

COMMUNICATIONS

In no line of progress during the last century are differences more marked than in the constantly improving methods of communication.

The early colonists of 1836 had absolutely no contact with the world outside the local borders, except, at first, a weekly mail, and the slow, difficult trips on horseback or in lumber wagons for purposes of trade as has been recorded.

This state of affairs was slow of change. During twenty-five years but little improvement came about and during the Civil War when excitement and anxiety were at fever heat, getting the news quickly was a serious question.

The Michigan Central R.R. brought Detroit papers to Jackson, a stage transported them to Charlotte; and a local "purse" was made up to hire a pony-rider to bring them each day to Vermontville. No one retired till every item of news had been read.

When the Grand River Valley R.R. was built, telegraph communication became possible and frequent mail, but that was not until 1870.

The entrance of the first telephone line into the village with a pay-station in the store of Stone & Hull was another mile-stone in local history.

The writer (J.E.M.) recalls as a child, playing with a toy-- "contraption" consisting of two pasteboard cups, the bottoms covered with skin and in the center of each a cord was fastened with a knot. This cord has a length of some forty feet thus uniting the cups. We thought it a marvel to hear remarks whispered by a child at the far end when holding a cup to the ear.

Dr. George Parmenter of Petoskey has contributed to this article a bit of personal recollection about the Bell telephone line which came through the town somewhere in the late 80's.

His father, Dr. Wm. Parmenter, had, prior to this date, installed a mechanical phone of a crude character between office and home. This consisted of two silk drums with outside circular rims of wood, and a wire was stretched in a straight line across the lots. To "call" a signal was given by tapping the drum with a pen-knife or some other hard instrument. There were no poles and the wire was fastened to trees. It was Dr. George's duty to act as "line-man" and repair any break caused by wind or storm.

We quote now directly from Dr. Parmenter: "On my way home from school one noon, probably in the year 1887, I noticed a gang of men digging post holes and putting up long poles right through the main street of Vermontville. This was something new and I watched the process and asked questions. I noticed that the line of poles came to the corner by the Methodist Church and turned East. I was told they were of a telephone line from Grand Rapids to Detroit. . . . Here was news! I hurried home and at the dinner table told the family what I had seen and heard and, guided by my long experience and being an old hand at the telephone game, I predicted they would