

# Old Frackville Tales

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by Lorraine Stanton

Mrs. Elmer Sanner, 127 South Balliet Street was a telephone operator in 1915 at the Bell Telephone Company, which was located on the corner of West Center and Main Streets, Shenandoah. There were four operators on each shift who worked forty hours a week and were paid five dollars a week wages.

Mrs. Sanner lived in William Penn at this time and had to go to work by trolley. The fare was five cents each way and many times she walked home after a day of work.

Some of the private phones in town were located at Dr. Taggart's, Dr. Berk, Charlie Seaman's Shoe Store, Sanner's Grocery Store, Burchill Lumber Company, and the First National (Brownstone) Bank.

Four party lines were used if any resident in the Bell Telephone area had a phone and if one party was on the line the other three could listen in to the conversation. As each person picked up the receiver the sound of the voice would get weaker so you knew when someone was listening in. Each party had their own ring and you could tell when your party line was receiving a call.

The pay phone at Dr. Taggart's Drug Store was the most used in town. All the young boys used this phone to call their girl friends and the druggist would become

provoked at this because many important and emergency calls were made that had to be relayed to the private homes.

Messenger boys were used to take these messages to the individual person and they were paid fifteen cents for this service. A phone call at that time cost five cents and you had to crank the handle on the side of the phone to get the operator. Long distance calls were rare but when they did occur they were connected to Tamaqua where the trunk lines were located.

Mrs. Sanner remembered the old phone books and said no advertisements or yellow pages were included in this book as it is today.

It was common practice for young boys to pick up the receiver and talk to the operators. This is not allowed today. Many young people became acquainted this way and this is how Mrs. Sanner met Elmer Sanner, her husband. They did not know each other but he and many boys in town loafed in Charlie Seaman's Store and "just in fun" would talk to all the operators. He talked to her quite a few times before she consented to have a date with him. This romance was a lasting one. The Sanners celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on June 3, 1967. Mr. Sanner passed away in November 1972.