

Joanna Stubinski May 30, 1972

1 hour

Agnes Chesser

Agnes took telegraphy in Toronto and in 1916 started as a student in Cobalt for the TNO. D. H. Way was the agent for both the station and the Telegraph office. Mary Bunyan was the head operator and. Florence Guertin was the operator. The office was very busy - the girls had to copy the news for the Nugget over the Morse wires and to deliver it to the Cobalt Nugget.

Agnes worked there for 6 months then when the ONR long distance moved from Northern Telephone to the station she came to Haileybury telegraph office, which was still under the ONR but over the Strong Drug Store - this was 1917 Agnes worked there until the 1922 fire. The day of the fire all of Haileybury was on fire. "I remember said Agnes, "the firemen came and sent a wire to railroad. In North Bay to tell them the Town of Haileybury was burning,"

We stayed at the lake until 2 a.m. in the morning, it had started to turn cold and we had light clothes on as we walked towards our place we stepped over live wires and dead cattle. Slept at Saumier's place. The very next morning I reported in Cobalt at the telegraph of fire.

I started with the actual TNNO in 1922 Oct. 5 we had to handle messages as far north as Englehart because all the wire was destroyed. Never forget the piles of telegrams. Alvin Jardine and McClary who later became superintendent on the ONH helped us sort out and deliver messages. The press reporters were like flees sending out reports about the fire.

At that time we worked from 8 a.m. till 2 a.m. without stopping. A couple of months later they opened a station in the baggage car at Haileybury -they had the Ticket and telegraph office there, I worked there all winter. The snow would blow in under the door and stay there all day long. It was really the coldest place I ever worked in. We were paid \$100 a month then, actually it was one of the better paying jobs in those days.

Things were really quiet around Haileybury then, people were building their homes - I know the house we live in today was built by my family in 1923. I worked part time in Cobalt then and worked on the books in Haileybury. In 1923 I started to shift around in order to stay on with

the railroad. I was told to bid on certain jobs. So first of all I went to Timmins for 3 years back to Cobalt for 3 years Florence Guertin was head operator then. Then the railroad opened a telegraph office, in the Haileybury Hotel where I was agent in 1935 after the hotel closed I went to Timmins for 3 months. Then Kirkland 3 years. Back to Haileybury 1938 at the station, then back to Timmins till 1944. I then came to New Liskeard where I stayed until I retired Oct. 5, 1962.

After 1955 they started putting in teletypes when the Morse wires went out. But I was still able to use my Morse wire till I retired. When I worked in Cobalt I took the street car to work. I would watch for them to go down town. They would cross at the Vendome Hotel then he backed up in 5 minutes. We bought tickets, which averaged out to .05 a ride. I really enjoyed my days in the telegraph office; there was never a dull moment. Agnes and her sister Vi who worked for Todd's Insurance for 30 years still live in the Homestead at Haileybury. They were both never married and had looked after their mother until she died about 5 years ago.