

THE “MORSE BOX” OF JOHN HENRY (ACE) HOLMAN

John Henry Holman was the man who took Stu Davis' idea of the Morse Box and moved to the next level, enabling communication by Telegraph in the decades after the last railroad and commercial Morse Telegraph circuits were discontinued. His invention allowed telegraphers to communicate with Morse Telegraph instruments over a telephone wire. Whereas Stu Davis' Morse Box was designed for the recording and play back of cassette tapes, the Holman Morse Box was created to allow real-time telegraphy over telephone lines. At the time, this was generally referred to as “Dial Up Morse.”

John Henry (Ace) Holman was born in Wilmerding, Pa, in 1926, and spent his earliest years in Turtle Creek, Pa. His family moved to Philadelphia when he was in grade school. Somewhere along the line he learned telegraphy, and in 1942, at the age of 16, he went to work for AT&T Long Lines Department as an equipment attendant and test board man in AT&T's office at the Bourse Building in Philadelphia. He retired from a supervisory position with AT&T in 1982. I knew Ace from 1978 until his death in 2004. For three years I was on the Philadelphia Leased Morse Wire with Ace and others, and he and I spent hours each day telegraphing together. He visited in my home many times, as did I in his home.

Ace's Morse Box used type 255-A differentially wound relays salvaged from teletype lines, and connected to the telephone line through a Tandy DMC-6 300 baud modem. Both the Morse Box and the modem required an external wall plug in 12v power supply. Ace's idea was to operate a “dial in telegraph hub” (which he ran out of his home,) and anyone with a Holman Morse Box could dial in and be connected with all others who had dialed in, in a series circuit which had full “break” capabilities. One simply dialed the telephone number for Ace's “hub” and, when an answering tone was received, threw a switch on his own Morse Box, and the connection was established. Ace's hub went operation in 1989, and as I recall it had capacity for 13 telegraphers to be tied together at one time. There were evening hours when telegraphers from all around the country dialed in, but the “hub” was available continuously. Ace made a Morse Box for me in 1990 and gave it to me as a birthday present the following year. Using Ace's Morse Box, the telegraph instruments, worked over telephone circuits, performed exactly as they would have performed on a real Telegraph wire.

Following are photographs of my Ace Holman Morse Box and the schematic that he furnished with it.

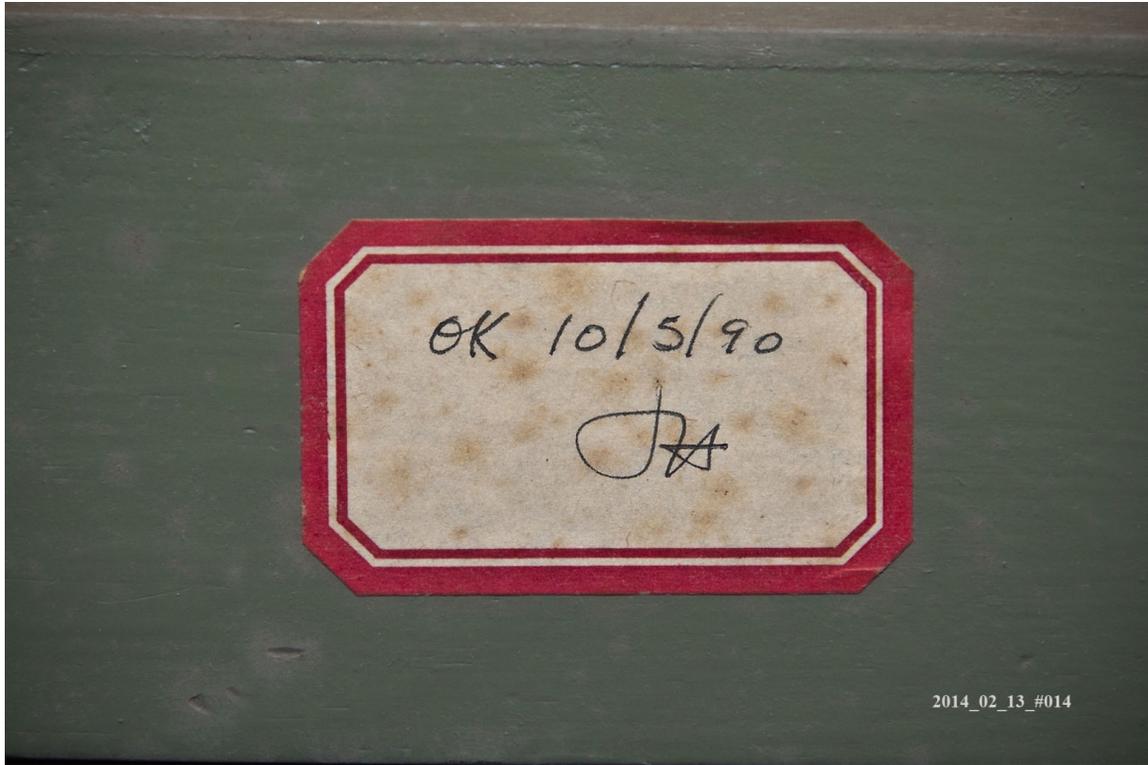
Abram Burnett
New Cumberland, PA
February 13, 2014



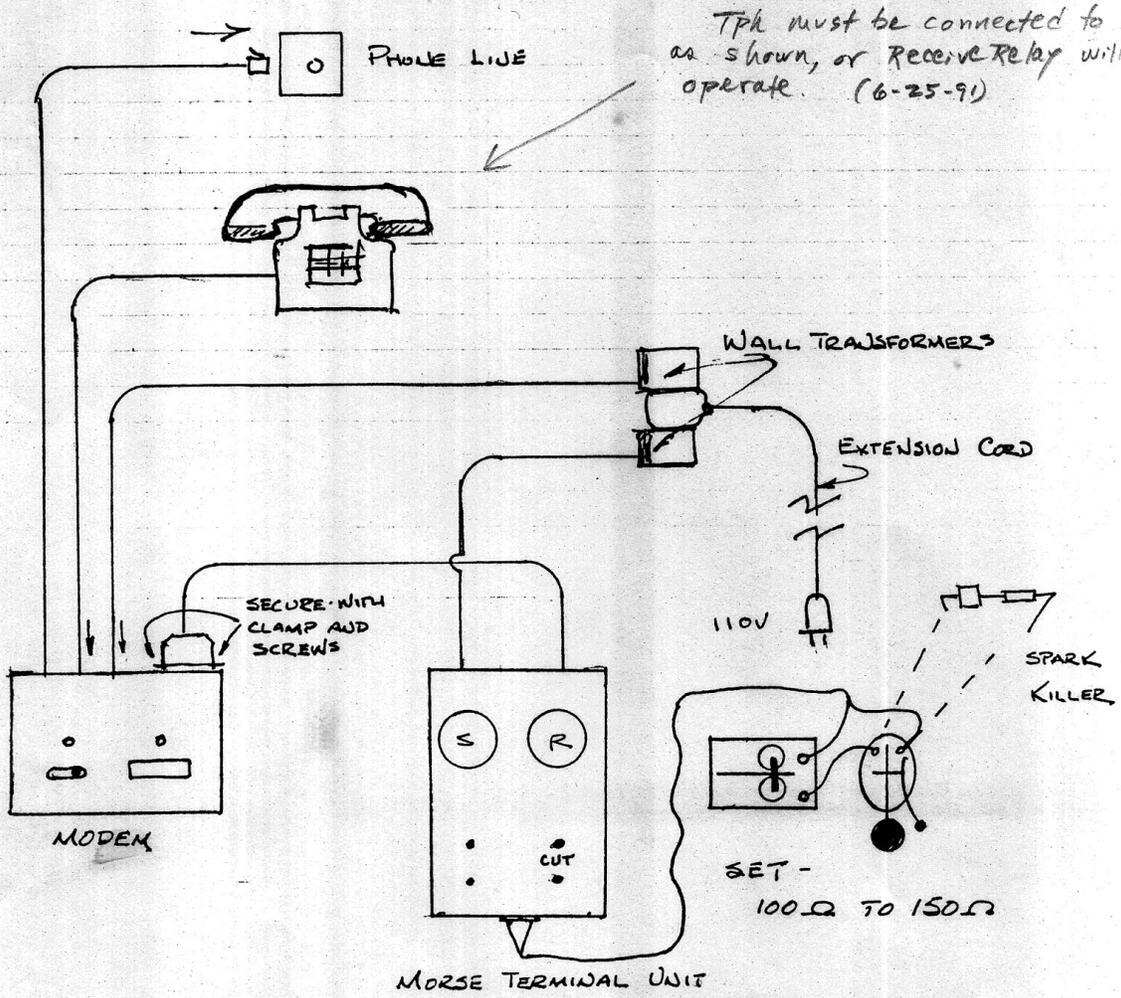
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Ace Holman (right) and his friend, Abram Burnett, in KB Telegraph Office, Knickerbockers, Malvern, Pa, on Morse Day, April 1998.



DIAL-UP MORSE TERMINAL EQUIPMENT ARRANGEMENT

KB June 23 1991

ADB

SW

JA
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Try this on your old piano. Call me anytime. We have a ~~reg~~ regular dial-up net first & third Thursday 8-10P Eastern. Happy Birthday. You're getting to be an old fart! My best to Pennie and the boys 73

JA