

Letter from Vera Cassilly to Lynch and McDonald, March 30, 1964

National Geographic Society WASHINGTON 6, D. C. HERMAN J.A.C. ARENS Assistant Secretary AND Executive Assistant to President and Editor March 30, 1964. Dear Sirs:—

Before Alexander Graham Bell exhibited his telephone at the Philadelphia Centennial in July 1876, he presented to his cousin, Frances Symonds, the original drawing of his telephone. Here in the Bell Room at National Geographic Society, we have a photograph of this drawing and we are most anxious to locate the original for our records. The photograph reads, in Dr. Bell's handwriting — “Boston, Mass. to Miss Frances R. Symonds, May 21, 1876 from A.G.B.” This was at the time Frances Symonds and her father Edward visited the Alexander Melville Bells at Brantford, Ont., Canada, enroute to England.

Recently, I located a letter to Dr. Bell, addressed — “My dear Cousin dated June 30, 1889, signed by Henry J. Leplastrier”, who was the husband of Frances, in which he says “The pencil illustration of the telephone, which you may recollect giving to Frances when in Boston— I have had it framed between 2 glasses so that both sides can be read and I have had some idea of sending it to our National Museum where it would be highly prized but have been persuaded to keep it in the family, at all events for the present.” At the bottom of the letter, Frances writes, “Dearest love to Mabel and yourself and to the dear little girls. F. R. Leplastrier”. The address on the letter is Claudeville, St. James Park, Hawthorn, Melbourne. There is a possibility that Stanley Leplastrier Symonds whose address I have as “The Knoll, Penquite Road, Launceton, Tasmania”, maybe still living and would know the whereabouts of the drawing in question.

I write to you as I find that you are the Solicitors of the Symonds Family in hopes that you may be able to locate this original drawing of Dr. Bell's telephone. The members of the Bell

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Family will be most appreciative of your efforts and very grateful of your success in this project.

Very sincerely yours Vera S. Cassilly Custodian of Bell Room Messrs. Lynch and McDonald Collins House, 360 Collins Street Melbourne, Australia.