

# Mrs. Eva Grylls, Postmistress Retires After Many Years



**MRS. EVA GRYLLES,** who recently retired after many years as postmistress of Westmeath.

Postmistress for more than half a century is the record set by Mrs. Eva Grylls of Westmeath, who resigned from her position in January.

Renfrew Mercury  
28 May 1959

One of her sons, Neil Grylls received the appointment as postmaster by the Postal Authorities on May 1st due to his military services during World War II.

Thus since 1906 the Westmeath Post Office has been established in the one home and at the age of 84 years, Mrs. Grylls has relinquished the task of sorting mail, selling money orders, stamps, taking subscriptions for newspapers and all the little myriad duties entailed when one is postmistress.

Mrs. Grylls proudly recalls how Captain Ellis of Arnprior, commandeered the C. B. Powell on the stretches of the Ottawa River and on the Allumette Lake, making Westmeath his port of call for mail. Residents of Lower Allumette Island also received their mail at Westmeath for many years.

There was an auxiliary post office on Bromley Line at one time, housed in the residence of the late John Edward Bromley.

Rural mail delivery was established in 1912 with R.R. No. 1, Westmeath being called the Bromley Line route and R.R. No. 2, being designated as the Sixth Line route. Cardiff Cavanagh was the first rural mail courier to deliver mail to La Passe.

The salary for maintaining the Westmeath Post Office was small indeed in those years of being paid in quarterly instalments. As the years passed, the remuneration was increased.

Only once during all these years, was Mrs. Grylls faced with the possibility of the Post Office being transferred elsewhere and an uncle of her first husband, Joseph Keyes, circulated a petition that she be retained as postmistress. A next door neighbor and friend, John R. Fraser, was the nominal choice, being postmaster for some years in name only.

Mrs. Grylls was decorated for her years of service with a badge and certificate of membership in The Canadian Postmasters Association. Through an ironical twist of fate, because her home also housed the Westmeath switchboard, she was debarred of obtaining superannuation from the Postal Department.

In November, 1958, following conversion to the dial system of the Westmeath Exchange, the switchboard of the North Renfrew Telephone Association was removed, Mrs. Grylls stating it was like one of the family going out after being in her home since 1910.

She recollects when each of the lines were independent of each

other, being maintained financially by each individual group. Amalgamation followed and for years she was collector of the telephone bills for subscribers on the Westmeath Exchange. In the first years these were remitted to Hugh Miller, treasurer at Beachburg, and one time undertaker residing there. Operating the switchboard in those pioneering days in communication was more strenuous than the push button control later used for the rings were signalled by turning a crank working off a wet battery.

At one time, subscribers were assessed \$5. per annum for the privilege of telephoning to Pembroke and later the rate was 5c per call. Increases from time to time raised this to 15c per call.

Mrs. Grylls' stipend for operator was the sum of \$66 every three months and later every month. When through provincial government legislation, a 24 hour service came into effect, the salary automatically increased. She has been provided with a free telephone for life.

Along with all these activities, Mrs. Grylls also raised and educated seven children, four of them of her first marriage and three sons following her marriage to W. F. Grylls, a Westmeath school teacher. She was ably assisted with the multitude of duties connected with the outside world by Miss Etta Wilson of Greenwood who resided with her since the birth of her youngest son in 1919 until the removal of the switchboard.

Suffering a slight paralytic stroke prior to Easter while attending church, Mrs. Grylls was confined to her bed for some time and Miss Wilson returned to keep household matters running smoothly. By coincidence, two of Mrs. Grylls daughters are nurses, and Mrs. Charles Milks of New York promptly came by phone to attend her mother. Some three weeks later, Mrs. W. H. Knowles of Seattle, Washington, arrived to assume care of her mother who has improved to such an extent, she was downstairs for Mother's Day.

Not forgotten by her host of friends, she has received letters and flowers, from many parts of Canada, United States and the British Isles.

She had been the Westmeath correspondent of the Pembroke Observer for a period of 30 years.

She is a charter member of the Westmeath Women's Institute organized 51 years ago and she engaged in its many projects with enthusiasm through the years and much credit is due her for obtaining Hydro service in the village. Since that time, Hydro bills as well as the telephone bills could be paid at her home.

She was district president of the North Renfrew Women's Institutes

for the years 1919, 1922 and vice-president for 1919 and 1955. She also was a constant standing committee of the Area W.I. for several years, a life member of Westmeath since 1958 and also a charter member of the Ottawa Valley H. Society since its inception.

Closely associated with the Westmeath Methodist Church at St. Andrew's United Church since 1955; she belonged to the Aid over 60 years ago and has been president of the women's societies several times. She was a life member of the Women's Association in 1950. She has been treasurer of many church organizations and steward of the United Church since Union. When she had held the Sunday School, she casually superintendent and teaching in particular her Class and the stress they put on Easter Observance rather than Christmas.

In the room formerly occupied by the switchboard operators "Hall of Fame". On the wall are the certificates already mentioned presented to her in recognition of her services. In 1958 she was a life member also of the Bible Society, having been elected to the Westmeath-Perreault pointment for many decades.

An expert needlewoman, many framed needlepoint and footstools in her home mentions proudly the one named Casa Loma completed day before her seizure. Although in complete possession of her faculties she reads or knits her vantage point on the street she sees the traffic on the river better still as she remarks, "see the river." This is a curious factor in the life of a lives along the Ottawa River.

She has contributed much to the recording of early history of Westmeath being a granddaughter of George Washington Tucker the earliest pioneers. In her collection containing her historical data significant poem:

I am only one,  
I cannot do everything,  
But I can do something  
And because I can do some  
I shall not refuse to do the  
thing I can do.

The End. In Las Vegas hearses and funeral cars of Bros. Mortuary are painted blue.