

Dial Log



Published by the
Telecommunications History Group, Inc.

DENVER, COLORADO

(303) 296-1221
Winter 2007, Vol. 11, no. 4

www.telcomhistory.org
Jody Georgeson, Editor

Director's Report

By Jody Georgeson

It's hard to believe we've been in our new quarters for a year now. It's been a busy one!

Ron Swanson, Renee Lang and **John Herbolich** finished reorganizing the clipping and serial files, and **George Howard** is nearly done with the reference library. I can't begin to explain what a big job this has been, nor how relieved we are to have it behind us. Now the volunteers can get back to their regular archival and curatorial duties.

Dale Norblom and **Ken Pratt** have valiantly kept up with the document collection, while **Bruce Amsbury** and **Betty Vigil** continue to update the directories. **Jerry Wild** and **Mike Nearing** continue to improve our computer system. **Milo Masura, Ron Pickens** and **Roy Lynn** have nearly completed our new audio/video facility, which will allow us to view and preserve our vast A/V holdings. **Herb Hackenburg** and I have kept busy with tours, research and (finally!) completing the requirements of our Colorado State Historical Fund grant.

Remember to check out the "virtual gift shop" on our web site. The items for sale are mostly duplicates from the collection. Most are in very limited supply, and once they are gone, they're gone for good. In fact, a couple of the posters have already sold out completely.

I hope you enjoy this issue. Be sure to catch up on the early days of telephone in Seattle and Northfield. There's also an interesting article about the history of payphones and an editorial about Telstar, the Bell System communications satellite.

THG cannot exist with the support of our members. I want to thank all of you for your support this year. With your continued help, we will be able to preserve and share our industry's history.

"Archivists are history's record-keepers. It's our job to collect, preserve, organize and describe (historical records) in a way so that the historian [and] the public can learn more about themselves."

Bob Clark, Supervisory Archivist, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum



Pay Phones Disconnected

On December 3 of this year, AT&T announced plans to phase out its pay phone business by the end of 2008. Other traditional telephone companies have also left the pay phone business. While pay phones will continue to be offered by independent operators, there will be fewer and fewer of them. Today, there are about 1 million pay phones, down from 2.6 million in 1998. Local calls on pay phones have also dropped 30 percent since 1998.

Pay Phone history:

1878: The first pay phone had an attendant who took callers' money.

1889: The first public coin telephone was installed by inventor William Gray at a bank in Hartford, Connecticut. It was a "post-pay" machine. Coins were deposited after the call was placed.

1898: The Western Electric No. 5 Coin Collector, the first automatic "prepay" station, went into use in Chicago.

1902: There were 81,000 pay telephones in the United States.

1905: The first outdoor Bell System coin telephone was installed on a Cincinnati street. It wasn't an instant hit; people apparently were reluctant to make private calls on a public thoroughfare.

1950s: Glass outdoor telephone booths began replacing wooden ones.

1957: "Calling from your car" was first tested in Mobile, Ala., and Chicago. Drive-up pay telephones proved popular and are still in use today.

1960: The Bell System installed its millionth pay telephone.

1964: When the Treasury Department decided to change the metallic composition of U.S. coins, it consulted with Bell Laboratories to ensure that the new coins would function properly in pay phones.

1966: "Dial tone first" service was introduced in Hartford, Conn. This essentially turned coin phones into emergency call stations, because calls could be made without first depositing coins.

Feb. 2, 2001: BellSouth announced that it was getting out of the pay phone business. It was the first major phone company to do so.

Dec. 3, 2007: AT&T Inc., the biggest U.S. phone company, announced plans to leave the pay-phone business after 129 years.



MUSEUM OF COMMUNICATIONS

Part of the TELECOMMUNICATIONS HISTORY GROUP, INC.

The Telephone in Seattle: The Early Days

This is the second installment in a story Don Ostrand found in a 1935 rate case filing for Pacific Tel & Tel.

During 1908, only about 1,100 stations were gained, a small increase compared to previous years, due to the general financial depression of this period. In 1909, the year of the Alaska-Yukon Exposition, 4,200 stations were added, bringing the total to 28,527. Two additional central offices were opened, Sidney and Beacon, the former serving the settlement in the south part of the city known as Georgetown and the latter relieving Main and East offices by serving the Mount Baker Park, Rainier Heights and Rainier Valley Districts.

The principal large expenditures in plant made this year were in connection with the establishment of these two central offices, though extensions and relief projects were completed in other parts of the exchange and various large reconstruction projects were carried out in the old districts replacing worn out plant and obsolete types.

During 1909 and 1910, over 20 miles of subway were placed in

connection with the above work and to provide for future growth.

About this time, it became necessary to open two new offices. A new Ballard office was constructed to serve the Greenwood and Phinney Avenue portion of the North district in addition to the territory served by old Ballard. The Kenwood office was built to serve the University and Green Lake sections of North district. These two offices were placed in service in 1911, in connection with which extensive additions to the outside plant were made

North Office became congested in 1910, and as a relief measure, Kenwood Office was established. Kenwood Office was also designed to care for expected new development in the University District. The old Ballard Office likewise became congested this year and the present building was erected and new equipment installed.

The stations in a part of the then existing North Office were also transferred to the new Ballard Office as a further relief of North Office.

The Independent Company had gained a few stations between 1907 and 1910, but suffered a

loss of 3,600 stations during 1911. In March 1912, The Independent Company was taken over by The Pacific Company. The plants were tied together and all duplicate stations eliminated. At the time of the cutover The Pacific Company had about 32,300 stations and The Independent Company 15,285. At the close of 1912, The Pacific Company had a total of 44,810 stations.



Looking Back

25 years ago - January 8, 1982

The Justice Department and AT&T announced an agreement (Modification of Final Judgment) to terminate the U.S. v. AT&T antitrust suit filed in 1974. AT&T agreed to divest itself of all wholly owned Bell operating companies' exchange operations, and thereafter would be free of constraints of the 1956 Consent Decree.

50 Years ago - March 13, 1957

The 50 millionth Bell telephone was installed in the Salisbury, Maryland home of James S. Russell, Chesapeake & Potomac employee. Russell had the longest service (53 years) among Bell System employees.

(Nearly) 100 years ago - 1908

The term "Bell System" was introduced in national advertising. The theme, "One policy, One System, Universal Service" was originated by president Theodore N. Vail to express his policy of eliminating dual telephone services wherever possible. Dual services were a result of competition, which had been active since the expiration of the Bell patents in 1894.

In a great many cities, both Bell and an independent exchange system were operating. Often customers had to subscribe to both services. The result was a heavy cost to telephone users and, often, impaired service. Vail launched an aggressive policy to either buy the competing service or abandon the field to it.

Another of Vail's policies was to use what is called informative advertising, telling the story of the Bell System as an institution of American life. These

advertisements began June 1908, and continued to appear regularly.



Woodsheds, Restrooms and a \$65-a-Month Man

By Craig Dunton and Carol Roecklein

Last issue, we told of the beginnings of the telephone industry in Northfield, Minnesota. The story continues....

At a February council meeting in 1904, a petition was read to make it clear who could and could not establish telephone service in the city. "A petition was signed by a large number of merchants, business men, all citizens of the city who prayed that popular companies be excluded from the city," a page one *Northfield News* article stated.

Somehow the Tri-State Company made a poor impression on local officials and a company representative, identified as Mr. Bowe, did his best to reason with the council. "All I asked was that a permit be granted for a pay station at Turner's Drug Store," he said. Bowe went on to tell the council that it had been rumored that his company had tried to force its way into the city. Not so, he states, they were simply trying to set poles and string wires to Turner's Drug Store through Fifth Street.

Woodshed as Telephone Booth?

The council comes up with what they believe is the perfect solution for the Tri-State Telephone and Telegraph Company: Use a woodshed owned by resident Pat Murphy as a phone booth.

“Of course the public would not use the booth but it would be nicer for the men. It is so much nearer St. Olaf Avenue where the men work on the line and would of course expedite matters greatly. Alderman Trip thought the phone ought to be left at Pat Murphy’s woodshed. Alderman Henderson wanted to be fair so he thought that the matter would be best deferred to a subsequent meeting. On a motion made by him the petition was laid over until the next special meeting.”

Needless to say, the Tri-State Telephone and Telegraph Company doesn’t see eye-to-eye with the council. Whether or not, the woodshed was used as a phone booth, we’ll never know. Local newspapers never mention it again.

Clash Develops

In the next two years, more people are trying to get a slice of the telephone industry pie. In addition to the Tri-state Telephone and Telegraph Company, the *Northfield News* reports on a farmers’ group that asks for permission to install a central office in the city and to connect instruments used by the farmers. The *News* also praises the Northwestern Telephone exchange Company for completing their new telephone directory. In time, the competition heats up and a clash develops between city authorities and the Northfield Rural Telephone company manager, C.E. Church.

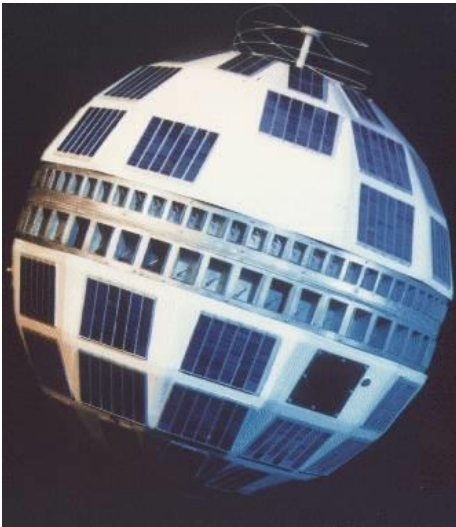
“Mr. Church, who has permission of the property owners, strung wires from the top of the Central Block to the Nutting Block across Fourth Street Thursday,” the June 23, 1906 *News* edition reports. “Chief Ramage, under orders of the mayor, cut the wires down. Manager Church threatens to have an injunction served on the city.”

Unique Council Meeting--Members Present, Meeting Short

When the city council holds its regular session concerning the matter of municipal ownership in August 1906, the council meeting is described in the *Northfield News* as unique in two ways: “The members were all present and the session was short.” Shortly thereafter, the rural telephone subscribers hold a meeting in October where all grievances are aired. Charles Crandall says he thinks the telephone company’s plan to install the new service for 50 cents per month is “unjust.” John Albers and A. L. Dixon describe their experiences with the telephone company as “unjust and abominable.” By December, the council tries to determine the costs associated with municipal ownership of a telephone plant. The *Northfield Independent* places the salary of a manager at \$65.00 and the *Northfield News* headline reads, “That \$65 A Month Man.” In early January 1907, Northfield residents vote against a telephone proposition that would issue \$25,000 in bonds for the installation of a municipal telephone system in Northfield. By the end of the month, the Northfield Telephone Company was incorporated under the laws of the state and the bylaws appeared in the *News*.

Telephones and Restrooms

A letter from Northfield Mayor D. J. Ferguson appeared in the Northfield News on Feb. 2, 1907 urging the Northwestern Telephone Exchange Company to fund the construction of a "Rest Room" for the city. How could they turn it down following the mayor's plea? "Knowing that you are interested in the welfare of our city, I beg leave to solicit such donation as you in your generosity see fit to give." It doesn't take the telephone company long to comply . . . the following month they donate \$500 to build a rest room.



An Editorial

This editorial appeared originally in the October 1962 issue of Cascades, the employee magazine for Pacific Northwest Bell. Telstar was the first active communications satellite, designed to transmit telephone, television and high-speed data communications. It was built by a team at Bell labs, and was launched by NASA aboard a Delta rocket from Cape Canaveral on July 10, 1962. On July 23 it broadcasted the first live transatlantic television signal and the first telephone call to be transmitted through space.

Telstar has been sailing through space for some time now, amplifying

signals, sending reports on the state of things up there, and, all in all, acting as it was expected to act--only quite a bit better.

Besides Telstar, dozens of talkative satellites have been lofted into outer space and are busy rattling off all kinds of information.

And beyond these inanimate space-dwellers (though Telstar almost seems to have a personality), have been the various human beings, astronauts in spacecraft. Brave men all, they have been circling the Earth, sending down a mountain of information to those below.

We, down here, reading about all of this and trying to sift the information to find something that is readily applicable to our daily life, find our self only afflicted with excitement to find out more. This is very likely a pretty normal sort of reaction. We wish, in a passive sort of way, that we could be among the explorers; but, since the information is flowing at such a rapid clip from space to us groundlings, we don't find the need to be more than passive about it.

We find it easy to look out at space with the same sort of "wild surmise" as "stout Cortez with eagle eyes stared at the Pacific . . . silent, upon a peak in Darien." Beyond wishing that Keats had picked the right explorer, we find this quotation singularly apt for looking at space. But Unlike the king of Spain, we don't have to go our self.

Thus does instant communication make explorers of us all.



THG Hall of Fame



Volunteer of the Year, Jerry Wild

The third annual THG Hall of Fame awards ceremony took place recently at the Buckhorn Exchange restaurant in Denver. (This is very near the old Western Electric Warehouse at 12th and Osage).

Our 2007 Volunteer of the Year is **Jerry Wild**. Jerry was one of our first volunteers, and has given generously of his time and talent for many years. He's our "go to guy" for a variety of things, but especially those having to do with computers and networking, telephone equipment and systems. Jerry also volunteers with the Pioneers in the Beep-Ball program. Thanks, Jerry, for everything you have done and continue to do for THG.

Thanks, too, to all our other volunteers. We literally could not operate without them.

If you'd like to see pictures of our celebration, go to:
<http://www.telcomhistory.org/volunteers.shtml>

If you'd like more information about becoming a volunteer, please contact us at 303-296-1221, or at:
telcomhist@aol.com

Bernhardt Disciplined

From the March 1957 issue of the Mountain States Monitor:

Back in 1909 Sarah Bernhardt, so loved that she was almost regarded as a national possession, was disciplined by the French government. Accustomed to speaking her mind freely, Mme. Bernhardt told an uncivil telephone operator just what she thought of the service. "And now," she said plaintively, "they have taken the telephone away from me. I feel like a woman with one arm. I used the telephone a hundred times a day, and because I lost my temper I have lost the principal convenience of my life."



I feel that you are justified in looking into the future with true assurance, because you have a mode of living in which we find the joy of life and the joy of work harmoniously combined. Added to this is the spirit of ambition, which pervades your very being, and seems to make the day's work like a happy child at play.

Albert Einstein

All of us at The History Group wish you joy and peace in the New Year!

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

