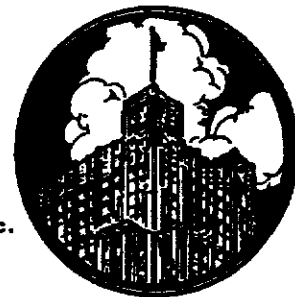




Dial-Log



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Herb Hackenburg, Editor

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY GROUP FOR OUR NEW READERS

We are building our mailing list so, if we're doing a good job, many of you are new readers of **Dial-Log**.

First, welcome. We at the Telecommunications History Group hope you enjoy this newsletter. Frankly, we aim to grow your interest in who we are and what we do.

Second, some words about who we are and what we do. Basically, we collect and archive the history of the telecommunications business (specializing in U S WEST and its root companies) and we serve as the curator for a couple of small museums in downtown Denver.

The first business history began about 2000 B.C. when a guild of Assyrian merchants established a central depository for records for their commercial activities.

According to Donn Neal, director of Congressional and External Affairs for the National Archives and Records Administration, "A good archives is good business." Neal says a business, even an industry, is shaped by the past more than it realizes, and a properly used archive enables it to transform information from the past into an asset for better management.

He goes on to point out that when properly used, an archived business's past can show consumer trends, help future planning, build pride in employees, sell products, instill customer loyalty and even win legal battles.

One of our prime reasons for being is a bit more pragmatic: If the past isn't saved and/or recorded it ceases to exist. We happen to think the telecommunication industry's history is important to its managers, employees and customers. The industry's history is also important to the nation where it was born and grew into the most viable in the world.

In 1983, while researching for a book about the history of Mountain Bell, Anne Hampton, my researcher, and I noticed truck loads of the company's history going to the landfill. As we discussed ways to save the best of this material, the seed for the Telecommunications History Group was planted.

Today, the History Group is an independent, nonprofit organization created to save and archive the proud, rich history of the telephone industry.

Big, BIG, BIG JOB!

The History Group began in 1990 as a Telephone Pioneer project. There were two volunteers. After the size of the job became apparent, the History Group transformed itself into a nonprofit organization with its own board of directors*.

Today, the History Group has a two-person part-time staff and 10 regular volunteers, 10 others who volunteer for special projects and an 18-member board.

Recent History Group events include: a two-day "How to Archive" training workshop conducted for the staff, volunteers and board members, by a Colorado State

University archivist; finishing the inventory of stock certificates from 260 little phone companies that once existed in the mid-west between 1880 and 1930; shelving the U S WEST telephone directory collection which presently includes thousands of directories published between 1890 to 1992 from several hundred towns, cities and counties in 15 western states.

Our volunteers also inventoried 12 pallets of raw historic manuscript material (part of 40 tons of material we received from Northwestern Bell, Mountain Bell and U S WEST archives); archived a "new" Arizona photograph collection containing 1,400 pictures; reshelved (to allow us to meet the fire code) and added to our video tape collection which now contains 5,000 video tapes and began the first phase of archiving our artifact collection.

Of course, we filled several requests for historic photographs and research (for which we charge) while working on the projects listed above.

This scratches the surface of our current programs. If you want to join in the fun; thirst for more information; have some photographs, documents, stuff and/or artifacts you think we'd be interested in; want to make a donation, want to get the heck off our mailing list, or just want to say, "Your newsletter is the greatest thing since sliced bologna," or "is full of bologna," **PLEASE WRITE OR GIVE US A CALL (303-296-1221)!**



*The board is made up of four recently retired U S WEST officers, three professional historians, four active U S WEST employees, a retired international vice president of the CWA, a Bell Labs retiree, a nationally renown telecommunications researcher from University of Colorado, a former Telephone Pioneer Chapter president, a retired executive from U S WEST BRI (real estate

and purchasing) and a retired executive from U S WEST MRG (directory publishing) and a retired executive from U S WEST, Inc.

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR'S REPORT

by Carol J. Baird



I understand that at the last National Assembly of the Telephone Pioneers of America (held in Denver last month), it was reported that 30,000,000 hours of volunteer work were contributed by the Pioneers in the United States and Canada in 1995. I'm proud that our History Group volunteers contributed to that astounding total.

September was a record-breaking month for the History Group as our volunteers contributed 382 hours. Because of so many volunteers taking extended vacations, our October total was 287 hours. For the first three quarters of 1996, our volunteers have contributed 2,470 hours of volunteer time.

As we do our volunteer work, many of us become interested in specific facets of the archive business. For example, **Jerry Butler** (he's the one always wearing white gloves) is archiving our black and white photos. He's established a preliminary file system for our 70,000 photograph collection and now is cleaning the photo prints and placing them in protective mylar wrappers. Later, **Jerry** will further refine his filing system and refile the negatives in their own storage area.

Ken Pratt has archived our insulator collection and is the expert on our directory collection. He also shelved our Bell System Practices library and is currently working on our stock certificate collection.

Lowell Todd (he also wears white gloves) is filing our color print and slide collection.

Jerry Wild, does a little of everything, e.g., he just installed an alarm on our front door so we in the office will know when someone enters the archive. **Jerry** archives our artifact collection as his "regular" job.

Bob Cook works on our computers and is our video archivist.

Dale Norblom is another vital "jack of all trades," but it looks like he and **Herb Hackenburg** (yes, staff members also contribute volunteer time) will become the manuscript archivists.

Georg Ek is a nationally known antique telephone collector and repair expert, and he owns a large collection of telephone reference material, so it's in these areas that he helps us. **Georg** is currently on a three-month tour of Australia and New Zealand where he's visiting fellow antique telephone collectors. So, **Georg**, when you read this, we say, "Welcome back and Merry Christmas!"

Lynn Graves is an active U S WEST manager and an antique telephone collector. **Lynn** has helped us acquire most of our historic central office repair tools.

Right now, my volunteer work centers on creating a basic data base (an index) of our directory collection. I just completed our index through 1925.

I'm also glad to report that we've recruited two new volunteers, **Edie Bates** and **Betty Labe**. While it's too early to know what their areas of interest will be, **Edie** and **Betty** they seemed interested in archiving our stock certificate collection which presently consists of certificates from 260 former telephone companies.

Many of our readers will remember a former U S WEST Vice President of Human Resources, **Fred Cook**. **Fred** used to believe in hugs--greeting hugs, good-bye hugs, thank you hugs. There doesn't seem to be any room for hugs in today's politically correct world. Too bad. Politically correct, or not,

I'm giving our volunteers a really big, heart felt, verbal **THANK YOU HUG**.

INTERN REPORT

JoAnn Emerson is our very first intern. **JoAnn** attends Metropolitan State College, Denver. Her site supervisor (teacher) is **Monys Hagen**, who teaches history at Metro State and is on our Board of Directors. **JoAnn** is obligated to spend 150 hours working with the History Group. Her assignment is to develop a middle school level presentation on the invention and patent of the telephone. Perhaps there will be a story about Alexander Graham Bell's long and happy marriage, too. The presentation package will be made available to the History Group when **JoAnn** completes her internship.

Another part of **JoAnn's** assignment is to go through our photograph collection and determine the various types of photographic prints represented.

As are most "civilians," **JoAnn** was overwhelmed by the magnitude of U S WEST's history. She almost passed out when we told her that this history was just a small fraction of the total industry's 120 year history. We pointed out that the telecommunications industry today touches virtually every human activity in the world and that's a bunch of history.

HISTORY GROUP GAINS NATIONAL RECOGNITION

The Telecommunications History Group made a rather impressive national debut in October with featured appearances in two national magazines; **Roundtable** and **Fortune**. And thanks to board member, **Sue Keesen**, the History Group also made its official appearance in **U S WEST Today**, the corporate-wide employee publication.

Roundtable is published by OPASTCO, which is not an Italian dish, but stands for the Organization for the Promotion and Advancement of Small Telephone Companies. The full-color **Roundtable** is one of the telecommunications industry's slickest, best produced, most educational magazines.

The Sept./Oct. **Roundtable's** cover story is about the history of independent telephony and many of the telephone museums operated by the independent telephone companies around the nation. Of course, the Museum of Independent Telephony in Abilene, Kansas, was a major part of the story. The five-page story contains an excellent side bar about the Telecommunications History Group which tells our story and provides our phone number and mailing address.

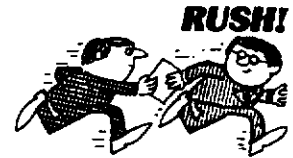
Our appearance in **Fortune** began when we received a call from Lois Leach, corporate spokesperson, U S WEST, Inc. Public Relations. Lois told us PR needed a historic picture sent to **Fortune Magazine** right away.

It seems the PR Department had been working with the magazine on a feature story concerning the unique territory U S WEST serves. The picture needed to convey the rugged, vast, open space served by U S WEST. After checking that we did indeed have such pictures on hand, Lois gave our number to the magazine's art director.

About 10 minutes after we finished talking to Lois, **Fortune's** art director called. He wanted the 1889 picture of the telephone line over Mosquito Pass which had been published in my book, *Muttering Machines to Laser Beams*. I suggested that our archives contained several other pictures which told the same story and we'd send them along. The art director liked the idea, but we had to have the entire picture package to the nearest Federal Express office by 3 p.m. It was 1:45 p.m. when we hung up the phone.

Carol and I flew to the photo files. Thanks to **Jerry Butler's** filing system, we

were able to quickly find 15 pictures, stamp them with credit lines, put them in mylar protectors, pack and FedEx them to New York by 2:45 p.m.



The story, "Even Telco Cowboys Get the Blues," appeared on pages 144-148 of the October 14, 1996, issue of **Fortune**.

Un-**Fortune**-ately, the published story didn't turn out the way the U S WEST folks thought it would. However, between the quote used in the story lead and the credit line on the full-page Mosquito Pass picture, the History Group did rather well. Our pictures were returned and we picked up a full-page, one-time use fee of \$400, plus an Internet use fee of \$75 for the picture. On second thought, we haven't received the check from **Fortune** yet.

THE "PINKIE" STORY



Soon after he became a History Group volunteer, **Ken Pratt** enlisted the aid of his son, **Ron**, to help archive our insulator collection. As a boy, **Ron** collected insulators, and even though he now teaches engineering at the Beijing University, **Ron** still has his collection in Denver.

Anyway, **Ron** was just finishing up his graduate degree from Colorado School of Mines prior to moving to China, when **Ken** asked for his advice and counsel in the fine art of insulator collecting. With **Ron's** help and the aid of several insulator catalogs, **Ken** was able to archive our collection of nearly 600 insulators. Basically, **Ken** selected, graded and indexed one prime example of each type of insulator in our collection.

Insulators are identified by shape, color, embossed manufacturer's names, patent numbers, size and material (usually glass or porcelain).

Ken cataloged and graded (from one through five) 141 different types of insulators. He found that we have one relatively rare "five," worth more than \$30, and several "ones" worth \$1 to \$2 each. Most of our insulators are grades "two" and "three" worth \$3 to \$6 each.

Ken was able to catalog every insulator except one ugly pink one. It couldn't be found in any of our reference books. At the National Antique Telephone Collectors Show, I asked an insulator collector to help us identify "pinkie." He sent us documentation after he returned to Missouri.

"Pinkie" is an unembossed composition insulator with a rough, granular surface. The composition may have mica and/or asbestos in its mixture and it seems to have been fired in an oven.

"Pinkie" has a common "beehive" shape and size and is designed to screw on a standard wooden crossarm pin. "Pinkie's" real names are "Arizona Mica," or "Arizona Beehive" and it may be light brown, gray or brownish pink in color. It's the most widely collected composition insulator.

Mary Wallace, a collector in the 1970s, said that she picked up her Arizona Mica near Tombstone, Ariz. Since she'd never seen anything like the Mica, she asked the locals about them.

One old-timer told her that the insulator was used by the telegraph and telephone companies to discourage the local Indians from breaking them, since they were much tougher than glass. A Western Electric retiree said the telephone linemen could carry more of the lighter weight composition insulators as they patrolled the telephone lines across the desert by foot or horseback.

Another collector said his collection of Micas came from an abandoned railroad line that ran between Tombstone and Nogales, Mexico.

Insulator historian Gerald Brown notes that the Arizona Beehive was manufactured by the Electrose Company,

catalog number 3001, and was used mainly by the Southern Pacific Railroad Company.

So, that's "pinkie's" story. One more thing--after our insulator expert helped us, we found our own autographed first edition of Gerald Brown's reference book about non-glass/non-porcelain insulators which featured "pinkie." Anyway, our own Arizona Mica is worth \$40, which makes that ugly, little sucker our second "five."

CONTRIBUTIONS BIG AND SMALL--WE'RE THANKFUL FOR THEM ALL

Volunteers Lowell Todd and Ken Pratt each made a contribution above and beyond their normal contribution of effort and talent--checks! Both gifts are eligible for matching funds from the U S WEST Foundation.

Board member John Darrow and his family also contributed generously. Actually, the Darrow contribution came from son, Gerald James, who works for the Tandy Corporation. Since the Tandy Foundation matches employee contributions \$2 for every \$1, the contribution grows quickly. Clever folks, these Darrows.

Total contributions, including matching funds, are \$1,650. Thank you, friends!

WHAT'S SHAKIN' IN THE ARCHIVES

Between additions, requests and the fire department, things have been busy in the archives.

ADDITIONS:

Since our last newsletter, we've added 48 additional boxes of telephone directories to our collection. Basically, the new books are the missing "Northwestern Bell" books from 1989, '90, '91 and '92. It seems these boxes were just "found" in a corner of the 198 Inverness Dr. location.

Unfortunately, **Russell DeFeyer's** health doesn't allow him to be a volunteer, but this retired Mountain Bell engineer/inventor/trouble shooter still contributes to the cause. He recently donated a truck load of central office tools, gauges and metering equipment to The Vintage Telephone Equipment Museum in Seattle (contains a working model of every type of switch used by the Bell System since 1923) and to our artifact archives. The artifacts had been used to fix and recalibrate assorted telephone switching equipment used by the Bell System over the past 70 years.

Board member **Mary Riffle** contributed several items she has accumulated over her 25 years as a public relations specialist for Mountain Bell and U S WEST, including pictures, policy statements, pamphlets and brochures.

REQUESTS:

Besides our usual requests from genealogists, we've had a spate research requests. The U. S. Department of Justice in Seattle submitted two requests for research in our directory collection--one request concerned a court case, one concerned a DOJ employee looking for his high school sweetheart. He was trying to locate her parent's address in a 1973 Seattle directory. We did collect research fees, both government and personal.

We have a request from the owner the Mission Bell Inn in Colorado Springs for some extensive research on his listings in the directories since the '60s. He says our fees are "quite reasonable."

We had directory research request from a rather abrupt lawyer. He grumped about our charges, but sent us a check.

We've had a little flurry of directory research requests from the U S WEST Law Department, I have a hard time charging them since the directories were theirs to begin with.

Three other research requests from U S WEST--two about the Mountain Bell Headquarters Building on 14th Street

(answered by our 'canned' research paper); and one concerning the origin of the "Bell" logo. This last one has turned out to be a stinker to research and we're still working on it.

FIRE DEPARTMENT:

The building's floor warden talked with us about emergency procedures for the staff and volunteers. We now have an idea what we're supposed to do when the fire alarm goes off. An inspection also determined that we had items stacked too close to the sprinkler heads in a few places. Carol and I spent most of a day rearranging things so we could be within code. We saved the biggest jobs for the volunteers which led to October 30 which was the single busiest day in our history.

Volunteers **Baird, Butler, Hackenburg, Norblom, Pratt and Wild** shelved directories, filed pictures, rebuilt shelves, moved equipment, cleaned a room, restacked video tapes, installed a new computer and an alarm system all within a single day.

MISSING COMPUTERISTS CAUSE A PENTIUM PLETHORA

It started out great.

Our friends from BRI told us they'd send their computerists (located in our building) to the office to "upgrade our computers." Two computerists and their boss came to the office. They disconnected our printers and monitors from their host 286 machines and cast the 286s to the recycling bin. Our donated 386 machines were now connected to the printers and monitors and the newer software was loaded.

Stuff happened.

The computerists found that the 386s' memory capacity wasn't large enough, and many of the connecting cables were wrong. The computerists packed up their tools, manuals and meters and said they'd be back

the next day with the proper cables, better software and expanded memory devices.

Thus, the History Group didn't have any computers, but we were happy because the next day we'd have more powerful machines to help us. No one came the next day, nor the next. Carol called to get the word.

The word was "downsized."

The boss no longer worked at BRI, and the computerists (contract employees) didn't know if they could work for us any more. (Downsizing is not unique to BRI, nearly 5,000 employees have been let go by U S WEST in the past several months.)

Carol rescued our old 286 machines and waited for our own amateur "computerist" volunteer, Jerry Wild, to come to work. Bob Cook, our regular computerist volunteer, was away for the summer building a new house. Jerry was also taking a little vacation, so we waited two weeks.

Carol and Jerry worked extremely hard for two days to at least get our label printing operation reestablished, but didn't have much luck beyond that.

Tired of waiting, I purchased a new 100 MHz, Pentium machine with Windows 95 software. We connected it to a used BRI monitor and a printer and it worked like a charm. It's the machine that produced this newsletter.

The speed, wonderful archiving software, ease of use, and memory capacity of the 100 MHz machine pushed me into ordering a 166 MHz Pentium which will serve as our main data storage unit, word processor, accounting machine, fax and Internet interface. The new, new machine was delivered on October 30.

An elderly BRI donated 286 machine (a working artifact) still drives our mailing list and label operation without missing a beat.



SHAKY BOTTOM LINE AT SHAKOPEE TELCO

AUTHOR'S NOTE: I'm going to write about an imaginary business day in the life of George W. Palmer, exchange manager for the Shakopee Telephone Company, Shakopee, Minn. Palmer works for Dr. H. P. Fischer, owner, president, secretary and treasurer of the company. Dr. Fischer also seems to have a significant financial interest in the Mudcura Sanitarium which is also in Shakopee.

To make this an interesting and educational story, I've condensed several events which actually occurred over an extended period of time. However, all the correspondence and names are authentic and reproduced with original spelling, punctuation and grammar. Our story begins at 7:00 a.m. on June 5, 1917.



"This is a heck of a way to start summer in Minnesota," George Palmer thinks as he heads for the telephone company shop instead of his office. Palmer is the exchange manager for the Shakopee Telephone Company.

"Big Ed" Leibold, plant superintendent, already has the crew gathered around the workbench in the shop.

Ed Flecken, line foreman, cable splicer and cigar smoker, is jawing with Otto Schaller and Bert Scherer about how Rowland will manage the White Stockings to 100 wins and beat out Cobb and his Tigers to be in the World Series. Billie Cain and young Joey Meyer are waiting in the background wondering what this front office fandango is all about.

Leibold finishes initialing Otto's time sheet penciled on the back of a trouble report. He adds the time sheet to the others in his pocket and thinks, "I'd better get these time sheets over to bookkeeping today or

Miss Vierling will skin me alive. Palmer's here, so we'd better get this thing going before the day's half gone."

Big Ed moves his chew to the right cheek as he hits the workbench with a line hammer. "This here is our exchange manager Mr. Palmer, and he's got some government business to talk about." He punctuates his introduction by hitting the spittoon dead center.

Peering through the fog of cigar smoke, Palmer begins, "As you know, President Wilson is getting ready to send the army over to France to save the Brits and the Frenchies from the Kaiser. The government says all men from 21 to 30 years old have to register for conscription. That means everyone here except me and Ed.

"I'm passing out the registration forms which Ed and I already filled out. Make sure all the information is right, especially on lines seven, eight and twelve. You can see on line seven we've put you all down for 'linemen in telephone service,' but if you've also been troublemen or done some cable work, we'll add it to the form.

"You'll see that we've claimed exemptions on those of you with families. Check to see if you agree with our assessments. You're welcome to disagree about being exempted, but keep in mind that we'll need experienced men to keep this outfit running while the others are off to war.

"One of the high mucky-mucks over at Northwestern Bell told me that the army plans to put experienced telephone men right into the Signal Corps to do the same thing in France that they're doing here."

After the line crew members look over the paperwork, suggest some changes and sign the forms, Palmer collects them and heads for his office.

Palmer briskly enters the business office, pausing briefly at Miss Vierling's desk,

Miss Vierling is penning neat, precise entries into a large, leather bound journal.

"Good morning, Miss Vierling. I see the morning mail is here, I'll read it in my office. And if you've finished with the Eden Prairie collections, I'd be pleased to have your report to set up my collection schedule for Friday."

Without looking up or missing a pen stroke, Miss Vierling hands Palmer a bundle of mail and three sheets of Shakopee Telephone Company letterhead with a column of names and dollar amounts typed on each sheet.

"Good morning, Mr. Palmer. I see you and Mr. Leibold got the boys signed up, do you want me to get those forms in the mail?"

"Thank you, Miss Vierling, that would be most helpful. Both Bill Cain and Joey Meyer seemed to think it would be a great adventure to go to France and string wire under the German guns," Palmer says as he hands the registration forms to the young woman.

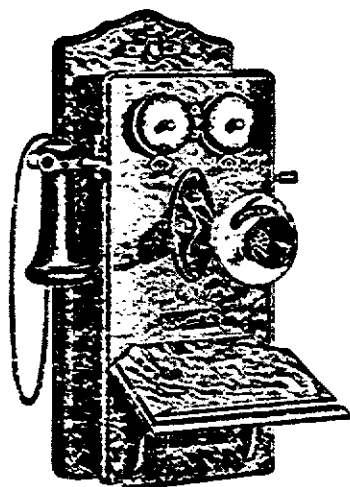
As he walks to his office in the back of the building, Palmer hears Miss Vierling say, "If those boys go to war, I pray their 'adventure' doesn't kill them."

Palmer sits down at his cluttered desk and begins to study the Eden Prairie collection figures. "I see all ten of the Andersen's are paid up as usual... Blakberough paid \$25 on his \$63.10 bill, he's good for the rest of it... Mr. Brown has only paid \$5 on his \$67.15 since April, I'd better call on him... Mr. Dorm always pays up after harvest. I'd better call on Mr. Frederich, Mrs. McClay and Mr. Sass to get them to pay at least something on account. If I can collect \$25 and sign up two or three new subscribers, Friday's trip to Eden Prairie will be quite beneficial," he muses.

Palmer jots down the Eden Prairie subscriber's names on a legal pad and unties the string from the bundle of mail. "I hope it's more payments than bills this time, Miss Vierling says our bank account is pretty flat."



A tan envelope covered with garish red lettering is on top of the pile. **Rebuilt Bargain BULLETINS** issued 'Every so often' from the 'Rebuilt' Equipment Dept. **PREMIER ELECTRIC CO.**, Chicago, the envelope shouts.



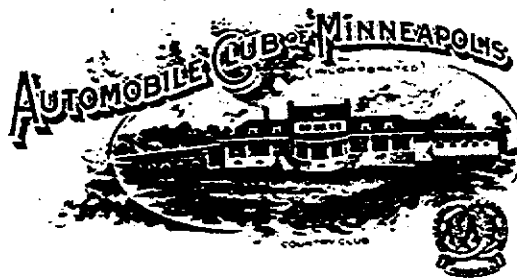
The envelope contains two bulletins: one offering Premier "Accessible" Midget compact magneto wall phones with the 3-bar series for \$7.75 each including the batteries; the other offers at least 100 items including Kellogg No. 9-L transmitters for 90 cents each and American Electric No. 40 type Desk Stands at \$2.50 each.

"Not bad prices, but we rebuild our own equipment. I'll file this."

The next letter is from the **Frank S. Betz Co.**, manufactures importers and exporters of Physicians and Hospital supplies. "This is Sanitarium business, I wish Dr. Fischer would keep the two businesses separate. Might as well see what it's about."

Palmer reads: *"We received your order and are entering up same for prompt shipment and invoice will be sent you later. Inasmuch as we would like to handle your orders as promptly as possible, we wish you would kindly send us your bank reference so we can arrange our records to give you the best service and that we may be able to determine upon credit quickly."*

"The bank will probably tell them, that our balance is a little shaky, I'd better send this on up to Dr. Fischer, it's Mudcura business anyway. Ah, here's something from the **Automobile Club of Minneapolis**, it's probably their payment. The engraving of their country club in Bloomington is very classy," Palmer muses as he opens the fancy letterhead.



"Dear Sir: With reference to your letter enclosing me bill for \$24. for telephone service in 1916, 6 months at \$2.00 per month, and 6 months in 1915 at \$2.00 per month. This is the first intimation I have had that we owe anybody for telephone service in Bloomington. I do not find anything in our files with reference to this matter and if you will send me copy of a contract or some evidence of our debt to you, I will be glad to present same to our Trustees at their next monthly meeting. Permit me to call your attention to the fact that nothing was said of the 1915 bill when the phone was installed in 1916, at which time I think it might have been proper to at least acquaint us with the fact that were in your debt, if we were."

"I assure you I will be glad to give this matter my very best attention on receipt of your reply. Yours very truly, G. Roy Hill, secretary."

"Oh, Lordy, I don't know if I can locate that Auto Club contract or not, maybe Miss Vierling will find it, if there is one."

The next envelope is from **John F. Unze, Practical Horseshoer, Lamé, Interfering and Difficult Work a Specialty**. It contains a bill for \$12.00 with the major items being \$1.90 for buggy repairs, \$6.00 for four 18 in. drills and \$1.50 for 16 iron steps. Palmer fills out a voucher.

Palmer reads the next envelope, "Oh no, it's from that danged cantankerous **Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha Railroad**. I wonder what they're blaming us for now."

"Dear Sir: Was very much surprised on receiving telegram from our Line Foreman, a copy of which is attached, to think that any one would be so regardless of

the safety of our trainmen as to string a wire across our right of way which only cleared the rails by 20 feet and will say that I approve of the action of our Foreman in taking it down. It also develops that above wires were strung across our right of way, evidently without permission from any one.

"However, we will offer no objection if this crossing is restrung on the regular public highway, which we understand is on a short distance from where this one was, provided our requirements for wire crossings, a copy of which is enclosed, are strictly adhered to in its construction and maintenance. Would be pleased to hear from you stating that this would be done. Yours truly, H. C. Hope, Supt. Telegraph & Signals."

The telegram states: "Have cut down two telephone wires owned by Shakopee Telephone Co. crossing our tracks one half mile west of Savage near public highway. They only cleared the rail 20 feet and not safe to leave them as they were. Have notified Dr. Fisher Manager at Shakopee of what I have done and why. They were strung two or three days ago. C. A. Eckman, Foreman."

Palmer frowns. "The railroads get half of the land in the country for nothing, then they are kind enough to 'allow' us to string wire over their tracks along the side of the public road. Darned white of them. Why didn't Dr. Fischer tell me about this?"

Using a pencil, Palmer scribbles some notes on the Hope letter: "The rules say we must have 30 foot clearance. We don't have a pole over 25 feet long in the yard, so we'll have to order at least two 35 footers from Bradley Timber and Railway Supply up in Duluth. They will have at least a seven inch top and cost \$3.30 each and it will be a month before they get here. It's dad-gummed unfair for us to have to pay freight charges on the poles we need to fix the line to the same danged railroad that took down our line in the first place. Besides, considering how long it took us to pay our last Bradley account, they'll want cash or COD. I'd better get the paperwork started. What a day so far!"

After writing an order and a voucher for the poles, Palmer notices the fancy bright red letters on the next envelope, **Prairie Queen Flour, Rock Rapids, Iowa**. As he opens the envelope, Palmer wonders, "Why is a flour company in Iowa writing to us?"

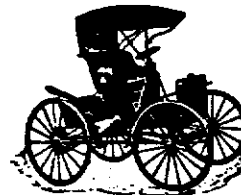


The longhand letter is short and to the point. "Dear Sir: I understand that your Telephone exchange is for sale if so how many phones have you, how long built--what kind of construction, what kind of phones please let me hear from you and also your price and terms Yours U. Albertus."

"Heck, a flour mill owner couldn't run a phone company any worse than a sanitarium owner, I'll send this up to Dr. Fischer," Palmer thinks, feeling guilty.

The next letter is to Dr. Fischer and is from **Pagel-Allen Co, 258 Temple Court, Minneapolis**.

"Dear Doctor: We have been expecting daily to hear from you in regard to placing an order for a Schacht Car, but up to the present writing have not received an order, therefore, write to know whether or not you are ready to put on a car. We can handle it in the manner named at the time the writer was in Shakopee, and would like very much to see you have one of these cars in service. Trusting we may hear from you in the near future, we beg to remain, Yours truly, H. B. Allen."



Palmer replaces the letter in the envelop, mentally noting to take it on up to the sanitarium. He also thinks, "If Dr. Fischer sells the company to the flour people, he could buy an 'Invincible Schacht.'"

The next letter goes straight into the waste bin unopened. From others on file,

Palmer knows it's another request for the Shakopee company's financial condition from the **Bradstreet Company**.

"Getting close to the end of today's mail," Palmer notes as he looks at a white parchment envelope containing a blue, steel engraved state seal and the words **Office of the Public Examiner, St. Paul**. "Only the tax man can afford this kind of stationary," he thinks as he opens the envelope.

"Dear sir: Your favor of the 18th at hand. You say that you have not reported the messenger services paid out because it is money we merely paid out for the Northwestern Telephone Exchange Company. The fact that no profit is made from this transaction is not to be considered. This question was settled in 'State v. N.W.Tel.Exc.Co., 120 N.W.534.' The switching fee of \$5.00 per month has not been considered. Please answer the question contained in the last paragraph of our letter of May 28th, and greatly oblige. Yours truly, A. Schafer, Public Examiner."

"I've had better days," Palmer says to himself as he pens a note to Miss Vierling requesting help to answer the tax man.

The letter from the **Smithsonian Truss Company, Manufacturers of the Smithsonian Truss, Topeka, Kansas, U.S.A.**, is addressed to Dr. Fischer, and since it cannot possibly involve the phone company and he really doesn't want to know what it's about, Palmer adds it to his Mudcura bundle.



Just a folder and a letter left. Since the letter is from long-time customer E. A. Garvey, who owns the general merchandise and farm produce store in Hamilton, Palmer saves it until last because it probably contains a payment.

The folder's from the **Fisher-Stevens Company** and features pictures of their line of "first class, oak telephone booths."

Palmer studies the pictures of the four types of telephone booths. "They look well built, double walls and a roof with glass windows, but we cannot afford to buy even a No. 1 for \$32," Palmer notes as he tosses the folder in the "to be filed" bin on his desk.

"Let's see what Mr. Garvey has to say, I sincerely hope his letter contains a payment on his account," Palmer muses as he opens the envelope postmarked "Savage, Minn." There are three blue lined half-sheets of paper, but no check.

"Dear friend: Have been informed that rental on the telephones after the 1st will be much higher. The reason of the proposed raise has not been told us, and further more only business 'phones' are effected by new rate. The very 'phones' mentioned have been subjected to unjust discrimination. Shall try to make some of those plain to you, and ask to be given the courtesy of replay on same

(I) Why have you not given us night service like the neighboring towns

(II) Why have we always paid 15 cents rate to StP & Mpls and farmers paid 10 cents

(III) Why can we not get all the customers in our town on free service when adjoining towns are given this!

(IV) Why are we on free list with Eden Prairie and Chanhassen towns that we do not want, and denied Lakeville and Rosemount towns wanted

(V) Why raise the 'phones' that are giving the revenue and not charging a cent for the time in making calls and collections, without raising all phones if they are not paying fair returns on investments? Yours Resp E. A. Garvey"

"Since it was Dr. Fischer's idea to raise the rates, I'll just add this to the mail I'm taking to the sanitarium. I hope Miss Vierling is doing a better job at collecting accounts than I've done so far today. Which reminds me I'd better get started on Axel's expense voucher, so she can get a check written to him before I have to hire him to work on that line over the railroad

tracks...those 35-foot poles will take all the extra help we can hire."

Dipping his pen in the ink well, Palmer begins writing: "Axel Peterson time helping me build line in May. he worked for \$2.25 per day and boarded himself. We to pay car fare. he worked 9 3/4 days making \$21.95. he paid out \$2.20 care fare he had 7 dinners out @ 25 cents per meal \$1.75 please send him a check for \$22.40 soon as you can. Geo W. Palmer."

Palmer puts on his coat, drops the vouchers on Miss Vierling's desk and tells her, "I'm going to see Dr. Fischer over at the sanitarium, and I may stay there up to my neck in the mud baths if we don't improve our collections. If I return, I'll need the tax file and our contract with the Automobile Club. Thank you."

Miss Vierling nods her head and continues making entries in her journal.

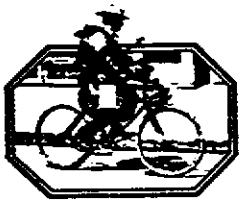
SHOPPING LIST

Dear Reader:

If you happen to run across any of the following items in your desk drawer, file cabinet, garage or attic, we'd be interested in acquiring them:

1. 10 Button TouchTone Phone
2. Princess Phone Key Chains
3. Early model fiber optic cable splicer.
4. Books about any aspect of the telecommunications industry.
5. Scrapbooks containing anything about the phone company.
6. Pictures big/little, black and white slides/color prints—we'll take'em all.





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