

ARTI-FACTS

The Newsletter of the Award-Winning Idyllwild Area Historical Society

Preserving the History of Idyllwild and Surrounding Communities
in the San Jacinto Mountains

SPRING 2015

“ONE RINGY-DINGY ... TWO RINGY-DINGY...”

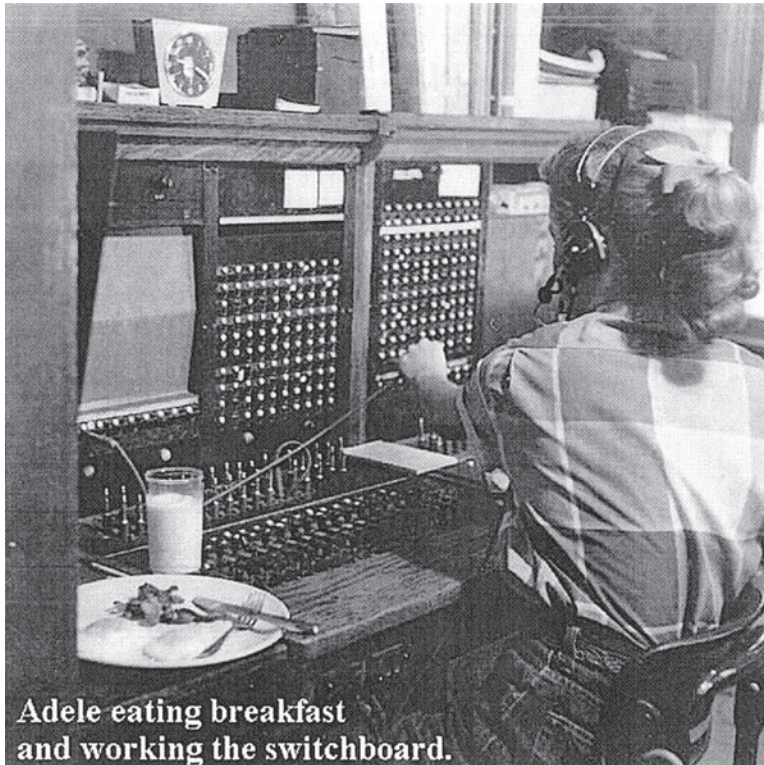
By John Blodgett

TALK ABOUT A WRONG NUMBER. In the late 1950s, telephone operator Adele Marks was at the Idyllwild switchboard when a Los Angeles operator called looking for the Flying Tigers. She thought she had dialed Idlewild Airport, New York International Airport's common name before it was rechristened in honor of John F. Kennedy. It took Adele a few minutes to convince her of the error.

“I told her there wasn't enough space in the mountains to land a helicopter, and to call New York,” Adele later recounted to a Press & Enterprise reporter.

ADELE AND HER HUSBAND REID were among the last people in the country to operate a phone system in which calls were connected by plugging a cord into a switchboard by hand. For the Markses, it was a home business they had happened upon as newlyweds.

After their wedding, Feb. 10, 1955, the couple honeymooned in a cabin at the Idyllwild Inn. Before driving home to Whittier, California, they stopped to thank Jerry Johnson for the comfortable accommodations. Small talk ensued, and when Jerry learned Reid worked for General Telephone Company



Adele eating breakfast and working the switchboard.

the Realtor went into sale mode — Idyllwild's telephone agency had just been listed for sale, and would the Markses be interested in buying it?

Reid and Adele discussed it and decided, yes, they were, but they had to wait a few months for a pending offer to fall through before they could buy it. Reid returned to Idyllwild in May to learn the switchboard system — he had worked only with the newer automated dialing systems — and in June they assumed

operation of the agency, which was owned by California Water & Telephone Company of Monrovia. In addition to Idyllwild, the service area included Pine Cove, Mountain Center, Garner Valley and Anza.

AS TOLD IN A 2004 TOWN CRIER article, their agreement with the phone company listed Adele as the “agent” and Reid as the “combination man” in charge of installation, repairs and maintenance. The couple had bought “the right to operate the Idyllwild system in exchange for a percentage of the gross proceeds.”

The original agent had been Rita Patton, who later became postmaster. In 1947 she sold the agency to Jess Brown, who had built what's now the Mile High Country Inn. He in turn sold the franchise to Lee and

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IDYLLWILD AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Board meetings are open to the membership and are held at the museum on the 2nd Friday of each month at 4 p.m..

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Betty Parks, Robert Reyes, Bob Smith

Arti-Facts

Co-Editors: Adele & Bob Smith
Layout: Halie Wilson
Feature Writer: John Blodgett

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT IAHS?

15th Annual Home Tour

Mark the date of Saturday, September 19, on your calendar to enjoy our ever-popular home tour. Nanci Killingsworth promises another great selection of homes. Volunteers are always needed for a variety of tasks: contact Charlotte Groty (951-201-1400) or Carolyn Hall (951-317-4613) to get involved. 📖

IAHS Around the Village

Next time you eat out, drop into the Mile High Café (an IAHS member), where owner Nam Park has expanded her historic photo exhibit with many images from our archive. This is one of several local businesses for whom we've recently supplied photos to display, including Village Market, Idyology, Idyllwild Bake Shop & Brew, and Jo'An's. You can also view our old images on the websites of the Idyllwild and Fern Valley water districts. 📖



New Museum Exhibit

Our hearty thanks go to Suzy Bowman and Lynnda Hart for mounting the new exhibit on local writers. Well-publicized in the press and on Facebook, it's been drawing a good deal of comment. In the exhibit you can see a list of writers who have made their homes on the Hill, as well as a sampling of their books. Children visiting the museum seem especially fascinated by the old portable typewriter. 📖

Additions to Our Archive

The past few months have seen several significant donations. Most noteworthy is an elegant framed portrait of Frank and Mabel Moote, now on display in their namesake archive building along with copies of a biographical brochure. The portrait was donated by Penny and Arpad Mihály of Columbia, California.

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RINGY ... (continued from page 1)

Bob Luck, from whom the Marksés purchased it along with the house Brown had built on the inn's property at the corner of North Circle Drive and Fir Street. The switchboard was in a room off the kitchen, making it convenient for Adele to take breakfast while working.

THE YOUNG COUPLE GOT OFF TO A ROUGH START. The agency's 250 to 300 customers were accustomed to providing names, rather than phone numbers (five digits at the time), in order to make calls. As the new kids on The Hill, Reid and Adele either had to match a name to a number before they could connect callers, or to ask callers to provide numbers instead of names. Impatient residents called a special meeting at Town Hall, where tempers flared, but Leona McGaugh spoke on the Marksés' behalf and Annie Morris came all the way from Mountain Center with a jar of jam to show her support. "From that point on, we became part of the family," Reid recalled in a 2002 IAHS oral history. "And eventually we learned all the numbers."

Less than two years later, townsfolk would once again gather at the Town Hall regarding the Marksés, only this time to give Adele a baby shower.

At first, Adele spent her days seated at the switchboard while Reid busied himself with installations and repairs. Reid's turn at the switchboard was in the early morning and late evening hours. They shut down the switchboard at 10:30 or 11:00 p.m., making sure to set an alarm to notify them of any late-night emergency calls that might come in.

SPEAKING OF EMERGENCIES, the switchboard was hooked into the siren atop the Fire Station. Whenever a fire call came in, Adele or Reid would press a red button on the wall, setting off the siren. Volunteer firefighters — Reid was one — could call the switchboard and "flash," or click the receiver, three times to get directions to the emergency.

Adele got away from the switchboard long enough to collect money from the payphones around town once a month in the winter and weekly in summer. If a movie was being filmed, she made sure to empty the payphones at the church camps and ISOMATA more frequently.

The original 250 to 300 customers eventually doubled, forcing the Marksés to install a second switchboard and eventually hire six additional operators to assist. Having employees allowed Adele



Reid (on pole) & Adele Marks working at the junction box between long-distance and local phone lines.

IAHS Archive

to spend more time raising their daughter Lisa, born Feb. 10, 1957, though it didn't stop her from working.

TODAY WE TAKE LONG DISTANCE phone calls for granted. Back then, however, Idyllwild had only a handful of long-distance lines that were connected to the outside world via Hemet. Callers had to wait if all lines were taken. At such times, the personal (and personable) service of the live operator came to the fore: Whoever was working the board could take a would-be long-distance caller's number and ring them when a line was opened.

The operators also acted as walkabout voice mail, hand-delivering messages to people who didn't have a phone. The cost of delivering these "messenger tickets" varied according to distance from the switchboard, and would be charged to the originating caller whenever the recipient returned the call from a payphone.

LISA'S BIRTH MARKED A TURNING POINT FOR THE COUPLE in more ways than one. Shortly after, Reid quit when the telephone company stopped reimbursing his mileage and refused to purchase him a work truck. (He found work with the U.S. Forest Service.) And within a year, modernity would catch up with Idyllwild.

By the close of 1957, California Water &

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ARCHIVE ... (continued from page 2)

California. Penny is the Mootes' granddaughter and has a vacation cabin on the site of the original 1878 cabin at Pinewood, the back-country community her grandparents founded in 1925.

Substantial cash contributions from life member Betty Parks of Riverside and from Bob & Adele Smith have allowed us to continue expanding the on-line archive of early Town Criers (see "Digital Town Crier" above).

We've also received additions to our holdings of maps, manuscripts, postcards, books, and posters from Idyllwild residents Ben & Nanci Killingsworth and John Blodgett, as well as Terry Bauman of San Diego and Sanders Chase of Los Angeles. And we've bought a few unique Idyllwild area postcards and matchbooks online.

Each item we receive is screened by the Collections
See MOOTES, page 5



RINGY ... (continued from page 3)

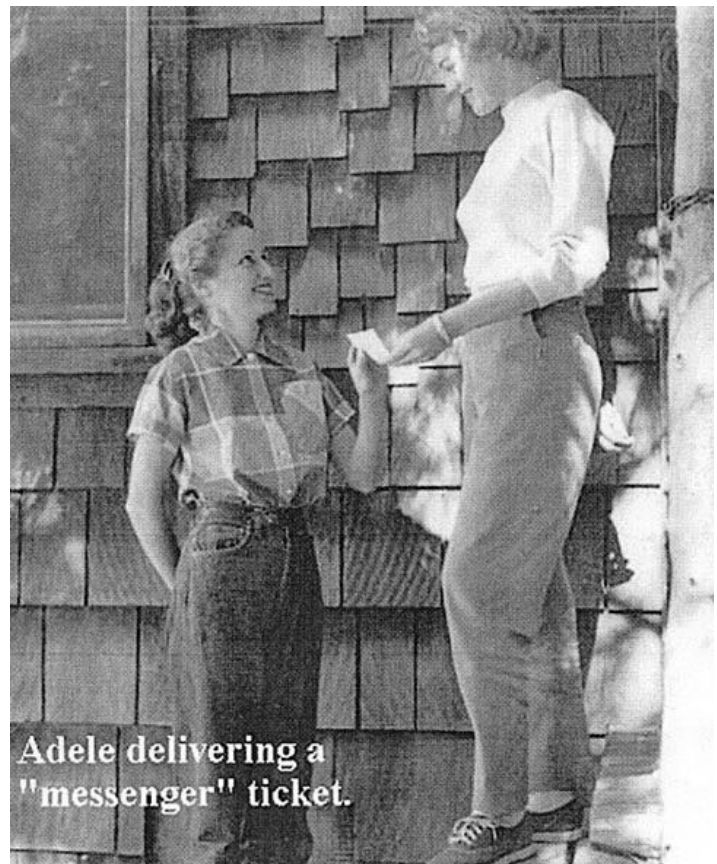
Telephone Company had paid \$130,000 to update the area's phone system to accommodate dial service. The money went toward buying equipment, building a small concrete structure on Ridgeview Drive to house the new system, changing out phones, and meeting other set-up needs. The upgrades would soon silence Idyllwild's switchboard operators, among the relatively few left in the country.



John Blodgett, our regular feature writer, is a freelance journalist and Idyllwild resident.

Photo Courtesy of John Blodgett

The Press & Enterprise reported that in the weeks leading up to the switch, Keith Horine, a California Water & Telephone representative, visited Idyllwild to teach adults and children alike how to use the new dial telephones. Bill Miller, president of the Idyllwild Chamber of Commerce, made the first call at 11:01 p.m. on Jan. 18, 1958. (The report did not note to



Adele delivering a "messenger" ticket.

whom.) Thereafter, 500 dial phones went into service within a system able to accommodate twice as many.

Adele expressed relief to the Press & Enterprise reporter. "The strain was awful," she said. "I will be happy to go back to just being a housewife and caring for my infant daughter, Lisa." 📖

MOOTES ... (continued from page 4)

Committee of the Board of Directors to ensure that it is appropriate for our permanent collection. For example, in a recent monthly meeting the committee examined 33 donations, consisting of 166 different items. Typically, a few items are deemed inappropriate. Depending on the expressed wishes of the donor, these may be returned, given to a more relevant museum, put up for sale in our Museum Shop, or discarded. ♪

Another Elvis Fan Club Visit

IAHS's collection of artifacts, photos, and documents from the 1961 filming of "Kid Galahad" in Idyllwild continues to draw worldwide attention to our museum. The latest contingent of visitors came from Brazil via Scottsdale, Arizona.



**Bob Smith, Vera and Marlene Biora, and "Elvis in Astrodome" Fan Club president Maria Mendes (far right).
Lynnda Hart photo**

In return for a generous donation to the museum, Bob Smith conducted a guided tour of filming sites in Idyllwild. (In past years we've also hosted such groups from Nevada, Florida, Tennessee, and Australia.) ♪

IDYLLWILD-AMONG-THE-PINES

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Round Trip Tickets on Santa Fe, Los Angeles to San Jacinto, good on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays—FIVE DOLLARS.

Daily stage meets all trains at San Jacinto. Sunset telephone for guests. Call up "Idyllwild." For particulars address:

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Bob Blankman Idyllwild
Norma Gibbs Huntington Beach
Carol Scanny Palm Desert
Celesta Wassell Kingman AZ
Patrick Wassell Kingman AZ

FOUNDERS CIRCLE

Approaching our 15th anniversary, we pause to honor the life members whose generosity lifted us through the society's early years and enabled us to develop the museum campus we enjoy today:

Nick Adamenko	Big Horn WY
Doug, Mary*, & Pat Austin	Idyllwild
Byron & Robyn Beck	Santa Barbara
Charles & Charlotte Bird	San Diego
Corrinne & Ray Brown	Idyllwild
Harry & Berdie* Bubb	Newport Beach
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Anne & Doug Walker	Palm Desert
Bill & Margaret Wootton*	Idyllwild
Jeff Wu	Irvine

(*deceased)

SURGEONS RACE DEATH IN AUTO TO SAVE MAN INJURED AT IDYLLWILD

Surgeons from Los Angeles, Riverside and San Jacinto raced vainly with death to save the life of Marion Hawkins of Pasadena, the owner of the livery at Idyllwild, who, dying from a gunshot wound, was tenderly borne down the steep trails on a stretcher to save every mile possible between him and the beneficent scalpers that might fight back death.

Hawkins went out hunting yesterday. While bending over a spring to quench his thirst, his gun was discharged and the bullet, a thirty-eight, tore through his stomach. He was borne to the hotel by tourist companions in the party. Telegrams were dispatched in all directions to surgeons. One was sent to Dr. Claire W. Murphy of Los Angeles, and although the furthest from the scene he was the first to get under way.

He received the telegram when three miles away from his surgical case. This was at four yesterday afternoon. He drove his horse so furiously the three miles to his office and thence to the Santa Fe depot that the animal lost three shoes. Arriving in Riverside at 7:25, he sought Dr. W. D. Sawyer, and the pair secured an automobile and started at breakneck speed, regardless of darkness and bad roads hurried on their errand of mercy.

Meantime Dr. J. H. Strasser of San Jacinto had been notified and he started up the rocky trail to meet the party slowly descending with the dying man.

Hawkins died one hour after surgical aid reached him. His body was brought into San Jacinto and prepared for burial. The wild race through the night and all the heroic endeavor of the surgeons was of little avail.

BY DR. W. D. SAWYER.

Hemet, Oct. 3, 1:30 a.m.—(Special to the Enterprise.)—Marion Hawkins was accidentally shot at 11 o'clock yesterday morning. He was brought to Hemet at 10 p.m. The surgeons reached there about the same time. Everything possible was done, but the long journey down the mountain after the wound, which was almost necessarily fatal, brought about death an hour after the doctors arrived.

—Riverside Enterprise (Oct. 3, 1905)

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If a gift membership, please enter donor's name and address:

Name _____ Address _____

Museum Hours:

11 am - 4 pm

Winter Schedule (Sept. 6-June 14):

Saturdays, Sundays,
& Monday holidays

Summer Schedule (June 19-Labor Day):

Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays,
4th of July, & Labor Day

Keep up with us on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/IdyllwildAreaHistoricalSociety>

Visit our website:

www.idyllwildhistory.org

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call (951) 659-2717 or

e-mail to info@idyllwildhistory.org

Admission Free

Donations Welcome

Dates to Remember:

**Saturday, June 6 – Annual Garden Tour
(sponsored by Idyllwild Garden Club)**

Sunday, August 9 – IAHS Annual Meeting

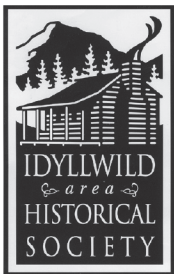
Saturday, September 5 – Annual Ice Cream Social

Saturday, September 19 – 15th Idyllwild Home Tour

**Saturday, October 10 – Art Walk & Wine Tasting
(sponsored by Art Alliance of Idyllwild)**

October 24 – IAHS 15th Anniversary Open House

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