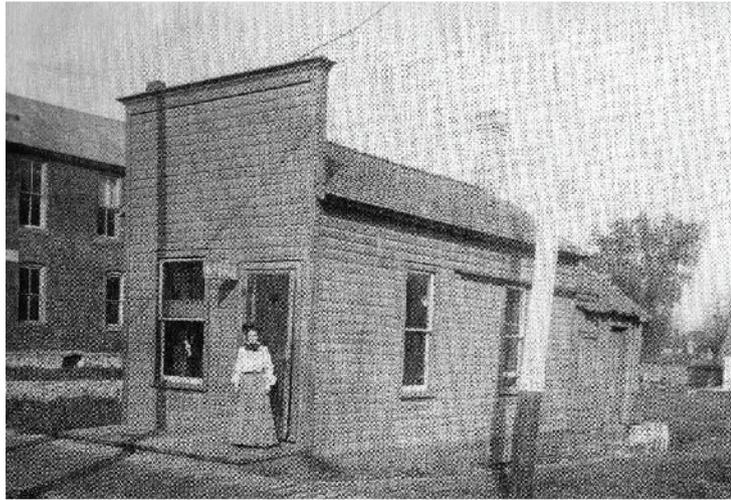
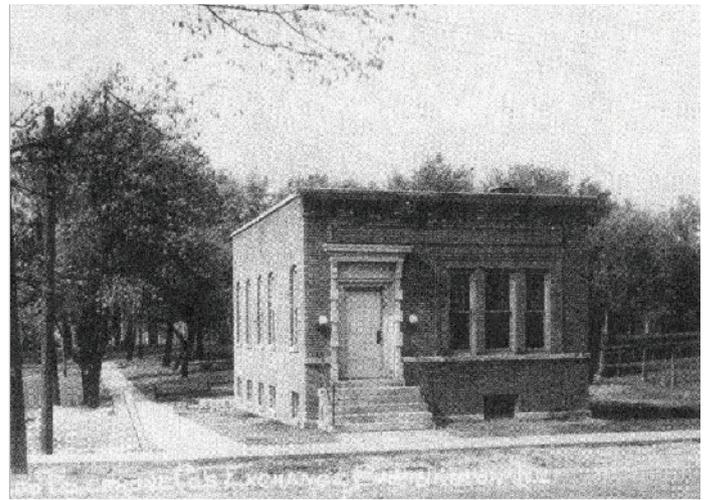


QUINTESSENTIAL BARRINGTON BY BARBARA L. BENSON



Chicago Telephone Company began service to Barrington in 1898 with its first switchboard in the office of the Barrington Review newspaper at the northwest corner of East Main and Ela Streets. Ida Hutchison Graham was the first operator (photo c. 1908).



Chicago Telephone Company became Illinois Bell Telephone in 1923. With subscriber growth, the telephone office moved across the street and was housed there until 1958. This building was remodeled and is now the Kaper building.

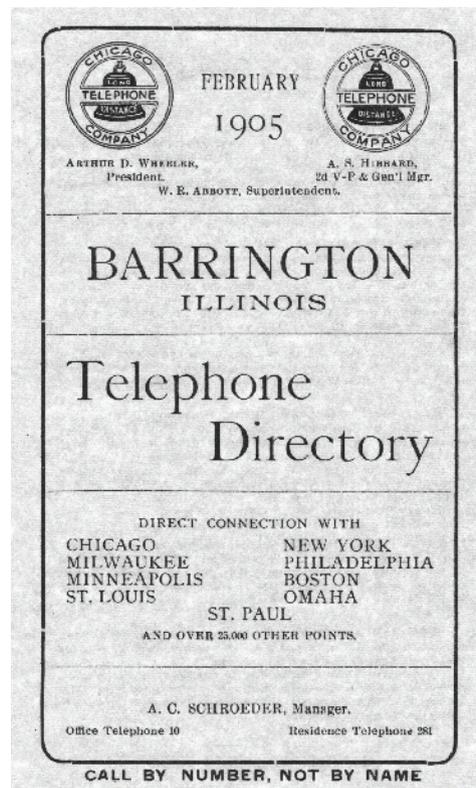
ACROSS PARTY LINES

IN 1969, MILLIONS OF AMERICANS turned on their TVs and howled with laughter as Lily Tomlin, playing the character of Ernestine the Telephone Operator on "Laugh In," pulled and pushed the plugs on her switchboard saying "one ringy dingy, two ringy dingy" with the query "Hello! Have I reached the party to whom I am speaking?" when someone picked up the line. Some of her priceless skits can be enjoyed on YouTube including her call in to General Motors. "Hello, is this the General?"

Today, as communication is one universal party, both visually and verbally, Ernestine and her fellow operators were a bridge from when the telephone "party line" was a novelty, beginning in the early 20th century, connecting communities across the countryside on a shared phone line.

The 1976 Bicentennial book "Tales of Old Barrington" has a recollection as Barrington tuned in to its neighbor towns. William "Bill" Klingenberg, Jr., was born in 1904, the same year that the telephone company ran a long-distance line from Barrington to Fox River Grove and Cary. That line ran along Harbor Road past the Klingenberg farm.

The company wanted all the farmers to install a telephone, but Bill Klingenberg, Sr.



Barrington's 1905 Telephone Directory.

only agreed when neighbors signed up. He had two hired men, August Felgenhauer and Charlie Hacker, who received board and lodging in exchange for farm work. Charlie played the fiddle, and August the concertina.

Bill, Jr. remembered the telephone ringing

in the evening and his dad answering. The caller was the night man on the switchboard in Barrington, and some evenings it must have been dull sitting there. So, he suggested a concert over the line by his dad's two hired men.

The night operator, known as "Central," said he would call all party lines around Barrington and long distance into Palatine, notifying the patrons to tune in on the concert. The two musicians sat on chairs next to the telephone, but they had to improvise something as a drum. Bill, Jr. remembered his dad taking his mother's wooden washtub, turning it upside down, and using a wooden potato masher for a drumstick.

Fast forward over 100 years, and we signed up by the millions for Zoom meetings, remote education, concerts, and programs as the pandemic physically separated us. It was communication that had its origins in those early days of calling along the line from Palatine (long distance!) to Cary.

The last local party line in Woodbury, Connecticut, was phased out in 1990, and Illinois State University closed its last party line in 1991. But, by leaps and bounds, everything old is new again, beyond the "night man's" imagination. U