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# Early Telephone History of Northern Kentucky

By

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A Paper from the Archives of the Christopher Gist Historical Society

June 28, 1955

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EARLY TELEPHONE HISTORY OF NORTHERN KENTUCKY

Paper read by Eugene E. Druley before the Christopher Gist Historical Society on June 28, 1955.

When I was asked to prepare a paper on the History of Telephone in Northern Kentucky it seemed very natural to tie together these two subjects - The Telephone Business and History. The major part of my working life has been spent in various departments of our local Telephone Company and History has been one of my perennial hobbies.

From its humble origin with crude box like instruments having crank ringers, to the present era of high speed dialed connections, the telephone business has been a continuous as well as challenging period of search for better ways to transmit the human voice. Not only have these better ways been developed, but with them has come rapid methods for connecting one telephone to any other, in the same town, in the state, the nation or indeed with any place in the civilized world where telephone facilities have been extended.

It was no accident that the telephone was born. Development of a practical means of communication and the transmission of intelligence over great distances has been sought by man through the ages - from the runners of Marathon, the drumbeat signals of the African primitive, the smoke signals of the American Indian, on through the unique blinker lights of the Napoleonic era there has been a constant search for "communications from afar" hence the modern word telephone, tele - meaning far, and phone - meaning voice, or literally translated, "far-talk".

Before a practical telephone could be brought to the civilized world - as we look back - two things were required; energy for transmitting sound and a channel through which to send it. Development of electricity provided the energy. Samuel F. B. Morse in 1844, with his telegraph, demonstrated that wires could be used in a practical manner to carry electrical circuits for signaling purposes.

Bell, however, was able to approach the problem of transmitting speech over wire with a background of broad scientific information born of experience.

A simple make and break circuit, he knew, would not transmit human voice. He brought to the inventive field his complete knowledge of acoustics, and diligently applied himself to devices which would make an electrical circuit vary in exactly the same manner as the voice varied. Bell had acquired this knowledge by struggling long and hard as a teacher of deaf people, to assist them to fight their way through the transparent yet soundproof wall with which misfortune had surrounded them.

The results of his experiments began to bear fruit and after many heart breaking trials and tests, on March 10, 1876, in a Boston attic, the first word ever spoken over wire was heard: "Mr. Watson come here, I want you".

Bell and his assistant had been working on two instruments, one located in his bedroom and the other in his attic laboratory. While handling the equipment Bell spilled acid on his arm, and called Mr. Watson for help. It has always seemed strangely prophetic that the first words spoken over the telephone were a call for help, "Mr. Watson come here, I want you".

It seems unbelievable today, with approximately 53,000,000 + telephones in the

United States that Bell's first undertakings were met with skepticism by the American public, and for two years it was considered nothing more than an interesting toy.

It was fortunate at this time, that many persons already interested in communications work realized the telephone had great potentialities. It was singularly outstanding that in this Metropolitan area we already had in existence, prior to the invention of the telephone, an organization that was able to encompass this new development of communication. This was the City and Suburban Telegraph Association which had been chartered in July of 1873. Of course, telegraphy was already in Cincinnati, a Morse line had come in from Pittsburgh on August 20, 1847. It remains for Charles Kilgour, however, who had used a private telegraph between his office and his home to demonstrate how telegraph service could be used on a purely local basis, and adapted to the needs of the every day business man. From this small beginning which proved to be successful the City and Suburban Telegraph Association grew. Here then, at the time of the telephone's invention, was an organization already dealing in local communications.

From its early development telephone communications in Northern Kentucky, particularly in the Metropolitan sections have been very closely tied in with their northern neighbor Cincinnati; from the very beginning the two Metropolitan sides of the river have been a common calling area. Therefore, I think it is of particular interest to review the early beginnings of the telephone in the Greater Cincinnati area generally and then to specifically outline the step-by-step development in our own communities of Northern Kentucky.

To give a relative picture of the pioneering spirit back of this early Telegraph Association, predecessor of our present Cincinnati and Suburban Bell Telephone Company and the Citizens Telephone Company, remember it was chartered in the year 1873, and here are some of the events and happening about that time:

Thomas A. Edison was working for Western Union in Cincinnati.

It was five years before he invented the phonograph.

Six years before the incandescent lamp.

Three years before Bell invented the telephone.

Seven years before commercial electric lighting.

Twelve years before America's first electric street railway.

Twenty-one years before Haynes automobile.

Twenty-nine years before the first radio message.

Mr. James O. Shiras, Agent for the Western Electric Mfg. Co., a shareholder in the City and Suburban Telegraph Association and an inspector for the Western Union subsidiary the Gold Bond Stock Telegraph Company, in July of 1877 secured the agency for Bell's telephone for Cincinnati and vicinity, through the Cleveland agent for the Bell Telephone Company of Boston. Immediately, he brought two of Bell's instruments to Cincinnati and arranged to demonstrate them to officials of the City and Suburban Association. The telegraph line selected to double as a telephone line in this trial was one leased by City and Suburban to the Mt. Lookout, Columbia and Cincinnati Railroad, connecting the station at Mt.

Lookout with Mr. Charles Kilgour's office in the Franklin Bank on Third St. between Main and Walnut.

The group which was hurriedly assembled in the Bank office for this demonstration were, Andrew Erkenbrecker, President of the Association and founder of the Cincinnati Zoo, Charles Kilgour, John Kilgour and T. W. Yardley and J. O. Shiras. Located at Mt. Lookout were A. H. Meier, operator of the station and, quite by coincidence, just as conversations were about to begin, Ormond Stone, director of the Mt. Lookout Observatory.

The tests were successful and all were convinced that here was a device for service and profit far greater than the telegraph lines the Association had been operating for four years. Here was the foundation of a communications network which could serve many more people than possessed the means or desire to subscribe to telegraph service.

Typical of other early trials in our metropolitan telephone development is an article of August 19, 1877, in the Cincinnati Sunday Gazette: "Mr. J. O. Shiras, agent for Bell's telephone, with the assistance of E. C. Armstrong, Superintendent of the City and Suburban Telegraph Association, gave another brilliant and successful test last evening of the telephone. It was tried on Mr. Richard Smith's private line connecting his residence in Clifton and the Gazette Office, a distance of about four miles. Many Clifton people were present in the Smith parlors for the demonstration which included exchanges of conversation, several selections of cornet music and vocal solos and duets—among those present were Col. A. D. Bullock".

Two days after this newspaper story appeared, City and Suburban signed their first telephone subscriber's Cincinnati Gas Company, on August 21, 1877. A few days later came the Association's second telephone contract with Joseph R. Peebles' Sons, Grocers. There was no voice with a smile, no dial, no quick completion of a call - not even a switchboard, you could talk only to the other telephone or telephones to which a line was permanently connected. Inter-connection and inter-communications between various subscribers had to wait for the invention of a switchboard and for subscriptions of enough people to use it.

It would be interesting to observe here, that from this meager beginning, more definite plans for a more integrated and flexible service were shortly planned.

To this end negotiations were opened early in 1878 with the Bell Telephone Company of Boston for a license to supply Cincinnati and environs (including Covington and Newport) with Bell Telephone and exchange service. The Bell Company immediately recognized the potentialities of this area and Thomas Watson, Bell's famous assistant, came to Cincinnati and assisted the local City and Suburban Association in selecting a suitable exchange office and devising a suitable switchboard.

The agreement was formally signed on September 10, 1878, whereby the local association became exclusive agents for Bell Telephone in Cincinnati and all territory within a radius of 25 miles of the city limits. A further agreement on September 6, 1880, provided that American Bell should handle all Long Distance calls in this territory; then on May 1, 1882, the two parties entered into a perpetual contract under which City and Suburban would operate all local exchange service and inter-exchange lines in Hamilton, Butler, Clermont and a corner of Warren Counties in Ohio; Boone, Campbell, Gallatin, Grant, Kenton and Pendleton Counties in Kentucky; and Dearborn, Franklin, Ohio and Switzerland Counties in Indiana; with

inter-territorial lines to be operated by American Bell.

The present Cincinnati and Suburban Bell Telephone and the Citizens Telephone Company Inc. of Kentucky actually provide service in only nine of these counties. In addition to the telephones so served several Independent Telephone Companies provide local service to approximately 18,000 telephones within this operating area, and are furnished toll service connections by the Cincinnati and Suburban and Citizens Companies.

I shall cover later the establishment and development of some of the smaller companies in Kentucky.

#### First Exchange

With the contractual formalities taken care of the local Cincinnati and Suburban Association opened their first exchange on September 1, 1878, with eighteen subscribers and four telephone lines. It was located on the fourth floor of the old Baker Bldg. in Cincinnati where the First National Bank now stands. With the innovation of the switchboard the name of the association was changed to the City and Suburban Telegraph Association and Telephonic Exchange.

This was the tenth telephone exchange established in the United States. It was preceded only by the following, in the order named: New Haven, San Francisco, Albany, Wilmington, Lowell, St. Louis, Portland (Ore.), Chicago and Detroit. It went ahead of such cities as Indianapolis, Louisville, New Orleans, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Cleveland and Washington.

Since the original Bell agreements included a portion of Kentucky it is not surprising that shortly after the first switchboard was put into operation telephone wires crossed the Suspension Bridge into Covington in the middle of January 1879. This was less than three years since the time the first words were spoken on the telephone. Covington subscribers could then talk with subscribers in Cincinnati. No state line toll barrier was erected, and that policy has remained constantly in effect up to the present time, free local calling between the two Metropolitan areas.

Crude as it was, this new telephone exchange saved untold footwork and hours of time. When a subscriber wished to call another party on his own line, he rang the necessary number of times. But if he wished to converse with someone on another line, he called the operator and asked for the party by name. Then the operator went to work on the second party, and when she obtained a response she would then call back the first party. When they both were ready their lines were connected. An element of uncertainty and chance was also added by a subscriber having to continually press down on a button during conversation in order to maintain the connection. Let the button slip and your party was gone.

#### First Line to Covington and First Subscribers

This first line that ran from the switchboard at Fourth and Walnut into Covington, had ten customers on a single circuit. The names of these pioneer telephone subscribers in Metropolitan Kentucky appeared in the Telephone Exchange Weekly, dated January 27, 1879, they were:

The German National Bank

Pike and Madison

The Covington Branch of Northern  
Bank of Kentucky

Peter Nodler's Drug Store

A Residence

W. H. Davis, News Dealer

Theodore Leverman, Restaurant

H. R. Camnitz, Printer &  
Stationer

Covington Transfer Company

The Covington Offices of the  
Commercial

The Enquirer

Third and Scott

Fifth and Madison

71 W. Fifth St.

803 Madison

12 E. Fifth St.

Fourth & Scott Sts.

Third & Madison

505 Madison Ave.

425 Madison Ave.

Remember, this was before the days of telephone numbers. Only your name and address was shown in the Exchange Weekly which was distributed to subscribers.

If some people today think they experience difficulty getting to talk on a party line, we can well imagine the pandemonium that must have reigned, if the Drug Store, a Bank, and a Restaurant, all started out to talk at the same time.

The population of Covington at that time was about 29,000 which would be about .3 telephones per 1000 population. Today these figures for our total operating area are about 385 per 1000 population.

The charge for this early service in Covington was approximately \$72.00 a year, either business or residence.

When these lines first reach Covington, the initial switchboard in Cincinnati had already been discarded. The second board was designed by E. T. Gilliland, a prominent Cincinnati electrician and was built in the Ludlow, Ky. plant of Post and Company. So when the first Kentucky customers were tied into the Cincinnati switchboard they were using a Kentucky built product.

The Covington people, however, didn't stay tied to the Cincinnati switchboard for long. The demand for telephones became so great that by May 1, 1879, just over three months from the time the first line was run over the river, an exchange was opened. This first office was on the second floor of a building at the southwest corner of Fifth and Madison.

At that time there was total of fifty-seven subscriber lines, fifty-four in Covington and three in Newport. In one of the exchange bulletins in early May we found these three Newport subscribers -

Depper & Company -

B. Dowling -

Liberty and Monmouth

News stand located in  
the Newport P.O.

Already the small exchange was branching into Campbell County, and as it grew, continued to serve the entire county until exchanges were opened in Ft. Thomas and Alexandria, which we shall mention later.

The first public telephone station was installed in the City Waterworks Office on the first floor at the Southwest corner of 5th and Madison in the same year. This was not a coin operated device or "pay station telephone". Money for calls was paid to the person in charge.

In the following year (1880) however, a coin type pay telephone was installed in the Bullock Building at Fourth and Scott Sts. This afforded the opportunity for many Covington people not having telephones in their homes, or business houses, of using the new device for the first time.

The first wires strung to Covington came from the old "Central" Exchange in Cincinnati and were placed on the Suspension Bridge. These became too numerous and cumbersome to maintain and in December 1882 a cable was erected on the "Cincinnati & Newport Railroad Bridge", shortly after all wires were removed from the Suspension Bridge and all communications used the cable during that era.

During the year 1882, the original Covington Office became too small, and new quarters for a larger exchange were occupied at Fourth & Scott Streets. At this time there were 132 subscribers lines in Metropolitan Kentucky distributed as follows:

Covington	107
Newport	22
Dayton	2
Ludlow	<u>1</u>
Total	132

This office served these Kentucky communities until the new South Exchange Building, at Fourth and Court Streets was opened in 1901. This building was used by the Citizens Company until the South Office was converted to dial and became a part of the Hemlock-Colonial-Juniper-Axtel units at 11th & Scott in 1940. The old South Exchange Building is now occupied by the Crescent Paper Tube Company.

To get an idea of the rapid development of the telephone in this Metropolitan area in 1881, just years after the first exchange in Covington, seven small Central Offices had already been established. Kentucky customers could talk with customers at the following exchanges in Cincinnati:

<u>"Front"</u>	located at Front and Elm Sts.
<u>"Freeman"</u>	N. W. corner of 8th & Freeman
<u>"Elm"</u>	Elm St. & Adams
<u>"Central"</u>	Fourth & Walnut

"Broadway"

on Broadway north of Court St. and

"Public Landing"

on Front St. just east of Main

There were still no telephone numbers, the Telephone Exchange Weekly still carried just the name and address of the subscribers. It was not until March 1, 1884, when the list of all Metropolitan subscribers totalled 2500, that the use of telephone numbers was inaugurated. Memorable, in this same year was the replacement of all men operators with women during the day. Men, however, continued as night operators in many offices until well after the turn of the century.

#### Early Telephones Outside Cities of Covington and Newport

The first telephone outside the corporation limits was installed in 1885 in A. L. France's residence, Independence Pike. Already the telephones were starting to reach beyond the urban limits, and during this same year, toll stations were established in Falmouth, Cynthiana, Independence and Mt. Sterling. Toll stations, it must be understood, was not a means of connecting an entire town's telephone through toll lines as is done at present, rather a toll station was literally that; a telephone you could use and make a toll or Long Distance call from. Very early in the telephone industry the word "toll" became to mean any call going out of the free calling area, (either a long or short distance) for which a charge was made in excess of the regular local monthly rate. The word "Long Distance" is in much greater use today, and I think more adequately describes inter-city connections.

In 1884 the City and Suburban Telegraph Association was incorporated under the laws of Kentucky with headquarters in Covington. The name "Citizens Telephone Company" which operates in this area, came into being as a rival operating group in Newport.

#### Rival Companies in Kentucky Metropolitan Area

At the expiration of the primary Bell patent in 1893, numerous rival communication systems opened and on March 15, 1893, the Telephone, Telegraph and Electrical Company was formed in Covington by E. J. Hickey, James W. Bryan, W. H. Glore and Peter Nodler. No records exist however, to show that this Company ever actually engaged in the Communications Business. Nevertheless, on March 2, 1894, a demonstration took place in Nodler's drug store of a telephone instrument invented by Philip Fitzsimmons of Birmingham, Alabama. This line extended from Nodler's store in Covington to an office in the Blymer Building in Cincinnati.

#### The Citizens Telephone Company Founded

In March 1895, The Citizens Telephone Company with headquarters in Newport was incorporated by J. R. Megrue, Alexander Dovezac, C. W. Coffin, W. H. Harton and W. H. Glore - J. R. Megrue as President and Alexander Dovezac as Vice President. On December 19, 1895, control of this company passed to a group of Cincinnati businessmen known as the Anthony Company. Max Silberberg was elected President, Louis Feder, Secretary and Treasurer with W. H. Harton, W. H. Glore, C. W. Coffin, J. C. Megrue and A. Stuart on the Board of Directors. On April 13, 1896, Lipman Levy was elected Vice President along with the officers elected on December 19, 1895. This group proceeded to erect poles and string wires, install instruments and equip an exchange in Newport, but not with much success. On December 31, 1901, the City and Suburban Telegraph Association (changed to the Cincinnati and Subur-



ban Bell Telephone Company November 1903) purchased all the assets of the Anthony Company and a new organization was formed. Mr. B. L. Kilgour, Sr. was elected President. Volney Elstun Secretary-Treasurer with Mr. C. H. Kilgour and Harvey Meyers as Directors.

In April 1902, offices of the Citizens Telephone Company were removed to Covington and the Kentucky properties of City and Suburban were transferred to it.

Telephone operations in the northern Kentucky communities were then continued on that basis until 1916 when the physical properties were conveyed to the Cincinnati and Suburban Telephone Company, all franchises being retained by the Citizens Telephone Company which thereafter leased the properties from Cincinnati and Suburban for operating purposes.

In 1895 The City and Suburban Telegraph Association had approximately three hundred subscribers in the northern Kentucky communities, about half being in Covington. By 1904 this had increased to approximately three thousand.

The 1890 census showed Covington to have 37,371 and Newport 24,918 population. Allowing for the half decade period to 1895 we can interpolate that the combined population was approximately 60,000. Other communities, Dayton, Bellevue, Ludlow, Ft. Thomas, would probably add another 5,000, so with a metropolitan total of around 65,000 and 300 telephones, there were still only about 4.5 telephones for each thousand population. With 3000 subscribers in 1904 this ratio had risen to 42 telephones per thousand population in the cities of Northern Kentucky only. For either a two county or total area ratio the figure would be much smaller. In fact, for the entire area, all counties in Ohio and Kentucky the ratio in 1900 was 14 per thousand. By 1910 for total area both urban and rural it had risen to 80 telephones per thousand of population.

In September of 1886 the first submarine telephone cable in the middle west was laid under the Ohio River from Lawrenceburg Indiana to Petersburg Kentucky and a pay station was successfully operated from that town. As nearly as I have been able to determine, this was the first telephone service this far from the Covington-Lexington turnpike in Boone County at that time.

#### Early Long Distance Service

By 1888 a line had been extended from Erlanger to Walton. Notable also was that several years earlier Long Distance service had been established with Hamilton Ohio, so that all exchanges served by greater Cincinnati could now talk that far north. In 1880 lines had been connected to Indianapolis via Hamilton Ohio. The effort to cut down distance by transmission of the spoken word was becoming a fact in this part of the country.

In 1893 long distance service from this area (Cincinnati) was opened to New York City, and Denver Colorado was connected in 1911. Gradually and surely communication was becoming nation-wide and Northern Kentucky through it's Cincinnati outlet was a part of it.

It was also in 1893 that the Long Lines Department of the American Tel. & Tel. Co. opened their first office in Cincinnati on the south side of Third St. just east of Broadway. This office handled all long haul calls from this area, and later became a regional switching center for through traffic back and forth from north and east to the south and west.

The first inter-regional Toll or Long Distance lead of a major nature was constructed through Kenton County in 1895. An agreement dated on September 3, 1894, gave the American Tel. & Tel. Co. the right to construct through City and Suburban's territory a toll line to run from Cincinnati to Louisville (via Lexington and Frankfort). This later became known as the St. Louis lead, since lines were very soon extended on from Louisville Kentucky to Evansville Indiana and on to St. Louis. This line went out of town on Pike St.

Many of you are familiar with the modern counterpart of this pioneer long distance line, it now becomes "open wire" southeast of the Dixie Highway outside of Covington, and runs through private right of way back of Lucerne Avenue in S. Fort Mitchell, and then follows generally the route of U.S. Highway 25 (the old Covington Lexington Turnpike) to Lexington.

I have in my possession an abstract of title for property in S. Fort Mitchell wherein reference is made to right of way for lines of the American Tel. & Tel. Co. The one I have is a right of way assignment from the Executrix of the Leather's Estate, and reads in part:

"To American Telephone and Telegraph Company-Right to construct, maintain and operate its lines of telegraph and telephone upon a strip, not to exceed 12 feet in width over and across the land owned by grantors, situated on the south side of the Lexington Turnpike Road. Grantors reserve the right to use said land in any way that will not interfere with the above."

In 1906 an additional line was constructed direct to Louisville following somewhat the general direction of U.S. Highway 42 - adding another link in the long distance chain.

In 1892, just 15 years after the first two telephones were brought to Cincinnati, the City and Suburban installed a really revolutionary equipment arrangement in the Cincinnati calling area. The system was converted from Magneto to common battery operation. In layman's language this meant that in the Metropolitan area subscribers could signal the operator by simply lifting the receiver and it was no longer necessary to "turn the crank".

In the same year cable began to be used underground which removed the large masses of wire from streets in the congested areas.

#### Rural and Suburban Development

At the same time, of course, that the larger Metropolitan Area was developing its local and long distance service under the City and Suburban and later Citizens Telephone Company in Kentucky, various other smaller groups were playing their parts in telephone development.

In 1901, we find that a copper circuit was run from Cincinnati to Florence, Kentucky, and another metallic circuit from Florence on to Burlington and Petersburg. I do not have exact details of the number or extent of telephones reached there at that time.

In the sparsely settled and rural areas of Kenton, Campbell and Boone Counties, problems different from those of the Metropolitan area had to be met in order to have some feasible type of service. Sometimes, it wasn't a complete exchange as we know it today that could solve this problem, sometimes a mutually owned farmers line was sufficient communication for the people involved.

What information I have been able to assemble on these several Companies and of mutual line operations I record here, since they certainly have been a part of the overall telephone scene and its history for the last half century. I emphasize that these are not all the smaller Companies that may have operated, but give a picture of early attempts on the part of Northern Kentuckians to communicate with one another. This probably does not include all mutually owned Farmers lines.

Around the turn of the century a Farmers line was organized at Union. This line was opened by Mrs. Dora Bannister, now deceased. About 1901 exchanges were opened at Waterloo and Rabbit Hash with connections to Union Kentucky.

The Independence Telephone Company of Kenton Co. planning to do business in and around Independence and Erlanger was another of the smaller organizations planning service in the rural areas. Members of this organization were John L. Vest, John M. Chambers and Alvin Perry. In 1903 plans were made for connecting lines to the Metropolitan area. In November of 1903 a central office was opened at Independence. Early plans called for the Company to provide service to surrounding towns- Morning View, Bracht, Bank Lick Station, Scotts, Ryland, Visalia, Fiskburg and other nearby points.

These interests became a part of the Citizens Telephone Company and our Exchange in Independence, currently designated Fleelword serves in general that same area. Of interest at that time was that early plans of the Independence Company included furnishing service in Walton and Richwood, which are in Boone County and are now served by the Consolidated Company.

Mr. T. J. Hughes owned a small exchange at Beaver, Kentucky. The Hughes Company had a circuit to Covington which gave it quite an advantage over the Farmers line at Union and I understand, was instrumental in closing the Union Company as it existed at that time. Service was, of course, reactivated here later. Most of these rural telephone circuits were grounded lines and it seemed that the various Companies had customers in different parts of the county. A Company would have three or four customers here and three or four customers there, sometimes at widely separated points.

In further connection with early telephone development in Boone County, according to records I have examined, the situation in 1903, was somewhat as follows:

In the early part of the year a switchboard, "of the latest pattern" had been installed at Burlington, and plans were firm to extend lines to Belleview and Rabbit Hash. The line already at that time reached to the following towns: Petersburg, Idlewild, Bulletsville, Hebron, Limsburg, Florence and of course Burlington, where the switchboard was located. This organization with headquarters at Burlington was known as the Boone County Telephone Company, the owners were:

B. W. Adams, then County Clerk

A. B. Rouse, Attorney

Judge L. M. Lassing

N. E. Riddell, Attorney

Connection was made to lines of the City and Suburban (later Citizens) at Florence.

As nearly as I have been able to determine, there were several groups of ownership of the Boone County telephone interests, and we find in 1912 that an organization known as the Consolidated Telephone Company served about 3/5 of the county with three exchanges; Burlington with 187 subscribers, Walton with 183 subscribers and Beaver with 126 subscribers. The northern corner of the county was served by the Hebron Telephone Company at Hebron and the southwest corner of the county by the Telephone Company at Rabbit Hash.

There were later transfers of property and further combinations of these exchanges, which for the purpose of this paper, there is not time to relate.

In the general period of about 1914-1918 Mr. M. J. Crouch was President and General Manager of the Consolidated Telephone Company of Union Kentucky. I do not have any details on their extent of operation. I presume this was a different organization from the one operating in Burlington, Walton and Beaver.

From time to time, various Farmers lines and Mutual Companies have been in existence - one of them, according to the records in possession of the present Consolidated Telephone Company of Boone County, shows the following:

From a minute book of April 1, 1922, there is recorded that Mutual Telephone Company, Inc. was organized and had its first meeting at Union Kentucky; Mr. James W. Aylor served as chairman and at this meeting was elected President. Mr. C. W. Meyers and Stanley Utz were elected Directors with Mr. Aylor; Mr. Tanner, Vice President; Mr. Grubbs, Secretary; and Mr. Richards, Treasurer. The directors and officers were sworn in at the meeting on April 1. Alice Utz was elected operator at \$300.00 a year with living quarters furnished; the Secretary was paid \$50.00 a year. Service was offered at \$8.00 per year and action was taken at the first meeting to cut off service to delinquents after 60 days.

The Consolidated Telephone Company of Boone County, of course, operates all the principal exchanges in that County at the present time.

Williamstown, Falmouth and Butler, although not strictly a part of our Northern Kentucky community, have always had quite a community of interest with us. As early as May 14, 1900, a telephone franchise had been granted to the Williamstown and Owenton Telephone & Telegraph Company to erect poles and string wires. This organization served about 225 subscribers in Falmouth and Williamstown. In April 1907, this company was purchased by the present Citizens Telephone Company and on August 24, 1907, a two position, 200 line magneto board was installed in the exchange building at Falmouth.

An exchange was opened on Front St. at Butler Kentucky in November of the same year.

Previously, in 1904, a similar board had been installed in the Courier Building at Williamstown.

#### Erlanger, Fort Thomas and Alexandria

The year 1907 seems to have been one of expansion and development for all rural communities, for on May 9th Erlanger's own exchange was opened on Locust St. This was also a magneto type, or "you turn the crank" type of installation.

Early telephone development was planned in Campbell County in 1903 when a Dr. C.W. Shaw of Alexandria, intended to form a telephone company in and around the Campbell County rural areas. However, since a franchise had been granted on

September 18, 1895, to the Citizens Telephone Company to set poles and string wires, there are no records to indicate that Dr. Shaw's company was ever formed.

The Citizens Telephone Company opened a full exchange in Alexandria Kentucky, on June 1, 1917. Prior to this time toll and pay stations served this area. In 1929 this central office was named Thatcher, which of course, is a very familiar pioneer family name in this area. More recently, for equipment and future direct distance dialing the name has been changed to Myrtle.

Telephone lines had already reached out from Covington to the Highlands of Ft. Thomas, as this community continued to grow into a prominent suburb. It became necessary to open a central office here in June 1909. Naturally enough, it was named Hiland. This original building still stands on Fort Thomas Ave. at Highland. It is now occupied by the Fort Thomas Women's Club.

#### New Building in Covington

In 1904, as mentioned previously, a modern telephone building was erected at 4th and Court. This was the first building on this side of the river designed primarily and completely to handle telephone equipment and switchboards. There was a large center stairway leading to the second floor operating room, where the switchboard was arranged like a giant horseshoe with the open end toward the front of the building to admit light and ventilation. This was for many years the South Exchange and was the principal seat of Metropolitan Kentucky operation until another and larger structure was erected at 11th and Scott in 1923. The central office in this building was known as Covington until 1929, when in preparation for Metropolitan Dial operation it was changed to Hemlock, the name it still bears.

The annual report of the City and Suburban Company in 1879 (the year the first single line came to Covington) showed that the operating force had increased from 5 to 20 people during the year. That a total of 145,392 calls had been answered and that the largest number handled in any one day was 6,296.

Today we average over 2,000,000 calls locally in one day; and 39,000 long distance by customers in the Cincinnati & Suburban and Citizens Companies, and related areas.

By way of tribute or dedication, I should like to say that without the valiant efforts of those early telephone pioneers this accomplishment would not have been possible.

The early history I have related does not detail the all night vigils of operators at switchboards; through fire and other crises; the frost-bitten hands of early linemen working with 19th century tools. The stubborn devotion of a strain of craftsmen, engineers and designers seeking constantly to improve transmitted speech where there were no rules to follow. Specifically in your own local company the 1937 flood tried the ingenuity, stamina and endurance of every employee as the Ohio River rose toward the 80 foot mark, black Sunday of that crisis is still vivid to most of us.

At every turn there were problems, when something new was devised or invented it had to be made to work with what was old, until the old wore out. When dial telephones were placed in service they had to work with manual until all the manual were gone.

There are more telephones per capital in the U.S. than anywhere in the world. In Northern Kentucky, as throughout the nation, this had been accomplished by private enterprise in a free economy, in a Company which has been locally owned and managed for over 80 years. Where men of courage have had the vision to try the impossible; and where today 718 shareholders from our own Northern Kentucky area own 39,300 shares of our Company. Our growth through these years, has truly been the growth of this community; for the customer, the employee, and for the owner.

Today you may talk to London, Paris, Capetown or Bombay from telephones in a Company which is 100% local dial. We have also recently changed to a 2-5 telephone numbering plan in our Metropolitan area wherein all telephone numbers now have two letters and five numerals. This has been done so that in the "tomorrow" you can sit in the comfort of your own home and without an operator dial a telephone number in New York, Philadelphia or Chicago. This will come as surely as "since yesterday" we have grown from a single "Covington Line" across the Suspension Bridge, to over 50,000 telephones in our Northern Kentucky area.

In these days we are all inclined to take the telephone for granted. This is as it should be for it is on a basis of good communications that our industrial civilization rests. Nevertheless, I hope that these remarks will prompt many of you when you hear the telephone ring, to remember that first historic sentence - "Mr. Watson, come here, I want you".