



Dial - Log



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Jody Georgeson, EDITOR

Director's Report

By Mary Riffle

The Telecommunications History Group's archive and artifact business is booming. THG receives calls weekly from people wanting to donate treasured documents, memorabilia and artifacts. (See Acquisitions article about how our collection is growing.) Having a large museum in downtown Denver to share our heritage more readily still remains a dream but our Telecommunications Virtual Museum on the Internet is slowly becoming a reality.

A big thanks to those of you who sent letters in support of the Telecommunications Virtual Museum. Our file of letters is growing and we're expecting more. When the timing is right we will apply for a federal grant to support this effort. In the meantime, we are applying for smaller grants, which would enable us to develop individual exhibits such as a virtual tour of the 931 14th Street building, former headquarters building for the Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Company in Denver.

To keep the momentum going, THG is collaborating with two new consortium participants to develop two early virtual museum exhibits. Check out the related articles about visits to the Rye Telephone Company and the Telecommunications Museum of New Mexico in Albuquerque to get an idea of what virtual museum exhibitions will look like. We're excited about these exhibits and will let you know when you can take these virtual tours.

Coincident with these virtual museum developments, we are in the early planning stages of an educational outreach project. Don Roy, principal of Hill Middle School of the Denver Public Schools, and Curt Furness, Ed.D, key THG volunteer, former school principal and current substitute teacher, are eager partners in developing educational materials. These educational materials, to be used by students throughout the state, would focus on the history of telecommunications and would meet all Colorado and Denver Public Schools curriculum standards.

We'll keep you posted on this and other progress.

A trip to Rye country

By Herb Hackenburg

It seemed like a simple request. In 1991, the Colorado Historical Society needed a cross arm, pins, insulators and hardware for a permanent display they were building in their museum. We scoured U S WEST for the requested items, but found that getting through the bureaucracy of the big phone company wouldn't allow us to get the material to the Historical Society on time. We called the Rye Telephone Company (RTC). The next day **Gary MacCormack**, president of RTC, dropped off the items at our door.

When it came to our recent request for a show of interest in the our proposed national Virtual Telecommunications Museum, the Rye Company not only showed interest, they became the first company museum to join the consortium.

I figured it was time to visit the MacCormacks and the RTC Museum. And since members of the MacCormack family are his in-laws, THG volunteer **Kurt Furness** joined me. Actually, since Kurt drove, I joined him.

Rye - all 200 residents - is southwest of Pueblo, Colorado, nestled near the San Isabel National Forrest. The area is located along the eastern edge of the Rocky Mountain Range and contains several "Fourteeners" (mountains more than 14,000 feet high). Thus, the Rye Telephone Company service area is lightly populated ranch land and rugged mountain country. Not ideal for providing telephone service.

Much to their distress, the owners of the Farmers Mutual Cooperative discovered the difficulties in serving the area. In 1959 Gary's parents, Robert and Maxine, moved to town. **Bob MacCormack** told the Cooperative that he would build a

new exchange, install a switch and get service into every home in the local service area within one year. In return for meeting the obligations, the Cooperative would belong to the MacCormacks.

The Rye Telephone Company is still a MacCormack family operation. Gary joined his parents' business in 1972, and soon became the company president and general manager. Gary recently turned over the operation of the company to his daughter, **Michelle Anderson**.



Michell Anderson (l)
and Gary MacCormack (r)

Gary is a natural storyteller - thus he is a subject for a THG oral history session. Our recording session with Gary and Michelle produced more than three hours of oral history.

Unfortunately, we don't have enough space to tell the story of the Rye Telephone Company's backhoe and burying two dead horses and a mule for a customer (just another RTC service), so we'll tell you about how RTC got the right-of-way to cross a very cantankerous rancher's spread.

For RTC, it was a major new line. Gary had negotiated the right-of-way for the entire line and hired a line crew from Texas to do the job. Things were going according to schedule until the line crew came upon an old rancher carrying a Winchester. He told the crew not to step

on his property. They pointed out that he had given the phone company the right-of-way. He said he changed his mind. The crew backed off and called Gary.



Gary arrived on the scene as fast as his pickup could go and confronted the rancher and Winchester. None of Gary's persuasive discussion had any effect on the perverse rancher. Gary backed off, thinking he'd have to come back with a lawyer and what that would cost.

Then he heard, "I'll wrestle yah for it."

Gary turned around and asked, "What did you say?"

The rancher said, "I'll wrestle you for the right of way."

"You mean get down and roll around on the ground?"

"No, arm wrestle."

"OK, we'll do it on the hood of my truck."

According to Gary, the rancher was a recently retired lumberjack with shoulders ax-handle wide. Gary was just out of the service and, at 6 feet tall, 180 pounds, was in good shape himself. Gary quickly stepped to the passenger side of the hood, near the front fender. It was the best two out of three. The line crew and Gary's young son stood ready to watch the show.

After a long struggle Gary won the first match.

After nearly as long a struggle in the over 100-degree sunlight the rancher won the second match.

The third match, according to Gary, seemed like it lasted at least an hour -- Gary finally won. The rancher waved his arm toward his ranch land and said, "Go on in."

Gary's son, wide-eyed with hero worship said, "Dad you really beat that guy."

"I cheated," Gary replied. He explained that he'd quickly got himself into position so if he had to, he could grab the truck's fender with his non-wrestling hand for more leverage. "After all, right-of-way was the prize."

Today RTC continues its aggressive customer service legacy. Today RTC serves more than 2,500 customers over an 18,000 square mile territory, featuring one totally wireless exchange. It takes some doing to provide service in an area so remote that it isn't connected to the electrical power grid. It also takes guts and an innovative spirit to provide "fiber drop" to nearly every one of your customers. RTC calls it "Fiber to the Home". Over that fiber, RTC offers enhanced video and high-speed data (faster than DSL) as well as all of the telephone bells and whistles, direct to its customers in the Greenhorn Valley.

Kurt and I enjoyed the trip so much that we're planning to go back later this year.



Volunteer Corner **The Museum of Communication** **and its Volunteers**

By Don Ostrand

In this issue, I'd like to recognize and thank those who have had a major part in building and presenting this unique collection of telecommunications heritage. - Don

The passing in 2004 of two very dedicated volunteers saddened us at the Museum of Communications.

Beverly Bendicksen was one of the most dedicated volunteers, having served as our Treasurer, photo archivist and having established and maintained an inventory of the items in storage. With Dick, her husband, she was always available for “tour duty” and would lead tour groups with obvious pride. Beverly was also a wonderful cook and baker. Nearly every Tuesday she would bring in homemade bakery goodies that would keep the crew fat, but not sassy.

Lyle Bracken was large in stature, with an even larger heart. Lyle’s career was in PNB’s Outside Plant Construction Department. Until failing health prevented it, Lyle was always ready for tours and was a faithful volunteer each Tuesday. The museum is on the second and third floors of the Duwamish wire center. The third floor contains the more technical switching and transmission equipment, while the second floor deals more with the telephone installation, construction and repair aspects of the business. Lyle would always inform our visitors that we saved the best for last, as he led them to view his domain on the second floor. He, too, displayed great pride in the museum, which he had a large part in developing.

Recalling all those volunteers who have shared their talents in building and presenting our telecommunications story, one can only scratch the surface in expressing our gratitude.

Over the period of time starting in 1985, we have enjoyed a total crew in excess of 80 volunteers. (Very likely there were more, as our memories do tend to fade.) We come from a wide variety of jobs in the telecommunications industry: Western Electric Installation, Western Electric Supply and Distribution, AT&T, Pacific Northwest Bell (including US West and Qwest) - Central Office, Toll and Telegraph, Station Installation and Repair, PBX Installation and Repair, Engineering, OSP Construction and Splicing, Plant Service Center Repair and Assignment, Operator Services, Accounting and Administration.



*Some of the volunteers at
The Museum of Communications*

Plus, we have enjoyed knowing the volunteer partners. Each has brought his or her talents and shared them with us. These volunteers have contributed tens of thousands of hours and have funded many items needed to keep this project alive. Each person’s efforts and contributions are responsible for building this world-class museum.

It is so easy to take things for granted. It is so easy to go along from day to day without giving credit to all the players, individually or as a group.

We can no longer express our thanks to Bev and Lyle or those 17 others who have passed on. We can recall each of them and realize just how fortunate we were to have had an association with them, and we can all cherish their memories.

To our active volunteers and to those "retired" museum volunteers - THANK YOU! I know the coffee and donut each week (if we're lucky) is rather poor compensation for your dedication and talent. You - the active as well as the retired volunteers - are an amazing group of people. All your individual and collective hard work has produced a treasure that truly represents your dedication; you are an outstanding group of people. The entire crew should take pride in a job well done!

And to those who contributed to our recent fund drive, thank you as well! As we all know, monetary support is very important in keeping any non-profit organization alive. It is very gratifying that so many folks did indeed believe in our efforts and choose to provide monetary support. Your thoughtfulness is very much appreciated.

As we move forward to the new and exciting effort of building an on-line "virtual museum," we can again use your support. For this effort, we will be applying for "grant" money. We are looking for folks who are willing to write letters of appreciation for the efforts of the museum crew and the Telecommunications History Group as a whole. Letters can be addressed to The Museum of Communications; 7000 East Marginal Way South; Seattle, WA 98108 or to The Telecommunications History Group; PO Box 8719; Denver, CO 80201-8719.

These letters will be submitted as support for our upcoming grant

application. We would like as many letters as we can obtain that show that our telecommunications heritage is an important piece of the overall development of today's society and is well worth protecting and preserving.

The museum's doors are always open to new volunteers. We have aspirations to add to our hours and/or days of operation. Additional volunteers could make that possible.

This Year in Telephone History



100 Years Ago - 1905

- Bell System telephones -- 2.2 Million
- Bell system employees -- 87,212
- Joseph P. Davis, head of the Engineering Department, American Tel. & Tel., resigned and Hammond Vinton Hayes succeeded him under a newly created title - Chief Engineer.
- According to AT&T President Frederick P. Fish, "That the competition between two telephone companies, operating in the same field, is an economic mistake, from the standpoint both of the investor and the telephone-using public, is coming to be more and more fully recognized."

75 Years Ago - 1930

- Bell System telephones -- 15.7 Million
- Bell System employees -- 394,343
- The Bell System began the systematic introduction of dial service. (Conversion to dial began in 1921,

but was installed only sporadically before this.)

- Bell Telephone Laboratories announced the negative feedback amplifier.
- A demonstration of two-way television took place over wires in cable between telephones at 195 Broadway and 463 West Street, in New York City.

50 Years Ago --1955

- Bell System telephones -- 46.2 Million
- Bell System employees -- 745,629
- Initial trial installation of electronic switching was announced for Morris, Illinois. An Engineering letter on electronic switching was sent to Bell Companies.
- Recorded announcements of disconnected and changed numbers began to be used in some small dial offices.
- A Dutchess County (?) housewife was convicted of refusing to yield a party line telephone to report a fire.

25 Years Ago - 1980

- Bell System Telephones -- 142 Million
- Bell System Employees -- 1.2 Million
- Long Lines announced plans for the construction of the world's longest laser powered light-wave communications system (611 miles), linking Washington, Philadelphia, New York and Boston.
- New England Telephone published the first special directory for use by hearing impaired people who used teletypewriter (TTY) service in their area.
- At the April 16 shareowner meeting, AT&T Chairman C. L. Brown remarked, "We would welcome the

opportunity to compete in a deregulated market . . . and certainly we would welcome relief from the constraints of the Consent Decree."

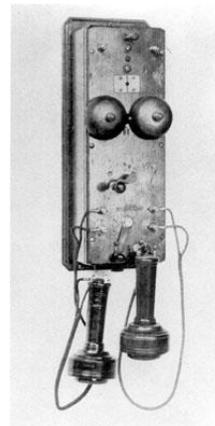


The First Telephones in Michigan

By Paul Rauth

Paul is the author of "Telephones: A look at the Past - a CD book for the young and the young at heart". The CD contains educational audio and visual vignettes from telephone history, photographs, learning activities and more. To order a CD, contact Paul A. Rauth at telephone@highstream.net, or by phone on 269-789-1878.

The first telephones in Michigan were in Ontonagon County in the Upper Peninsula. Rockland was the town and the year was 1877. Wow! the year after the invention by Bell. How could this be? I wrote the Ontonagon Telephone Company to find out more and they were very cooperative and sent me lots of information.



To make a long story short, a man named Linus Stannard from Rockland visited the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, where he heard Alexander Graham Bell's lecture and the next day saw the telephone demons-

trated. He was convinced the "gadget" was practical and useful. He installed the first telephones between his home and the store he owned, and the home of a friend of his. The highlight of the social season in that year of 1877 was to gather in these two homes and talk back and forth on the telephone.

Another story that I like is about the first call received in Frank Scharf's Tailor Shop in Ontonagon. A good friend called the shop. As Frank gingerly picked up the receiver, the friend started to talk in German. Frank, looking perplexed, turned to his friends in the shop and said, "This thing talks German, too!"

For more information about the Ontonagon Telephone Company, visit their web site at <http://www.ontonagon-telephone.com>.

Acquisitions

Our friends have started out 2005 with a steady stream of contributions to the archives.

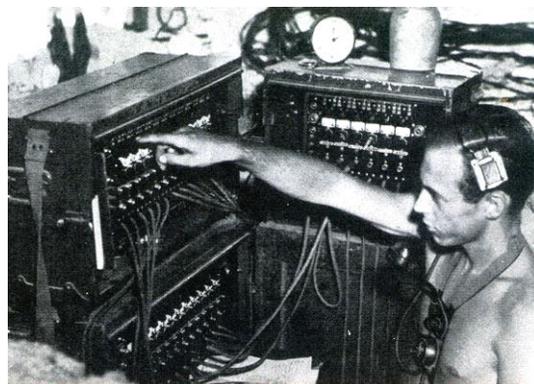
In January, we received an anonymous gift of documents from accounting offices in Utah and Idaho from the late 1940s to the early 1960s. The collection provides a snapshot of the kind of documents that were important to an accounting manager during that era.

Robert Block of Coralville, Iowa sent three directories from the 1940s, and **Lisa Best**, from Evergreen, Colorado brought us three wonderful cowboy posters from



the 1987 International Golf Tournament.

Wendy Bartlett (Littleton, Colorado) donated a whole box of material, including many magazines and employee newsletters from Northwestern Bell and U S WEST, a video of former Colorado Governor Roy Romer, and photographs of the 1995 bargaining sessions.



*A switchboard in a foxhole on a Pacific island.
From "The Pacific War is the No. 1 Job of Telephone Factories," Pacific T&T Co, 1945*

Maxine Smith, from San Diego, California, sent a pamphlet she was given by an elderly neighbor. It's entitled "The Pacific War is the No. 1 Job of Telephone Factories," and was published by The Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company in 1945. It contains an amazing series of photographs of soldiers using telephone equipment in the Pacific theater of war.

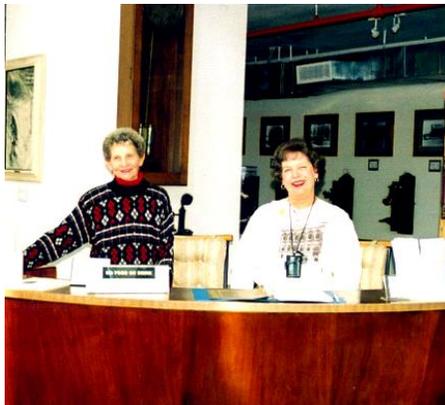
Thanks to all of you who have contributed to our growing collection. Remember, if you have any documents or memorabilia, we'd love to be able to preserve and share them with others interested in our wonderful history!

The Telephone Museum of New Mexico

by Jody Georgeson

Along with several other telephone history organizations, THG is embarking on an ambitious project to develop a virtual telecommunications museum. One of the first participants in the project is the **Telephone Museum of New Mexico**. In February, volunteer **Renee Lang** and I visited the museum to check out its exhibits and to record information to be used in the virtual museum.

Gigi Galassini (Chair, Board of Directors) and **Susie Turner**, Publicist, were kind enough to give us a private tour of their wonderful museum.



*Gigi Galassini and Susie Turner
at the reception desk in
The Telephone Museum of New Mexico*

Housed in the old (1906) Albuquerque Main telephone building, the museum features historical displays, photographs and literature depicting the history of the telephone industry in New Mexico.

The museum is a concrete example of the power of volunteers. It was conceived, constructed and is maintained entirely by volunteers, and is one of the nicest museums of any kind that we have ever seen. The museum itself is bright

and beautiful, and the displays are well thought-out and documented.



*The Golden Boy mural, by Neal Roch
after the statue, "The "Genius of Electricity"
by Evelyn Beatrice Longman, 1916.*

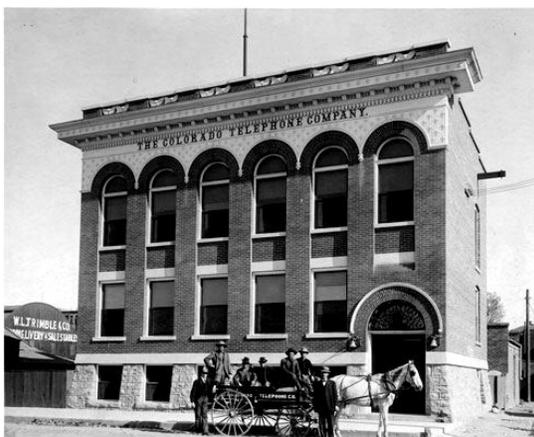
Visitors are greeted by a mural of "Golden Boy," the statue that stood on the roof of the AT&T headquarters in New York City. The mural is the work of **Neal Roch**, a 33-year veteran of the Bell System and the Design Director on the museum's Board of Directors. Looking up, one can see "Bob" a lineman working on an actual pole and crossarm that has been installed in the atrium of the museum. Several unique exhibits are accompanied by an audio explanation of the exhibit. One is the story of Susan Parks, who warned the U S Cavalry of the attack by Mexican General Pancho Villa on the little town of Columbus, NM in 1916. Another tells of Sally Rooke, a switchboard operator who lost her life warning others of the devastating 1908 flood in Folsom, New Mexico.

Extensive work has gone into the Learning Center, which offers children the opportunity to learn about telephone technology in a hands-on environment.

Children are able to become telephone switchboard operators, use military field phones, and learn how it feels to be a 911 dispatcher.

We are so excited to be working on the virtual museum project with the volunteers at this exceptional museum. I urge all of you to visit when you're in Albuquerque.

The museum is located at 110 4th St., N.W. They are open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday, or by appointment. Group tours are also available by appointment. More information about hours of operation is available at www.nmculture.org.



*Albuquerque Main as it appeared in 1907
From a THG file photo.*



*The old Albuquerque Main building
as it appears today
Photo by Renee Lang*

Another Treasure

We continue to come across treasures in the archives. While performing routine research, we found several volumes of correspondence from Casper E. Yost. Mr. Yost became president of the Nebraska Telephone Company in 1891, of Iowa Telephone in 1898, and of the Northwestern Telephone Exchange Company in 1902. The three companies became known as The Northwestern Group of Telephone Companies in 1909, and Yost served as President until 1919.

This correspondence, and other related material, offers a unique opportunity to understand how Bell Companies operated and their relationship with AT&T. In his own words, we read of the trials and triumphs of the man in charge of a Bell franchise operation.

And in charge he was. Casper Yost had his finger on every aspect of his business, from the druggist who hadn't paid his bill to late shipments from Western Electric and the affects of proposed government regulation -- nothing was too trivial to gain his attention.

Volunteer **Norman Birt** is busy composing a finding aid for this collection, so researchers will soon be able to access this fascinating material.



There is an importance in every job that cannot be measured in numbers or in prestige, but can only be found within the heart of the man or woman doing that job. The happiest people - those who believe they have the best jobs - are those who respect the job they do, no matter what it is. When we understand that, it becomes obvious that every job is worthy of praise. Daily OM. 3/7/05

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