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Mr. T. Ahearn

AN APPRECIATION

by

L. B. McFarlane

President

The Bell Telephone Company of Canada

1927.



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President, Ottawa Electric Railway Company; President, Ottawa Traction Company; President, Ottawa Car Manufacturing Company; President, Ottawa Electric Company; President, Ottawa Gas Company; President, Ottawa Light, Heat and Power Company; President, Ottawa Investment Company; President, Ottawa Land Association; President, The Capital Mica Company, Limited; Director, Canadian Westinghouse Company; Director, Bell Telephone Company of Canada; Vice-President, The Wallace Realty Company, Limited; Director, The Ottawa Building Company; Director, The Merchants Bank of Canada; Director, The Northern Electric Company; Director, The Bankers' Trust Company; Member of The American Institute of Electrical Engineers; Member, Old-time Telegraphers' Association; Member, Telephone Pioneers of America.

An Appreciation

The regular meetings of the Board of Directors of the Bell Telephone Company of Canada are held monthly at the Head Office of the Company at Montreal. In courtesy to the Ottawa member of the Board, Mr. T. Ahearn, the June, 1919, meeting was held at the Dominion Capital. Afterwards the members of the Board, with Mr. J. E. Macpherson, District Superintendent, were the guests of Mr. Ahearn at the Country Club, at which luncheon Mr. L. B. McFarlane, President of the Bell Telephone Company, spoke as follows:—

“With the permission of our host, I wish to say a few words about his personality,

which should be more widely known.

"Some fifty years ago, a little boy attended school on the Chaudiere Flats. He had neither rich nor influential friends, but was endowed with a clever brain and skilful hands, which are far more to be desired. Like all children of that period, the head lines on his copy book contained many precepts, not only to be copied but instilled in the memory for future guidance. His book, no doubt, carried the oft-quoted phrase—'Great oaks from little acorns grow.' It kept before him this agricultural idea by which he was to do great deeds later.

"In time he took up electricity as a livelihood, and first 'planted' the 'telephone acorn' in Ottawa. To-day you see the result in the 'sturdy young oak' in the

Exchanges we have visited.

“Still with the agricultural viewpoint in mind, you find him planting ‘bulbs’—Weston electric light bulbs—on the telephone poles on Sparks Street. From this small beginning has sprung the marvellous net work of light and power—not only here but elsewhere, because our host, having the vision and the courage, conquered the difficulties of hydro-electric operation. Mr. Ahearn’s work in this direction made the hydro-electric method possible and profitable, and it was the pioneer of Hydro Systems throughout Canada.

“Having in this way conquered all difficulties, we find him still in the agricultural field ‘planting’ the poles on lines which later became the North American Telegraph System.

"About this time a new electrical wonder appeared at Richmond, Va., in the shape of an electric railway, which was possible in a land without frost or snow. No one thought that such an enterprise could succeed in this Northern climate, but we find our host appearing before the Ottawa City Council with his little storage battery plant (you will notice he is still 'planting') under his arm, ready to undertake what practically all people thought an impossibility. Having secured the franchise for a street railway service, it was not possible to find charter members enough to apply for a charter, showing what little confidence the public had in the enterprise, and names to qualify had to be borrowed. The question of what would happen when snow fell in

winter time was uppermost, but this obstruction was again successfully solved by Mr. Ahearn. At the same time it settled the question for all parts of America north of New York, and made the street railway the successful public servant it now is.

“Here is a pioneer, who, unlike others who have made their mark in one branch only, has excelled in five of the main branches of Electricity—namely Telegraphy, Telephony, Light, Power and Traction. It is given to few men to have such a record, and his neighbours have not realized it. His great achievements have not brought him titles or honours, and his native city has not recognized what wonderful benefits he has conferred upon it, but he takes greater delight

in being known as 'our Tom
Ahearn' than in any title or
honour, and he can have no
greater monument when his
time comes to leave us than
the wonderful works he has
created in our midst.

