

McCreary's Book Recalls Days of Old-fashioned Telephone System in St. Ignace

By Ryan Schlehuber

Patricia McCreary, fascinated that St. Ignace was the third last community in the country to switch from a manually-operated telephone system to an automatic one in 1974, wrote a book about those early days.

"The Company and The Community: A History of the Telephone Company of St. Ignace and Surrounding Communities," has been published by the Michilimackinac Historical Society and is a 123-page compilation of history and photographs of St. Ignace telephone service and its switchboard operators. The book includes personal accounts from operators about their jobs, the equipment they worked with, and facilities they worked in.

"I think the history of the phone company here is very interesting," said Mrs. McCreary, "and listening and reading what some of the switchboard operators had to say about it, that was the most interesting thing to me."

She is originally from Strandburg, South Dakota, and has written five historical accounts of the schools and

The Company and The Community

A History of the Telephone Company of St. Ignace and Surrounding Communities



Compiled by Patricia McCreary

Patricia McCreary's book, published by the Michilimackinac Historical Society.



Patricia McCreary

churches there.

"The Company and The Community" is the first to be pub-

lished. It will be on sale Friday, October 17, at the historical society's French Frog Feast fundraiser at The Galley Restaurant in St. Ignace, and Mrs. McCreary will sign copies at 7 p.m.

Telephone service was introduced to St. Ignace as early as 1884, according to Emerson Smith, author of "Before the Bridge."

In 1974, Michigan Bell moved its offices from St. Ignace to Sault Ste. Marie and the manual switchboards were replaced by automatic switches.

A section of the old board is on display at the St. Ignace Chamber of Commerce.

The last two communities to use manual switchboard operators were Virginia City, Nevada, in

1975, and Catalina Island, California, in 1978.

In her book, Mrs. McCreary lists 126 former St. Ignace switchboard operators, compiled mostly by former Bell employee Gert Litzner.

"She stayed up many nights thinking and remembering names of people," said Mrs. McCreary.

Mrs. McCreary, 71, is a retired high school English teacher and also taught American English at an all-girl college in Nagasaki, Japan, for 14 years.

She moved to St. Ignace five years ago to be closer to her son, Pete.

Her next writing project will be a history of the Bethel Baptist Church in her hometown of Strandburg.

Jane Young Captures Fur Trade in Book

From girlhood, Jane Young of Mackinaw City has been fascinated and Native Americans and how their interaction with Europeans changed them. "Fur Trade Impact on Great Lakes Indians" is the result, an illustrated, 111-page self-published book written with her husband, Larry. In it, she traces history from the 1500s to the French and Indian War in 1760.

The Youngs participate in historical re-enactments of the 1700s and the American Revolution.

She will sign copies of the book at the Frog Feast Open House from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Friday, October 17, at the Fort de Buade Museum in St. Ignace. It will sell for \$20.

Several Thefts Reported on Curtis Boats

The Mackinac County Sheriff's Office is requesting assistance from the community in investigating a larceny that took place in the Village of Curtis between Monday, September 22, and Wednesday, September 24, when personal property was removed from several pontoon boats docked on the shore of South Manistique Lake.

Items taken included assorted fishing equipment, floatable life jackets, boat gas tanks, miscellaneous hand tools, an eight-horsepower pull start boat motor, boat propellers, and other boat equipment.

Anyone having information regarding this incident is asked to contact the Mackinac County Sheriff's Office at (800) 643-1911.

Sidewalks Will Improve Safe Routes to School at St. Ignace District Gets \$62,235 Federal Grant

By Karen Gould

By next fall, St. Ignace students will have new sidewalks leading to the school campus and drivers will be alerted to slow down on Portage Street by two flashing school zone signs.

The walkways will be constructed next summer as part of the Safe Routes to School program that integrates safety and fitness and focuses on elementary and middle school students. Most of the project costs are covered by a \$62,235 federal grant.

St. Ignace is the only school district in the Upper Peninsula and one of 41 Michigan elementary and middle schools in 10 counties that is receiving the funding.

The Michigan Department of Transportation and the Michigan Fitness Foundation coordinate the state's program and reviewed the grant applications. Funding for the program is a 100% federal grant with no local match required.

The goal of the program is to encourage students to walk or ride a bicycle to school by improving safe routes. Part of the requirement for the grant is to motivate students to walk more.

A walking competition will begin this year for students in kindergarten through eighth grade. At the end of the competition, the class that has walked the most will receive a trip to Mackinac Island in the spring.

They will walk from the ferry dock up Cadotte Avenue to Grand Hotel, where they will be served lunch.

"It's not that we're trying to exclude the high school," said

Superintendent Mike Springsteen, "it's just that the grant was focused on elementary and middle school students."

In the grant request, the school also had included plans for a road that would have circled around the rear of the elementary and middle school building to improve traffic flow. Funding was not awarded for that part of the project.

"I saw that as a really big safety issue for alleviating the pressure for the cars coming in and out of the parking lot and making that a lot safer," Mr. Springsteen said.

A sidewalk to the school along the south side of Spring Street, beginning at Fourth Street, will be built. Students now walk or ride bicycles on the grass and in the road. During the winter, once snowbanks line the street, the only option students have is to walk in the street.

From Portage Street, students now weave through the parking lot to get to the school building. By next fall, a sidewalk constructed on the east side of the parking lot will lead to the school building. The two concrete sidewalks will be six feet wide and curbed to differentiate them from Spring Street and the school parking lot. Where appropriate, the sidewalks will have safety markings to meet federal rules.

"I think it will be a real big plus that, if you wanted to drop your son or daughter off on Portage Street, that they would have a safe route all the way up to the middle school or elementary school, which they don't right now," Mr. Springsteen said.

A branch from that sidewalk will head west across the width of the parking lot and link up with the walkway already in place. That sidewalk is 14 feet wide and leads to the LaSalle High School cafeteria entrance.

"From a community standpoint, it's going to be a lot safer getting to school," he said.

The school has been working with the city's engineer, Brian Olsen of R.S. Scott and Associates, which served as temporary engineers for the Mackinac County Road Commission. Mr. Springsteen also is talking with the new Road Commission manager, Dirk Heckman. The school must work with either the city, county, or the Michigan Department of Transportation, as the funding is a pass-through grant.

Since receiving the award, the school has learned the grant can only be used to cover construction, not design, engineering expenses, or project oversight costs.

Historical Society Plans French Frog Feast

The second annual French Frog Feast, featuring dinner, a museum open house, and two author book signings, will be Friday, October 17, at 6 p.m. at The Galley Restaurant in St. Ignace. All proceeds will go toward Michilimackinac Historical Society for the operation of Fort de Buade Museum.

Included in the event is an open house to Fort de Buade Museum from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m., and two local authors will be on

hand to sign books.

Patricia McCreary of St. Ignace is the author of "The Company and The Community," a history of telephone communication in St. Ignace and the rest of the Straits area. Mrs. McCreary will sign books during the dinner.

Jane Young of Mackinaw City is the author of "Fur Trade Impact on the Great Lakes Indians," which discusses Native American crafts, accessories, and

clothing seen during the fur trade era. She, along with her husband, Larry Young, will be dressed in period regalia during the event.

A social hour will begin at 6 p.m. and dinner will be at 7 p.m. Food featured at the dinner will include frog legs, whitefish, whitefish liver, and chicken and glissants.

Dinner is \$20 per person. Seating is limited, so reservations are required. For reservations, call 643-7960.

Community Television Channel 2 Returns

The community cable television channel two will be back on the air in St. Ignace listing nonprofit events and meetings. The school anticipates the channel will be operational by Monday, October 20. After about six months of seeing nothing but a black television screen on the channel, viewers again will be able to view local information, including St. Ignace Area Schools' lunch menu. The system's 20-year-old software has been replaced with an enhanced program that offers graphics and is much easier to use, said Kathy Marshall (pictured) of the school district. The system, offered by the local cable provider and supported by the city and the schools, is operated by Mrs. Marshall. To have nonprofit events and meetings posted on the channel, call Mrs. Marshall at 643-8500 or Kathy Cryderman at City Hall at 643-8545.



Recreation Dept. To Promote Hockey Program

Concerned About Decline's Impact on Arena Revenues

By Karen Gould

A joint effort between the St. Ignace Recreation Department and the Hockey Association is hoped to introduce more young players to hockey, stop the decline in participation, and raise funds to lower youth costs to play the sport at Little Bear East Arena.

The cost to play, a lack of awareness about the youth hockey program, and fewer children living in the area, say members of the Hockey Association, have created a drop in the number of players eight years old and younger from signing up for the sport. The decline in young players eventually will impact the entire hockey program, the Recreation Advisory Committee was told during its Wednesday, October 8, meeting.

The Hockey Association received backing from the Recreation Department and a reduction in ice-rental fees that will keep the cost for players eight years old and younger to \$35, which is the cost to register with USA Hockey for insurance. The Recreation Department will provide two hours a week of free ice time, help introduce young players to the sport, and work with the association to develop fundraising activities.

Before the meeting, only two players in the Mite age group of seven to eight years old had signed up to play hockey this season. Under the new cooperation, members of both organizations hope to increase enrollment in the next few weeks.

The 12-week hockey program begins November 15 and runs to

February 15. The young skaters would be on the ice learning about the sport twice a week.

A lack of sports participation is not specific to hockey, said the advisory committee chairman, Don Gustafson, who also is the high school principal. School enrollment is down, and there were not enough players to field a junior varsity football team this year at LaSalle High School.

About 60% of Hockey Association members are 13 years and older, 35% are between the ages of nine and 12 years, and 5% are eight years old and younger, said Scott Winkelman of the association.

The Recreation Department is concerned about the future impact on Little Bear East Arena revenues if the Hockey Association has fewer teams and needs to rent less ice time, said city Recreation Director Scott Marshall.

Ice rental is the largest expense considered when the Hockey Association sets fees, said Mr. Winkelman. The association pays \$60 an hour for ice rental for the younger players. The association pays about \$50,000 a year to rent the ice from the city.

"I believe that the Hockey Association needs assistance," said Mr. Marshall. "I believe that the declining number of players this year will greatly affect the program in the near future."

At committee member Mark Sposito's suggestion, Mr. Marshall will determine the two least used hours of open skating offered at the arena and convert those hours to a free training period for youth hockey players.

"We're investing in our future right now by putting these kids in here to learn to play," said Mr. Sposito, "so we do have a Squirt team [ages 9 and 10] in another

year."

Mr. Marshall also said he had been in contact with St. Ignace Area Schools to bring classes to the arena to learn about hockey. Mr. Marshall said he would work with the Hockey Association to organize fundraising, with revenues earmarked to help reduce hockey costs for young players.

"My only concern is, if this is failing and we do help, are we opening the door to be helping with the whole program?" Mr. Marshall said. "And if we don't help, are we opening the door to be helping with the whole program, if the program fails now with the young kids."

Mr. Gustafson suggested the groups work together to see if they can make a difference.

To alleviate some the expense faced by parents, the Hockey Association obtained a grant to purchase 15 sets of some of the equipment, including jerseys, pants, and safety pads, Mr. Winkelman said. Families still need to purchase skates, a helmet, and a stick.

"We have all the people in place. We have a coach, schedulers, volunteers, we have everything," said Mr. Winkelman. "We don't have kids."

Both groups will update the board in November.

On a related matter, talks continue with the Hockey Association on an agreement for concession operations at the arena.

Although it's usually a fundraiser for the association, Mr. Marshall would like to run the concession during open skate times, when in the past it was not always opened by the association. He also wants operation of the concession for any new event he brings to the arena. These occasions, he said, would not take away from the Hockey Association

Trudeau Wins Top Raffle Prize



Ed Trudeau of Mackinaw City won a new 2008 Toyota Yaris and \$25,000 in cash in a raffle September 27 to benefit Bishop Baraga Catholic School in Cheboygan. Mr. Trudeau is pictured (center) receiving the keys to his new vehicle from Dave Fernelius, and the \$25,000 check from Rachael Hudson of the Baraga Booster board. (Photograph courtesy of Michael Grisdale)