

From oddity to necessity

Telephone in Michigan nears its centennial

The "speaking telephone" made its Michigan debut in the Detroit area only 16 months after Alexander Graham Bell and his young assistant made history with the famous "Mr. Watson, come here, I want you" message 100 years ago in Boston.

On July 28, 1877, C.C. Reed telegraph superintendent of the Michigan Central Railroad in Detroit, received two telephones mailed to him by Bell. A contemporary news account said Reed "promises to satisfactorily demonstrate" the telephones' merits by a series of experiments.

During the next two months, Reed demonstrated the telephones around the city, but it was an enterprising local businessman who devised a way to advertise what the telephone could do.

DETROIT POLICE Department was second to use the new Bell telephone in the city. An Oct. 4, 1877 news account in a Detroit paper stated that the "telephone in the police stations continues to afford visitors and attendants much entertainment."

Despite local skeptics, a survey revealed 72 interested subscribers in August 1878. 53 customers ordered lines connecting them to a central switchboard in the Telegraph Block Building at Griswold and Congress streets—the present site of the Guardian Building.

Messenger boys from the local telegraph office were hired as operators and the following month Detroit's first telephone directory was published. By that time the list of customers had grown to 132, all of whom were listed by name in the directory. In January 1879 Detroit customers were first in the nation to be assigned phone numbers to facilitate handing calls.

A DETROIT newspaper, one of the initial 53 subscribers, commented in December 1878 that "The use of the telephone in Detroit is increasing by leaps and bounds. The instrument is passing from a convenience to a necessity and many families are having it installed."

In 1880, the world's first international communications were established with the line linking Detroit and Windsor. The following year, the first long distance line in the state was strung between Detroit and

Port Huron. The 75 mile link between the two cities was one of the longest in the world.

Grand Rapids, which missed having the first Bell telephone in Michigan by only eight days, also was expanding its network. The first phone exchange was taken place on Aug. 3, 1877, but public phone service didn't arrive until two years later when the city got the second switchboard in the state.

Soon after, telephone exchanges were established in Bay City and Saginaw, and the Port Huron exchange celebrated its opening on Christmas Day, 1879.

Although no early exchanges were created in the Upper Peninsula, news accounts of a young telegraph operator in Houghton was running telephone instruments to copper mines in 1877. In 1878, the first telephone line in the Upper Peninsula was completed, connecting Greenland to Ontonagon via Rockland.

During this early period, girls began replacing boy operators when a number of boys in Grand Rapids were discovered shooting marbles instead of tending the switchboard. Detroit made the switch to women operators late in 1879.

BY MARCH 1886, the Michigan State Telephone Company—later to become Michigan Bell—had 220 exchanges and nearly 100,000 customers. That same year, the Michigan State Company issued the first directory in the country featuring classified business advertising on yellow pages.

Early in 1915, Michigan hooked up to the first cross country, long distance line and the first Detroit to San Francisco call was made. It took 30 minutes to set up the three-minute call and cost the customer \$10.70. Today, with customer direct distance dialing, a call goes through in seconds and could cost as little as 53 cents for three minutes.

Automatic dial service was introduced in Detroit in 1923 permitting customers to dial their own local calls. The first transcontinental call from the state was made in Lansing early in 1927 and later that year television images carried over telephone lines were demonstrated for the first time to the Detroit public.

EARLY IN the '60s, Michigan Bell topped one million telephones in service and state residents were making more than four million calls a day.

During World War II, Michigan Bell helped serve the war effort by installing telecommunications equipment at military

bases around the state. More than 3,000 company employees went into the armed forces—47 of them died in service.

During the war years and post-war period, the telephone industry turned to satisfying the increasing demands for more and better communications facilities. Ship-to-shore phone service for Great Lakes vessels was inaugurated in 1942 and mobile car phones in 1946.

IN THE '50s, telephone advancements and innovations began arriving at an even faster rate in Michigan, most of them made possible by the invention of the transistor in 1947 by a team of Bell Telephone Laboratories scientists.

In 1952, Michigan Bell installed its two-millionth phone. A year later, Birmingham became the second community in the nation to have direct distance dialing (DDD), enabling customers to dial their own long distance calls direct without operator assistance.

DDD came to Detroit in 1960, and today virtually all of the company customers have the service.

Also in the early '50s, color phones started to become a common sight in homes and offices around the state.

THE PRINCESS telephone made its debut in the state in 1960, followed closely by Bellway service. The Speakerphone arrived in 1962 and Touch-Tone service was introduced the following year. In 1963, the modern Trinitone phone—with its dial in the receiver—made its national debut in Michigan.

In the late '60s, electronic switching systems, able to handle calls a thousand times faster and more economically and efficiently than previous equipment, arrived in the state. Today, Michigan Bell has about 80 of these super electronic switches in service.

In 1973, Michigan Bell marked another

milestone with its five millionth phone—while Trinitone installed at Greenfield Village. Also that year, international direct distance dialing permitted customers to begin dialing their own overseas calls direct.

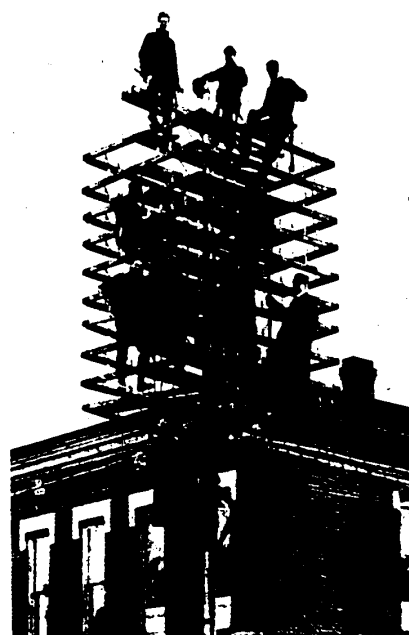
MICHIGAN'S LAST manual phones faded into history in 1974 when electronic switching replaced St. Ignace's old-fashioned "number, please" operator manned switchboards.

Over the years, Michigan Bell has become a major citizen in the state and in the communities it serves. The fourth largest private employer in Michigan, the telephone company provides jobs to about 30,000 people. Operating in 23 of the state's 83 counties, Michigan Bell serves some 2.8 million customers and handles an average of more than 31 million calls a day to points within the state, to other states and throughout the world.

A SIGN IN Frederick K. Stearns' Detroit drugstore in September 1887 heralded the first commercial telephone line by inviting people to "Come in and talk over the amazing long distance telephone. Three your voice almost two miles."

That first commercial telephone line—a single, iron wire strung over the roofs of houses—linked Stearns' drugstore at Woodward and Jefferson to his laboratory at Woodbridge and Sixth.

Detroiters flocked to try the new device but most were skeptical—they were sure it was a hoax and the voice they heard over the phone was someone shouting through a speaking tube from an upper floor.



With increasing demands for phone service, the four-way pole was designed to handle telephone wires from four directions. This giant pole stood in front of a Detroit central office building in the late 1890s.



This 1904 telephone construction crew erected one of the first long distance cables leading out of Detroit. The well-dressed man at left with the shovel was the foreman.

At vocational center

How students tune their skills

By LINDA TAYLOR

Located at 1000 Beck Road and known as SWOVCE, the center is one of four in Oakland County designed to provide students with marketable skills whether they go into full-time jobs immediately after high school or continue their education. Students attend their "home school" part of the day and are bused or drive to SWOVCE for the rest.

The school is administered by the Wall-to-Lake Consolidated School District and includes students from West Bloomfield, Oakton, Lake Farmington, Novato, Millard Laeland and Clareville schools as well as Our Lady of Mercy and Boys' Republic. Diane Coffee, a senior at West Bloomfield High School, is learning the printing trade during her afternoon sessions at SWOVCE.

"It's a lot better than just reading about it," she said. "We can do it."

Diane, John Long and other students in the two-year printing program learn skills in photography, typesetting and keyboarding. When the course is completed, students are certified to work an offset press, said instructor Holland Radb. All the work the students do is used by the school system or sold.

"They're not playing it safe," all production work, which means the kids take more pride in their work.

While there is some "book learning," Radb said 99 per cent of his course involves working directly with printing equipment. A "hands-on" learning process.

The print shop is among class areas to be opened to the public Sunday.

A STUDIES AREA which offers "no problem with placement," said instructor

Barb Poling is the two-year office training program. Her course offers instruction and practice in business machines, shorthand and office etiquette as well as specialized training in legal, medical, executive and accounting skills.

"There are a lot of job opportunities available for our girls," said Mrs. Poling, who said her only male student dropped out.

Part of her program includes teaching students what to expect on the job, including coffee breaks, time clocks and proper attire and grooming.

The majority of students in the program do not go on to college immediately, Mrs. Poling said.

Lynn (Easton of West Bloomfield High School said, "I don't plan to go to college. I have learned and I like it."

Man receives library post

Daniel F. Harrison, son of Mr. and Mrs. Fred E. Harrison of Farmington Hills was appointed assistant librarian in the document division of Texas A&M University.

He received his master's degree in library science at the University of Michigan last December and until assuming his new position, is employed in the graduate library at the university.

On April 2 he will be initiated into Beta Phi Mu, national library honor society. He will assume his position in College Station, Texas at the beginning of the fall term.

Area members added to Phi Beta Kappa

Three area students have joined Phi Beta Kappa at the University of Michigan.

Mary K. Flau, 22943 Manning, Farmington and Margaret A. Gargan, 22460 Ridgewood, Farmington Hills were among

the 119 students who joined the chapter. Wiley V. Chan, 27329 Sky Drive, Farmington Hills also joined.

The guest speaker at the initiation banquet was Prof. Russel Frezer of the university's English department.

ANOTHER AREA of instruction from which most students go directly into a job rather than more schooling, is diesel mechanics.

"I've learned a lot here," said Bob Meske, a senior at West Bloomfield High. It's a hands-on program.

Meske said he plans to go into the Navy and be an aviation mechanic mate.

An area of study in which students can see their work go from paper to reality is architectural drafting. According to instructor Jerry Baumann, students have worked on actual plans for homes, plants and the Wilson Fire Station.

Baumann said most of his students do go on to college to study architecture, usually at Lawrence Institute of Technology, the University of Michigan, Ferris State or Schoolcraft College.

"The open house is an excellent opportunity for both employers and future students to look over the training we've our students," said John Xerox, the school's principal.

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Naturalists share their flowerlore

Farmington area elementary students in grades one and four soon will have an increased appreciation of wildflowers and the great outdoors.

From Monday, April 26 through Friday, May 7, members of the Farmington Area Naturalists will give programs in all area schools including a panel one.

Those who will be presenting the programs include Eleanor Douglas, Ann Ludwig, Kay Wittill, Margaret Converse and two teachers who bring in the club Herta Dodd and Carolyn McKnight. After a slide program on Michigan wildflowers

and local geology, the speakers will answer questions.

Among the things they will share will be identification of protected wildflowers such as trillium, lady's slippers, herbodot, violet, trailing arbutus, dogwood, bittersweet, highly genetic club mosses and pinks.

All of the speakers have their own wild flower gardens in which they grow the protected species. Unprotected wildflowers may only be dug and replanted with the permission of the landowner if they are in an endangered situation.

P.M. people make your living all A.M.'s

Tim, Sherry and Brian had been looking for someplace that loved kids, had a lot for Brian and was at a price they could afford. They left for Parkview Apartments on Schoolcraft near Telegraph. It was a moving experience. Call 533-1635

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Accountants join group

Delores Fordham of Farmington was recently approved for membership in the Oakland County Chapter of the National Association of Accountants.

She is a revenue agent with the Internal Revenue Service in Detroit.

Also approved for membership was Karen Schuman of Livonia, who is in the market accounting department of Federal Mogul of Southfield.

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