



Dial Log



Published by the
Telecommunications History Group, Inc.

DENVER, COLORADO

(303) 296-1221
Summer 2009, Vol. 13, no. 2

www.telcomhistory.org
Jody Georgeson, Editor

Director's Report

By Jody Georgeson

Denver volunteers have been busy folding and stuffing nearly 50,000 fundraising letters. Now that it's June, we're slowing down a little so they can have well-deserved vacations. As I write this, **Ron Swanson** is RVing in Montana, **Jerry Wild** is fishing on Lake Powell, **Renee Lang** is at her cabin in the Colorado mountains, and **George Howard** is on his way to Pagosa Springs, Colorado.

We have several new acquisitions—**John Herbolich** (Lone Tree, CO) brought in several boxes full of engineering and network volumes. We also received books from **Bob Timothy** (Denver) and **Les Albert** (Sun Lakes, AZ). **Vince Beeson** (Denver) gave us BSPs from 1944.

We received a wonderful autobiography of **John M. Fraser** (from his daughter, Jane M. Fraser). Mr. Fraser was an electrical engineer at Bell Labs and later worked at Hughes Aircraft and as an independent consultant in the U.S. and abroad.

I was lucky to meet **Tom Ruzicka** at his lovely home in the foothills near Boulder, CO. Tom was employed by New Jersey Bell, eventually becoming Director of the Arts and Graphics Department, where he designed the 1969 and 1984 versions of the Bell System logo. He then became Art director at AT&T, and ultimately held the same position at U S WEST. Tom donated a number of wonderful items, including Bell System and U S WEST graphics standards, a hard hat, Alexander Graham Bell and Vail Award medals that he designed, and a Native American-style appliquéd pillow top of the Bell logo.

Thanks to those of you who support us by donating artifacts, documents and funds. Thanks, too, to our wonderful group of volunteers who give so much of their time to our efforts. We couldn't do it without all of you!



Founder of THG Honored



Herb Hackenburg at his going-away party.

Last month, THG volunteers and directors said a reluctant goodbye to beloved THG founder and volunteer, **Herb Hackenberg** at parties held in his honor. Herb has recently moved to Salina, Kansas.

Without Herb's intervention, most of what is now THG's collection would probably have been destroyed and an important piece of history lost forever.

In 1991, Herb met with **Jack MacAllister**, President of U S WEST, to obtain support in forming our organization. Within 90 minutes, Herb had his first three board members - **Howard P. Doerr, Robert Runice** and **Laurence W. DeMuth, Jr.** With their assistance, more board members were selected and space was obtained in the Colorado Headquarters Building for an archive to store the valuable historical documents. The collection has grown beyond expectation and the archives now occupies over 11,000 square feet.

Herb is a historian, writer, avid photographer and storyteller by nature.

He began obtaining his knowledge of telecom history in 1983, when he was appointed by President **Bob Blanz** to write the Mountain Bell company history which resulted in the 1986 publication of *Muttering Machines to Laser Beams*. Herb retired from U S WEST in 1990 as Corporate Historian.

Herb was Executive Director of the History Group from 1992 through 2003, and has served as a volunteer since then. (He has promised to continue writing for the *Dial-Log*—a promise we intend to hold him to!)

The THG Board unanimously voted to honor Herb by naming our extensive stock certificate collection after him. Herb worked diligently to collect and preserve the certificates, which in themselves tell a wonderful story of the early telephone companies in the western United States.



Herb in 1986 with his newly published book.

*"Muttering Machines" is still available for purchase from THG. The **THG Herbert J. Hackenburg Stock Certificate Collection** is available to qualified researchers by appointment at our archives in Denver.*

A Little Girl's Visit to Her Father's Office in the 1930s

Mountain States Telephone &
Telegraph Company
By Rae Morris Benton

Last issue, we learned about Ray Marion Morris' rise from posthole digger to executive vice president of the MST&T. Here's the story of his daughter's visit to "the corner office."



MST&T Vice President Ray M. Morris

In the 1930s, the largest city in Colorado was Denver. The offices for corporations, retail stores and medical facilities were centered in what was called "downtown." That is the area that is drawn diagonally in the otherwise North/South-East/ West grid of the city. Approximately one-half million people lived in homes and apartments surrounding this center, and most of them worked in the area, too. Electric street cars provided alternative transportation for families owning the

customary single car. Airplanes flying into and out of Stapleton Airport carried only mail; people traveled to other large cities and states in railway cars driven by coal-powered steam engines.

Littleton, Lakewood, Brighton, Golden, and other areas we now consider suburbs, were then small, distant towns.

When a mother and little daughter wanted to go shopping in one of the department stores, it was a special occasion to include lunch and a visit to father's office. As was the custom, mother and daughter wore hats, gloves, dress coats and "Sunday shoes." For a little girl, this outfit meant black patent leather Mary Jane shoes, a camel hair coat with matching hat, and little gloves usually knit of wool to match the color of the coat. It was fully understood that manners were expected to be impeccable!

On a visit to the Mountain States Telephone & Telegraph building, one was greeted by a liveried attendant and ushered through ornate revolving wrought-iron doors into the cavernous entrance. Mother and her little girl were recognized and greeted politely by name, before being escorted toward the bank of elevators, which seemed to be down a dark, marble tunnel. However, the way to the elevators was delayed in order to view the original murals by the renowned local artist, Alan True. Each individual mural covered a wall from floor to ceiling, and depicted the stages from the laying of telephone lines to the final communication by telephone.

After riding upward for 14 floors in a solemn, marble and steel enclosure, the elevator doors opened to reveal another long, dark marble corridor. The office of Mr. Ray M. Morris was at the end of the hallway in a suite that included the current MST&T president, the board

room and the secretaries' reception room. Impressively, each of the two offices had its own bathroom and coat closet. The board room with a fireplace at one end was furnished with a very large rectangular table surrounded by many chairs. All of the rooms were carpeted and the walls paneled in dark walnut. The furniture was large, artfully carved walnut. Amenities included service trays, ice water-filled decanters, and furniture for the comfort of visitors.

Again, visitors were greeted by the bank of secretaries and escorted to the appointed office. Inside the auspicious office, the sun shone through gothic windows. Colorado weather always seemed to allow a view south to Pike's Peak from this particular corner room, and it was exciting to look down 14 floors to see miniscule cars and people below.



*The telephone building at 931 14th St,
Denver, Colorado. (THG archives)*

If it was not a particularly busy day, one of the secretaries would give a tour around the suite of offices. Sometimes the president would invite the little girl into the Director's board room, which reminded her of the Baroque castles in her story books. The mantel around the wood burning fireplace was reminiscent of those in King Arthur's court.

That little girl was me, and I fondly remember the feeling of respect instilled with these visits to my father. Architects designed these elegant buildings which were referred to as the "Bell System palaces" in the era of AT&T and the Baby Bells. There was a feeling of respect and a practice of courtesy during this era. Men worked hard not only to have the necessary knowledge of the business, but also the management skills and gentle manners to be worthy of election to these important offices. It was a sign of accomplishment to reach a position that rewarded an officer of a corporation with comfortable amenities. It would seem that daily life at that time reflected these values...perhaps we have lost something today!

The building referred to in this article is the historical MST&T headquarters building at 14th and Curtis in Denver. It, along with its marbled hallways, dramatic murals and hand-carved walnut fixtures can still be seen. Just get a hold of us at telcomhist@aol.com or on 303-296-1221 for a tour. A virtual tour of the building is available on our web site at:

<http://www.telcomhistory.org/vm/exhibits931.shtml>

Montana Telephone History

By Brian Litster

Brian Litster, from the Library Science Masters Degree program at the University of Denver, was our intern earlier this spring.

The telephone came to Montana in 1876 when it was still a territory [*in the form of farm lines*]. Soon, people set up local phone cooperatives (co-ops). Many Montana exchanges were purchased by the Bell System companies and ultimately sold back to locally-owned companies.

Choteau

Charles H. Dunlap and A.L. Vance established the first telephone exchange in Choteau in 1875. Citizens of the town wanted their own lines so, the exchange grew rapidly. As time went on, the telephone exchange grew and the Rocky Mountain Bell Telephone Co. bought it out. After the sale, Mr. Dunlap worked for Rocky Mountain Bell Telephone Co. until his retirement. In 1911, Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Co., (MST&T) was formed and took over all the Rocky Mountain Bell exchanges. **

White Sulphur Springs

Pre-1911, before there were a lot of telephones in White Sulphur Springs, Ed Conwell's law office had the only private telephone line in the city. Long distance service was provided by a part-time operator, Grace Courtwright. This line

was used by many of the residents until Fred and Ted Baron came into town to install a city-wide system. The White Sulphur Springs Tel. Exchange was incorporated in 1911. Mrs. Mary Brady and her daughter Josie were hired to operate the system. Many businesses in town had White Sulphur Springs Telephone Exchange lines installed. The company was bought by Mr. Otto Schulz in 1914, and was sold to Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph company 1927.

Culbertson

The Great Northern Telephone Co. operated the exchange in Culbertson from [sometime before] 1905 until 1910. Great Northern created rules for its customers to properly use the phone.

These rules included things like speaking directly into the transmitter in a calm voice while using it, and to not call during a thunder storm. The exchange was bought by the Montana Star Telephone Co in

1910 and was sold to by MST&T in 1916.

Scobey

We have yet to unearth a date for the first telephone in Scobey. We do know that Mrs. Alvin Olafson worked as a telephone operator from 1914 to 1916 for Four Valleys Telephone Co. in that town. Four Valleys operated the ruralexchange privately until it was bought byMST&T in 1916. In 1950, Nemont Telephone Cooperative, Inc was organized by people wanting to upgrade telephone service in rural areas. They



started buying and building their own systems in the areas where they lived. Nemont. continued to buy, build, and merge with other cooperatives in order to provide better telephone service until they became a major player in the Montana telecommunications market. They continue to provide service to rural Montana today.

Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Co. / Mountain Bell

After 1916, Mountain States served most Montana customers, rebuilding and improving exchanges so customers would have better service. As the years went by, MST&T phased in new equipment like improved magneto switchboards, new lines, and hand-crank phones so customers would enjoy the same services found in other parts of the country. A new distance dialing



system was installed in the mid-1960s so customers would be able to call phone numbers across the country. The company installed microwave-radio facilities so customers would enjoy improved long distance service. There were an increasing number of phones being installed and used in people's homes. In A digital electronic switching machine was installed to replace the old mechanical switching machines.

U S West Communications

After the split from AT&T [Divestiture], U S West Communications continued to upgrade service and worked to make themselves well-known throughout the various communities by providing grants for teacher awards, assistance for small businesses, and sponsorships of events like local high school bridge-building competitions.

In the early 1990s, U S West saw a changing marketplace. Shifts in strategic direction prompted the company to sell some of its small town and rural exchanges. It sold the properties to the in order to make a profit for its shareholders and to be able to focus on servicing the larger cities. In Montana, this included communities near Helena, Billings, Great Falls, Miles City, Missoula, Butte, Glasgow, and Lewistown.

Today

Nemont Telephone Cooperative, Three Rivers Communications, and other companies worked with the Montana Public Service Commission to buy and operate the other exchanges. There were town meetings organized across the state to allow customers to listen and to talk about what would happen due to the sale of the exchanges. It was believed that local companies would do a better job serving these exchanges because they could afford to update the telephone systems and provide a tradition of service to the communities.

**** Correction (06/15/2022): The first telephone company in Choteau was incorporated in 1887, according to Nancy Thornton, Choteau, MT historian.**



The 1876 Centennial Exposition

On May 10, 1876, President Grant officially opened the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition. Entrance to the grounds was 50 cents, payable only in paper scrip. The exhibitions included 37 nations and countless industrial exhibits occupying over 250 individual pavilions. Until its close on November 10, the event drew nearly 10 million visitors at a time when the population of the United States was only 46 million.

Major attractions were the Main Building, devoted to manufacturers of the U.S. and other countries; Memorial Hall, dedicated to the fine arts; and Horticulture Hall, a conservatory for the display of native and exotic plants. Everything at the Centennial was classified by department (Mining and Metallurgy, Manufactures, Education and Science, Art, Machinery, Agriculture, and Horticulture), sub-classified, and further sub-classified in a logical scheme that later became a model for the Dewey Decimal System.

On March 10, **Alexander Graham Bell** had delivered the first telephone message to his assistant, Watson, in their workshop in Boston. Now, on June 25, he presented his invention to a crowd in the Main Building. According to Sir William Thomson (Lord Kelvin) it was "the most wonderful thing [*I have*] seen in America." However, according

to a description of the exhibition written 90 years later, "One new invention which interested hardly anybody was Alexander Graham Bell's telephone. It attracted less notice than the packages of magic tricks on sale nearby." (Dee Brown, *The Year of the Century: 1876*, 1966, p. 133.)



Emperor Dom Pedro (Peru) inspects Bell's exhibit at the Exposition.

Other technologies displayed at the fair include the Corliss Steam Engine, the *John Bull* steam locomotive (originally built in 1831), and the first automatic screw making machinery. During the Exposition the Turkish delegation presented marijuana to the United States for the first time (one of the most visited exhibits of the fair). The right arm and torch of the Statue of Liberty were showcased at the Exposition. For a fee of 50 cents, visitors could climb the ladder to the balcony, and the money raised this way was used to fund the rest of the statue.

Consumer products introduced at the Fair included:

- the Remington Typographic Machine (typewriter)
- Heinz Ketchup
- Wallace-Farmer Electric Dynamo (precursor to the electric light)
- Hires Root Beer



The greatest impact of the Centennial Exposition was on the image of the United States. Before 1876 Europe had generally considered the U.S. an upstart country, not yet quite eligible to join the ranks of first-class nations. In this country, Americans had come through a difficult period; the post Civil War years were marked by political scandal and lack of leadership. Visitors and businessmen from abroad were astonished at America's industrial productivity, its creativity, and its progressiveness. The country was hailed as the land of progress and increasing economic power. The Centennial gave Americans pride in the present and confidence in an even greater future.

Mystery Solved!



Our mystery building wasn't such a mystery, after all. Several of you knew that it is a repeater hut, with a little outhouse out back. More precisely it is a J Carrier Auxiliary Repeater Station on the Denver-El Paso open wire line. As **Vince Beeson** (Denver) points out, it is near the Greenland exit east of I-25, between Denver and Colorado Springs.

Lloyd Leger (Gilbert, AZ) writes, "The carrier method of stacking voice channels to get more than one circuit per pair had a modest beginning with a "C" System in the 1930s. All of these early systems (clear up to the Coaxial Cable and Microwave Systems that were expanded after WWII) used vacuum tubes, before Bell labs invented transistors that spawned the modern chips (along with converting from analog modulation to digital). The early J & K Wire Line carrier systems were put in and expanded to give 12 channels per quad (two pairs) just in time for the communications needs of World War II and the boom that came along."

According to **Jim Coates**, who admits to having spent a lot of hours working in these huts, they "were spaced about 20 miles apart all along the open wire lines. They contained battery plants and J Carrier repeaters. In the 1940s and 50s, before microwave,

this was the only facility capable of carrying toll traffic over long distances.”

Thanks also to **Robert Wiswell** (Denver), **John Herbolich** (Lone Tree, CO), **Charlie Root** (Tucson, AZ), **Buell Ross** (Alamosa, CO), and **John Schaefer** (Pueblo, CO), all of whom took time to answer our mystery question. We enjoyed each of their letters, so they each will receive a THG shopping bag.

More UFOs

(Unidentified Found Objects)

Speaking of mysteries, we've recently received a couple of items that we can't identify. The first was given to us by our good friend **Ralph Crawford**, and even he doesn't know what it is. It's a bowl 6.75 inches in diameter, and 2 inches deep. It's painted red, and has

raised letters reading “ BELL SYSTEM” in the bowl. It is made of iron and is *very* heavy.



Next is this lovely object from the AT&T Phone Center. Volunteer **Ken Pratt's** wife, **Jewell**, found it and sent it in to us. It's silver-colored, about 6 inches long and 1.5 inches at the widest part of the fork. On the back it says “Action Line U.S.A.” There's been a lot of speculation about what it might be used for, but none of us knows for sure.



Help us clear up these mysteries! Let us know if you can identify either of these objects by calling 303-296-1221 or by writing to us at telcomhist@aol.com.

Hayes has first phone installed in White House



President Hayes

On May 10, 1877, President Rutherford B. Hayes had the White House's first telephone installed in the mansion's telegraph room.

President Hayes embraced the new technology, though he rarely received phone calls. In fact, the Treasury Department possessed the only other direct phone line to the White House at the time. The White House phone number was "1." Phone service throughout the country was in its infancy in 1877. It was not until a year later that the first telephone exchange was set up in Connecticut and it would be 50 more years before President Herbert Hoover had the first telephone line installed at the president's desk in the Oval Office.



President Hoover

In more recent years, presidential phone recordings have given the public

insight into the personalities and political maneuvers of the nation's leaders. On such tapes, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon and Harry Truman were frequently heard using profanity or openly criticizing political opponents without the constraints of being in the public eye or having to maintain a facade of presidential decorum. Most of the time those on the other end of the White House phone line had no knowledge they were being taped.



President Nixon

Since 1990, the National Archives and Records Administration has released to the public presidential phone recordings regarding subjects such as Kennedy's handling of the Cuban missile crisis; Johnson's increase in the number of U.S. troops sent to Vietnam; and Nixon's appointment of William Rehnquist to the U.S. Supreme Court. American Radio Works® states that President Nixon left behind more taped phone recordings than any other president, a fact that led to his political undoing in 1973 when Watergate investigators subpoenaed tapes and transcripts of close to 3,700 hours of Nixon's phone recordings. Since Nixon's administration, declassified transcripts or sound recordings have become increasingly available to the public in print and online.

From: History.com, Accessed on 5/11/09



Construction Crew Wagon

We were contacted late last year by Paul Keith, who was in the process of building a model of a telephone construction crew wagon. We were happy to be able to provide him with some information and photographs. Last week, he notified us that he had finished his model.



Paul told us, "It took about 200 hours to design and build everything. All the parts are hand made with the exception of the chain on the rear gate and the hooks on the ends of the climbing belt. The model is made from bass wood, walnut, brass, two leather wallets and sheet styrene."

Paul started his career in telephony as a special services tech with PacBell in 1980. He spent 11 years with PacBell, AT&T and PacTel before moving on in the private sector.

Paul based his reproduction on a picture in our collection of a crew in Pittsburg, from around 1900-1910.



"Having spent a couple of months working on outside plant repair after the storms of 1980-81 in the SF Bay Area, the crew in the photo doesn't look any different than a crew from 1980 - the hair is shorter, but that's about it. The supervisor is easily recognized."

More pictures can be found at:
<http://forum.scalemodelhorsedrawnvehicle.co.uk/showthread.php?t=529>

and
<http://s437.photobucket.com/albums/gg100/basilhoff/Wagon%20final%20pics/>

Telecommunications History Group
P.O. Box 8719
Denver, CO 80201-8719

