weather. It was also cheaper to build and operate.

While he worked on the electromagnetic telegraph, Morse developed Morse code, a system that went hand in hand with the telegraph. Morse's associate Alfred Vail went on to improve Morse code and simplified it to a sequence of dots and dashes. Telegraphs work by tapping out electronic Morse code signals for each letter of the alphabet using short (dots) and long (dashes) pulses.

With advancements in wireless technology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the telegraph and Morse code were adapted for maritime communication. Since a connecting telegraph wire was no longer necessary to physically connect telegraph stations, ships could now communicate with each other and with the shore. In the maritime sector, Morse code was used to relay distress messages and to aid in navigational communication. The original

maritime distress signal was CQD, meaning "all stations: distress." CQD was later replaced with SOS, which was adopted as a distinctive Morse code sequence. While SOS is commonly associated with the phrase "save our souls," it is not actually an abbreviation.

Perhaps the most famous maritime telegraph message is the haunting SOS from the Titanic. On the night of April 14, 1912, radio officers Jack Philips and Harold Bride stayed aboard the sinking Titanic until the very last moment, sending out CQD and SOS messages. These calls for help reached the Carpathia. As a result, 700 survivors were rescued. Without these wireless transmissions, all 2,200 passengers would likely have succumbed to the frigid Atlantic waters. Philips did not survive. Bride was seriously injured, but he helped the radio officers on the Carpathia's assigned escort, USS Chester, send news to surviving passengers' kin.

The telegraph was gradually replaced in everyday life by the radio and telephone, but Morse code was used for maritime communication until 1999. At the stroke of midnight on January 31, 1999, Morse code was retired from international maritime regulations. Before that, all ships were required to be equipped with Morse code for emergency services. The Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) officially replaced the Morse system. After saving countless lives at sea, coastal stations around the world transmitted one last Morse message. In the United States, the final commercial message mirrored the first, "What hath God wrought." Thus, the world ended the era of Morse code using dots and dashes.

While Morse code and the telegraph were born together, Morse has long outlived the telegraph. Though Morse code has officially been retired, it has not disappeared entirely. Many hobbyists around the world keep Morse code alive.

President's Line Continued

of time sees very little public discussion.

Other aspects of telegraphy are also disappearing into the mists of time such as "District Telegraphy" and bank alarms, fire alarm selector and dispatch systems, and similar technologies. The process of automation is also worthy of discussion and documentation. While it lacks the "human element," it provides the "missing link" between manual telegraphy and today's Internet and packet-switched networks. In fact, a strong case can be made that the Internet was simply one of the significant, incremental steps that grew out of automation such as varioplex, concentrators, switching centers, paper tape storage and repeaters, early data processing methods implemented by Western Union for organizations like the Federal Reserve and the U.S. Air Force, TELEX, and so forth.

The story of telegraphy also enlightens today's generation by illustrating the fact that technologies are rarely mutually exclusive. New technology often evolves out of older technology and, in many cases, the new and old co-exist for many years. In some cases, the old technology never quite fully disappears, at least not for many decades. For example, one can still see the influences of basic telegraph technology in many legacy railroad signal systems operating today.

All of this points to the need to preserve our history. Save those photos of your former telegraph or depot offices from the dumpster. Publish your experiences in "Dots and Dashes." Encourage friends and associates who may have worked in other phases of the industry to join MTC. Scan those photos and send them to MTC or, if you no longer have use for them, let's put them in the MTC archive.

Let's leave a legacy for future generations.

BEHIND THE WIRES: A LOOK BACK AT CANADA'S GOLDEN AGE OF TELEGRAPHY

By Kallan Lyons, www.canadiangeographic.ca

On a warm August afternoon at Calgary's Heritage Park, a crowd attending the annual Railway Days exhibition made their way to the pavilion to watch a live demonstration of telegraphy. Lavina and Earl Shaw, veteran telegraphers both in their 80s at the time, sat on stage, ready to show off their skills. On the other side of the stage stood two college students, phones in hand, eager to try their texting prowess against a master of the original instant message: Morse code. The emcee handed Lavina and her first competitor a piece of paper with a sentence to transmit, and they turned to their devices and started swiftly tapping away.

The transmitted message was read aloud within seconds, and the emcee declared Lavina victorious. Then it happened again. And again. Eventually the young texters admitted defeat and left the stage. The watching crowd erupted into enthusiastic cheers as the octogenarians were crowned instant messaging champions.

Long before mobile phones, there was the electrical telegraph. Although a number of working prototypes were developed in the early 19th century, it was the single-wire telegraph system invented by American Samuel Morse — and its eponymous alphabet of dots and dashes — that

Lavina Shaw in her telegrapher's uniform, which belonged to her father. (Photo courtesy Lavina Shaw)

quickly became the international standard, including in Canada. In 1917, train dispatcher Vincent Coleman saved 300 lives by sending a heartbreaking warning to an inbound train moments before the Halifax Explosion. Two decades later, Canadians used Morse code to intercept German messages during the Second World War.

This year marks a historic milestone: the 175th anniversary of Canada's first telegraph message. On Dec. 19, 1846, the Niagara Electro-Magnetic Telegraph Company sent a message from Hamilton to Toronto, which simply read: Who is in the office? The telegraph was the first technology to connect Canadians across the country, but the true pioneers are the people behind the wires. They call themselves "brass pounders," and Lavina Shaw is proud to be one of them.

A painting of the railway station in Sifton, Man., where Lavina Shaw grew up. (Image courtesy Lavina Shaw)

Lavina was destined to be a telegrapher. Her father, grandfather and uncles all worked as railway operators and used the telegraph to deliver train orders to conductors and engineers. As a young child, Lavina would lie in bed listening to the repetitive clicking and clacking of the register. It was a language she couldn't understand, and yet it was as familiar as the scraping of wheels on steel tracks and the stream of disembodied voices drifting from the train platform into her childhood home, the railway station in Sifton, Man. When she turned 10, Lavina asked her father to teach her the code.

"I was always going to be a teacher," says Lavina. "I just kept on learning telegraphy and when I got to be 17, I decided that I didn't want to live in a small village anymore. So, I went into Winnipeg and tried out as a telegraph operator. I passed right away."

Lavina decided to become a commercial telegrapher — a career which, surprisingly for the time, earned her the same wage as her male colleagues. Two months after completing her training, she was sent to Saskatoon for her first assignment with Canadian National Telegraph, working six days a week translating messages mainly sent from railway stations across the province. Much like modern-day texting, telegraphers used a series of abbreviations to speed up their communications. The word that for instance, was shortened to tt: two dashes in Morse code. Recently, the now-92-year-old Lavina overheard a few people bemoaning the fact that teenagers are butchering the English language: "I got up and said, '50 years ago I used all those abbreviations, and I don't think the language was ruined!'"

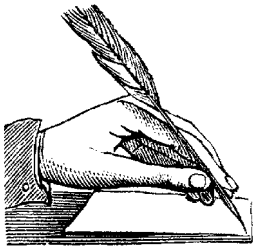
During a typical shift, Lavina copied an average of 20 telegrams an hour, ranging from birthday messages to horse betting results. "That was a scandal, actually," she says. "They [the telegraph operators] would already have the results before they put [their own] bets in. They actually made quite a bit of money. I was told I don't dare tell anybody." Lavina was already sworn to secrecy: handling peoples' private communications meant everything she copied was confidential.

Life as a telegrapher was fast-paced and never boring. By 1946, sending and receiving telegrams had become a regular part of daily life, but some people were still getting used to this "new" technology. "People thought that they could send flowers over the telegraph, and one person wanted to send a pair of shoes, thinking it would travel along the wire," Lavina laughs.

From Saskatoon, Lavina moved on to several smaller communities: Moose Jaw, Sask., Fort William, Ont., (now Thunder Bay) and Flin Flon, Man. As a female telegrapher, often working late into the night, she had several uncomfortable encounters. One evening she received a telegram from a man claiming to be a judge's son, whom she presumes may have been running from the law. He threatened that if word got out he was in the area, her life would be in danger. Her love for the job kept her going. In Flin Flon, she covered local breaking news for the Winnipeg Free Press and even moonlighted as a sports broadcaster, doing play-by-plays at local hockey games.

When work was slow, she would play checkers with other operators over the wires, tapping out her every move. Soon, she could tell each telegrapher apart by their "fist," or distinct style of transmitting. "I could still do that, hear somebody

continued on page 19 ☛



Letters to the Editor

October 6th

Way back in the good old days of the 1980's, when the Southern Pacific had divisional offices and seemingly lots of money, the Company attempted to establish employee involvement groups throughout the system, said groups ostensibly to inform and encourage employees to take a personal interest in the Company's customers, operations, business patterns and so forth.

There were two groups formed in San Antonio: ours, which began to focus upon communicating with employees about the Company, and the other group, which was to focus upon bringing about a reduction in car dwell times in yard, improve reporting of cars in yards and reduce reports of "lost" cars, and to improve reporting of locomotives arriving at San Antonio for servicing and maintenance subsequent to release for service.

So, anyway, our group (a carman, two train dispatchers, two locomotive engineers, and one conductor) pursued employee communication and began with a bi-monthly magazine titled, "The Cross Tie." We tried to bring in the services of employees from throughout the Division. The staff artist was a clerk in El Paso. Photographers were everywhere, including family members, and field reporters were from MW to Signal gangs. We got lots of great photos of Friday night small town Texas football games, high school and college graduations, weddings, recipes (these were usually popular), as well as stories about track and signal projects.

Publishing an issue every two months (beginning in mid-1983), I think became somewhat difficult when working as a trick train dispatcher as well as the carman, engineers, and conductor and others. But the material came in and there was a perceptible improvement with each issue, although we were far from approaching "Texas Monthly" in terms of quality of editorial content and appearance. After a year, "The Cross Tie" was accepted across the Division and contributions increased. We had an annual publication budget of $28,000 from the suit's discretionary finds.

In 1983, most of our original "team members" were gone, and for all practical purposes, myself and my train dispatcher partner were the survivors. With that, there had been a realization that producing each issue of "The Cross Tie" was tantamount to designing an elephant by committee with the obvious loss of the team. Two of us spent more time rewriting stories, taking local photos, and dispatching trains. But, we became, shall I say, very ambitious. We began production of our first (1984) all color calendar that featured a color image taken on the Division for each month. The photos were taken by employees with two exceptions, where two professional photographers who were also railfans, offered their contributions and they were accepted.

Thus, with all that stated, here is the 1986 SP San Antonio all color calendar for you to look at, so as to have an idea of what two working train dispatchers can do with funding material, time, and money.

MTC Member,
William Neill

William included a computer link to the 1984 calendar.

October 27th

This is a train order from 1903. The reason I am sending it to you to see is because it's called a Telegraphic Order. I always wondered if there was any difference in train orders when they were given over the wire. This is something different.


TELEGRAPHIC TRAIN ORDER

MTC Member,
John Springer

October 27th

This is a reply to John's email:

It's just a form 31 (the train has to be stopped so the crew can sign for the orders before it can be marked "complete") and at the time of this order, I think telephone service on the railroads for such use had yet to begin or was in its infancy. I had just started experimenting with it.

73,
Chris Hausler

November 18th

I recently saw a pre-WW2 Japanese key for sale and it got me thinking. Obviously, any Japanese messages sent and received would have had to be in the Latin alphabet, involving converting from Japanese script to Latin to send, and then converting back on the receive end. Would this conversion have been a widespread skill in pre-war Japan, or would It have to have been taught to operators concurrently to teaching Morse?

I never really thought about it before, but are there other Morse-like code systems in other countries that do not use the Latin alphabet? (Korea, Thailand, Viet Nam, Russia, et at)

MTC Member,
Steve Fox,
KA4FOX

November 19th

Response from J. Chris Hausler:

Although I do believe competent Japanese telegraphers were probably at least aware and even somewhat competent with International Morse (there is no evidence I've ever found that they used the original American Morse) there is a Japanese telegraph code. This is called Wabun code, based on Kata Kana and so sometimes is also referred to as Kana code. It has about twice as many individual codes as Latin-based Morse. It was widely used by the Japanese all through WWII and of course before, and I believe is still used by Japanese amateur radio operators. Here is a link which contains a number of additional links: https://wikipedia.org/wild/Wabun_code.

73,
Chris Hausler
International MTC Vice President

November 21st

A few years ago, representatives of the Morse Telegraph Club assisted the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) in a reenactment of the historic May 24, 1884 Morse-Vail message between Washington, DC and Baltimore. The reenactment was filmed in Baltimore, Maryland. Club members traveled there at their own expense to participate.

Was that segment ever broadcast as part of BBC's "Great American Railroad Journeys" series, and if so, what episode? If the segment did not make it into the series telecast, might a copy be obtained elsewhere?

MTC Member,
Dr. Dale Lichtblau,
Reston, Virginia

December 3rd

I received the Fall issue of *Dots & Dashes* today, the birthday of our new MTC Director, Charles Beckett. I am really glad that I got you to be the editor. You have done a fantastic job through the years.

And, I can actually pronounce the name of that 59-letter railroad depot in Wales. (fall issue, page 6, the Llianfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlllllantysiliogogogoch railroad depot) My grandparents came from Wales. When I was a young kid, my grandmother taught me how to say the name of that station and I have never forgotten. She passed away in 1943, so quite a few years have passed since then.

We are still under restrictions here due to the virus and its variants. We aren't allowed out of our apartments without a mask, and we need a vaccine passport to get into a restaurant. I didn't get a booster shot because my blood pressure the day after the second Pfizer shot went from the 130's to 199/88. That was last February. Although I'm on pills, my blood pressure is still quite high.

Keep Well,
Lavina Shaw,
Former MTC International President

December 4th

A reader of "Rivanna Review" quarterly journal sent us the summer issue of *Dots & Dashes*, "the official publication of the Morse Telegraph Club, Inc." Twenty-four pages are beautifully printed and illustrated. The magazine has stories about the telegraph, the men who operated, it, chapter meetings, and special events, like the 1991 bicentennial celebration in Washington, DC of the birth of Samuel F.B. Morse, who invented the telegraph in 1944. ☛

Early radio was called "wireless telegraph," used on ships at sea and over distances with no wire connection. Voice began in 1906, and radio broadcasting in 1920, but Morse code was still in use through the 1940's. The telegraph played a vital role in transmitting news from reporters to newspapers, and in running trains on railroads. Tracks normally had telegraph wires strung along them, and each station had a telegraph office.

The telegram was the equivalent of email today, a way to deliver messages before the telephone was available. Commercial telephone service in the United States began in 1914. You paid by the word to send a telegram, hence the laconic prose style. For many years, coding and transcribing was a valuable skill. The telegraph was cutting edge technology, the new science of electricity, and it shared the romance of the railroad.

Dots & Dashes has an article on "The Great Geomagnetic Storm of May 1921," caused by solar flares, and overdue for a repeat. A geomagnetic storm today will wreak havoc on satellites, electrical power distribution grids, and atmospheric communication. You can read up on the preservation of old equipment and documents, personal experiences, and book reviews. Letters to the editor expand on these topics.

The club has 2700 members, which include ham radio operators in the United States and Canada. It started in California in 1942 and re-incorporated in Illinois in 1973. Club members keep up to speed as a hobby, and they demonstrate the use of Morse code to the public using brass keys.

Jim Wilson edits the magazine in North Garden, Virginia and the International President is James Wades in Buchanan, Michigan. To become a member, subscribe, or send your thoughts, visit www.morsetelegraphclub.com.

Robert Bucheron,
Editor of The Rivanna Review

December 7th

The United States Library of Congress is the possessor of untold masses of photos covering so many aspects of U.S. history. But, rummaging through them consumes too much time. There's nothing like the guided tours by the archivists to give you an educated start at touring the many photographic archives within the library. They have a vast quantity of railroad photos to graze through.

MTC Member,
William Neill

December 7th

You might enjoy this picture, just one of many from a local train's newsletter.

Friend of the MTC,
Ron Richie, K4RKA

December 8th

Thank you for mailing past issues of *Dots & Dashes* to complete my collection of 2021 issues. A friend of mine, Phil King, just received his Fall issue of *Dots & Dashes* on December 1st.

73 and all the best to our members during Christmas and upcoming 2022.

MTC Member,
Robert Weare

December 11th

I was interviewed a few days ago for a *National Geographic* article on my life as a telegrapher. This is for their on-line version. It apparently has to do with commemorating the first telegram sent in Canada on December 17. Also, John Springer arranged with Chuck Beckett, myself, and a retired dispatcher and historian, Jim Murphy, to be interviewed last Tuesday morning for about 1 ½ hours. Edd Murphy is the editor of *Trackside* magazine.

I talked with the journalist, who phoned me for more information on a few items. She said she will send the link about the article as soon as it is published so we can put that on our MTC website.

Merry Christmas and 73,
Lavina Shaw,
Former International MTC President

CHAPTER NEWS

The Evergreen Chapter has had a Morse telegraph exhibit in the Foss Waterway Seaport museum in Tacoma for a number of years. The exhibit was revamped in June, 2021 and now I've learned it needs to be revamped again by the spring of 2022, largely in part to the museum now having a professional curator with a good sense of what appeals to the modern public. A bunch of paper reading is not in vogue; instead, there is a request for a short, something like 90-second audio & video on monitor that encapsulates the role of Morse telegraphy in the railroad industry. While the museum is mostly maritime in nature, there has been a "railroad corner" exhibit area commemorating the role of the Northern Pacific Railway in shaping Tacoma and the Pacific Northwest. The museum building itself was built by the Northern Pacific in approximately 1900 for the transfer of goods between trains and ships.

Ideally, a 90-second video would be tailored to Morse telegraphy in the Northern Pacific Railway and we still have some great members that may be able to relate, firsthand, what telegraphy was like on that railroad. Another aspect to doing that is finding a place to assist with making a recording. Concurrent to such a local undertaking, I would like to inquire if the MTC has, or can recommend, any short videos that may relate the role of Morse telegraphy in the railroad industry. I've been told that there could be a sequence of 90-second videos, such that if a person wants to stand there longer and watch more, a variety of recordings would be good.

Attached is a photo overview of the Foss museum telegraph exhibit and following is the museum's website. Any suggestions will be most appreciated.

https://fosswaterwayseaport.org/

73,
Kevin Saville

Welcome Aboard!

New Members of MTC

Lee Barrett, La Jolla, CA
Jim Callaway, Coronado, CA
Larry Ratcliffe, Indianapolis, IN
Brent Shipman, Henderson, NV
John Brewer, Clayton, NC

VINTAGE TELEGRAPH RETURNS TO THE GREAT NORTHERN DEPOT

Submitted by MTC member William J. Neill

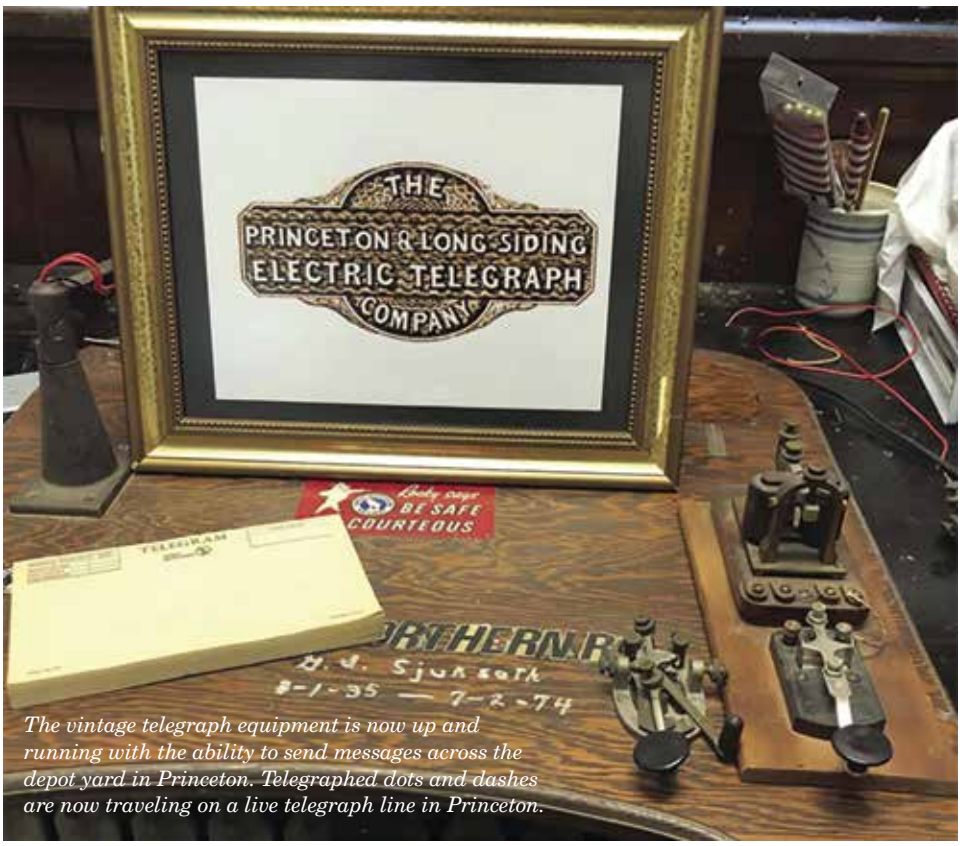
After more than 60 years of silence, the telegraph connection has been restored between the Princeton Great Northern Railway depot and the adjacent Long's Siding Great Northern Railway depot.

"It seemed a logical goal to have," said Barry Schreiber of the Mille Lacs County Historical Society, which is housed in the Princeton depot.

There are several telegraph keys in the historical society's archives, Schrieber said.

The telegraph project was triggered by the gift of the little Long's Siding Great Northern depot to the Historical Society by Pete and Mary Davis in 2016.

"With the move of the 34-foot structure to Princeton depot property, we had the opportunity to reestablish the original electronic communication between the two depots," Schrieber said.



The vintage telegraph equipment is now up and running with the ability to send messages across the depot yard in Princeton. Telegraphed dots and dashes are now traveling on a live telegraph line in Princeton.

The telegraph was vital to railroad operations from the day the train came to Princeton in 1886 until reliable telephone connections replaced it in the 1950s.

"We couldn't have done this project without the help of our good neighbors across the street, Princeton Public Utilities," Schrieber said.

Princeton Public Utilities stood up two vintage cedar poles to carry the telegraph wires between the two depots, and provided a safe and expert line crew to climb poles and attach the telegraph wires to the insulators. The insulators carried the wires from the stationmaster's office in the massive 215 foot long brick and stone Princeton depot down to the agent's office in the Long's Siding depot.

"We followed the lead of Historical Society member Garlan Hulbert in getting the components of the telegraph system organized," Schreiber said. "We had the incredible good luck to have the national expert on Great Northern Railway telegraphy, Gary Lenz, join in the project from nearby Winsted, Minnesota."

Lenz provided rare parts and skills needed to bring the telegraph line to life.

Telegraph team members Jon Brooks and Chris Rotz played key roles in bringing the dots and dashes back to life in Princeton.

The telegraph was a revolution in communications in the 19th Century, much like the Internet has revolutionized communications and life in the 21st Century. Before the telegraph, the fastest communications were letters carried by horses.

Samuel Morse sent the first telegraph message in 1844 from Washington, D.C. to nearby Baltimore. Early reports describe the telegraph as delivering messages "with the speed of lightning". Morse also developed a code system that assigned "dots and dashes" to each letter of the English alphabet.

"Telegraphed Morse Code was the original texting", Schreiber said. "The Mille Lacs County Historical Society wants to give kids of all ages the opportunity to see and hear the original texting of the telegraph," he said.

MARATHON READY TO MAKE A RETURN

By Glae Thien, enewspaper.sandiegouniontribune.com

Runners and Friends of Running,
Yours truly is highlighted in today's San Diego Union Tribune article as the oldest runner in the Rock & Roll Half Marathon tomorrow.
The pressure is on! I'll enjoy running the 13.1 miles from Balboa Park through North Park to downtown tomorrow.
Cheer for me!
Richard Williams

After a nearly 17-month delay caused by the pandemic, runners are ready to "Rock 'n' Roll" again in San Diego's iconic marathon and half marathon races.

The Rock 'n' Roll Marathon and Half are back Sunday with a move to the fall instead of the traditional early June dates. The event was called off last year for the first interruption in its history dating to 1998.

Ahead of the longer races is a 5-kilometer race at 7 a.m. today with the course completely within Balboa Park for the first time.

The marathon and half start at 6:45 a.m. Sunday at Sixth and Quince streets in Balboa Park and conclude at Waterfront Park with a finish-line festival.

Due to compete are some 22,300 entrants, in line with the previous event, according to race director Meryl Leventon.

"You can feel the energy in San Diego right now," Leventon said. "We knew people would be ready to run, be excited, and they're showing up for us in San Diego."

There are about about 5,500 entrants in the full marathon, 14,000 in the half, and 2,800 in the 5K.

As early as March, it was evident that the races wouldn't be conducted on their usual dates. So Leventon began then considering alternatives later in the year, weighing such factors as the calendar for other major rescheduled races and the ability to coordinate with local officials for access to public lands along the course.

"It's a big relief to finally be here and know what this looks like," Leventon said. "It's really weird being an event producer when you're not sure that you can have an event. We had Plan A, Plan B,

Plan C ..."

From the hot June days, even in the early morning, the switch to the fall brings cooler temperatures and perhaps faster times as a result. Also, with the later sunrise, the Sunday races have switched from a 6:15 a.m. start to 6:45.

"This is going to be absolutely perfect running weather for us," Leventon said. "You never know what we will get in October. Sometimes, we can have a hot day, but temperatures are looking cool for us on race day."

The San Diego event is the original one in the nationwide Heineken 0.0 Rock 'n' Rock Running Series, noted for musical entertainment during races.

Ahead of the San Diego races in this series this year were the resumption of the Virginia Beach event on Sept. 5 and San Jose on Oct. 3.

Runners can be mask-free in the outdoor event under current pandemic health guidelines.

Due to a conflict with another event, a portion of the marathon course has been re-routed to include the San Diego River bikeway off Morena Blvd.

"It's beautiful, breezy and more quiet out there," Leventon said. "We'll see how it goes. I really like it. We'll see what other people think."

There will be no prize money as a result of the financial hit endured by organizers last year with race cancellation, according to Leventon. She expects the prize purse to return next year, when the race is due to return to its traditional dates.

Among the top men's marathon entrants is Irvine's Izzak Mireles, who won the 2020 Carlsbad Marathon, when that event was last conducted. Top local entrants include San Diego's Spencer Johnson and Hunter Bliss in the men's half.

Chula Vista's Erik Santizo, 14, is slated to be the youngest runner in the marathon.

On the other hand, Coronado's Richard Williams, 85, is expected to the oldest competitor in the half marathon. Before the pandemic, Williams typically ran a half marathon every month.

The oldest marathon runner is due to be Patrick Bivona, 80, of Los Alamitos.

"It's really special to be back at the home of the original Rock 'n' Roll," Leventon said. "I can't wait to be at that start line."

In the 2019 marathon, England's Bradley Wattleworth won the men's race (2:25.50), and Baltimore's Jennifer Brill led the women's field (2:57.49).

Kenya's Benard Negeno took the men's half (1:00.8), and Ethiopia's Rahmia Tusa won the women's race (1:09:09).

MEMORIES OF A 40 HOURS A WEEK TELEGRAPHER

By MTC Member Evan Hooson

In 1950 the Unions struck the Canadian railways for a 40 hour work week. The result was a shortage of Agents, Assistant Agents, Operators, Dispatchers, maintenance of way staff, shop and yard personnel as well as numerous other trades and positions. I was 18 years old at the time and in October 1951 started work in Brookmere BC on the Kettle Valley Division of Canadian Pacific for 75 dollars a month as an station apprentice which included learning Agency accounting, telegraphy, station duties and everything associated with running a railway terminal. After a couple of months I was transferred to Princeton BC as an Assistant Agent. Adjoining the railway office was a CP telecommunications repeater office where a couple of the fellows, Doug McCann and Freddie Veale took me under their wing and pounded telegraphy into my head. Slowly but surely I became "somewhat" okay with Morse. I remember once storming out of the office in frustration, going for a walk and returning in 30 minutes or so. Shortly after that I reached another plateau. I was naturally left handed and sent code with my left hand, I finally purchased a bug, a right handed Vibroplex blue racer, I had to teach myself to use the bug right handed. To this day I cannot switch, key with left hand, *bug with right hand.

I passed my written and oral rules and was appointed an operator with a seniority date of April 24th 1952. My first shifts were 2nd trick operator Brookmere, with further shifts as swing operator, graveyard and spare operator KV Division. In June '52 I was sent to McCulloch for a week. I was dropped off the passenger train in the middle of ☛

the night, my luggage left at the previous station. Some fun no food, no bedding. The next morning the section crew arrived with my luggage. After that it was back to Brookmere. During that time we had four passenger trains a day, numbers 11 and 12, 45 and 46. These passenger trains were well equipped with nice coaches. Later 11 and 12 were replaced by RDC Dayliner Cars. As well, we had a mixed train, the Jitney 805, 806 which ran from Brookmere to Spences Bridge on the Merritt Subdivision twice weekly, Tuesday and Fridays returning Wednesday and Saturday.

Working Brookmere afternoons and graveyard shifts often had challenges especially in winter. As the Divisional point east of the Coquihalla Sub Division we would receive calls on the track phone from the patrolman Wong Gee at Iago advising that slides were down. We would inform the dispatcher in Penticton and call an ASAP (as soon as possible) snow plow. Brookmere had no domestic telephones so we would have to run to the various homes, knock on the windows, sometimes 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning to call a conductor, head and tail end brakeman. The shop staff looked after the engine crew and plow operators. It is a tribute to those men that they could be ready to go within 20 to 30 minutes. As well, an operator would usually go with the plow. I recall being on one of those plows; we had run out of time so I had to jump over the bank into snow up to my chest, hang up the portable phone on wires only two to three feet above my head and copy orders in a snowstorm.

In the spring of 1953 my next adventure was as an operator on a work train out of Coquihalla. The Engineering Department were filling a trestle a few miles west of Coquihalla. We had 10 air dumps which were loaded at the gravel pit at Juliet, and travelled back and forth all day then tied up in the evening. As operator I had to copy orders in the morning, check-in from time to time and provide a tie up at night. The rest of the day I just loafed around, talking to the cook, feeding the odd bear cook car scraps and shooting tin cans with a .22. An enjoyable summer. In the fall of 1953 the Company created an operators position at Coquihalla. I bid on the job and was appointed to that position. Hours were from 11 until 19 o'clock. The office had phones but no telegraph. It was a pretty boring job. I had a practice key and a typewriter. I taught myself to touch type using a book "Twentieth Century Typing".

Talk about snow, the locals told me it could snow a foot a hour. Well, at noon one day I could not see the water tower which was kitty corner across the track. Snow flakes were the size of small saucers falling straight down, there was no wind, it actually could snow a foot a hour! The stations door opened to the tracks, so when a plow went by the door burst open and the office filled with snow. That happened a number of times. Finally the pass was closed due to massive slides and I was stuck in Coquihalla. Traffic was detoured via the Merritt Subdivision to Spences Bridge and the main line. The Chief Dispatcher arranged to put my eastbound board on red. As a result I was on the payroll 24 hours a day for over a week. The winter of 1953-54 saw a total accumulation of 762 inches of snow.

In September of '54 I bid on the swing position between Allenby and Brookmere. I left Coquihalla and moved to Princeton. Allenby was on the Copper Mountain Subdivision and the location of the concentrator for the Granby Copper Mine at Copper Mountain. Shifts were always graveyard, our duties were weighing the ore trains before they dumped their load. One evening in the winter of '54 my brother Peter and I left Brookmere in a VW bug to drive back to Princeton because I had to work an Allenby shift that evening. Well, it was 40 below zero F and about 11 or 12 miles out of Brookmere the car quit. Luckily, we were beside an old logging camp. Neither of us were dressed for the weather. We ripped off a bunch of boards, lit a fire, found a piece of tin for a reflector and sat there all night. Finally a road maintenance truck came by, drove past our car but came back. The guys picked us up and took us back to Brookmere. Later we towed the car to Princeton. The gas line had frozen. We were lucky!

I kept that position until Sept '56 when I went back to Brookmere as 2nd and 3rd trick operator. One of the more amusing things I remember, one afternoon 2 or 3 of us novice telegraphers (or "lids" I think we were called) were trying to copy a wire from the commercial office in Vancouver. We finally managed but it must have been frustrating for the professional telegraphers. It was during that time I was again operator on a snow plow on December 9th 1956. We made it through to Jessica for the evening. I had to walk down to the shack to call in. Well, it was a night from hell if there was ever was one. There was about 14 inches of snow, so saturated with rain it was blue. The wind was driving west to east at gale force and the rain pelted down almost horizontally. Tragically that was the evening Trans Canada Airlines flight

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810, a Canadair Northstar CD-4M2, crashed into Mount Slesse a few miles south west of our location killing all 62 on board.

From 1957 until the spring of 1960 I worked various stations, notably Merritt and Princeton. In the spring of 1960 the Chief Dispatcher asked me if I would be interested in the relief Agents position. The O.R.T. agreement with the Company provided for an allowance of $1.50 per day to cover expenses. That was not going to work so I suggested to the Chief I would take the job providing the Company gave me an old caboose. He agreed and that started nearly two years as a relief Agent all over the Kettle Valley Division, including stations on the Carmi Sub; Osoyoos Sub; Princeton and Merritt Subs and west to Hope on the Coquihalla Sub. One of the more interesting jobs was in Osoyoos. That area was the heart of the southern fruit producing areas of British Columbia. We handled carloads of fruit for CP Express, mostly shipped by people to relatives on the Prairies. CP Express was a separate entity from the rail operation and we were paid a commission by CP Express. This could more than equal our wages during that time.

In the fall of 1961 I successfully bid on the Agency at Beaverdell BC on the Carmi Sub Division. Beaverdell was a small community of approximately 400 to 500 people. The town was home to the Highland Bell Silver Mine and two small sawmills, with another mill a few miles west at Carmi BC. Beaverdell had no telephones, therefore most correspondence was by telegraph. That was my baptism of fire. It didn't take too long to get pretty proficient at Morse. Opening the office first thing in the morning I would be greeted by the commercial office in Vancouver calling BD BD BD VR. Usually they would have half dozen or more. Every now and then I would get a "bad news" message for someone. I would deliver those personally although it was something I would have rather not done. The two sawmills would bring me in a tally of finished product representing a rail car of lumber. I would send it off to four or five lumber brokers who in turn would wire back a quote. Then it was up to the mill to accept or not and off would go another telegram of confirmation. The station building was in pretty bad shape, the floor was rotten in places. I sent a note to the general office in Penticton suggesting they pick up one of the linesmen's buildings at Romeo, as the Coquihalla sub was about to be abandoned. Take it to Penticton, fix it up with a baggage room and office and replace the existing building. They followed up with that idea and we had a new office.

I was Agent Beaverdell until the fall of 1966, and that is when my operating experience ended. I was transferred to Kelowna BC in the Freight Traffic Department as Chief Clerk and Office Supervisor. In 1976 I was transferred to the position of Service Representative Marketing and Sales Vancouver BC. Eventually retiring in 1996.

HOW I BECAME INTERESTED IN TELEGRAPH: THE LONE RANGER AND ELECTRICITY FOR BOYS

By Durell M. Roth

A Little Background:

I cannot pinpoint a given event that galvanized my interest in telegraph, but retrospectively it occurred around my third year of elementary school, and my obsession with the Lone Ranger radio show may have been the catalyst. The program frequently used the sound effect of the telegraph, and one brief scene was particularly memorable. The Lone Ranger and Tonto waited in a small telegraph office as a message for the Ranger was being received over the wire: the sounder was heard clearly over the radio. The agent copied the message then handed a pre-paid telegram to the Ranger. After leaving the office, Tonto listened intently as the Ranger explained that he had learned the Morse code years ago and could easily tell that the message given him was not the message received by the operator as they waited. The Ranger speculated that someone was attempting to disrupt their plans. Yes, he was correct.

To a kid, just the idea of knowing a code and being able to communicate in 'secret' was thrilling. I was hooked and had to have a telegraph set. ☛

had I seen such an expanse of tracks, switches, levers, and other unknown equipment that stretched as far as the eye could see. My attention abruptly shifted to a sign on a small building just to my right. I was quite aware that my hometown was Houston, but the sign said Eureka, Texas. To a kid in late elementary school, it was almost euphoric to imagine having ridden my bicycle to another town. At the time, I paid no further attention to the sign but allowed myself to be mesmerized by the plethora of railroad equipment including boxcars, tankers, flatcars and the beehive of activity in the yard.

I even fantasized about stretching a wire to my friend Ron's house across the street so we could have a real system. Days later, while perusing my elementary-school library for anything telegraphic, I spied a small red book bearing the title "Electricity for Boys." Within that book were instructions for building a rudimentary telegraph set and an "open circuit" telegraph line. Even at my young age, I didn't like the open-circuit system, but I had to use it to conserve battery power. I also didn't care much for the "musical" sound of my homebrew 'bent nail and coffee-can tin' sounder; after all everyone knows a sounder says click and clack, and not ping and ping.

Then came summer and with it the increased importance of telegraph and crystal radio sets. Mom and Pop and I lived in Houston; the neighborhood was known as Cottage Grove, and I always viewed it as a railroad community. That visualization was probably realized because of the train yard (that's what we called it) about five blocks north of our house. We lived, day-and-night, with the sounds of steam and diesel engines slamming various freight cars together in making up a train. One day I rode my bicycle to the yard: wow, never

My First 'Real-Telegraph' Experience:

I made many trips to that yard and met several of the men who worked there, but time has erased all names and faces. On one of my numerous visits to the Eureka yard, I encountered one of the guys, let's just call him Bob, with who I always talked, and I inquired about the six-volt lantern-batteries stacked on a small shelf. He said that they were the old batteries from the lanterns that they used during nighttime service requirements. Sensing ☛

my interest, he added that each one had been used only a couple of hours and still had plenty of life; he concluded by saying that they were all mine if I wanted them and that they would save a few each week if I needed more. Perfection! The next time I saw Bob, he asked me what I did with all those batteries; I said that I did electrical experiments, used enough of them connected in series to run my ac-dc radio, and my homemade telegraph line. He smiled, nodded approvingly, then somewhat studiously remarked that it was time for his coffee break and asked if I would like to join him for an ice-cream cone (don't do this today). We walked across a seemingly endless quantity of rails to a large building on the north edge of the yard. Inside one end of the building was a quiet, clean, well-kept, café. At his direction, we sat at one end of the counter and placed our order. Then I heard the unmistakable chatter from a telegraph sounder. Bob said, "stick your head through that door, but don't say anything because the operator is busy." I did, and oh my----telegraph equipment everywhere, but the rest of the room is a psychological and emotional blur. Even now, as a professional writer, I have difficulty collecting adjectives of sufficient strength to describe my feelings at that moment, but just for grins let's try "Sublime." The guy (Bob) who bought my ice cream and placed me at that specific end of the counter knew exactly what he was doing. He'd observed my deepening knowledge of telegraphy and he knew that I would remember, perhaps even cherish, that moment for many years to come and maybe the rest of my life; he was right.

Love in a Box:

My real love affair with telegraph began with my last appearance in the Eureka, Texas yard. On that occasion after a brief visit and collecting my cache of batteries, two of the guys asked me to wait just a minute because they had something to give me. I didn't know what to expect as they approached me; one of them had a small, grey, non-descript, cardboard box in his hand. He reached out and gave me the box then said, "Here, we thought you might like to have this." Inside that little grey box resided a new 4-ohm, 1-A, Western Union sounder manufactured by J. H. Bunnell & Co. I don't remember my reaction or the rest of that meeting as, once again, time has caused memories to simply fade into the cosmos: 'the sounder,' oh it's a beautiful and robust instrument, still looks new and resides in my small collection of telegraph equipment.

Not long after that meeting, school, and other interests temporarily put telegraph into a standby mode, and the city of Houston saw fit to condemn a large part of our neighborhood to make room for T. C. Jester Blvd.: it was time to move on. We lived on the northeast corner of Leroy and Darling streets, and Leroy was the north/south street destined to be an exit ramp. As it turns out, T. C. Jester was built, but Leroy St. is still just a street, our house was purchased and moved, but our driveway is still usable. During all the packing, shuffling, and moving, one may wonder as to the contents of that little grey box. It made the move without a scratch and here's a photo of my sounder in all its glory. Since that first day of acquisition, it has been cared for very well, used with beautiful memories and reverence, on my ham rig and in demonstrations.

Closing Thoughts:

Now, it's time to say many, many, thanks to my 'MTC brothers--telegraphic;' especially Jim Wilson, Chris Hausler, and Bill Neill for their interest in my project, and their gracious help including maps, photographs, and for identifying the yard telegraph station (my first real telegraph experience) as having two call signs, "KA" and "KU." Additionally, many thanks are due all those kind and thoughtful guys who worked that yard and somehow arranged for me to have a lifetime of lovely memories and a real sounder that came to me wrapped in its original plain-grey cardboard box. There may also be other 'MTC brothers and sisters—telegraphic' who assisted in my small project and my hardy thanks go to them as well. As to the fate of the sounder, in a few months (plus or minus a few months) it will take its rightful place on one of the Morse-KOB lines and will for the first time work the wire as KU or maybe KA-- Austin, Texas. Eureka!

Behind the Wires continued from page 7

on there and know that's so-and-so," she says. "They say women have a smoother method of sending."

In an example of online dating that long predates the internet, Lavina's "fist" caught the attention of Earl Shaw, a telegraph operator in Melville, Sask. By then, Lavina had returned to Saskatoon and copied lots of messages to and from Melville, nearly 300 kilometres away. A good majority were from Earl, who also grew up on a railway station and came from a family of telegraphers. Gradually, they started corresponding by regular mail to avoid any uninvited listeners along the line. The shared language that brought them together resurfaced after they were married in 1949. "When we had our two girls, we'd converse [in Morse code] with a fork and a knife…the kids couldn't understand what we were saying," Lavina recalls with a grin.

The couple settled in Vancouver, where Lavina landed a job with Canadian Pacific Telegraph, copying news for the Vancouver Sun and the Canadian Press. In 1952, she was put on a direct line to Time Magazine during the election of U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower. The little girl from Sifton, Man. who used to lie awake wondering what was being said over the wires was now translating major world events for millions of people across the country.

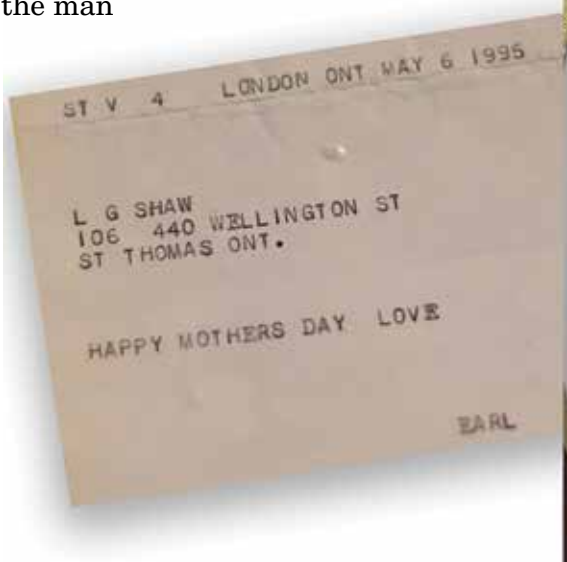
By the early 1960s, railway stations across Canada were shutting down and telegraphy was being replaced by telephones and computers. The last Morse code train order was sent in 1977. Lavina's father, the man who bestowed his love for telegraphy, is long gone, along with Lavina's childhood home. During the golden age of Canadian rail, "They had to have a telegraph operator every 35 miles [56 kilometres]," says Lavina. "It's sad to travel through the prairies and not see any of the train stations there anymore."

Telegraphers, too, are disappearing.

In June 2018, the B.C. chapter of the Morse Telegraph Club paid tribute to Lavina. The club is an international community dedicated to preserving telegraphy's heritage. Lavina made history as its first and only female president. When she joined the B.C. chapter, it had 75 members. After presenting her with her trophy, the 10 remaining members tapped a final goodbye. "Nobody else would volunteer so we had to close it down," says Lavina. "There's not too many of us left."

As part of her own legacy, Lavina is determined to keep telegraphy alive and well. On yet another warm summer afternoon, before the COVID-19 pandemic, she stood in front of a group of curious campers in Port Coquitlam, B.C., where she now lives, and taught each one how to tap out their name in Morse code. Technology may look very different today, but Lavina doesn't want anyone to forget how telegraphy shaped modern-day communications.

"It should be taught in history books," she says. "It really changed the world."


ST V 4 LONDON ONT MAY 6 1995

L G SHAW
106 440 WELLINGTON ST
ST THOMAS ONT.

HAPPY MOTHERS DAY LOVE

EARL

Lavina and Earl Shaw married in 1949. Right: A telegram sent by Earl to Lavina. (Images courtesy Lavina Shaw)

HAVE BUG, WILL TRAVEL

by J. Chris Hausler

The title for this article is taken from what some of you might recall was a "Western", a TV series of the late 50's and early 60's titled, "Have Gun – Will Travel". It featured actor Richard Boone in the character of "Paladin", a gunfighter for hire, but one who attempted to uphold the law and do what was right. It was a favorite of mine when I was growing up. But this title might also represent the "business plan" for that band of roving brothers of the early 20th Century known as boomer telegraph operators.

In that vein I was asked by John Springer, a retired Amtrak engineer and new board member of the MTC, to bring my bug and spend a day at the SONO Switch Tower Museum in South Norwalk, CT. This museum features a beautifully preserved "arm strong" interlocking tower on the former New Haven's four track main, still a busy rail corridor with both Amtrak and Metro-North trains passing regularly. In last fall's edition of *Dots & Dashes* I reviewed a book about interlocking towers on the New Haven which featured this tower. To learn more about it read my review and read the book!

It was John who also first contacted me over a year ago asking if I would provide technical guidance to aid the tower museum volunteers so they could install a working, MorseKOB based, telegraph office on the operator's desk. They had already added working railroad telephone systems from two different eras, the classic scissors phone complete with foot switch and a desk set and speaker from the 1960's. Now they wanted to add the Morse telegraph to make the display of railroad communications history at the tower, office call SH, complete.

My visit to the museum had been discussed for some time but was delayed by Covid as has so much else. But with most folks vaccinated I finally ☛

felt comfortable enough to travel. So I packed up one of my Vibroplex bugs and took Amtrak over to Springfield, MA where John picked me up and then put me up at his home, providing me dinners and breakfasts during my stay and libations in the evenings. On Saturday October 30th, John drove me down to the museum so that I could work a trick at the tower, demonstrating telegraphy to the visitors, on the museum's last open Saturday of the season.

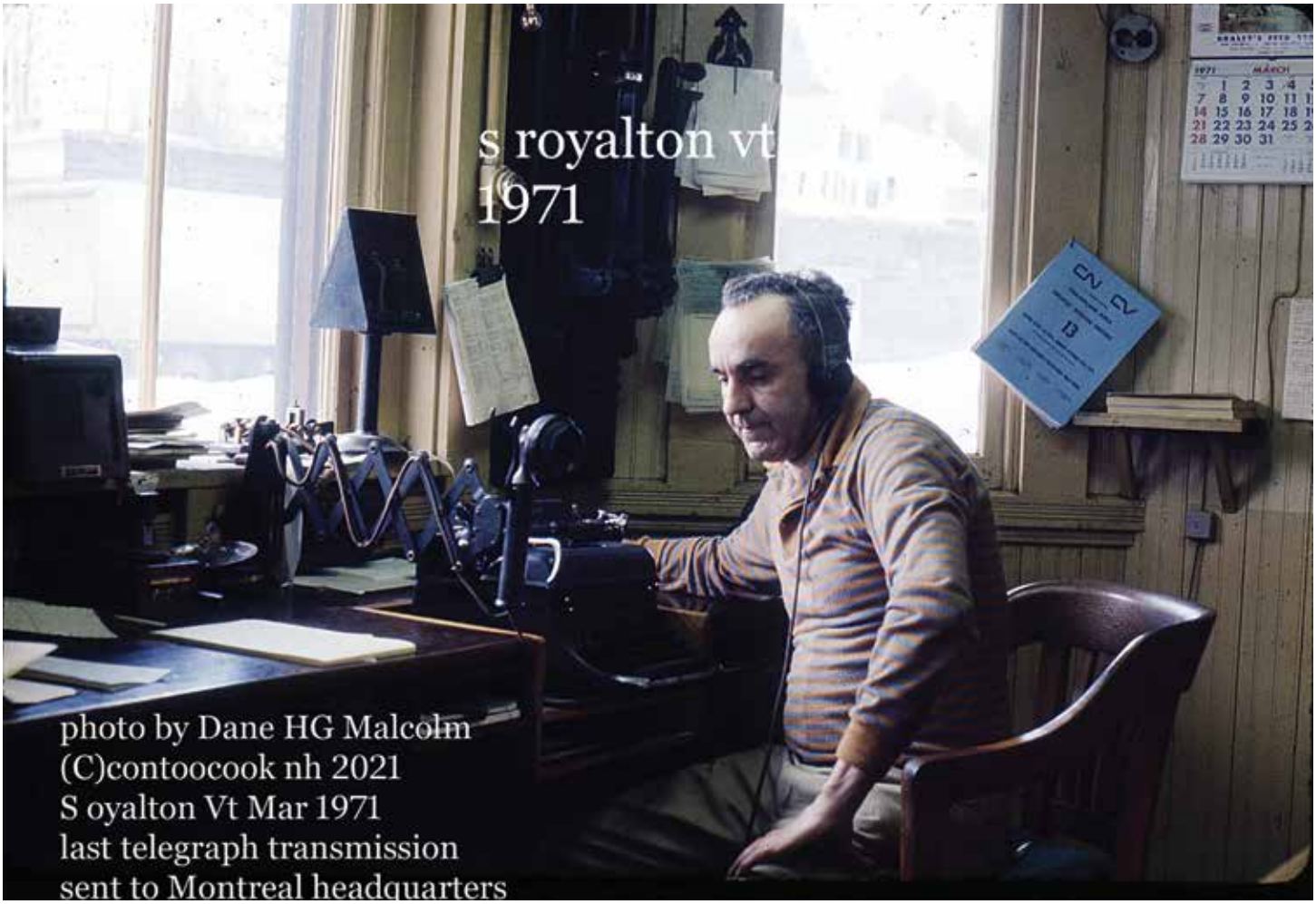
Here are a number of photos taken that day. One shows a view looking down the row of arm strong levers. You see the power board at the far end on the left as the tower operators on this electrified line had to control the catenary power as well as the interlocking machine. One shows the operator's desk and you can see the foot switch for the scissors phone underneath it. The MorseKOB interface is in the wooden box on the wall to the right of the desk just below desk level. One shows John Springer and I laughing about something and in the background is Rick Silva, the "Conrail Lineman" and his wife, Maureen. Rick is the one who did much of the installation of the phone and telegraph systems ably aided by both Bob Eb, another museum volunteer, and John. One shows Rick Silva explaining the two telephone installations to me, a subject with which I am not very familiar. One shows me demonstrating telegraphy to a couple of visitors with Rick and wife in background again. And finally, one just shows me at the operator's desk working my bug. I had a grand time at the tower and hopefully will get an opportunity to visit other MorseKOB museum installations in the future.

If you want to visit a wonderfully preserved interlocking tower, the volunteers at the SONO Switch Tower Museum will welcome your interest. Information about visiting can be found on their web site at www.westctnrhs.org/tower.htm . And you might just hear that clicking sound we all adore. If you want to watch live video feeds of trains passing the tower, there are two rail cams mounted on the rail side of the tower. Go to virtualrailfan.com/video-dashboard/ and then click on Choose Location, US State Regions, North Eastern US, Connecticut and the only two rail cams available in Connecticut as of this writing are SONO East and SONO West.

Paladin's business card said to, "Wire Paladin" in San Francisco and had the image of the

knight chess piece on it. The etymology of the name Paladin as best I understand it is, “a knight renowned for heroism and chivalry”. As roving telegraph operators were apparently sometimes referred to as “knights of the key” maybe this image of a knight chess piece is an appropriate one for boomer telegraphers too.

If Covid hopefully further clears up this coming year and if you are willing to pick me up at the nearest Amtrak station and put me up for my stay, this boomer might just be willing to come and work a trick at your MorseKOB equipped facility. My bug and I are willing to travel. So, like for Paladin, just “wire” me. If your museum does not yet have a MorseKOB installation and you are interested, feel free to contact me and I will provide technical guidance on installation procedures.



From the archives of the Morse Telegraph Club. This photo of a Canadian Pacific Railroad telegraph car was taken on November 15, 1901 at Vanceboro, Maine. We don't know the identity of the two men in the photo, but the detail is excellent. With some magnification, one can see the telegraph relays and sounders, switchboard, a telephone (which doesn't appear to be connected), and a Smith Premier typewriter (mill). No bug is present because the photo predates the invention of the Vibroplex key by several years.

Vanceboro, Maine is located on the border of New Brunswick a short distance North of the Bay of Fundy. The line at Vanceboro was really part of an amalgamation of several earlier railroad projects and ultimately the line from Vanceboro to St. John served as a link in the completion of a CP transcontinental railroad during construction and acquisitions during the period of roughly 1886 to 1889.

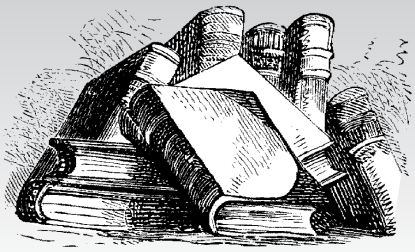
Vanceboro is perhaps best remembered for an act of attempted sabotage during World War One. The German government suspected Canada of violating US neutrality by using the line to ship war material. A German officer entered through the United States, traveled to Vanceboro on a Maine Central passenger train and, after a few nights in a local hotel, planted explosives on the St. Croix-Vanceboro bridge. The explosion failed to destroy the bridge and the saboteur was eventually arrested in the United States and extradited to Canada where he served time in prison.

Photos such as these seem to almost transport the viewer back to a time when the telegraph operator played an important and interesting role in the railroad business. It reminds me of a handwritten note received with a dues payment from an MTC member some years ago. It simply asked "why did the good times have to end?" Perhaps that simple question speaks volumes, much like this early photograph.

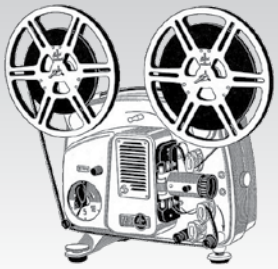
DID YOU KNOW?

Because the ice covered Artic north pole and ice covered Antarctic south pole are melting, the earth's oceans are rising. How much of a rise in ocean levels is predicted for the coming ten years and beyond?

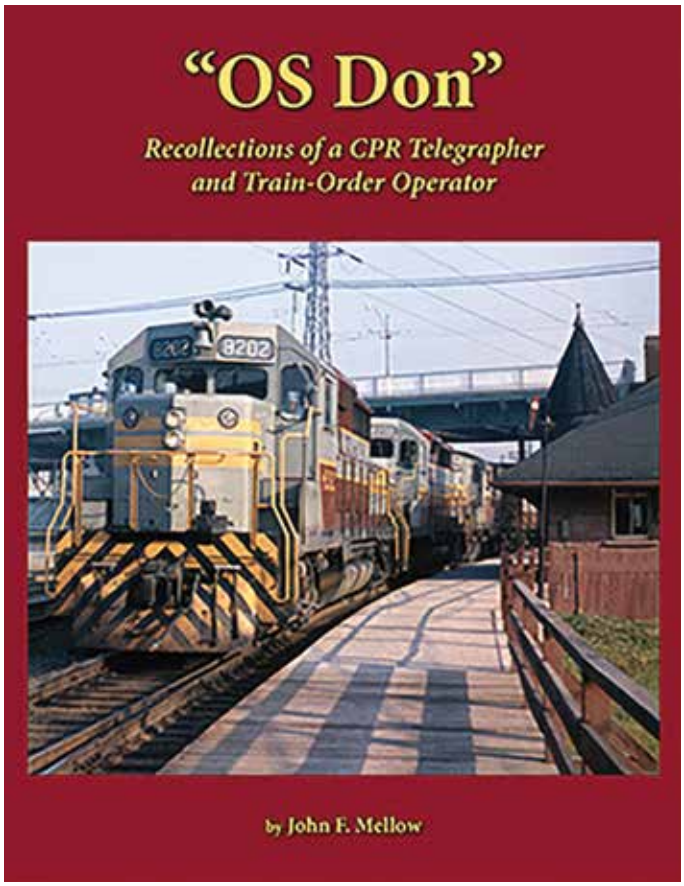
The sea level rise is projected to be 6 to 10 inches by 2030, 31 to 61 inches by 2100. Rising sea levels will cause "climate migration" by millions of people who will be flooded out of their present homes. ~Jim



J. Chris Hausler's BOOK & MOVIE REVIEWS



The book I'm reviewing this time is titled, *'OS Don' Recollections of a CPR Telegrapher and Train-Order Operator* by John F. Mellow, an MTC member. It was just published in 2021, ISBN-13: 978-0-921871-16-3. MTC member Robert Weare made me aware of this book, thanks Robert! Like with many young boys of that era, railroading became a fascination for John and back then railroad employees would welcome and even encourage this interest by young persons. In June 1963, and just shy of his 18th birthday, John became employed by the Canadian Pacific Railway as a spare telegrapher.

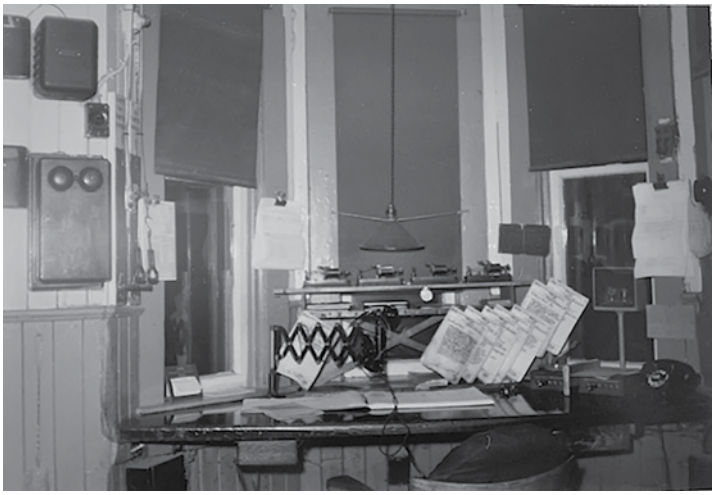


The title of the book refers to a station named "Don" which was located in the Don River Valley just east of Toronto, ON. John frequently worked at this station and it is featured in the book. It was on both a very active CPR line as well as an active CNR line, not to mention all the predecessor roads of both, and therefore was a joint agency and a very busy OS job. The station was first opened by the CPR in 1896. Although focusing on the author's work at the station, the book looks at the entire history of the station with many photos of the station from throughout its operational existence, as well as of the author himself at work there. Because of all the rail activity it was also a popular spot for rail enthusiasts to come to watch and photograph the action.

The book begins by looking at railroading as it was beginning with the construction of the station at Don and how the area, the railroads involved and the job of agent/operator evolved over time. It starts by examining the steam era in the Don Valley including many photos of steam powered trains. It then looks more specifically at the job duties of an agent/telegrapher working at a busy train order station, focusing much on the author's own work at Don and at other locations and some of his interesting experiences while working.

Even though by 1963 when he started work dispatching was all done by phone, John still had to pass a 15 WPM telegraph test to get the job. There were then still four telegraph wires at Don, two CPR and two CNR. The photo shown, which the author graciously provided me to include in this review, is one he took in 1963 of the operator's desk at Don. It also appears at the top of page 40 in the book. You can see the main line relays for the four wires on the shelf over the desk and the sounder in a Mascot style resonator to the right. The book also includes images of many train orders and clearance cards as well as pages out of the Don Station's train register. Railroading, however, was changing and the Don Station was closed and boarded up in 1967. John went on to qualify as a dispatcher in 1968 and as a chief dispatcher in 1976.

But that wasn't the end of Don Station. In 1969 it was moved a couple miles north to Todmorden Mills Park were it sat mostly unused despite several efforts to restore it. Then the Toronto Railway Historical Association, with the cooperation of the City of Toronto which owned the station, moved it in 2008 to the newly opening Roundhouse Park in downtown Toronto near the CN Tower. The park features a number of preserved railroad facilities and a live steam miniature railway. Don Station is now once again open to the public and serves as the ticket office for the live steam railway on which you can ride around the park. More about the station can be seen at this link: https://www.trha.ca/trha/collections/structures/don-station/ .



Although now retired, the author has continued his interest in railroads by aiding in the restoration of the former CNR station at Burlington, Jct, ON including the set up of the telegraph desk in that station. More about this station can be seen at this link: https://tourismburlington.com/freeman-station/ .

The book "OS Don" is published by the Bytown Railway Society, their main web page is: https://bytownrailwaysociety.ca and the book can be found for purchase from their web site, the direct link is: https://bytownrailwaysociety.ca/index.php/sales-desk/publications/161-os-don . I quite enjoyed this look at railroading as it was, both early on and not all that long ago, but bearing little resemblance to how it is today, both in reality and in the public's perception. I think you will also find it a very interesting read. In my humble opinion, the photos and images alone are worth the price. Enjoy!

ORT BADGES AVAILABLE

MTC member John Springer has volunteered to offer you historic ORT patches [Order of Railroad Telegraphers].

For a donation to MTC of $20 you can own an ORT patch. John's address during winter is 3703 SE Jennings Road, Port Saint Lucie, Florida, ZIP 34952.

John's summer address is 261 Airline Road in Clinton, Connecticut 06413. The Morse Telegraph Club benefits from this sale.

"30" SILENT KEYS

News of our brothers and sisters who have closed the key

Thomas Edison Memorial "TD" Chapter

Thomas G. Hirschinger, a longtime member of the TD Chapter, passed away in December 2021. At this time, we do not have his obituary information. He lived in Wadsworth, Ohio.

Thanks to Al Skornicka for this notice.

Grace Ann Beloglowka, wife of MTC member John Beloglowka, passed away On October 31, 2021. John & Grace lived in Edmonton.

Thanks to Bill Tchir for this brief information

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: 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.

Hubert Jewell is now a Silent Key, but his interesting book is still available.

AVAILABLE: The equipment is part of a very large collection gathered over 60 years. It was from a family member who has passed but was a very long time and well known MTC member. I have included three pictures of the hardware. I would like to sell it as a collection. There are several rare west coast as well as many early rare pieces. $12,500. Dave Ball (408) 805-0065

Keep in Touch...

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

Jim Wilson, *Editor*
Dots & Dashes

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Richard Williams
International Secretary-Treasurer

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(619) 818-9017

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

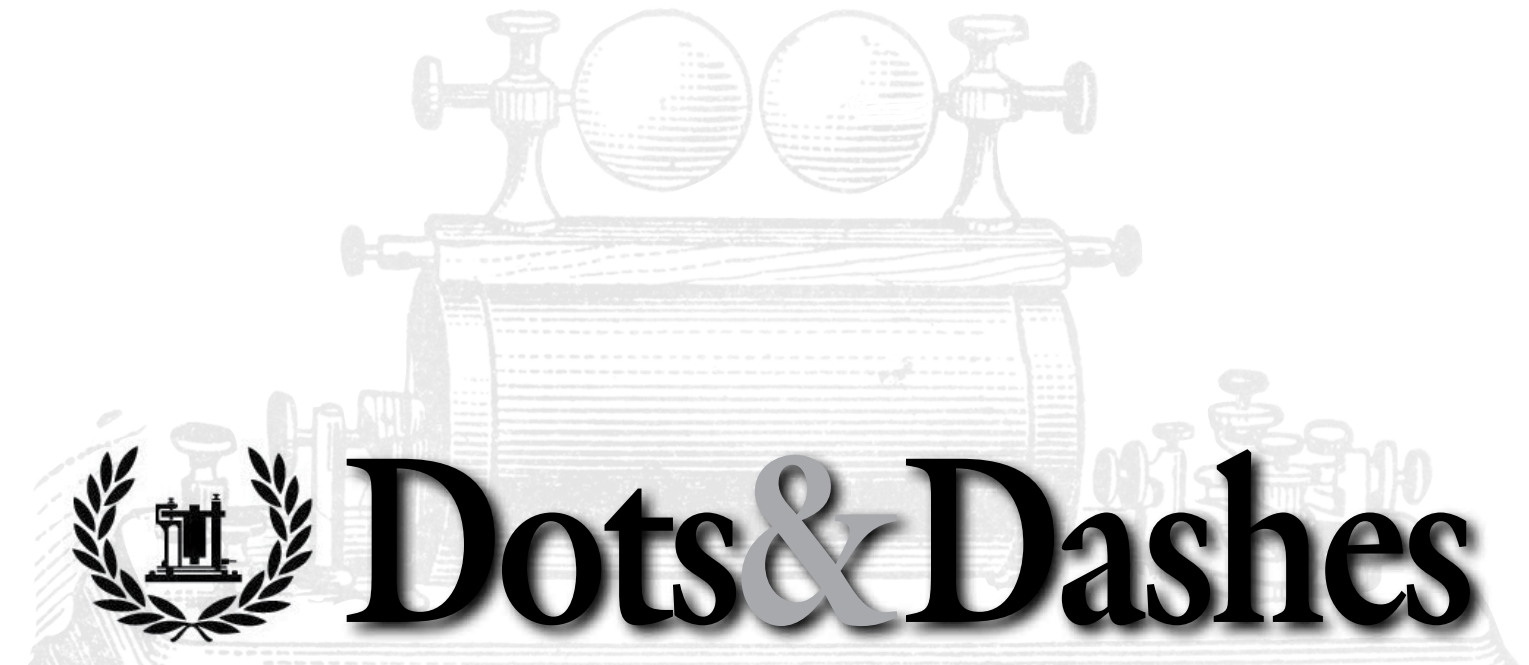
For those of you who are amateur radio operators, here are four current web sites that I find useful:

www.arnewsline.org
www.usrepeaters.com
www.qth.com
www.qrz.com

Notices & Invitations

Morse Telegraph Club, Inc.
Dial-Up Information

MORSE KOB PROGRAM
on the web at www.morsekob.org
DUES
U.S. First Class postage $20.00
E-mail delivery $15.00
Canadian is now by chapter
Foreign Air Mail postage $26.00



Dots & Dashes

What Hath God Wrought

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