



# Dial-Log



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Jody Georgeson, Editor

## Director's Report

By Jody Georgeson

The best laid plans....

Last issue, I reported that we'd be moving to the 930 15th Street building by the end of October. Not surprisingly, we have yet to move. Oh, and we'll be moving to 1425 Champa, instead of 15th Street. We hope to be settled in our new space by the first of the year.

Our congratulations to volunteer **Norman Birt**, who recently received his Master of Library Science degree from Emporia State University. Norm has performed many services for us during his self-imposed internship here at THG, including inventorying all of our audiotapes, inventorying (and cleaning out) our oversized materials in the flat files, and devising a retention guide for our corporate records. Norm has accepted a position as cataloguer with the St. Vrain school district, and has embarked on a Masters program in History, so won't be able to continue as a THG volunteer. We'll miss him greatly, and wish him the best of luck.

Our most intrepid volunteers, **Milo Masura** and **Roy Lynn**, made another trip to Montana to work on the Forest Service's magneto phone system. We'll publish an installment of their travel diary in the next issue of the *Dial-Log*, and will mount the whole thing, with pictures, on the web site just as soon as possible.

Another member, **Conrad Krebs**, has started an interesting web site about lead exposure and lead poisoning in the Bell System. Check it out at:

<http://BellSystemleadpoisoning.com>

Researcher **Phil Sterritt** recently spent several afternoons conducting research about Denver telephone numbers in our archives. He graciously allowed us to publish the results, on page 4.

Thank you all for your wonderful response to this year's fundraising efforts. For those of you who have yet to respond, it's not too late to send your donation in time to claim it on your 2006 taxes.

## Volunteer Hall of Fame

By Jody Georgeson

THG held its annual Volunteer Hall of Fame celebration on November 29. We had originally planned to have a gala open house in our new quarters. We were a bit premature. As the date neared, it became obvious that we would not be there in time.

Once again, **Mary Riffle** came to the rescue, offering her spacious home for the get together. Then we compounded our problems by having a snowstorm. So while it wasn't quite as gala as we'd planned, and we weren't able to include as many members of the THG family as we would have liked, we managed to celebrate the occasion quite nicely.



The THG Volunteer of the Year for 2006 is **Betty Vigil**. Betty has been the driving force behind collecting, organizing and inventorying of our directory collection. We really could not have done it without her.

Betty lives with her husband, Albert and grandson, Garrison, in Longmont, Colorado. She retired in 1992 from

U S West, where she was a manager in the Legal Department. Aside from her many skills that we shamelessly exploit, Betty's intelligence and humor make her a pleasure to work with.

Betty's picture will be added to the new Hall of Fame in THG's new quarters on the fifth floor at 1475 Champa.

## This Month in History

By Herb Hackenburg

### In December:

- 1877 - The first substantial use of copper wire, and the construction of the first experimental PBX both took place.
- 1918 - Miss Merle Egan (a Mountain States operator from Helena, Montana and a U S Army Signal Corps volunteer) was appointed "head central" (chief operator) at Versailles, France during the World War I peace negotiations.
- 1926 - Paying their own way and on their own time, the Northwestern Bell telephone operators in Grand island, Nebraska *all* took music and public speaking lessons to "professionalize" their speaking voices.
- 1934 - Thomas A. Watson died at Pass-a-grille in Florida.
- 1942 - One year after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the first transcontinental buried telephone cable was connected in Wyoming.
- 1947 - Drs. John Bardeen, William Shockley and Walter H Brattain of Bell labs received the Nobel Prize for the invention of the transistor.
- 1957 - The first public air-to-ground telephone call was made from a commercial airliner.
- 1971 - During the last week of the year, the number of Bell System telephones in service reached 100

million. (Independent companies served another 25 million.)

1987 - Boulder, Colorado was selected as the home of U S WEST Advanced Technologies; groundbreaking occurred in early 1988.

1991 - AT&T announce that it had stopped providing telegraph service.



## MUSEUM OF COMMUNICATIONS

Part of the TELECOMMUNICATIONS HISTORY GROUP, INC.

by Don Ostrand

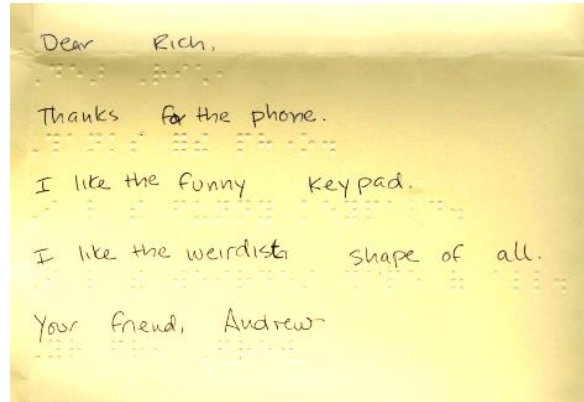
A recent segment of *Modern Marvels*, "The Telephone", which aired on November 13 on the History Channel, was filmed, in part, here at the Museum of Communications in Seattle. Try to catch it when it comes around again.

We recently had a special visitor to the museum. The young man (12 years old) lives in St. Paul and is an avid telephone collector and hobbyist. He came to "see" the museum even though he is blind and challenged by CP.



**Andrew checks out a panel switch.**

**Rich Barger**, one of our volunteers, spent about 2½ hours conducting the tour. Rich also gave Andrew a telephone set to commemorate his visit.



*Andrew's thank you letter, written in Braille.*

### In Memory

We were sorry to hear of the recent death of **Joyce Kilmer**. Joyce began work for Mountain States as a lineman in 1947. He moved to Grand Junction in 1970, where he continued his work as a right-of way agent until retiring with 36 years of service.

He wrote a book of stories about his career, which was published in 2000 (THG has a copy in our collection).

Joyce is survived by his daughter Jana and her husband Woody; son Jeff and his partner Nick; sister Barbara; brothers-in-law Don and Glen; and eight nieces and nephews.

*"After all is said and done, a hell of a lot more is said than done." - H.L. Mencken*

## Singular Wireless

Among the many competing designs for a speaking telephone in the 1870s was a wireless model invented by Amos Dolbear, then head of Tufts University Department of Astronomy and Physics. The first transmissions with the "induction wireless telephone" took place between Dolbear's laboratory in Ballou Hall and his home on Professor's Row.

Although the device was less practical than the one patented in 1876 by an upstart named Bell—its magnetically induced signal could travel barely a mile, and apparently was unrecognizable as speech—it offered a distinct advantage over today's wireless phones: to place a call, you first had to jam a metal rod into the ground. In other words, no gabbing in restaurants or on the road.

Amos Dolbear's papers reside in the Tufts University Archives. A finding aid is available at <http://dca.tufts.edu/>

*Amos Dolbear's telephone*



## Denver Telephone Numbers

By Phillip G. Sterritt

The following is information distilled from analysis of Denver telephone directories in the collection of The Telecommunications History Group. The intent of the study was to determine the format and patterns of telephone numbers in use throughout Denver's history.

It covers the period from 1879, when there were no telephone numbers, through 1960, when seven-digit telephone numbers had been uniformly established. It does not establish dates of later changes, such as when alphabetic exchange abbreviations were discontinued and phone numbers were expressed in fully numeric terms, or the adaptation of ten-digit numbers, including the area code.

It is hoped that this information will be of benefit to anyone wishing to estimate the approximate date of creation or publication of an artifact or document. Much like patent numbers, it can only establish an approximate date **before which** the object in question could not have been made or published.

The first Denver directory in the collection of The Telecommunications History Group is dated April 4, 1879. At this time, there were no telephone numbers, just a listing of names of people and businesses that had phones.

By January 1890, the next directory in the collection, telephone numbers had begun. The numbers were between one and four digits long. From this point on, there are very few missing dates in the collection.

In January 1896, numbers were still between one and four digits long, but occasionally a letter prefix was found. This continued until January 1898 when letter prefixes were replaced by occasional letter *suffixes*. In addition, a sticker affixed to the front of that directory said:

**IMPORTANT** .....

Notice to Telephone Subscribers.

A branch exchange of the Colorado Telephone Company has been opened and will be known as the "YORK EXCHANGE." Parties desiring to call subscribers who appear in the Telephone Directory as connected with that exchange, must call "York 27", or whatever number the subscriber is assigned. When a letter is affixed to a number it should be called that way, as: "1400-a", "York 230-c."  
Respectfully,  
E.B. Vice-President & General Manager.

The numbers with 'York' to the left generally had addresses east of Broadway.

By April 1900, exchanges were specified with all numbers. Numbers not in the York exchange now were listed with the 'Main' exchange. Page headers and footers said "GIVE THE COMPLETE DESIGNATION OF THE TELEPHONE WANTED." Named

exchanges included Main, York, South, White, Blue, Red, Green, Brown, Black.

Olive and Pink exchanges were added in the July 1901 directory. In January 1903, the cover had the following notice:

*'We are preparing to move into our new building, and consequently changing several thousand numbers; for instance, there are no more "A, B, C or F" numbers in the Main or York Offices.'*

This notice was repeated in April 1903 with the addition of the South exchange.

The Gallup exchange was added in August 1906. Directories for 1908 and 1909 are missing from the collection, but by 1910, named exchanges included Main, White, Champa, South, Gallup, York, Olive, Ellsworth, Brown, Walnut, Purple, Hickory, Blue, Cascade. The directory also included listings or exchanges in adjoining towns, usually with a notation about an extra charge applying to calls to those numbers.

In 1913, listings of prominent buildings appeared in the front section.

In July 1920, classified listings began as a separate section. Also, a notice appeared stating:

*'The entire directory will be printed in modern telephone directory form, similar to those furnished in New York, Chicago, ... -- in fact, every large city with a population of more than 200,000.'*

The cover of the July 1921 issue said:

*'The entire directory will be printed in modern telephone directory form, similar to those furnished in New York, Chicago, ... -- in fact, every large city with a population of more than 200,000.'*



*'Important Notice. When waiting for a called telephone to answer, from most telephones, you will hear a slight burring sound at intervals, indicating the connection has been made and that called telephone is being rung. When necessary equipment has been installed in all Denver offices (probably before December 1st) this signal will replace the operator's report, "I'll ring again."*

Summer 1927 saw managers listed for Main, Champa, Gallup, South, Sunset, York and Franklin exchanges. Radiophone service was now available from Denver to England, Scotland and Wales, between 6:30am and 11:00am Mountain time. Rates were \$84.00 for three minutes, \$28 each additional minute.

In winter 1928-1929, phone numbers were listed with the first two letters of exchange bolded and separated from rest of exchange. Although there was no mention of it, they were probably preparing people for the concept of direct dial service. *Herbert J. Hackenburg, Jr.'s* book, "From Muttering Machines to Laser Beams," has a reproduction of a Rocky Mountain News editorial cartoon from the May 7, 1929 issue showing dial service arriving in Denver. The Summer 1930 directory included instructions on using dial service as well as non-dial service phones, so apparently both were in use. By July 1933, non-dial service instructions no longer appeared.

In Winter 1935-36, managers were listed for Main, Cherry, Keystone, Tabor, Gallup, Pearl, Spruce, York and Franklin exchanges. In the Summer 1938 directory, the same exchanges were listed and letter suffixes still appeared on numbers in at least the York, Franklin, Gallup exchanges. By Winter

1938-39, a different set of exchanges were shown in the listed billing schedules -- Cherry, Emerson, Gallup, Keystone, Main, Pearl, Spruce, Tabor, East. Only Gallup exchanges seem to have letter suffixes.

Summer 1939 had billing schedules listed for Cherry, Emerson, Glendale, Grand, Keystone, Main, Pearl, Spruce, Tabor, East exchanges. No Denver phones appear to have letter suffixes, which may have gone out with the old exchanges.

1941 saw two new exchanges added, Race in the spring and Alpine in the fall. Dexter was added in spring 1942. In December 1946, the Fremont exchange replaced Emerson and Florida was added in October 1948.

May 1949's cover stated:

*'All Englewood telephone numbers are changed with this issue of the directory.'*

Those numbers had the Sunset exchange, which appear to be the first seven-digit numbers in the area. Denver added the Acoma, Genesee and Sherman exchanges and in February 1950, added the Stillwell exchange.

In May 1951, all Lakewood numbers had been changed to the Belmont exchange. Like Sunset, it was a seven-digit exchange. Sullivan numbers followed suit in May 1952. November 1952, saw the first seven-digit exchange in Denver with the debut of the Skyline exchange. Aurora's Empire and Arvada's Harrison exchanges arrived in Spring 1953.

The following exchanges were introduced in November 1953:

- All Hazeltine numbers changed to **AT**las 8 numbers

- Many South Denver and Westwood numbers were changed to **WE**st 4 and **WE**st 5 numbers
- Many Westwood numbers became **WA**lnut 2 numbers

Denver listings also included a Dudley exchange but no mention of whether it was seven digits.

By spring 1954, all Denver exchanges appeared to have been converted to seven digits.

*If you have comments or questions about this article, Phil can be reached at [pqspub@comcast.net](mailto:pqspub@comcast.net)*

## Westcliffe

By Florence Rush

*From time to time we run an excerpt from Hot Rails, an original manuscript by the wife of a traveling construction worker with Mountain States Telephone. This story took place in 1938.*

We lived in a two-story building at the corner of one block. It most likely had once been a lodge hall. The first floor was boarded up and one entered at a small door facing the street. Straight ahead was a wide staircase that led to our quarters. Inside there was a kitchen containing a sink, table and two chairs. A cupboard hung on the wall. The table was placed against a large window so one could look out into the vast, cold, empty space, where the lodge had probably met. Next to the kitchen was a large room, which served as the living room and bedroom. The bathroom was across the hall next to the lodge hall.

We were there in the harsh grip of winter. It was painful for me to think of Janet having to spend Christmas in these dreary surroundings. I was

reminded of one of her very early observations when she said, "Mom, why can't we have a home like Mrs. DeLaat's?" Mrs. DeLaat lived in a beautiful large house in Park Hill. Mrs. DeLaat's living room contained a grand piano, and she summoned the maid by stepping on a button on the floor near her chair in the dining room. Oh, me!

One bright spot at Christmas was my receiving a portable Singer sewing machine. With the purchase of the machine came a premium of a miniature sewing machine. I gave it to Janet as one of her Christmas presents. It really sewed by turning a wheel.

... ..

At this time we were driving a beautiful bronze-colored 1938 Chrysler Imperial four-door sedan. A big snow storm swept in. The temperature dropped into the 40 degrees below-zero range. Our cars actually froze onto the unpaved street and could not be moved. The men had to use dynamite to blast the old telephone poles from their holes in order to replace the line and finish the job.

When the storm broke and the thaw began, we were able to move our cars. We found the Chrysler continued to run but the clock had stopped running, never to run again.

*To you and yours....*



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