



# EAGLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Summer 2003

Eagle, Wisconsin

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594-3301

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Darlene Landmann

594-3430

## **EHS News**

### **New Look**

This issue incorporates the eagle logo designed by Tom Shropshire and generously given to EHS for its use. This will also be used on EHS stationery in the future.

### **Membership**

Welcome to new member Ken Skidmore—many residents will remember him from his days with the railroad in Eagle.

There was a glitch in April and the printer did not include the 03 in the address. Please check this issue to see if our records show you have a current membership.

### **Donations**

Many thanks to the following for donations received: Alice Baker Library, Luella Bowey, Mabel Finney, Irma Jolliffe, Stephanie Kalnes, Marie Knowlton, Darlene Landmann, Elaine Ledrowski, Welthy Mueller, Martin Murk, Connie Potrykus and Pat Wilton.

### **Ice Cream Social/Band Concert**

Over 130 people attended the free event on July 20. This year the concert included an original work by band member Gina Neist. It was set to the music of "The Three Trees" composed by Tom McNaughton and arranged by Anthony Guerrero. The piece follows.

Ode to the Eagle Historical Society  
Nestled in the heart of the Kettle Moraine is a treasured gem known as the Eagle Historical Society, which is a guardian of the *Past—Present— and Future.*

Visitors flock here, searching for the records kept safe over the years, recalling the memories of dear old grandma and gramps, trusting the Eagle Historical Society to preserve the *Past—Present—and Future.*

Never knowing what one will discover, the traveler drinks in the warm hospitality of the volunteer staff, dreaming of the grandeur of the Victorian Age represented by the architecture of the house itself, and the flowing gowns worn by pioneering women long ago, and the formal poses of generations long deceased, grateful to the Eagle Historical Society for preserving the *Past - Present - and Future.*

A tattered photo catches the eye.  
It's a mother's son, a young Civil War soldier.

A timeless memory that tugs at the heartstrings once again.  
Join us as we express our gratitude to the Eagle Historical Society for preserving the memories *Past - Present - and Future.?*

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### **EHS**

museum/research library

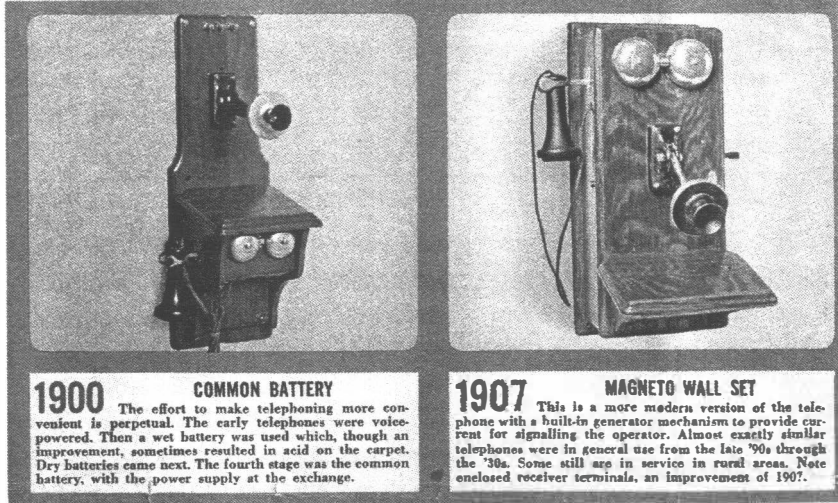
594-8961

open Fridays and Saturdays,

9 am to noon

Website: [eaglehs.org](http://eaglehs.org)

# The History of the Telephone in Eagle



**1900**

## COMMON BATTERY

The effort to make telephoning more convenient is perpetual. The early telephones were voice-powered. Then a wet battery was used which, though an improvement, sometimes resulted in acid on the carpet. Dry batteries came next. The fourth stage was the common battery, with the power supply at the exchange.

**1907**

## MAGNETO WALL SET

This is a more modern version of the telephone with a built-in generator mechanism to provide current for signalling the operator. Almost exactly similar telephones were in general use from the late '90s through the '30s. Some still are in service in rural areas. Note enclosed receiver terminals, an improvement of 1907.

*Western Electric photo courtesy of Viola Adams*

From information from Viola Adams, Betty Enright, "The History and Development of the Telephone in Wisconsin," vol. Ten, Wisconsin Magazine of History, 1926-1927, and Memoirs of Waukesha County edited by Theron Haight.

In our world of instant communication, it is difficult for us to comprehend how isolated people were before the telephone was available. Rural free mail delivery did not begin until the early 1900s. The first radio transmission occurred on December 24, 1906, and was heard only by the very few who had sets designed to receive "the newfangled wireless apparatus."

The first telephone appeared in Wisconsin in 1877. Charles H. Haskins brought the telephone to Milwaukee in 1879. His Haskins Company became the Wisconsin Telephone Company, which acted as agent for the Bell Telephone Company and established local exchanges around the state.

In the 1880s, telephones spread to cities across Wisconsin. Businessmen and other foresighted individuals took advantage of the new medium of communication.

Because large populations provided more potential customers, the Bell Company concentrated on cities at the expense of other areas. Due to this and the fact that rates were so high, telephones were still rare and expensive luxuries in the 1880s. The December 1, 1885 issue of the Wisconsin Telephone Company book for Milwaukee and related exchanges lists just 2 names for the Eagle exchange: F. G. Parks, exchange manager, real estate; and M.J. Bovee, hotel.

As telephones became indispensable and better service was required, it was no longer necessary for those who wished to have service to provide a

part of the cost of equipment. Telephone securities were in demand as investments, and the cost to subscribers came down.

In 1890 there were fewer than 3 telephones for every 1,000 people in Wisconsin. In 1893 the patents owned by Bell expired and small independent telephone companies spread across the state. Some companies began as cooperatives. Some were incorporated; the prominent men of the community serving as stock holders. The Wisconsin Telephone Company and its parent, Bell, competed fiercely with the small companies, who in turn fought among themselves. Subscribers to the service of one company could not talk to those of another, unless they wanted another line. For example, should a subscriber to an independent exchange wish to talk to a Bell subscriber, he either had to have a Bell telephone installed or go to a Bell office to make the call. Furthermore, independent subscribers could not make long-distance calls from their telephones, as Bell owned all the toll lines. Bell provided this service for an additional charge.

The Eagle Telephone Company was organized on February 26, 1902. E.J. Lins, H.M. Loibl, and F. Abendroth were instrumental in the process.

"The usefulness of the telephone has heretofore been restricted to cities and having been found absolutely indispensable, spreading to the rural districts—the greater field—and here it will be found

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the greatest boon, doing away with isolation, loneliness, and meagre means of protection. The telephone for farmers will result in putting him in touch with the markets, the news, the weather reports, saves weary miles of travel in ordinary transaction of business. The demand is growing greater for the farmer to live in closer touch with the world. The telephone will sell cattle, hogs, products. Knowledge of latest quotations quickly pays for the service. It will help to keep the young folks on the farm. It will make neighborhoods of homes stretched along a road for miles. The inclemency of the seasons with their effect on the health may be avoided in a hundred instances. Illness may be checked as quickly by its use as if in town, dollars saved in a hundred ways. Thus the farm life may be made ideal...The telephone is a saver of time, an annihilator of distance and that time is coming when every remote hamlet and nearly every home will be in hourly communication with the outside world." *(Eagle Quill, March 21, 1902)*

#### Local Telephone for Eagle

The Eagle Telephone Company commenced today to build its local line. The plans are similar to those of the Wisconsin company and long distance instruments only will be used. When the village line and the line to Eagle Lake and Jericho is complete the company proposes to build to Dousman, Genesee and neighboring points. A local line will be built at Palmyra by this company in a few days. The company is ready for an extensive business and will meet all reasonable demands."

"The Eagle Telephone Company is right in the harness and will soon have its lines up. Enterprise of this kind is deserving of support. Many who have had sickness in the family are anxiously looking for telephone service." *(Eagle Quill, May 2, 1902)*

"Next week the "hello" instruments of the Eagle Telephone Co. will be in working shape." *(Eagle Quill, May 23, 1902)*

"The Eagle Telephone Co. gives all day and night service, a convenience enjoyed in large cities. The night service also affords protection to the bank. Eagle folks all appreciate the service."

*(Eagle Quill, August 22, 1902)*

*(Ed. Note: In 1919 teenager Louise Breidenbach, a new employee, was awakened in the early hours by the noise of robbers breaking into the bank below the telephone office. They had cut the wires from the telephone company office to the pole across the street, but were unaware that there were wires from the back of the building. She was able to call the bank president, who notified the marshall of the robbery in progress. After a gun battle and chase, the robbers escaped without robbing the vault.)*

#### "EAGLE TELEPHONE COMPANY

If the number of telephone subscribers can be taken as a basis to figure the thrift of the people of a community, then it is safe to say that Eagle and vicinity are exceptionally fortunate. The Eagle Telephone Co. certainly has abundant faith in Eagle's future and to this end has spent a large sum of money in the building of lines and equipment of their exchanges. It was established only last June and its growth has been really phenomenal. By the first day of November, 75 phones will be in use. Our business men and the farmers around Eagle realize the necessity of having a telephone installed that can furnish them "long distance" as well as perfect local service, which accounts for the wonderful increase. The switchboard and instruments used are of the latest improved patents; in fact the switchboard is technically known as the "relay multiple" pattern. The word "relay" refers to a portion of the interior equipment, but the word "multiple" interests every subscriber in the exchange in that it provides the operator with a means of reaching every line instantly, thus saving much time and eliminating the opportunity for error. Those who now have the service provided by this company are loud in its praise and would not be without it. The officers are: Frank A. Abendroth, president; Frank Kloppenburg, Jr., secretary and treasurer; and J.A. McManaman, general manager. Day and night the service is given and the switchboard is in the charge of Miss Isabelle Lins, day operator, and Miss Bertha Lins, night operator. Both of these young ladies are very amiable and answer all calls in a pleasant and satisfactory manner. We predict that it will not be long before every farmer in this

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locality will have telephone service. The advantages are innumerable and at the same time the cost is very low. This company also owns the Palmyra Exchange.” *(Eagle Quill, November 10, 1902)*

The Eagle Telephone Company quickly developed exchanges in other communities, beginning with Mukwonago:

“According to present prospects a telephone system will soon be incorporated in connection with the long distance telephone line in operation which will be of great benefit to citizens throughout this and neighboring townships. A very enthusiastic meeting was held in the Citizens bank building last Saturday evening and committees placed in the field to carry the work along. Reports show that about one hundred have shown a disposition to place instruments in their homes and business places.” *(Eagle Quill, January 23, 1903)*

“Wales—Steps have been taken whereby a local telephone system is to be established here. The system will be an extension of the one now located at Mukwonago. The central station will be at Genesee Depot until farther (sic) arrangements can be made: then possibly the central will be at this place. It needs ten subscriptions to make the movement an assured fact and at this writing the company has secured seven.” *(Eagle Quill, February 6, 1903)*

“The Eagle Telephone Company has increased its capital stock to \$30,000... [These] directors hold office: Frank A. Abendroth, Frank Kloppenberg, John A. McManman, Ed. J. Lins and H. M. Loibl. The company owns and operates the exchanges at Eagle and Palmyra and is building an exchange at Mukwonago. Contracts are also held for an exchange at Genesee Depot.”

“At a meeting of the board of directors held in the city of Milwaukee the East Troy exchange with all its appurtenances was purchased and will be oper-

ated by the Eagle company. The Eagle Telephone Company has long distance connections and gives both day and night service. The cost of a 'Phone per day is about four cents which includes free service over the lines of the local exchange.”

*(Eagle Quill, March 13, 1903)*

“The Eagle Telephone lines to Genesee and Wales will be in operation about May 1st, with long distance office at the Union House. F.W. Schwinn, local manager. Lines will be extended to North Prairie and Genesee Village. Farmers 'phones added.” *(Eagle Quill, April 21, 1903)*

“Eagle Telephone Company is building a line from Mukwonago to East Troy. The line will be completed this week. East Troy subscribers will soon be supplied with new bell (sic) instruments.” *(Eagle Quill, May 8, 1903)*

There were dangers associated with telephone use. In 1903 the Quill reported the trolley current following the telephone lines from Waukesha to Eagle and giving an “exhibition of electric light on the switchboard,” and in 1904 it told of lightning following a telephone line into a home.

Wisconsin was a leader in safeguarding the interests of the public; in 1907 the state government granted the Railroad Commission of Wisconsin the right to regulate the telephone industry. Bell and the independent companies worked together to connect the lines around the state. Many smaller companies sold out to the Wisconsin Telephone Company, which came to dominate larger metropolitan areas. The independent companies united in 1910 and established the Wisconsin State Telephone Association.

The Eagle Telephone Company was quite successful, showing assets of over \$111,000 for the year ending December 31, 1922. Eagle's equip-

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## IN MEMORIAM

Marcella Winzenried



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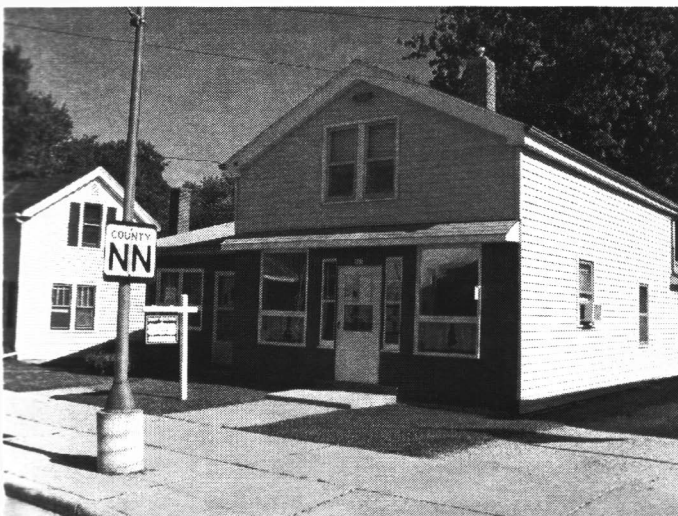
ment compared favorably to that of other sites. For example, although by 1926 there were 17,637 telephones in Madison, that city had no automatic telephones throughout the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th. Calls were taken by operators, who connected the call (literally—the connecting wire was moved from one line to the other). Operators and others on the “party line” could listen in on conversations.

In 1925, John Allen bought the first exchange (Tomah) of what would become the North-West Telephone Company. He purchased the Eagle Telephone Company in the late 1920s.

The Eagle Quill of March 13, 1931 carried a story describing the Bank of Eagle building as a total loss in a fire. The telephone company had occupied the second story. Betty Enright remembers that for a while the telephone company was in the space next to the bank, now occupied by the Coyote Canyon Café.

In April of 1939 Viola Adams began work as a telephone operator for North-West in Palmyra. At that time, the company was located in the building at 117 Main Street. Previously, it had been in the second story of the building at the corner of Third and Main Streets. She recalls that the night shift ran from 7 pm until 7 am, but she was only paid for 8 hours, because it was assumed she would be able to sleep during the night. From working for 21 cents an hour, Viola went on to become the business office supervisor.

Ed and Nona Kuetter ran the Eagle telephone exchange from 125 Main Street/Hwy NN for a time.



*Photo by Roy Leonhardt*



*Photo by Roy Leonhardt*

The cobblestone building at 205 Grove Street in Eagle, currently used by the Ultimate Image salon, served the telephone company from the 1940s. Betty Enright worked there from the early 1950s. Things had not changed much for operators—there was generally only one on duty at a time, they were trained on the job, and a bed was provided for the night shift, which she remembers as running from 9 pm until 7 am.

In 1960 North-West, using a \$7,500,000 loan from the Rural Electrification Administration, established dial phone service in Delafield, Dousman, Eagle, Genesee, Mukwonago and Palmyra. Receivers in Palmyra were replaced beginning March 21. Eagle customers did not get new instruments at that time “due to the fact that the present exchange has magneto service and will have a complete new set-up.” In its June 30, 1960, issue the Palmyra Enterprise reported that the Eagle dial phone system was 95% complete. The new service made operators unnecessary, and when the Palmyra office closed in April of 1961, the jobs of Viola Adams, Sandra Adams, Florence Amann, Bessie Scheets, Helen Turner, Lois Oehrke, Leota Baasler and Leola Turner were eliminated. Viola Adams worked on assigning the new 7-digit telephone numbers which replaced the 3- and 4-digit ones formerly in use.

The Eagle office closed in July, ending the jobs of Rita Eiring, chief operator Margaret Smart, Shirley Matters, Betty Enright, and Irene Shearer.

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The operators were replaced by one-story un-attended dial offices, built 24 by 30 feet in size. The one in Palmyra was built facing E. Main Street between First and Second Streets, on property acquired from Mrs. Ruth Barnham; it still stands behind the library. The one in Eagle was built at the rear of the water plant and still stands behind the Kettle/Citgo station.?

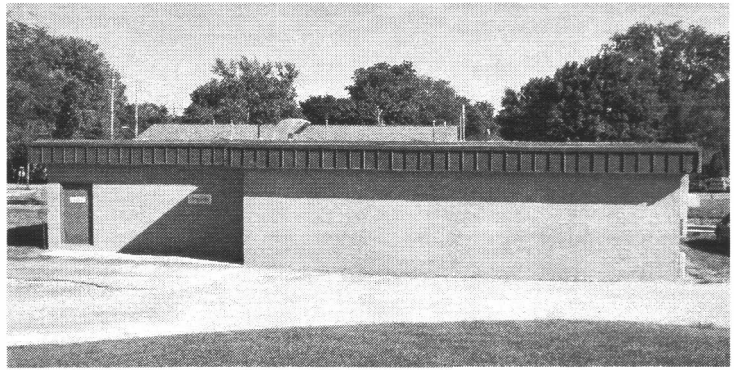


Photo by Roy Leonhardt

## Our Artistic Neighbors Exhibit at the EHS Museum

The exhibit currently in progress will feature works by both amateur and professional artists. It is anticipated that the exhibit will be open in time for the EHS open house and remain on display in the museum for a month. The exhibit includes, but is not limited to, work by these artists:

Stuart Fredenberg started painting after retirement. He likes to work with oils and will recycle the canvas and frames from old paintings he finds at rummage sales. Unfortunately, he suffered a stroke recently, but insists he will get back to his hobby.

Stephanie Kalnes, the owner of Great Lakes Design company, is a member of the American Society of Interior Design and has a BA in art. Her clients have included Miller Brewery, General Mitchall International Airport, and the Pettit Foundation.

William Krestan jr lives in Eagle with his wife and two children. The painting on exhibit was an assignment for art class his senior year at Palmyra-Eagle High School (1985). The class was taught by Mr. Wimmer. This acrylic painting took about 3 to 4 weeks to complete. Now he does woodworking projects in his spare time; his current project is an oak cabinet.

Martin Murk won the federal duck stamp competition in 1977 and went on to win Wisconsin's 1979 trout stamp and the 1980 duck stamp contests. In 1982 he designed Wisconsin's first Great Lakes salmon and trout stamp and the first North American endangered species conservation stamp. He also won the 1989 Wisconsin inland trout stamp contest. He has been privileged to be Artist of the Year for several organizations: Wetlands for Wildlife, Wisconsin Ducks Unlimited, Wisconsin Waterfowlers Association and the Great Lakes Wildlife Art Festival. His works have been exhibited at the Milwaukee Public Museum, National Museum of American History (Smithsonian Institution), and Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum, among other sites.

Elaine Potrykus attended Mt. Mary College and Layton School of Art. She has 25 years of experience in interior and exterior designs and does church interior design as well. She works in all mediums.

Rose Raiter became interested in painting after she retired. Inspired by a woman who had learned to paint at a senior citizen center, she took lessons—the teacher did not believe that Rose had never painted before. After starting in acrylics, Rose moved on to watercolors and then to oils.

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Margaret Richards graduated from Milwaukee Downer College with a degree in art and went on to get a master's degree in art from Lawrence College in Appleton. In 1990 she retired after teaching art at Kettle Moraine High School for 25 years. She was also a weaver, and made many hand woven items as gifts. She passed away May 14, 2001. The picture on display was a gift to Eloise Richards in 1953; it shows the section of Main Street from Mealy's Furniture Store to Healy's Tavern. It hung in the bank (now Bank One) until December 31, 1999.

Tom Shropshire became interested in art as a young child and began his first professional art training with Earl Gessert, the renowned watercolorist at the age of 13. By age 15, he had a Chicago agent and was competing in national exhibitions. Locally, the Potawatomi Casino in Milwaukee commissioned him to create a series of paintings that comprise the "Living Legacy Collection" of Limited Edition Prints. They were showcased by the Milwaukee Public Museum in conjunction with the opening of the new native American exhibit, "A Tribute to Survival." He has won numerous awards and his paintings are represented in many private and corporate collections, museums and tribal centers throughout the country.

Stephanie Tabat (Beck) has been doing artwork since high school. She was an illustrator-draftsman in the US Navy for 4 years. "The Farm" was done with india ink and colored pencil. She is now an art director for a large health care provder and does most of her work on the computer using art programs.?



## EHS Shirts Are Available for Sale

Shirts with a small EHS eagle logo on the front left side are available for sale through the museum. (Logo shown 2/3 size.) This year the society is offering members T shirts in natural or sand for \$8 and golf shirts in light blue or light gray for \$10. For those ordering from out of town, there is a \$2.50 charge for post age and handling.

Please make checks out to Eagle Historical Society and send with the following form to:

Eagle Historical Society  
PO Box 454  
Eagle WI 53119

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Number of T-shirts \_\_\_\_\_ Size(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
(sizes from child's M (10-12) to adult XL)

Number of golf shirts \_\_\_\_\_ Size(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
(sizes adult M to XL)

Telephone number \_\_\_\_\_



Eagle Historical Society, Inc.  
217 Main Street  
P.O. Box 454  
Eagle, WI 53119



**ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED**



## Eagle Historical Society Open House

Members and the public are invited to  
the Our Artistic Neighbors exhibit  
at the museum, 217 Main Street,  
on Sunday, August 17, from 2-4 p.m.