

# This Great Contrivance

THE FIRST HUNDRED YEARS OF THE TELEPHONE IN ROCHESTER



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**O**ver the past century  
 the energies and efforts of thousands  
 of telephone men and women  
 provided the foundation for the communications  
 services of today. In their memory  
 this book is proudly dedicated by all  
 the active and retired employees of  
**Rochester Telephone...**

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Continued on back page

## **This Great Contrivance**

# This Great Contrivance

THE FIRST HUNDRED YEARS OF THE TELEPHONE IN ROCHESTER

Edited by F. L. Howe



**ROCHESTER  
TELEPHONE**  
CORPORATION

8/21/98

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Rochester, New York 14646

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## Foreword

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Few inventions have had a greater impact on society than the telephone. A hundred years ago it was an expensive toy. It progressed to the status of a useful luxury, then a nice convenience and, finally, an indispensable service. It has so pervaded our lives that most of us today consider it as essential as food, clothing and shelter.

From the beginning Americans found the telephone irresistible. It was a personal, even intimate innovation, and America was its natural home. English novelist Arnold Bennett proclaimed it “the proudest and most poetical achievement of the American people.” To Marilyn Monroe, it was the only thing she “always depended on...my best friend.”

Beginning in this century, the ring of the telephone resounds through American literature, its plays and songs. The emotions its bell evokes depend upon the listener’s expectations. For many, it may signal hope, relief or joy; for others, fear or anxiety. But for all Americans it’s a sound ingrained in their consciousness.

It has taken a century for the telephone to become such an integral part of our lives. In that time it has fashioned significant changes in the nation’s life styles. For one thing, it virtually eliminated the once flourishing business of sending telegrams, as well as the art of letter-writing. Most people today call rather than write or wire.

Some of the changes have been more profound: It was the telephone that drew closer people living miles apart in the lonelier parts of the country, reducing the isolation of millions of farm families. It also was the telephone that altered the methods of doing business and made practical the skyscrapers of today, thereby affecting the very way in which cities were built.

The telephone is so taken for granted today that millions of Americans reach for it hourly almost as a reflex action—to call for the time or temperature, for a prayer or joke, to talk with friends across the street or across the country. The telephone has conquered distance as no other invention or technology. Even 50 years ago a long distance call anywhere was a special occasion—like an ice cream cone or a ride in a rumble seat. A three-minute coast-to-coast call in 1917 cost more than \$20, took 14 minutes to complete and required the assistance of eight operators. In 1979, that same call could be dialed by the customer himself, almost instantaneously, for just 51 cents.

The story of the development of the telephone is really the story of America—how ingenuity, dedication, faith and foresight created the world’s finest communications system. As the nation has prospered, so have the telephone companies that serve it, including Rochester Telephone Corporation. The company’s success has been, and remains, inseparable from that of its territory.

*This Great Contrivance*—the title is taken from a reporter’s description of the telephone at its first public demonstration in Rochester—is a broad

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history of the development of the telephone in the Rochester area, an illustrated excursion into the past hundred years, played against the backdrop of the people and events of the times. It is not intended to be the definitive account of each step taken along the way.

None of the accomplishments of the telephone would have been possible without people. The telephone, and the equipment and wires that make it work, are inanimate; their lifeblood is the skills and energies of telephone men and women and the capital provided by the people who have bought stock in the company. It was they who built the system that gives the telephone voice.

The record of their first hundred years of service is chronicled on these pages. With the nature of the business undergoing significant change, the story of the next century will very likely be a different one. But whatever the challenges ahead, their performance over the first hundred years convincingly demonstrates that telephone people are equal to the task.

# 1

## 'My God, It Talks!'

The 35 years between the end of the Civil War and the end of the 19th Century was the golden age of American inventiveness. In that period the U.S. Patent Office granted more than a half million patents—for the telephone, the family camera, the home sewing machine, the typewriter, improvements in dynamos and motors, the gasoline-driven automobile...

It was an age of enormous progress, too. The railroad, the telegraph, oil and gas lighting and a hundred other comforts and conveniences came within reach of all but the poorest. The wealth of Americans multiplied prodigiously. By 1900, per capita annual income had risen from \$779 to \$1,164, the workday was reduced from 12 to 10 hours and for many Saturday had become a half holiday. Mark Twain called it the Gilded Age, the heyday of the middle class. Money seemed to be the consuming passion of virtually all Americans, rich and poor, old families and new immigrants alike.

While over half the population still made its living on farms, cities grew spectacularly,

especially in the Northeast, where industry became paramount. Millions of immigrants poured into the country, 5 million in the 1880's alone, and nearly all settled in cities. Millions more went west, to settle new communities.

In those years, Americans also found the greatest array of job opportunities in the nation's history. In 1870, there was no such thing as a telephone, yet by 1900 there were 19,000 operators. The iron and steel industry put more than a million people to work. Some 300 factories were turning out a million bicycles a year. Chewing gum and cigarettes by the pack were introduced. Bridges and even skyscrapers began to dot the urban landscape.

Even mounting industrial unrest didn't shake the American faith in progress. The depression of 1894 threw 3 million people out of work, and set Coxey's Army marching on Washington in protest. There were bitter and violent strikes across the country as working men sought to organize themselves against big business. The pattern of living was changing, and the telephone was to become an instrumental force in that transformation.

"The last hundred years have been the most fruitful and the most glorious period of equal length in the history of the human race... We are entering a year which will be ever memorable in our annals."

NEW YORK HERALD, 1876

"Mr. Watson, come here, I want you."

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL, 1876

"Hell, I'm rich. It's time I had some fun."

DIAMOND JIM BRADY, 1895

# 'My God, It Talks!'

**O**n July 27, 1877, a reporter for Rochester's *Union and Advertiser*, visited one of the city's downtown business offices and later reported in his newspapers columns:

"Our readers have heard so much in reference to the telephone that they may like, perhaps, to see it in practical operation. In Phillips' coal office, on W. Main Street, a small instrument of the kind may be seen. The wire that connects with the instrument is the same that is attached to the telegraph battery. When they wish to use the telephone the battery is cut out by turning the switch, and all that is necessary is to put your mouth to the tube in the box and speak what you want. It should have been stated that the other end of the wire is at their yards on Smith Street, a mile and a half distant. This morning a reporter of the paper happened to drop into the office and he was requested to carry on a conversation with the man at the yards. Putting his mouth to the tube he carried on a conversation in an ordinary tone of voice, the answer coming back instantaneously and perfectly clear and distinct. During his stay, orders were sent to the

Bell's first telephone.



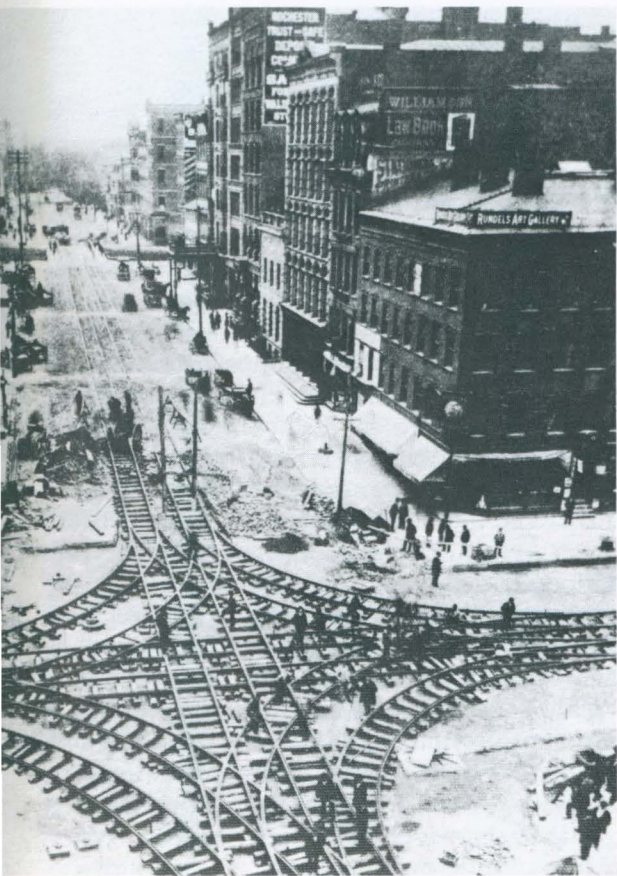
yard through this instrument for coal to be delivered in different parts of the city. The advantage of such a piece of mechanism to any one having two or three places of business is very great, as unlike the telegraph, it does not require any special knowledge. It is not impossible that this machine may come into general use, and every business man have a wire running from his house to his office."

Six weeks later the Rochester Executive Board convened in City Hall. On signal, one of its members spoke into a telephone, then placed the instrument to his ear. From the Water Works station at Hemlock Lake came the voice of a city employee. With that exchange, the telegraph line that paralleled the recently-completed, 28½-mile conduit bringing Hemlock Lake water to Rochester became what is generally believed to be the longest telephone line in the world at that time.

*The Union and Advertiser* reported that "several conversations were held," adding: "This instrument is certainly a great contrivance and no difficulty was experienced in holding an animated conversation with a man thirty miles away, the answers returned being distinctly audible. The instruments are attached to the regular telegraph line, the wire acting as a perfect conductor of sound."

The telephone had come to Rochester just a year after its birth and two years after Alexander Graham Bell had proved it was possible. On June 2, 1875, in a garret on Court Street in Boston, Bell heard a "twang" over a wire from an adjoining room where his assistant, Thomas A. Watson, was tuning the reeds of their harmonic telegraph. The sound had tones and overtones, quite different from the previous whine of the vibrating transmitter. Bell was ecstatic. By the simple plucking of a reed, his theory of the telephone had been confirmed.

The young Bell had an instinctively inventive mind, an excellent training in music, an interest in electricity, and a desire to help the deaf. During the day, he taught deaf children how to speak and teachers how to use "visible speech" with deaf pupils. In 1872, he opened his own school in Boston and the next year became professor of vocal physiology at Boston University. At night, he carried on his experiments,



*Above:* Alexander Graham Bell, with Emperor Dom Pedro of Brazil on June 25, 1876 at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition. On this same day, 2,000 miles to the west in Montana, General George Custer and his 7th Cavalry troop of 225 men were killed by Indians near the Little Big Horn River.

*Below:* Streetcar tracks being laid at the Four Corners in the late 1880's, when the first trolleys began their runs.

becoming increasingly convinced that if the end of a magnetized reed could be attached to the center of a diaphragm, as it vibrated to voice waves or music, it would generate a current that would vary in intensity just as the air varies in density when a sound is passing through it.

Then came the June day when he and Watson were working in separate rooms and one of Watson's reeds, screwed down too tightly, had "frozen" to the pole of its electromagnet. In unfreezing it, Watson had caused the historic "twang." More experimentation followed. On February 14, 1876, Bell applied for a patent, which he received on March 7, four days after his 29th birthday.

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### 'Don't talk with your ear...'

It wasn't always easy for subscribers to communicate with those first telephones. Because the telephone user spoke and listened through the same end of the instrument, he or she was admonished in printed instructions: "Don't talk with your ear or listen with your mouth." A good deal of shouting also was required if the two parties were to hear each other clearly. Subscribers also were reminded not to look out the window while talking, but to speak directly into the mouthpiece.

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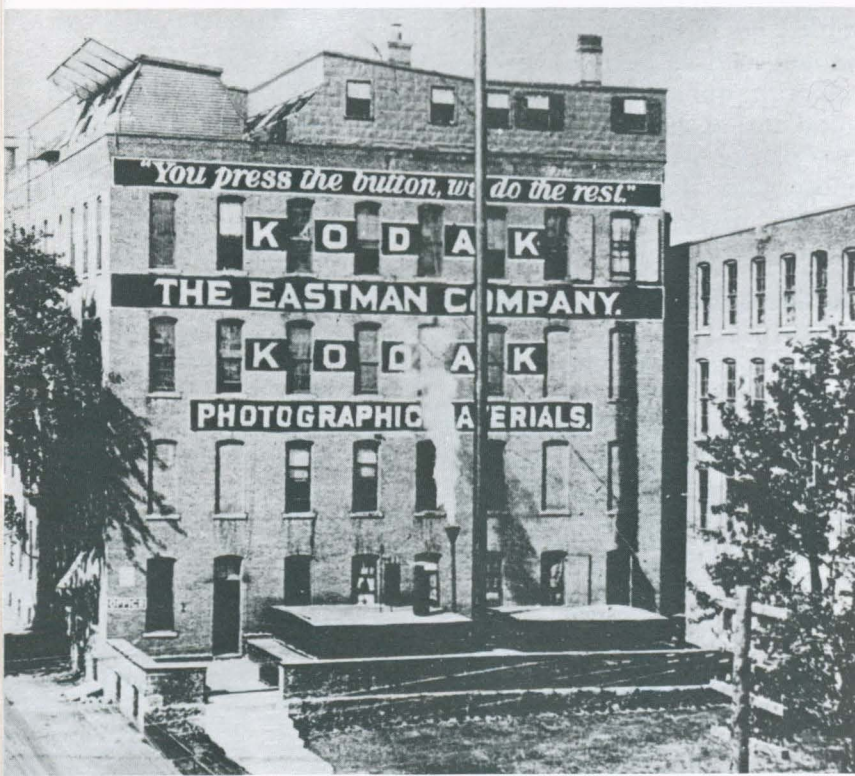
On March 10, in new quarters on the top floor of an Exeter Place boarding house, Bell and Watson were about to try out a new liquid transmitter when Bell upset some acid on his clothes. He called to his assistant, "Mr. Watson, come here, I want you." An astonished Watson rushed between rooms and announced, "Mr. Bell, I heard every word you said, distinctly." Bell had succeeded in transmitting a complete sentence of speech. The telephone was born.

The following June, Bell exhibited his invention at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, where it had to compete with such wonders as the first electric light and the first grain binder. However, Bell's telephone attracted the attention of the emperor of Brazil, who called it the most wonderful invention he had ever seen or heard. "My God, it talks!" he exclaimed when Bell demonstrated it for him.

Another visitor to that 1876 exposition was a young Rochesterian, J. Foster Warner, who had just graduated from high school. He was impressed, too. Later a prominent Rochester architect, Warner never lost his interest in the telephone, serving as a director of Rochester tele-



J. Foster Warner.



*Above left:* The Triangle building in the 1890's. Rochester Telephone's executive offices were here for more than 30 years.

*Below:* One of Eastman's first buildings on State Street.

*Above right:* The Erie Canal Aqueduct over the Genesee River in the 1890's. At center is the Lawyers Cooperative Publishing Co. building, which stands there today.

phone companies from 1899 until his death in 1937.

The Rochester of the mid-1870's, with a population of more than 80,000, offered a ripe field for innovation. New and powerful forces were taking shape to lay the foundation for very nearly continuous prosperity and growth. The nursery and seed business, which had made Rochester The Flower City, were at their height. Flour milling, for which the city earlier had been known as The Flour City, continued strong, but was encountering competition from the West. The men's clothing industry, to which Henry Michaels had given form in 1849, was burgeoning. So was shoe manufacture, in which dozens of plants and 4,600 workers, half of them women and children, were engaged. In different fields, James Cunningham & Son, producing carriages and hearses, and the Leighton Bridge and Iron Works, manufacturing and erecting wrought iron railroad bridges, were gaining national reputations. Bank clerk George Eastman was showing an interest in photography—his first film was produced in 1884 and the first Kodak camera four years later. George B. Selden was designing internal combustion engines for automobiles, the huge Johnston Harvester Company of Brockport was shipping farm machinery all over the world, and Bausch and Lomb Optical Company was making telescopes and other optical devices. George Taylor and his brother had opened a new thermometer works on Hill Street.

Exactly how many telephones, in addition to those in City Hall and the Phillips coal office, were in existence in Rochester in 1877 isn't known. The probability is that there were none. There was no telephone exchange in the city, nor would there be for two years. By mid-1877, fewer than 1,000 telephones were in use nationally.

The telephone was a novelty and Rochesterians viewed it with some skepticism. Still, a crowd turned out at Corinthian Hall on March 12, 1878 to hear by telephone a concert played and sung in Buffalo. The affair was sponsored by the Western Union Telegraph Company, which used Edison telephonic equipment. The music was provided by two singers and a cornet player and the most that can be said about the performance apparently was that it was audible. The audience, though barely able to identify the music as such, applauded each selection.

The following evening the cornet player and singers came to Rochester and their efforts were telephoned from an office in the Reynolds Arcade to an audience in Buffalo. One measure



of the concert's success is a telegraph message received from the manager of the Western Union office in Toronto. He not only had heard the concert, but also correctly identified the selections.

On January 28, 1878, the world's first commercial switchboard was opened in New Haven, Connecticut. Other communities soon followed suit. The next year, with both the Bell and the Edison telephone companies of Buffalo competing for Rochester business, the city got not one, but two exchanges. The Bell company, incorporated in Buffalo in January of 1879 and controlled by the American Bell Telephone Company, opened its exchange at 10-12 Main Street Bridge. The Edison company, also a national organization with a Buffalo affiliate, opened its exchange in the Powers Block.

On February 15, 1879, Edward J. Hall, Jr., general manager of the Rochester Telephonic Exchange (Bell), sent out the first sales letter. It read in part:

"We offer to the business men of Rochester an absolutely perfect system of speaking communication with each other, by which the utmost secrecy is secured. The advantages of such a system in the saving of time and labor,

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#### What the skeptics said

The telephone had an indifferent introduction, with most people considering it a scientific toy and many newspapers ridiculing it. The Baltimore County Advocate of Towson, Md., reported the arrest of a man in New York "...for attempting to extort funds from ignorant and superstitious people by exhibiting a device which, he says, will convey the human voice any distance over metallic wires... Well-informed people know that it is impossible to transmit the human voice over wires..."

A Western Union Telegraph Company report prepared in 1882 discounted the development of the telephone as "utterly out of the question ...Bell's proposal to place his instrument in every home and business is, of course, fantastic in view of the capital costs involved in installing endless numbers of wires."

The famed financier J.P. Morgan was equally skeptical. "...while it is a very interesting novelty," he told Bell, "we have come to the conclusion that it has no commercial possibilities."

---

## C

Carr, Allen B., M. D., Residence, 32 N. Clinton.  
 Chace & Meyers, Lumber, 19 Warehouse st.  
 Chambers, Robt. W. & Co., Druggists, 130 State street.  
 Chase Brothers, Florists, East Park.  
 Chase, Ethan, Residence, 234 North St. Paul st.  
 Chase, Lewis, Residence, 2 East st.  
 Chase & Otis, Lumber Dealers, west end Court St. Bridge.  
 Citizens Gas Company, Office, 13 North St. Paul st.  
 Citizens Gas Company, Works, Vincent Place Bridge.  
 CITY HOSTESS, West Avenue.  
 CLAGUE & WEGMAN, Printers and Law Blank Publishers,  
 corner Exchange and West Main s's. (Smith's Arcade).  
 Clark, J. W., Saloon, 124 State st.  
 Clark, L. W., Residence, 25 1/2 East avenue.  
 Clarke, Freeman, Residence, 110 Alexander street.  
 Cleveland, H. B. & Co., Commission Merchants, 410 W. Main St.  
 Collins, A., Residence, 16 N. Fitzhugh street.  
 Cook, Frederick, Residence, East Avenue and Arnold Park.  
 Cook, A. A., Confectionery, 315 State street.  
 COOLIDGE BROS., Pharmacy, 125 East Main street.  
 CORK, ALFRED H., Grocer, 184 East Main street.  
 Craig, Oscar, Attorney, 31 State st.  
 Craig & Crouch, Lumber, 4 Griffith st.  
 Cramer, J. G., Paper Bag Warehouse, 25 West Main street.  
 Creed & Wilson, Bookbinders, 23 West Main street.  
 Crittenden, P. V., Residence, 12 Monroe avenue.  
 Crossman Brothers, Schoolmen, 390 Monroe Avenue.  
 Cunningham, Joseph, residence, 147 Alexander street.  
 Cunningham, J., Son & Co., Carriages, 3 Canal st.

**ROOT BROTHERS,**  
 (Successors to Coolidge Bros.)

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 TELEPHONE YOUR ORDERS.

## D

Dake, W. W., Druggist, 11 North Avenue.  
 Da Lee, W. J., Residence, 50 S. Union st.  
 Dann, Archibald, M. D., Office, 42 South Avenue.  
 Davenport & Hale, Grocers, 163 E. Main st.  
 Davidson, M. D., 72 Allen street.  
 DAVIS, E. H., Wholesale and Retail Druggist, 81 State st.  
 DAVIS, E. H., Residence, 12 Trowbridge street.  
 Day, James, Livery, 109 State st.  
 Deaf Mute Institute, 263 N. St. Paul st.  
 Decker, Frank, Baggage Express, N. Y. C. Depot.  
 Democrat and Chronicle, 3 East Main st.  
 DeVos, Jacob, Provision Dealer, 44 Front street.  
 Dickinson, W. C., Coal Yard, Clarissa and Exchange sts.  
 Dickinson, W. C., Coal Office, 52 West Main st.  
 Dryer, B. K., Residence, 145 Alexander st.  
 Duffy, W. B. & Co., Wholesale Liquor Dealers, 27 Lake ave.  
 DUN, R. G. & Co., Mercantile Agency, 60 State st.  
 Dutton, G. R., Druggist, 52 South Avenue.

**E. H. DAVIS,**

WHOLESALE AND RETAIL

**DRUGGIST,**

AND DEALER IN

PURE DRUGS, CHEMICALS, CHEMICAL APPARATUS,  
 TRUSSSES, PATENT MEDICINES, PURE WINES,  
 Surgical Instruments, PERFUMERY, LIQUORS,  
 LEECHES, TOILET GOODS, for Medicinal Purposes.

Physicians' Prescriptions compounded by competent persons only.

81 State Street, Rochester, N. Y.

TELEPHONE ORDERS PROMPTLY ANSWERED.

**ROCHESTER TELEPHONIC EXCHANGE,**

(LICENSED UNDER ALEX. GRAHAM BELL'S PATENTS)

EDWARD J. HALL, JR.  
 HANCOCK C. PALMER,  
 ALFRED HALL,  
 B. F. BLACKBURN.

General Manager  
 Secretary and Treasurer  
 Superintendent



Central Office and Operating Room  
 10 & 12 MAIN ST. BR.

Rochester, February 15th, 1879

IMPORTANT TO BUSINESS MEN:

We offer to the business men of Rochester an absolutely perfect system of communication with each other, by which the utmost secrecy is secured.

The advantages of such a system in the saving of time and labor, and the security of business, are obvious, and clearly demonstrated by the immense success which has been secured in the operation of a similar system in other large cities in the United States.

Our connections will include every branch of business, railroad and freight agencies, physicians, lawyers, residences, etc. Lines are now being built, and subscribers will be furnished with telephones and connected with our central office as rapidly as possible.

Each subscriber is provided with a Telephone and Call Bell, and a List of Subscribers connected with the system, with any of whom he can be placed in instant communication. The instruments and lines are kept in proper working order by the Company, and at the disposal of the subscriber for use at any time, day or night.

In order to place the system within the reach of all, and secure its general adoption, whereby the largest benefits may be realized, the price has been placed as follows: \$30 per year for offices, and \$24 per year for residences, payable semi-annually in advance. Connections will be made without charge.

New subscribers will be added in the order of their application, as far as practicable.

Full details of the operation of the system, and any other information desired, will be cheerfully furnished.

Your cooperation is respectfully solicited.

EDWARD J. HALL, JR.  
 General Manager

and the expedition of business, are obvious, and clearly demonstrated by the immense success which has already been secured in the operation of a similar system in other large cities...

"Each subscriber is provided with a Telephone and Call Bell, and a List of Subscribers connected with the system, with any of whom he can be placed in instant communication. The instruments and lines are kept in proper working order by the Company, and are at the disposal of the subscriber for use at any time, day or night.

**Watch the hammer...**

Instructions for use of the telephone were spelled out in the back of the first directory:

"To call the Central Office, press the knob firmly twice; then watch the hammer until it drops back from the bell, indicating that the call has been received. As soon as this occurs place the telephone closely over your ear, push the hook-switch to the left and wait for the operator to speak. Answer, first, by your own name; and then by the name of the person with whom you wish to communicate. When the operator has connected the proper wires, he will say 'All right' through the telephone. When you receive a call answer by one tap of the bell, then place the telephone to your ear and turn the switch to the left. Wait an instant and if you hear nothing, turn the switch to the right, as the call may come from a subscriber on your own circuit."

"In order to place the system within the reach of all, and secure its general adoption, whereby the largest benefits may be realized, the price has been placed as follows: \$30 per year for offices, and \$24 per year for residences, payable semi-annually in advance. Connections will be made without charge..."

The first newspaper advertisements appeared the same month. On April 16, a short time after the first private telephones had been installed, the newspaper reported a "Horrible Accident" in which a 64-year old woman was severely burned when a kerosene lamp exploded. Neighbors helped her, and a doctor was summoned, but too late. The newspaper said about 50 telephones were in use at the time and contended that had the doctor possessed one of them he might have been called in time to save the woman's life.

The opening of the 1879 baseball season give the local Bell company another opportunity to publicize the new service. It installed a telephone in a building adjoining the baseball grounds so that subscribers could call during the game and find out the score.

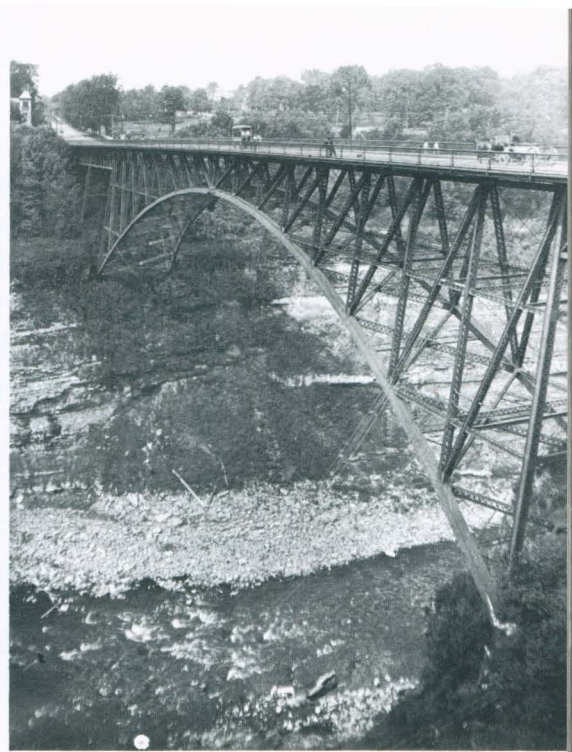
Beginning with 50 telephones, the number of subscribers increased steadily, with the newspapers chronicling each new development in

*Above left to right:* Two pages of Rochester's first telephone directory. All subscribers whose name began with C or D are listed on those pages. In the 1979 Greater Rochester directory, the C & D listings encompass 72 pages, with more than 450 names to the page.

The first telephone advertisement in Rochester.

Vick Park A in the 1890's.

Driving Park Bridge, shortly after its erection in 1891.



### The man who invented the dial

Although Rochester was one of the last Metropolitan areas in the nation to have dial telephones, the inventor of the dial phone was a former school principal in the Town of Penfield. Almon Brown Strowger was a grandson of the first miller at the mill operated by Daniel Penfield, the town's founder. A number of descendants still live in the Rochester area.

In his youth it was said of Strowger and his brothers that if their mother gave them a task to do, they would spend most of their time figuring out a machine to do it for them. He put that inventiveness to use years later as an undertaker in Kansas City. Convinced that he was losing customers to rivals because an

operator had failed to complete a call to him, he worked to devise a system in which the calling party would directly control the equipment, without any operator assistance. He filed a patent for his "automatic telephone exchange" in 1889.

The system, originally exhibited and advertised as the "girl-less, cuss-less, out-of-order-less, wait-less telephone," used an up-and-around, magnet-driven mechanism. Strowger put it together with a collar box, pencil and hatpins. The electrical impulses were created by pushing a number of keys much like those used in telegraphy. For example, to call Number 89, the caller would press one key eight times and a second key nine times.

In 1893, Strowger and a financial backer formed the Strowger Automatic Telephone Exchange Company to develop and promote the system. Today it's known as Automatic Electric, a manufacturing subsidiary of General Telephone & Electronics. The system was first placed into service at LaPorte, Indiana, and within the next three years was installed in several other communities. By then Strowger's engineers had replaced the pushbuttons with the dial. Albion, New York, had one of their first dial systems.

Competition from other telephone companies and infringement of patent rights caused Strowger to sell his interest in the company and retire. He died in St. Petersburg, Florida, in 1902.



Almon B. Strowger

The original Strowger switch, for which he was granted a patent in 1891.



detail. *The Union and Advertiser*, for example, called the increase “really wonderful, and shows that the telephone has become an actual business necessity.”

As telephone service grew, so did the problems—both for subscribers and the company. Wrong numbers were frequent and operators had a habit of checking service in the early hours of the morning, awakening many subscribers. There were other annoyances, such as kite strings and wind storms—and P.T. Barnum’s Circus. The circus bandwagon was decorated with a gilded figure, which was so high that it pulled down a wire on East Avenue. The wire chief logged the incident this way: “The Goddess of Liberty did it. Heaven preserve us!”

In October, Rochester was connected with Syracuse through the Bell exchange over wires

of the American Union Telegraph Company. A newspaper account stated: “The sensation was really amusing. The Rochester operators rang up several of their local stations, and, without telling them with whom they were to converse, connected them with the Syracuse wire. Their inquiries as to the identity of their auditors, and incredulity when informed that they were talking to Syracuse, were the subjects of a great deal of fun and hilarity.”

The test was described as “a complete success” and the newspaper speculated “that perhaps the day is not far distant when the people in New York will be within the very sound of the voice of their friends in San Francisco.” The first transcontinental telephone line, from New York to San Francisco, actually wasn’t realized for another 35 years.





### The first operators drank beer

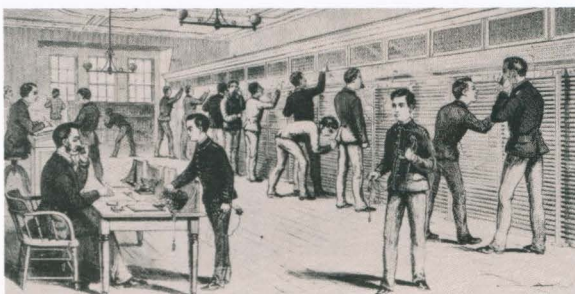
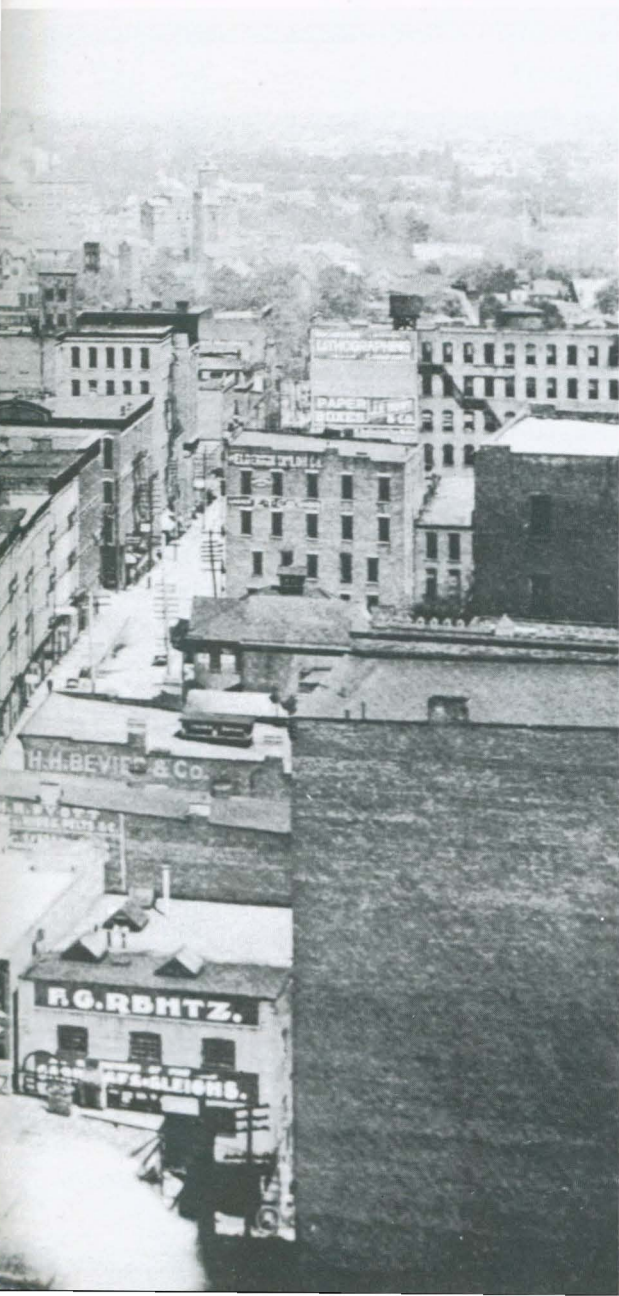
The day the Rochester Telephonic Exchange opened for business on the Main Street Bridge its employee body consisted of a chief operator, who also was an experienced telegrapher and wireman; one operator; and a messenger. The night force had a chief operator, who also was a switchboardman, and a messenger who could help answer calls. Within a month other operators and a messenger were hired.

The day force worked from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. and the night force from 6 p.m. to 7 a.m. six days a week (the additional hour on the night side was presumably due to the slower pace in the early morning hours). There was no allowance for overtime.

Operators, all young men between 18 and 22 years of age, received \$4 a week. And it was strenuous work. On the first switchboards, only a few lines could be placed within the reach of one operator, so they had to work on their feet and move quickly. An operator named Frank Montgomery set an early record for handling the most calls, 419 connections in four hours, "and he did not do his best either," according to one newspaper account.

Within six months the male operators were being replaced by women across the country. As one telephone official expressed it: "The service of women is very much superior to that of boys and men. They are steadier, do not drink beer and are always on hand." They didn't whittle on the switchboards, either.

In the late 1940's, before beginning its dial conversion program, Rochester Telephone employed more than 975 women operators. In 1979, it had fewer than 350, among whom were more than a dozen men.



Boy operators in 1879.

*Above left:* A Bell Telephone office of the 1880's. While the exact location can't be determined, it's believed to be a town near Rochester.

*Left:* A view of the area north of Main Street as it appeared from the Chamber of Commerce offices, at Main Street East and South Avenue, in the 1890's.

In June of 1880, competition between the Bell and Edison companies ended when the two were merged, with Bell the surviving company. Three years later the company received formal permission to set poles and string wires upon and over the city streets and property.

Until then, wires were carried on wooden fixtures on the roofs of buildings. The fixtures were often 15 to 20 feet high with crossarms of 12 feet or more in length and carrying 50 to 200 wires. Since the routes followed the principal streets, large numbers of wires ran along Main Street, South Water and Front streets. Farther along, the leads were branched into smaller lines and finally into single ones which were supported on iron spikes or bayonets driven into the ridge poles of the roofs.

As the number of subscribers increased, the number of obstacles mounted, too. People re-

fused to allow access to roofs—the long spans were dangerous when laden with ice and fire hazards were of major concern. A network of telegraph messenger wires and fire alarms laced rooftops and crosses between the systems made service unreliable and led to frequent complaints.

A much larger controversy erupted in 1886 when the company announced that effective November 1 that year measured service would replace the flat rate service. The customer would pay according to the use made of his phone. For customers within a half mile of the telephone exchange, the new rate was \$50 per year for 500 calls or messages and six cents a message for all over 500. Outside the half-mile radius, customers were to be charged an extra \$20 per mile.

The public objected loudly and the City Council revoked the company's license. The

### Straight or unsightly?

The company required city approval to string its lines along poles erected on city streets. Permission to do so was contingent upon their being "straight and slightly." Whether or not they were depends upon whose account you read.



Another view of Main Street in the 1890's, this one looking east from St. Paul Street.

In 1924, Milton S. Baxter of Rochester Telephone's Plant Department wrote in the employee publication: "The poles were 50 feet above ground, two feet in diameter at the base, straight as masts, and had a capacity of 200 wires. They represented a fine job in modern line construction and were pointed out with pride to visiting telephone men. The Main Street pole lines were extended to Goodman Street eastward and Genesee Street on the west, and lines were built north and south to the outlying wards until all parts of the city were covered."

Representing another viewpoint, William F. Peck, in his 1908 *History of Rochester and Monroe County*, wrote: "Having obtained the right... (the company) immediately proceeded to disfigure Main and State streets by the elevation of immense pine sticks, in some cases 90 feet high, 'like the mast of some tall admiral,' none of which had been prepared to resist the action of the moist earth, most of which were far from straight and all of which were placed without the slightest regard to the convenience of property owners."

In 1888, the company obtained a permit from the city for its first underground conduit for telephone wires and cables, on East Main and Exchange streets.

*Right:* Balanced on a pole nearly 100 feet above the Four Corners of the 1890's, these intrepid telephone men were probably photographed from the roof of the Wilder Building, which housed the Bell operation. The view looks north on State Street, with the Powers Block at the left.





subscribers also had their say. Although undecided on tactics, they organized to oppose the new rates and agreed to do whatever the "subscribers organization shall deem proper to resist it." On November 20, 1886 they united in an action that is unparalleled in telephone history: At noon that day every subscriber removed his telephone receiver, with the understanding that it would not be replaced until the company came to terms. The first strike against the Bell System, it lasted 18 months, and laid the groundwork for a locally owned and operated telephone company to compete with the Bell of Buffalo operation.

For 18 months both the public and city officials stood fast. The city took legal action to force the company to remove its poles and wires and a number of businessmen began to organize a locally owned cooperative exchange, to be known as the People's Telephone Association. With no foreseeable end to the strike and sensing the emergence of competition, the Bell company agreed to terms and submitted to City Council a schedule of rates *without* measured

*Left:* Dedication of the Soldiers and Sailors Monument in Washington Square on May 30, 1892. More than 10,000 people marched in the 2-mile-long parade that preceded the ceremonies, which were climaxed by a speech by President Benjamin Harrison.

*Right:* The Wilder Building, where Bell moved its switchboard and offices in 1888, just a year after it was built.



service. In May, 1888, the strike ended with the Council's approval of the new rates: \$64 a year for ordinary business; \$54 for doctors and lawyers; and \$45 for residence, all on a flat rate basis for individual lines.

With the end of the strike, Bell opened a new exchange on the seventh floor of the recently completed Wilder Building and installed a multiple switchboard. In August, it also began to install its first underground conduit along Main and Exchange Streets.

Bell continued its monopoly of telephone service well into the 1890's. But in 1893 Bell's first patent expired and a great many independent exchanges and systems came into being. In the next three years more than 6,000 non-Bell companies were started across the country. Rochester, too, was destined to have its own locally-owned and operated system, a movement that began with the subscribers strike of 1886 and the formation of the People's Telephone Association. Not for more than a decade, however, would the seed germinate.

# 2

## The Two-Telephone Era

For most Americans, the first decade of the 20th Century was a golden interlude, a long, comfortable moment before the good days vanished and modern times arrived at full tide. In 1900, there were only 45 states, and the U.S. population stood at 76 million. Eggs were selling for 12 cents a dozen, steak for 24 cents a pound. Automobiles cost \$1,500 each, with the truck and bus still to be invented and only 150 miles of paved highway in the whole country. There were no radios, no electric ice boxes, and only 18 telephones for every 1,000 people. Diphtheria, typhoid fever and malaria were among the leading causes of death, with yellow fever epidemics in the South not uncommon.

As they made more money, people looked for new ways of spending it. Movies began to catch on—Mack Sennett made his first Keystone Cops comedy in 1912—variety and stage shows became more popular than ever. The first Rose Bowl game was played in 1902, the first World Series in 1903. Irving Berlin's "Alexander's Ragtime Band" sparked a batch of new dances.

Early in the century's second decade, the nation's self-confidence showed signs of sagging. Although more people were

sharing in the good life—10 million cars were bought from 1910 to 1920, including 4 million of Ford's Model T's—there was increasing social ferment and discontent. The women's suffrage movement was near its height, with 25,000 women staging a protest march in New York City in 1915. With as many as one third of the working population still laboring up to 12 hours a day for subsistence wages, many of them children, there was continuing union unrest, too, with 2,000 strikes and lockouts in the first six months of 1916 alone.

The outbreak of World War I had little effect at first. Americans didn't want to get involved, and neutrality was the official and popular cry. With the sinking of the Lusitania by a German U-boat in 1915, sentiment began to change. Germany became the enemy in name, if not in fact, and two years later America joined the war that was to end all wars. In the grim months that followed, 116,000 soldiers and sailors died, more than half of them from disease. On the home front there were wheatless and meatless days, shortages of coal and influenza epidemics. But by the war's end the United States had mobilized its industrial might to become the most powerful nation in the world economically. Life would never again be as simple as in those first mellow years of the century.

"God has marked the American people as His chosen nation to finally lead in the regeneration of the world. This is the divine mission of America, and it holds for us all the profit, all the glory, all the happiness possible to man. We are trustees of the world's progress, guardians of its righteous peace."

U.S. SENATOR ALBERT J. BEVERIDGE, 1900

"The way to make automobiles is to make an automobile like another automobile, to make them all alike, to make them come through the factory just alike."

HENRY FORD, 1914

"The world must be made safe for democracy."

PRESIDENT WOODROW WILSON, 1917

# The Two-Telephone Era

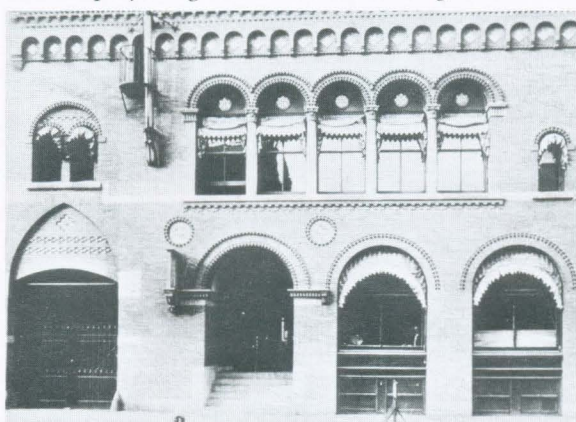
**I**n 1876, the same year that Alexander Graham Bell spoke his first historic words over the telephone, George R. Fuller came to Rochester from Watertown. At 26, he already had been a telegraph operator and auditor with the Rome, Watertown & Ogdensburg Railroad. In Rochester he purchased a firm engaged in making artificial limbs and renamed it after himself, serving as its president until his death half a century later.

Fuller became a prominent businessman and after the Bell company increased its rates he interested other influential Rochesterians in forming a competitive company, the Home Telephone Company of Rochester, which was incorporated on January 18, 1899. The name Home was not unique to Rochester. Across the country many independent telephone companies were being named Home to emphasize their local ownership.

A canvass netted about 1,500 five-year telephone contracts, which were submitted to the Rochester City Council in support of the company's application for a franchise. The Council approved it on April 14 and Rochesterians were in the telephone business—for good. The rate to subscribers was put at a maximum of \$48 a year per instrument. Bills were payable in advance, to be rendered every three months. With an eye to the measured service dispute of 1886, local calling was to be unlimited.

The Home Telephone Company was short-lived under that name. On November 21, 1899, the directors of the Home company changed it to the Rochester Telephone Company. The

The company's original Stone Street building.



directors included Fuller and a number of other Rochester business leaders—Frederick Cook, Thomas W. Finucane, Eugene H. Satterlee, George W. Archer, Albrecht Vogt, H. Wheeler Davis, Gustav Erbe, Jacob Gerling, J. Foster Warner, Edward W. Peck, Horace C. Brewster, Willard B. Spader, V. Moreau Smith, and Ezra M. Higgins. At their first meeting in December, 1899, they elected Cook president; Satterlee, vice president; Smith, treasurer; and Fuller secretary. Charles E. Stinson, an experienced telephone engineer, was named general manager.

On May 13, 1900, the Stone Central Office, with a new central energy switchboard containing all metallic circuits, was opened in the company's first building at 59 Stone St. Eighteen hundred subscribers were connected that day and by the end of the month the number exceeded 2,000. The company's growth was extraordinary. In the fall of its first year—1900—1,000 lines were added to the switchboard. Service demands by the end of the second year required the addition of another story to the building and installation of a new switchboard, this one with a 7,200-line capacity. Part of this growth came from outside the city. In June of 1900 alone, the company was granted franchises by Charlotte, Fairport, and Pittsford.

While the territory of the Home company was wholly within Monroe County, the area to be served by its successor company, at least on paper, was enormous. Rochester Telephone Company's articles of incorporation defined "the general route and points to be connected" as: "...through and along the streets, avenues, lanes, squares, alleys, parks, bridges, aqueducts and public places of the City of Rochester... and from the central exchange of said company... along the highways, roads, lanes, railways and canals of said State, easterly to Syracuse and Utica, northeasterly to Oswego, Watertown and Ogdensburg, westerly to Buffalo and Niagara Falls, southwesterly to Mayville, southerly to Corning and Elmira and southeasterly to Binghamton."

The competing Bell company, meanwhile, was not just sitting by. In October, the company moved from the Wilder Building to "new and beautiful premises" on Fitzhugh Street, accord-



*Above:* Rochester Telephone's line construction department in 1903, photographed on Minerva Place behind the Stone Street central office building. The man in the derby, second from the left, was the boss, John Haley.

*Left above:* Same day, same location. For some reason, long forgotten, the youngster atop the spindle, which was used to pull cable through underground conduit, slipped into the photograph.

*Right above:* Stone telephone operators on an outing in 1906. Their host, and the owner of the car, was a Rochester automobile dealer who sold the vehicle their signs advertise, the Dolson. The manufacturer went out of business in 1907.

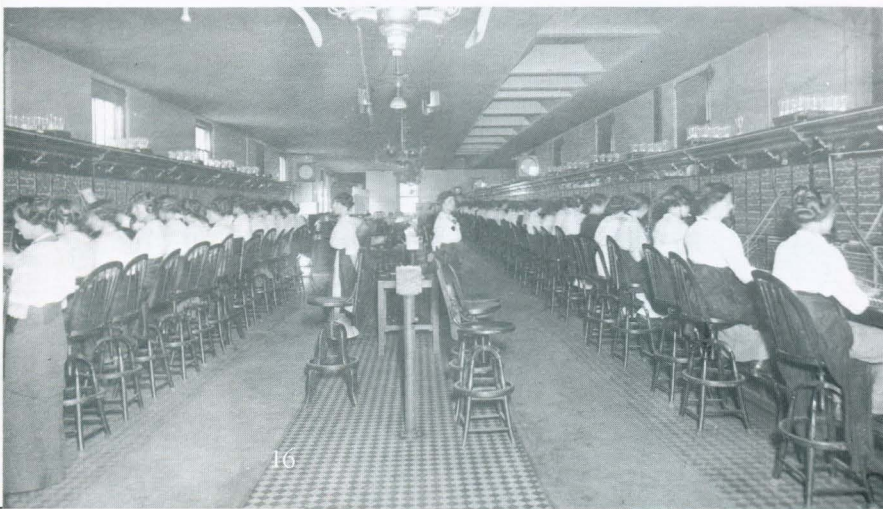
*At right:* A Rochester policeman makes a call from a street telephone in the early 1900's.

ing to a local newspaper account. On the first floor were located the Plant and Commercial offices; long distance operations were on the second; and the Main exchange was on the third. By 1914, even more space was required, and the then New York Telephone Company constructed an addition to that first building, both of which are still in use today.

Across Main Street, young Rochester Telephone had begun to be recognized nationally and to expand its borders. In September, 1901, the company acquired the toll lines of the Inter Ocean Telephone & Telegraph Company of

Cleveland. Earlier in the year, the Genesee Valley Telephone Company had been incorporated for service in the counties of Monroe, Wayne, Ontario, Livingston, Genesee and Orleans. And in October, 1902, the Interlake Telephone Company was incorporated for service in 16 central-western counties; it promptly purchased the Canandaigua Telephone Company.

Despite the company's continuing expansion, there remained one major problem. The Bell System still was not allowing connection of independent companies to its network, which meant that customers of non-Bell companies,



Identification Card  
Bell Telephone Co. of Buff

No. 151



Name ... Robert M. Bruce  
Position ... Wire Chief  
Dept. ... Maintenance

(SIGNED) *W. Craft*

*Top row, left to right:* The Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) parade in downtown Rochester in 1911. More than 25,000 Union Army veterans came to Rochester that year for the national encampment.

An election night in the early 1900's, with returns handled by phone in a telephone company office.

Installers behind the Stone Street building in 1914. By then motorcycles had begun to replace the horse and buggy and the company was using its first automobile, shown just behind the cycles.

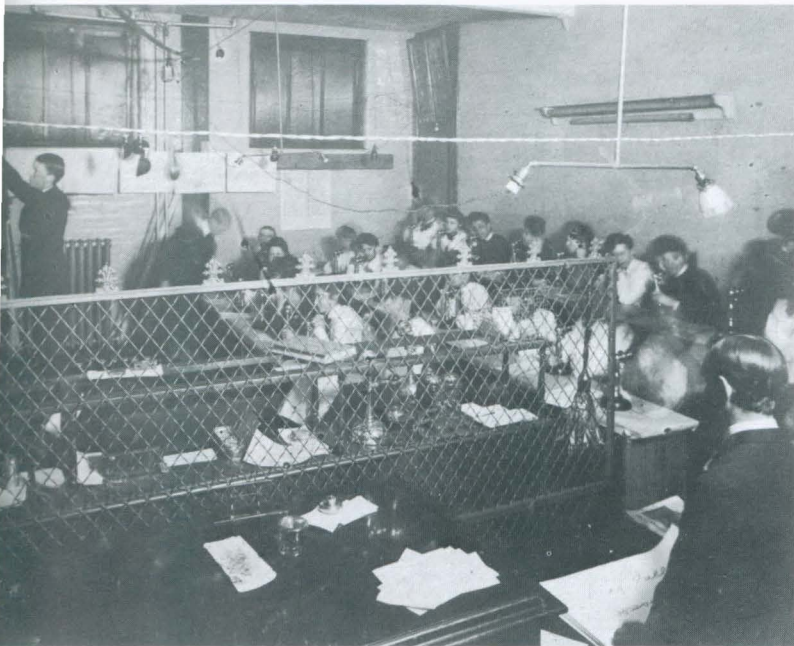
*Bottom row, left to right:* The "A" and "B" switchboards of the Stone central office about 1914. The "A" board handled calls placed within the exchange, "B" board operators sent and received calls to and from other exchanges.

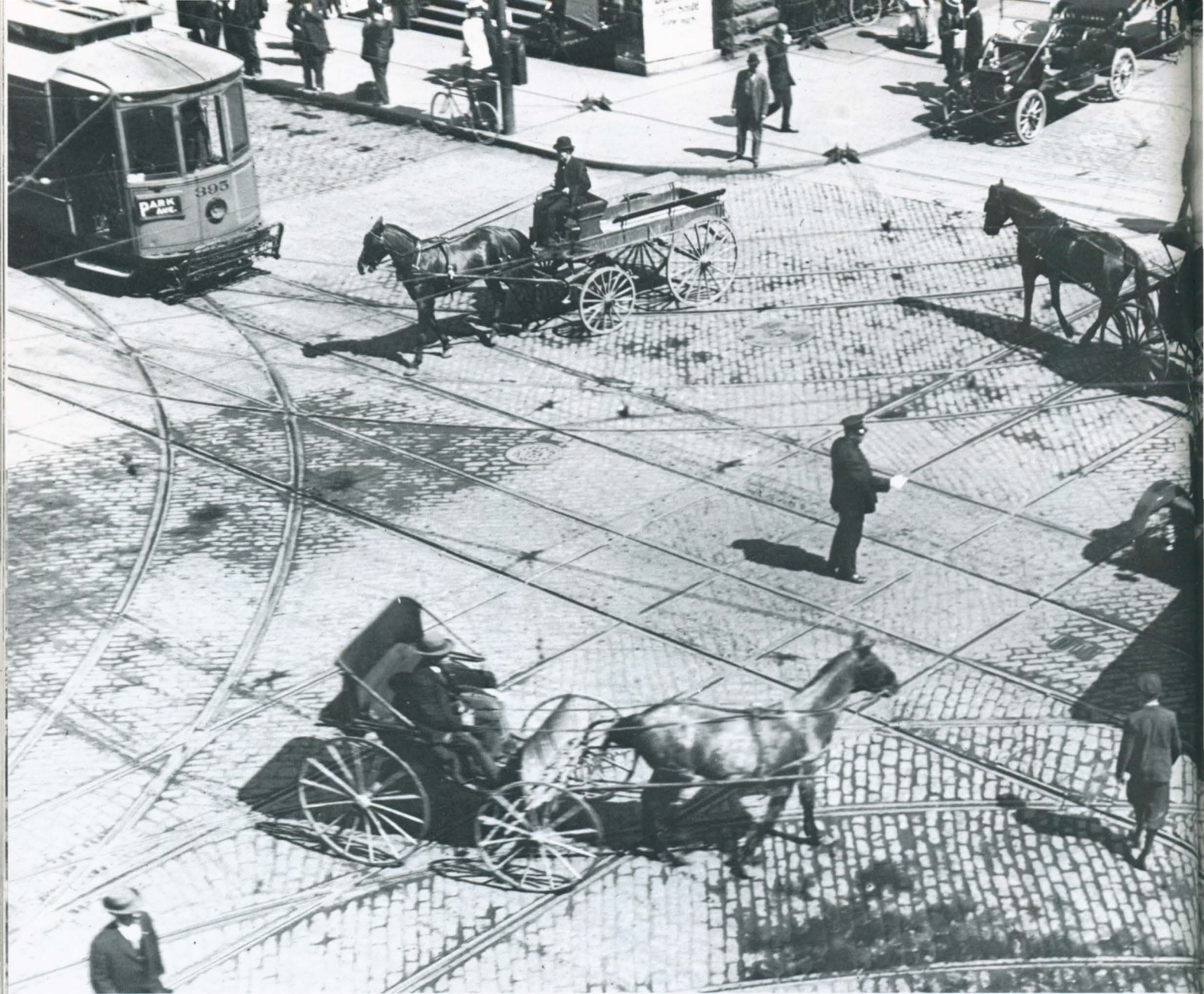
A repair crew and their wagon in the early 1900's.

Telephone employees were required to carry identification cards like this one.

The Stone Street terminal room after a 1908 fire that knocked out Rochester Telephone's entire operation. It took employees more than two weeks to rewire the frames and switchboard and restore service for the company's 11,000 customers. While the telephones were out, Bell experienced a sizable increase in its calling volumes, bringing in 20 operators from out of town to handle them.

A telephone office in the early 1900's. The communities listed on the windows presumably could be reached through the company's network.





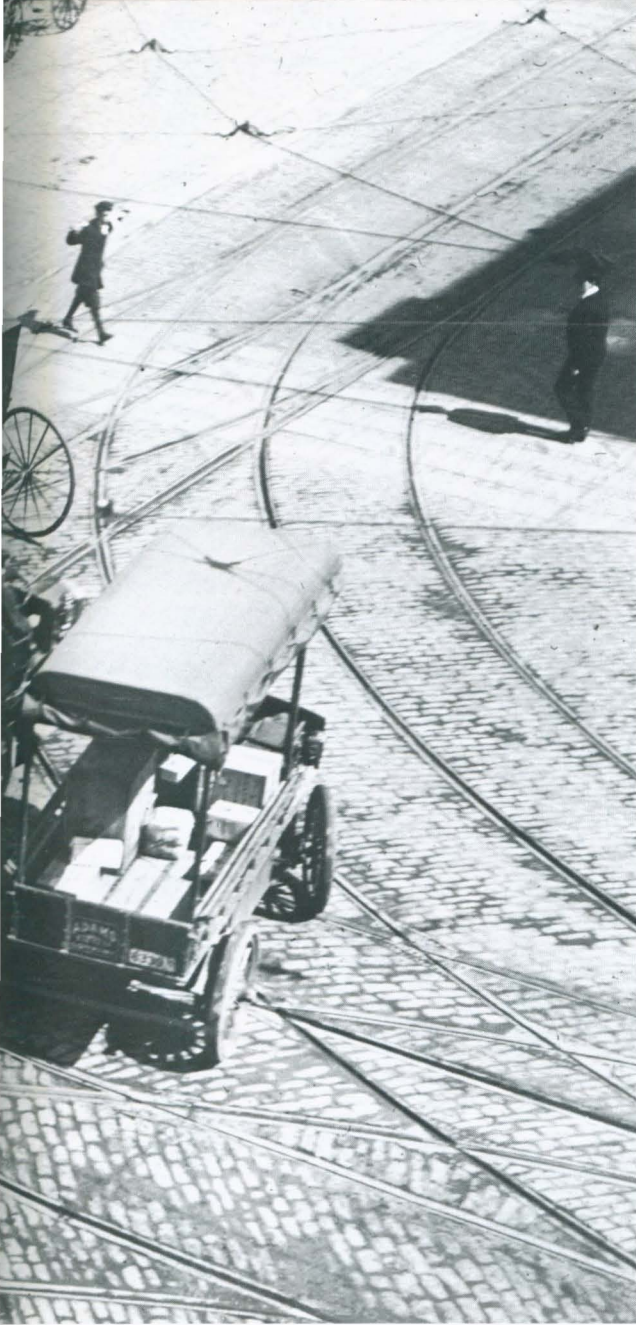
including Rochester Telephone Company and all its subsidiaries, were unable to call outside their own territories. Across the country pressure began to mount for a second network, one to rival the AT&T system, which had settled largely in the nation's metropolitan areas. In 1902, independent companies were competing with Bell in some 1,200 communities; in 600 other areas, independents were battling each other in a concerted effort to establish their own long distance network.

In 1905 a handful of prominent Rochesterians and several business and industry leaders from various parts of the country formed the United States Independent Telephone Company. The company was intended to be an independent holding company, patterned after AT&T. With a widespread network of independent companies, the new organization believed it could chal-

lenge the national dominance of the Bell System. Thomas W. Finucane of Rochester was chosen as president. Among the 26 directors were such famous Rochester names as George Eastman, Edward Bausch, Hiram Sibley, Henry A. Strong and James S. Watson.

The holding company was to acquire controlling interests of the Rochester Telephone Company; the Kinloch Telephone Company of St. Louis, Mo.; the Home Telephone Company of Kansas City, Kansas; the Federal Telephone & Telegraph Company of Buffalo, and others. It bought the Stromberg Carlson Manufacturing Company of Chicago and, by bringing it to Rochester to supply equipment, hoped to match the Western Electric Company, chief supplier of the Bell System.

Its success hinged on the granting of a franchise to the Independent Telephone Company



*Left:* The Four Corners in 1908, when it was ranked the third busiest intersection in the entire country. A traffic count in 1910 showed that in the course of an average work day the corner was traveled by 1,964 autos, 489 one-horse rigs, 82 two-horse rigs, 811 one-horse delivery wagons, 106 two-horse delivery wagons, 732 one-horse heavy wagons, 410 two-horse heavy wagons and 60 heavy trucks.

*Below:* This is the intersection of South Avenue and Gregory Street in 1908, before the telephone wires were placed underground. A crew is shown working at the right. Below, the same intersection two years later, in 1910, with the poles and wires removed.

*Right:* A 1900 installer with his on-the-job tools and equipment.

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### **“It was all hard work”**

Telephone jobs were plentiful in the early 1900's, especially for installers and construction workers. In those early days an installer was easily recognized. He always had a coil of wire slung over his shoulder, as well as tools, gallon jugs, and a heavy telephone. William Culliton, a Rochester Telephone installer in that era, once recalled what he had to carry to complete an installation in 1904:

“A 6-foot wall set; a coil of split knobs; 100 feet of burnt copper wire, to be used as outside ground wire; a 100-foot coil of inside station wire; a glass jug containing battery solution; two one-gallon battery jars; two porous battery cups; two carbons; two pyramid zincs; one bottle of mercury; and, of course, my installer's tools.”

Construction crews had it even more difficult. Tools were crude, and there was only muscle power to erect poles and lines. “It was all work, with plenty of digging,” according to James Maley, a former groundman and lineman, who retired from Rochester Telephone as a construction inspector in 1931.

In those early days, telephone employees were a transient lot, too. Frank Hayes, who retired as a lineman in 1931, once described it this way: “If things didn't go just right, you rolled your tools together and started work for another company. Jobs were plentiful and easy to get and leave.”

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of New York, a subsidiary of the new holding company. It was expected to be routine. The franchise, however, was not granted. Without a New York City connection, and the revenues it could produce to help finance a competing long distance network, the holding company was doomed. Its stock, which in 1906 had sold for \$45 a share, plummeted to \$3 a share 14 months later, and its bonds lost half their value. The company was dissolved in 1907.

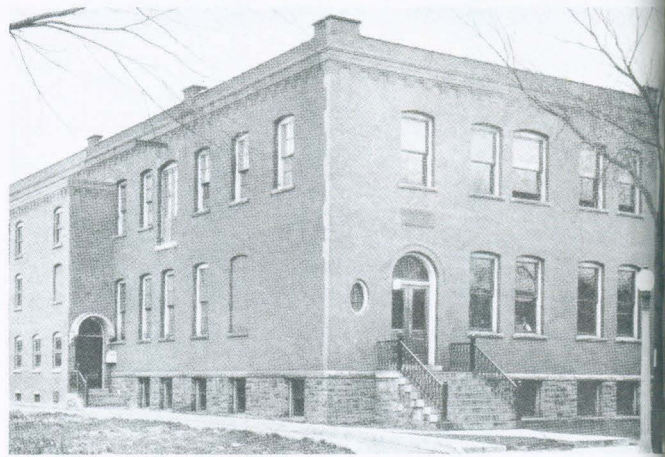
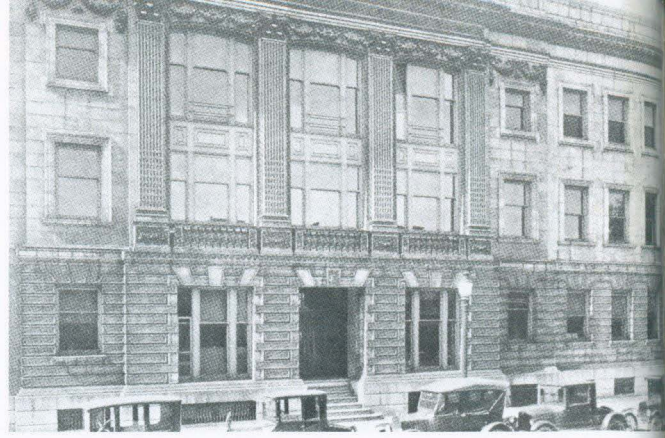
A number of Rochester investors lost money with the demise of the United States Independent Telephone Company. Rochester Telephone, which had been heavily committed, managed to survive the crisis. In 1908, however, the company found it necessary to double the number of shares of common stock (George Eastman was one of the purchasers).

The early 1900's were difficult years for most independent companies. With its enormous resources, Bell could reduce rates and expand service anywhere it faced competition. Financial pressures on independents became fierce; between 1903 and 1906 at least 85 independents failed, because of over-capitalization, low rates and the lack of long distance interconnection.

About this time, several Bell companies operating in New York State, including the Bell Telephone Company of Buffalo, were merged with the New York Telephone Company. In Rochester, competition continued keen between the two companies. Incidents, however, were generally few and minor. While thefts of a rival's manhole covers weren't uncommon, most employees recall relations as amicable.

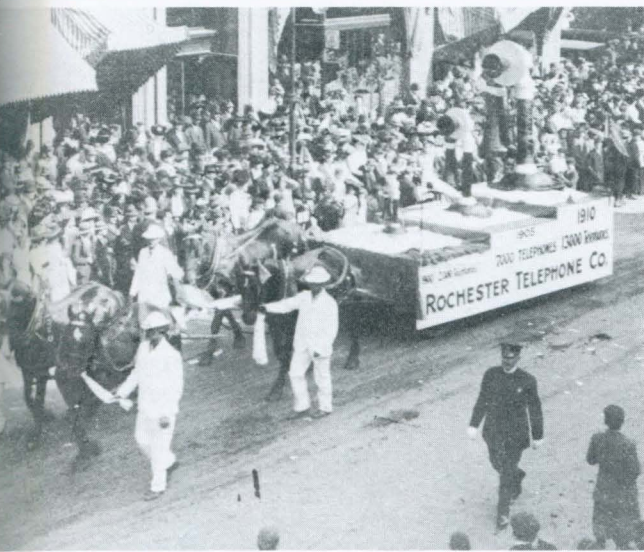
Both companies enjoyed healthy growth. In 1902, two years after occupying its new Fitzhugh Street building, the Bell company opened the Chase exchange on Park Avenue, and four years later the Genesee exchange on Genesee Street. Rochester Telephone, with 13,000 subscribers, in 1911 added the Park central office, at the corner of Vassar Street and Park Avenue, to serve the southeast residential section of the city. In 1915, it opened its Glenwood central office on Broezel Street to meet service demands in the northwest section of the city.

Rochester's population was still multiplying. In the first decade of the century, the number of residents increased 55,541, to 218,149. Between 1910 and 1920, population rose another 77,601, which was to become the largest increase in any decade. New businesses were established. One of these, in 1906, was a company called Haloid, which a half century later would become an industrial giant and make Xerox a household word. Kodak was booming. In 1912, while its



16-story office building was being erected on State Street, 65 acres and several new buildings were added to Kodak Park. That same year the company paid its first employee wage dividend. George Eastman continued as the city's leading philanthropist. He helped finance the development of Durand-Eastman Park and later gave the University of Rochester funds for the Eastman Theater and the Eastman School of Music.

They were years that knew financial panic, recurring smallpox epidemics, floods that brought rowboats into the middle of Front Street, and the disastrous Sibley's fire of 1904, which virtually leveled the north side of Main Street from St. Paul Street to Clinton Avenue. Automobiles became a familiar sight on city streets, and Sunday baseball and moviegoing



*Left row, from top:* The Fitzhugh Street building, from a 1924 photo. It was built and operated by New York Telephone and housed the Main exchange until 1948.

The Genesee Street central office building.

Rochester Telephone's Park central office building, opened in 1911 and abandoned in 1926. About four blocks down the street was New York Telephone's Chase office, which was closed in 1927.

*Center row, from top:* Front Street during the 1913 flood.

Women's suffragette parade of 1914. The marchers all wore white masks and capes and carried signs that listed those states and territories that had already given women the vote.

A Rochester Telephone Company float in a 1910 parade. The numbers on the side chart the growth in the number of telephones served since the company began operations in 1900.

New York Telephone's Main switchboard, in its Fitzhugh Street building, in 1912.

*Above:* The Sibley fire of 1904.



By 1910, many baseball fans were driving cars to games at the Bay Street park.

### When the government ran the phones

By 1912 the United States was the only major nation with privately-owned and provided telephone service and in that era of trust-busting there was frequent talk about a government takeover in this country. However, it wasn't until America's entry into World War I that the question of nationalization was addressed by Congress, largely on the grounds of security. In July, 1918, Congress voted to give the president control of all telephone and telegraph systems in the U.S. and President Wilson later invoked the powers given him, with an effective date of July 31, 1918.

A year later everything went back to private ownership, with the one-year experiment of government ownership generally regarded as a failure. For one thing, the government had found itself unable to operate the telephones without increasing rates. It raised both long distance rates and Bell local exchange rates during the year. In addition, it instituted a service connection charge, something the Bell System had been seeking to initiate for years but which had been blocked by state regulatory agencies as well as by a lack of cooperation among the independent telephone companies. The charge of course remains in effect today, in both the Bell System and independent companies. And, finally, under government operation Bell operations for the year showed a deficit of more than \$13 million, of which by terms of the agreement negotiated between Bell and the government more than \$9 million was made up from the U.S. Treasury.

were made legal. East and West high schools were built, along with the Seneca Hotel, the Temple Theater and the imposing New York Central railroad station on Central Avenue.

As business expanded and the city grew outward, there was increasing opposition to the inconvenience and expense of having two separate telephone companies. To talk to parties on both systems required two telephones in every home and business—one for each system (“Call us—we’re on the Bell” became a familiar slogan). Businessmen had to have Bell phones for long distance and Rochester telephones for complete communications. One local newspaper concluded: “It is a remarkable fact that practically every person questioned on the subject is in favor of a single telephone system in Rochester.”

Both companies were losing money, too, but Bell, with its greater resources, could afford it. Rochester Telephone wasn't as resilient. No dividends were paid on the company's common stock from 1906 on, and its bondholders, by not cashing in interest coupons, contributed at least \$86,000 to keep the company afloat. With its financial position so precarious, the company was unable to raise new capital of any kind. In recalling that period, John P. Boylan, who became the company's general manager in 1921 and later president, said the company “limped along on half rations during the last 15 years of its existence. That it was able to survive and give reasonably good service is one of the outstanding records in telephone history.”

In an effort to end the rivalry, at least two attempts were made to sell Rochester Telephone to Bell. One was led by George Eastman, around 1906. The second came in 1911. Both failed; they were ruled violations of the antitrust laws.

However, public clamor for a unified telephone system was growing louder across the country, which led the Department of Justice to become interested in the Bell System's acquisitions of independent companies and its continuing denial to the independent industry of long distance interconnection. In 1913, a compromise agreement was reached, expressed in a letter written to the Attorney General by N.C. Kingsbury, then vice president of AT&T. Among other things, his letter committed the Bell System not to acquire competing companies without government approval and to provide other

*Above left:* A construction gang of the early 1900's.

*Above right:* This pole, at Monroe Avenue and Pacific Street, was toppled in 1908 by a sleet storm.

*Right:* Rochester Telephone installers in 1903.





telephone companies long distance inter-connection.

Under the terms of the letter, known as the Kingsbury Commitment, many Bell and competing companies were consolidated, with the Department of Justice generally refusing to permit any acquisition of independent companies by the Bell System unless, as part of the same transaction, Bell gave up as many telephones elsewhere as it was acquiring. In New York State, Buffalo, Jamestown and Rochester all had dual telephone systems, with Bell a competitor in each city. Negotiations for the consolidation of these systems began around 1915. In 1917, it

was agreed that Bell would acquire the independent company in Buffalo while in Rochester and Jamestown new corporations would be organized to acquire the properties of both Bell and the independents. In Buffalo, Bell would acquire approximately 32,000 independent telephones, and in Rochester and Jamestown it was to give up about 35,000.

At a special meeting in July, 1918, Rochester Telephone directors authorized the company's officers to execute the merger. Under terms, the price to be paid for the two systems was to be based on an inventory and appraisal as of June 30, 1917, plus or minus adjustments. Rochester



Hundreds line Main Street in 1912 waiting for a parade.

Telephone was to be paid \$1,363,400 and New York (Bell) would receive \$4,206,800. Rochester Telephone properties included Interlake Telephone Company; the Brockport Telephone Company; and the Bergen Telephone Company. The company subsequently purchased the Tuscarora Telephone Company and the Nunda Telephone Company. Properties of the New York Telephone Company included those acquired from the Federal Telephone & Telegraph Company, among which were several ex-

*Right:* East Avenue in 1915, when it was known as Automobile Row. That's the Regent Theater at the center.





*Above:* Liberty Bond rally fills downtown streets in 1918.

*Bottom left:* World War I draftees leaving the Main Street East Armory in 1918. From there they marched to the New York Central railroad on Central Avenue.

*Bottom right:* Armistice Day, 1918. Thousands celebrated by gathering downtown. This photo looks northwest, from Main Street East and East Avenue.



Above: World War I soldiers are welcomed home in Main Street in 1919.

changes in its so-called Rochester District.

What may be the first mention of the name of the newly created company—Rochester Telephone Corporation—appears in minutes of a June, 1919, meeting of the old company's executive committee. Six months later the directors authorized President Fuller and his associates to use that corporate name. In 1921, the merger became official. Rochester Telephone contributed 22,592 stations to the consolidation, to the New York company's 29,827. The Rochester company had 1,000 more telephones in the city than the New York company. In the suburban area, New York Telephone had 8,200 more telephones.

The actual transfer or cutover was made at midnight on Sunday, July 31, 1921. The preparations began in April and continued at an accelerating pace. The Revenue Accounting Department, which was responsible for processing and updating customer records, was expanded from 10 to 80 people and for six months or more had to work nearly every night. It wasn't until the following February that bills could be mailed at their regularly scheduled intervals.

On the morning of August 1, the new corporation was in business with principal offices at 500 Triangle Building, 335 Main Street East. Fuller continued as president of the new corporation—he had headed the old company since 1905—and Fred C. Goodwin as vice president. The 15 directors included four minority repre-

### Four wars, five gold stars...

With the spirit of service so deeply ingrained in telephone people, it's little wonder that hundreds of Rochester Telephone men and women have fought in this nation's four 20th Century wars. Five have given their lives.

In World War I, more than 25 Rochester Telephone Company employees were members of the armed forces, among them Marie Belanger, who went overseas and served as an operator in France. One was killed in action. Alan Eggleston, who was a test deskman when he signed up in April, 1917, just after America entered the war, was killed in France in September, 1918.



American telephone operators in France in 1918. More than 225 served overseas in World War I, including one Rochester Telephone operator.

A generation later, more than 100 telephone men and women served in World War II. Two of them never came home. Clark Bevin was killed in a crash of his Army Air Corps training plane in Arkansas in 1943. The next year Glenn Butler, a troop carrier pilot in the Air Corps, was lost over New Guinea. Both men were memorialized in the name of the company's American Legion contingent, the Butler-Bevin Post.

The Korean War was next, with several World War II veterans called back into service. In all, about 15 Rochester Telephone men served during the conflict.

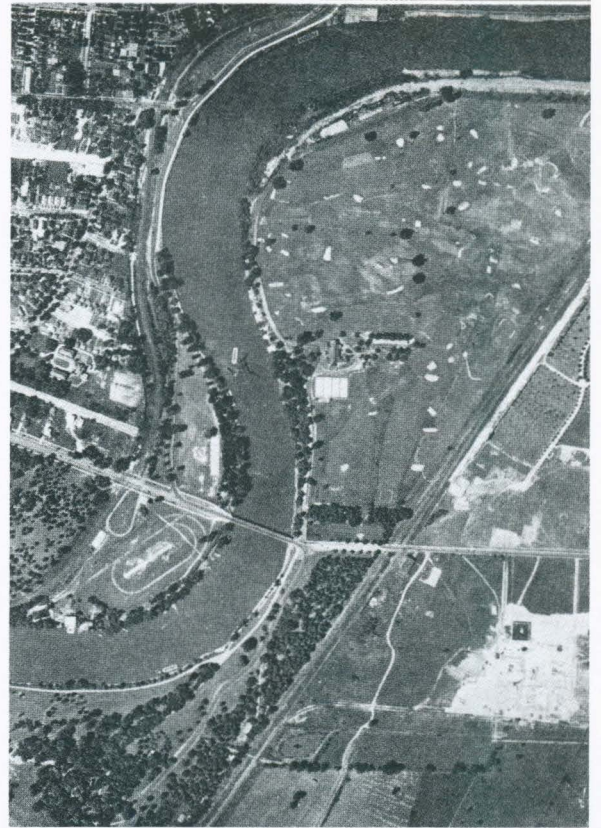
The war in Vietnam claimed the lives of two young telephone men, Michael Brady and Joseph Williams. Both came from telephone families; Mike Brady's father and two brothers worked for the company, and Joe Williams' mother had been an operator. Both were killed in action in 1969.

sentatives of the New York Telephone Company, as a result of the securities received for property turned over to the new corporation, and in keeping with the State Corporation Law.

In Rochester there were six offices: Chase, Genesee, Glenwood, Main, Park and Stone. Besides Rochester, central office districts or exchanges included Atlanta, Avon, Bergen, Brockport, Caledonia, Canandaigua, Castile, Charlotte, Churchville, Cohocton, Dansville, East Rochester, Fairport, Gainesville, Geneseo, Hemlock, Henrietta, Honeoye Falls, Leicester, LeRoy, Lima, Livonia, Manitou, Mt. Morris, Naples, Nunda, Pittsford, Rush, Scottsville, Springwater, Victor, Warsaw, Wayland, Webster and Wyoming.

A 203-page directory, distributed just before the cutover, listed subscribers from AA Taxi at 85 Cortland St. to Arie Zwitter of 20 Eckhardt Pl., and urged users to "look for the new number before calling and thus co-operate with us in our efforts to give the best possible unified service under extraordinary conditions."

The changeover came against a background of continuing development in Rochester. The year 1921 ushered in the boom years. That same year the University of Rochester, in a historic move, decided that the Oak Hill Country Club property on the Genesee River was the ideal place to build a new men's campus, and agreed to exchange its holdings in Pittsford for the Oak Hill property. County real estate values were soaring, up \$58 million over the year before. There was increasing talk about a city subway system. And the telephone, because of mounting prosperity, was coming more and more into general use.



An aerial view of the Oak Hill golf course, now the River Campus, in 1921.

## The Eastman Connection

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# 3

“I offer to buy...the 666 shares of the common stock of the Rochester Telephone Corporation...and to donate such stock to the people of the City of Rochester...”

GEORGE EASTMAN, 1922

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# The Eastman Connection

**T**wo major controversies erupted in Rochester in 1921. The city took title to the old Erie Canal bed for construction of a subway, providing politicians and citizens an issue that was debated for years, even after the subway was abandoned in 1956 and converted into the Eastern Expressway. And the new Rochester Telephone Corporation announced that measured service would replace flat rates on business telephones. Thirty-five years earlier, the Bell System had tried to introduce measured rates and lost, after an unprecedented 18-month subscriber strike. Now the telephone company found the most powerful forces in the community aligned against it. George Eastman, for one, condemned measured service, claiming it would stifle business by restricting the free flow of telephone traffic.

Despite the public opposition, the New York State Public Service Commission approved the change, making only minor adjustments in the rate schedule. The battle had, however, only been joined; it was to rage on for more than two years. The Chamber of Commerce issued a report acknowledging that while it "wants the telephone companies of Rochester to have an income adequate for a proper return on the capital invested and to give a first-class service to all telephone users, adequate compensation is not the issue. The issue is simply and clearly the determination of the new consolidation to impose a measured service upon Rochester. Your committee and officers believe that Rochester does not want a measured service." The *Democrat & Chronicle* interpreted this statement as voicing "the position of the great mass of telephone users in the city."

The new company was pressed on other fronts. Citing old contracts, the City of Rochester filed suit to prevent the company from collecting metered rates. Canandaigua and Bergen both filed complaints with the PSC. Faced with so many objections, the Public Service Commission ordered a rehearing, with more than 500 people attending the first session.

In an effort to speed a decision, in January, 1922, a telephone conference committee of six members was formed to present the views of all sides at the final PSC hearing. The mayor named two union business agents, Frank J. Hartnett and

David Archibald, to represent the city; the Chamber designated Daniel N. Calkins and George Herbert Smith, and the telephone company appointed W. Roy McCanne, a director, and John P. Boylan, its new general manager. The committee held open hearings throughout 1922. At issue were business measured rates of \$4 per month for 80 messages or less, 4½ cents for each of the next 120 calls, 4 cents for each of the next 150, and 3 cents for each call over 350.

A major development came in October. In a letter to members of the "Conference Committee on Rochester Telephone Matters," George Eastman offered to purchase the company's common stock and turn it over to the City of Rochester. He wrote:

"It must be apparent to you as it is to me that the telephone situation in Rochester is unsatisfactory and is likely to remain so unless something can be done to alter the present conditions.

"The Rochester Telephone Corporation was organized in such a way that with certain limitations the voting control of that corporation was vested in three Rochester men, with the object of convincing the people of Rochester that the local corporation was in Rochester hands and not in the hands of the Bell company. However,

## Fact or fiction

Little associated with the telephone rate controversy went unreported by the newspapers, even the most fictitious stories. On August 4, 1921, under a headline of "Metered Service Causes Gambling Among Blondes," the *Democrat and Chronicle* related:

"The manager of a downtown office in Rochester was somewhat shocked yesterday to find that during the noon hour two of his stenographers were shooting craps...

"What's the idea?" he asked. "Where do you think you are, anyway, Monte Carlo?"

"And then the girls sheepishly explained that they were rolling the bones to decide which of the two would have to call up a friend and make a date for the evening.

"You see," one explained, "it means 4½ cents a call."



George Eastman at his desk in 1916.

the three excellent Rochester men selected to have this voting control are not independent of the Bell company. On the contrary, each one of them is under obligations to that company, and this, while the voting stock is in their hands, makes their independent representation of Rochester interests impossible.

"To relieve them of the embarrassment inevitably resulting from this situation and to put the voting control of this stock in the hands of men absolutely independent of Bell interests, I make this proposition:

"I offer to buy of Messrs. Fuller, Goodwin and McCanne the 666 shares of the common stock of the Rochester Telephone Corporation of the par value of \$66,600, and pay them in cash the par value of such stock and donate such stock to the people of the City of Rochester, the title thereto to be vested in three Rochester men in no manner connected with the telephone business to be selected under a plan which is to be developed later on.

"This proposition is made without reflecting in any way upon the present trustees, for whom I have a high personal regard, but with the object of placing control in the hands of those who have not been connected with the Bell Telephone Company..."



George Fuller



Fred C. Goodwin



W. Roy McCanne

The letter was at least the fourth attempt by the industrialist to influence telephone affairs in Rochester. Prior to consolidation, Eastman had tried to direct a sale of the company to Bell. When the measured rate argument came up, he arranged for a study by the Bureau of Municipal Research, which he had founded. And nine months earlier he had tried to obtain the voting stock of Goodwin, one of the three trustees of the majority of the common stock.

Fuller, McCanne and Goodwin formally rejected Eastman's offer, saying that "to accept the offer would involve a gross betrayal of trust." The three noted that New York Telephone owned \$4,814,000 of preferred stock in the cor-

poration, which had originally been valued at \$7 million, and in a reference to that investment asked:

"Can anyone really believe, in these circumstances, that we can, with propriety, sell our small holdings to any third party without the consent, freely given, of the real owners of the corporation viz., the New York Telephone Company and the security holders of the Rochester Telephone Company?"

"Is it possible that any third party can, in any righteous way, for the meager sum of \$66,000, acquire, either for himself or anyone else, the absolute control of a great solvent \$7,000,000 (now more than \$8,000,000) corporation without even consulting its real owner?"

They also cited the report of Eastman's own Bureau of Municipal Research: "It is expressly declared in that report that the meter system is the fairer method of measuring the value of telephone service and that the meter rates now in force do not afford the Corporation a return, based upon the value of its property as fixed by the Public Service Commission for the purpose of capital issues, adequate to its needs." The Bureau's report, they continued, showed that the flat and base rates the Bureau itself had proposed would mean higher charges for more than 70 percent of the small users of telephone services.

A month later, the Telephone Conference Committee held its final meeting. A Chamber-backed resolution that the committee favor a flat rate for business telephones produced a tie vote, which in effect sanctioned the Public Service Commission's earlier approval of measured rates for business customers. However, it was nearly another year before the case was finally closed. The plan's opponents won a moderate reduction in charges, but measured service was introduced. It had taken more than two years to resolve, and in that time business was booming in Rochester.

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### Patience, please

On August 1, 1921, just after the consolidation of the telephone facilities, President Fuller sent a letter to all customers asking their patience and cooperation. Although the measured service controversy still was the foremost issue, Fuller's letter dealt only with the problems arising from the consolidation.

"The physical consolidation of the two telephone systems in Rochester is an undertaking of such magnitude, attended with such an enormous amount of detail, that it is beyond human power to complete the work without errors and mechanical faults which will temporarily affect the service.

"The Consolidated List of subscribers, with which you have been supplied, may contain some mistakes and some names may have been inadvertently omitted. For a time the operating mechanism will develop faults which will have to be remedied and these will be taken care of as promptly as possible. Until our operators become accustomed to the new conditions, they will be under a strain that will test their endurance to the utmost..."

However, public acceptance was somewhat cool. One newspaper claimed that the directory had been "hastily compiled" and advised subscribers to hold on to their old books because of errors in the new consolidated one. Another newspaper complained that the directory lacked a hole through which a piece of string could be slipped to hang up the book, a common practice in those days.

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# 4

## The Boom Years

In America, the 1920's are still described as a golden age, when life was a lark and to be young and daring became a national rage. It was an age of idols, of Babe Ruth and Jack Dempsey, of Rudolph Valentino and Clara Bow, of Charles Lindbergh. It was also an age of excess, in amusement, in scandals, in movie-going, in drinking.

The nation's industrial production and national income soared upwards. Refrigerators, washing machines and other labor-saving home appliances meant less work for the housewife. The telephone, the radio, movies and tabloid newspapers brought the outside world right into the middle of Main Street.

The automobile introduced a new sense of freedom. By 1930, there were more than 26 million cars rattling over American highways, three times as many as were registered in 1920. This revolution on wheels expanded the nation's geographical horizons, drawing city and country together by a spreading network of hard-surfaced roads. New factories and suburbs flourished where a few years before there had been farms or even wilderness.

For many Americans, the Twenties were indeed a golden age, a wonderland. But beneath the surface there was a growing alienation of the poor. By 1929, the average production worker was making only 5 cents an hour more than he had in 1921; six out of every ten families were earning less than \$2,000 a year, barely enough for the necessities of life. Within the year additional millions of Americans were to know the grinding despair of poverty as the dream of boundless prosperity faded into the nightmare of the Great Depression.

“The parties were bigger, the pace was faster, the shows were broader, the buildings were higher, the morals were lower, and the liquor was cheaper.”

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

“The chief business of the American people is business.”

PRESIDENT CALVIN COOLIDGE, 1925

“The American system of ours, call it Americanism, call it capitalism, call it what you like, gives each and every one of us a great opportunity if we only seize it with both hands and make the most of it.”

AL. CAPONE

# The Boom Years

In many respects, the 1920's were one of the most remarkable periods in the history of both the United States and Rochester. Until the market crash at its end, the decade produced an almost unbounded prosperity and the new Rochester Telephone Corporation grew at a phenomenal rate. In the first five months of its existence, it added nearly 400 telephones a month—at a time when measured service for business was being hotly contested—and spent over half a million dollars on additions to its plant.

At the end of 1921, the corporation could count 54,346 telephones; 38 central office districts; seven buildings; a fleet of 56 cars and trucks; 1,200 employees; and a plant investment of more than \$6 million. The average wage of its employees was slightly more than \$25 a week. Operators, who had been receiving a dollar a day only a few years earlier, were now starting at \$12 a week, with promises of regular increases and an opportunity to earn as much as \$95 a month.

## A minute of silence

In August, 1922, Alexander Graham Bell died at the age of 75 in his Nova Scotia summer home. During his funeral service, on August 4, all telephones served by the Bell System were silent for one minute. At his request, the epitaph on his grave reads: "Born in Edinburgh...died a citizen of the U.S.A."

The telephone was no longer just another novelty. In 1922, the company added 4,366 telephones, and nearly 6,000 in 1923. A good share of the gains were due to employee efforts. A drive for 500 new subscribers conducted in January, 1923, achieved 107 percent of quota. Telephone "training" also helped. At a 1923

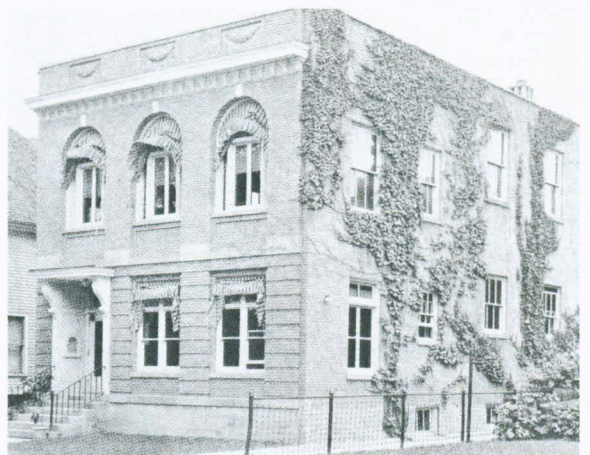
Rotary Club meeting, 500 businessmen watched a demonstration of how *not* to use a telephone. The demonstration was repeated the next two nights at Corinthian Hall, with more than 11,000 persons applying for tickets. Various civic, social and church groups requested similar demonstrations. Sibley's devoted a Main Street window to a telephone display, the theme stressing all the things that are "as near as your telephone."

During its first three years, the corporation spent more than \$3.5 million in expanding its plant. Much of the investment went to replace open wire—that is, pairs of wires—with underground and aerial cable. The change to cable wasn't always a simple matter of substitution. It involved a new layout of exchange districts to allow completing more calls within one exchange and reducing the number of calls that required the services of more than one operator to complete. As one example, 1,100 lines were moved from the Main exchange to the Glenwood exchange. Before the change, only 14 of every 100 calls originating in the Glenwood exchange were completed within that exchange; after the change, the count was 48 calls out of every 100.

Also in 1923, the company added to the Char-



Alexander Graham Bell

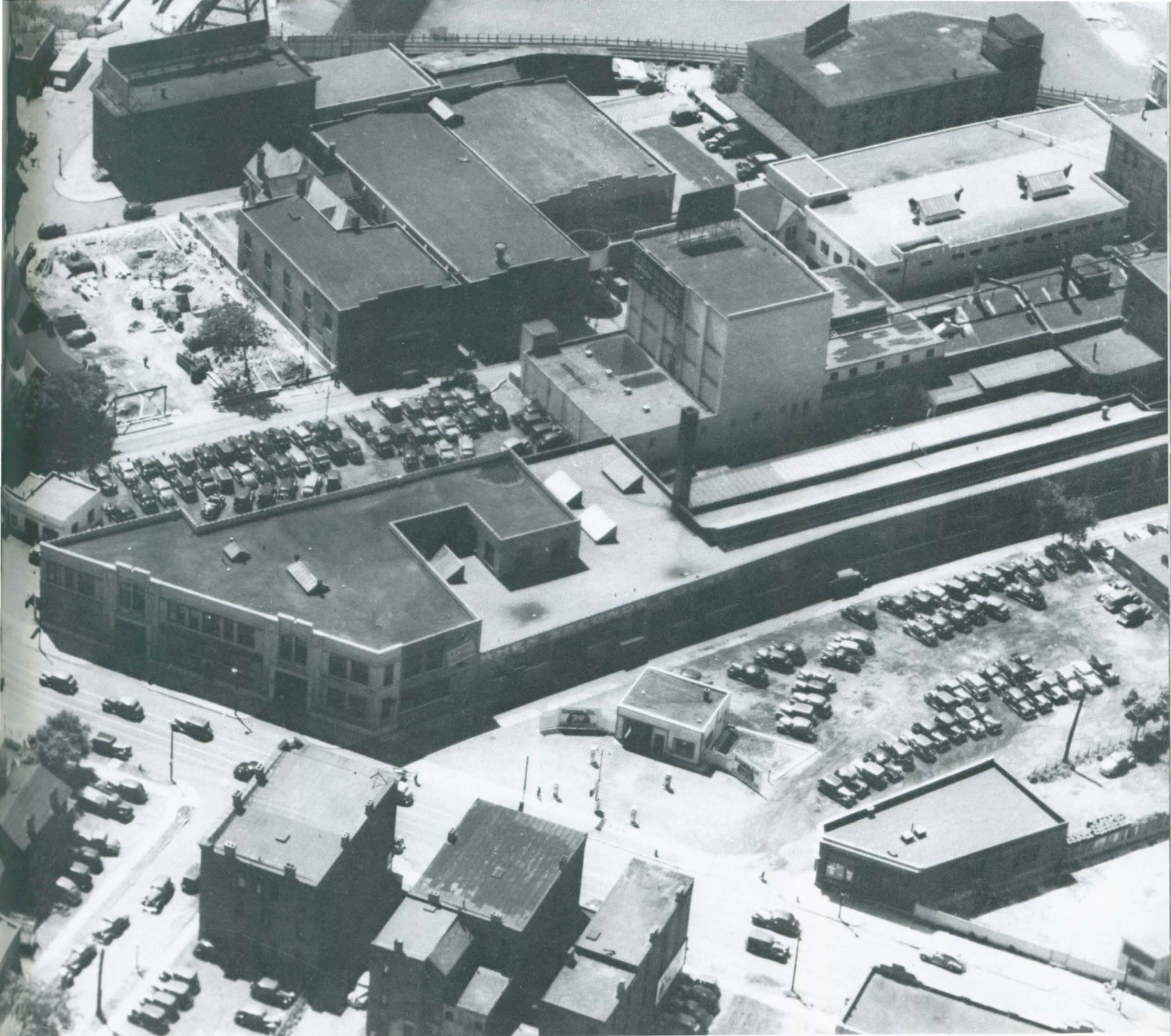


*Right above:* The Glenwood central office building in 1923.

*Below:* The Culver central office building in 1925.

*Opposite page:* An aerial view of the company's garage on St. Paul St. as it appeared in the late 1930's. It was opened in 1924. At the top is the Genesee River, with the Platt Street bridge at the far left corner.





lotte switchboard and changed that office from a toll to a Rochester city exchange; it completed an addition to the Genesee building; it added to the Glenwood building, including the installation of 29 new switchboard positions; at the Main exchange, it added 33 new switchboard positions. And it crossed the Genesee River gorge north of Driving Park Bridge with a structure designed to carry three 900-pair cables.

The next year the company completed a building at 445 St. Paul Street to house the Plant Department, storeroom, shop and garage. Until then, company vehicles had been located at various rented quarters throughout the city. The major project for that year was construction of the new Culver office to serve the area north of the New York Central Railroad and east of

North Goodman Street. It opened the following year. After later use as both an engineering and training center, the building, on Hurstbourne Road just east of Culver Road, was demolished in 1978.

A major engineering-economy study conducted in the mid-1920's was to have a significant long-range effect on telephone service in the Rochester area. Together with Stromberg-Carlson, the telephone company's engineers studied the cost benefits of whether to continue on a manual switching basis or to begin to convert to dial central office equipment. From an economic standpoint, the study convinced the company to stay with the manual operation. It was a decision that was to haunt the company 20 years later.



*Top row:* The 1925 baseball team.

*Center row, left to right:* The line, installation and repair force based at Geneseo in 1925.

The two splicers climbing high are Sam Harris, on top, and Myles Tierney.

Durand-Eastman Park Beach was one of Rochester's most popular summer spots in the 1920's.

*Bottom row, left to right:* The Canandaigua public office in 1923.

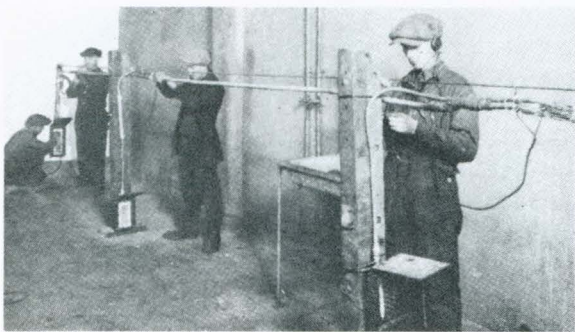
Some of the horses, drays and men—the company then called them hustlers—that delivered the 1923 telephone directories. Behind them is the statue of Frederick Douglass which stood at St. Paul Street and Central Avenue for more than 40 years before it was moved to Highland Park in 1941.

Across the country telephone companies were beginning to convert to dial systems in the 1920's. Although the initial investment was heavy, there was substantial labor savings to be realized, as well as improved customer service. While the company introduced small community dial offices outside Monroe County in the 1930's, Rochester itself remained totally manual until 1948, when the first dial system was initiated in downtown Rochester. It was 1966 before the territory was fully converted.

The delay was largely due to the timing of the company's decision to remain manual. In the 1930's, when the company might well have begun to convert under normal circumstances, it was unable to raise the necessary capital. Its Depression construction budgets were bone thin, its work force reduced. World War II then intervened and telephone equipment of any kind was virtually impossible to acquire. After the war, when the company was finally in a position to plan a dial network, all switching equipment was in short supply.

During the 1920's the company's manual systems were improved and expanded regularly. While the new circuits were more costly than the type replaced, the additional cost was justified by the increase in operator productivity.

Like 1923, the year 1924 also was marked by extensive cable installation, which led the company to organize a cable splicing school and turn out about 30 trained splicers to augment the regular force. Of the 219,000 miles of wire in service at the end of that year, 161,000 miles, or



Students in the first cable splicing class.

73 per cent, was in underground cables and 30,000 miles in overhead or aerial cable. The total value of plant in service reached nearly \$10 million.

Not all the work was done in the city. In 1925, for example, the company overhauled 60 miles of toll lines, rebuilt and rearranged 75 miles of rural pole lines, and installed modern cable systems in the communities of Mt. Morris, Geneseo, LeRoy, Bergen and Livonia.

Meanwhile, telephones across the country

### Victory wasn't everything

In 1925, the company fielded its first baseball team since 1910. Although the season itself was a mixed success, the team's enthusiasm was high. In reporting one loss in the Rochester Telephone *Bulletin*, the team correspondent went on to say, "...but what is a defeat in our young lives? Even the Washington Senators, world champions, get beat once in a while." Washington of course never again won a World Series, but while softball has replaced hardball in industrial leagues, Rochester Telephone teams are still represented.

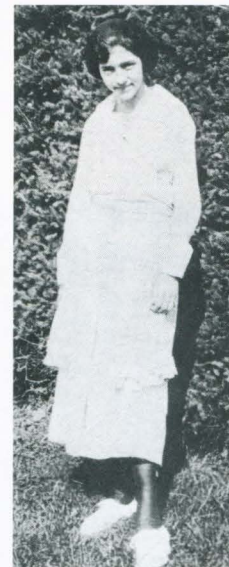
### For exceptional service, a Vail Medal

Rochester Telephone's only Vail Medal winner was Clara Griffin, an operator who was employed by the New York Telephone Company in Geneseo when she was cited. With the consolidation in 1921, she became a Rochester Telephone employee.

Vail Medal awards were created by the Bell System in 1920 to recognize outstanding actions and services by telephone employees. The medals were named as a memorial to Theodore N. Vail, a former president of AT&T and the man largely responsible for its development into a huge nationwide system.

Miss Griffin was on duty in the Geneseo office the night of May 13, 1921 when the Livingston County sheriff received a call from Hornell police asking him to be on the alert for two young "highwaymen"—as they were called by the newspapers of that day—who had beaten and robbed a taxi driver and stolen his car. The sheriff asked Miss Griffin to call the village night watchman. Before she could even place the call, she saw a car matching the description of the stolen taxi on Geneseo's Main Street and quickly notified the authorities. The men were arrested and later convicted.

The medal was presented to Miss Griffin December 27, 1922 at the Rex Theater in Geneseo before an admiring audience of friends, relatives and fellow employees. In making the presentation, George Fuller, president of Rochester Telephone, said her action "typified the exceptional service that distinguishes telephone operators from workers in other walks of life."



Clara Griffin

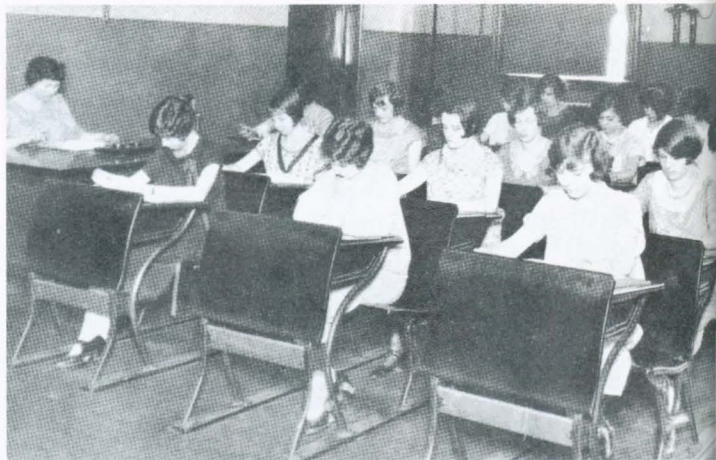
were multiplying at a faster rate than the population. For every 100 telephones at the turn of the century, there were 1,194 a quarter of a century later. At the beginning of 1924, there were 24.5 million telephones in the world. Of these, 15.3 million, or 63 per cent, were in the United States, which, with only 6 per cent of the world's population, had one telephone for every seven of its people compared with one for every 185 persons in the rest of the world.

On October 1, 1925, nearly two years after the second transcontinental telephone line was opened, a long distance telephone cable was put in service between New York and Chicago at a cost of \$25 million. The following March, exactly 50 years to the day the first telephone patent was granted to Alexander Graham Bell, the first public test of two-way trans-Atlantic calling between this country and England was demonstrated in New York City. Only seconds before 11 a.m., the New Yorkers heard: "Stand by, New York. Before putting on the next speaker, we're going to open the windows and see if you can hear the chimes of St. Paul's." Then came the

sound of four bells rung in succession, for 4 p.m. in London. The 3,500-mile service was formally opened to the public January 7, 1927. Ten days later, the third transcontinental telephone line was opened. And the following April, by means of wire and radio, came the first public demonstration by Bell System engineers of something called television.

In May, 1927, President George R. Fuller died. For 22 years, he had been president of Rochester Telephone, first of the struggling company, then of the consolidated corporation. Rochester Telephone directors noted that "he, more than any other, was responsible for the success of the old Rochester Telephone Company and for the organization and success of the present corporation."

Fuller was succeeded as president by John P. Boylan, vice president and general manager. Boylan had come to Rochester in 1921 with 29 years of experience in the independent telephone field. He began as a \$1 a day timekeeper for the Cleveland Telephone Company in 1892. Fred C. Goodwin was named chairman of the



board, and William J. O'Hea succeeded Thomas J. Hargrave as secretary. Hargrave resigned to devote full time to his law practice, and later joined Eastman Kodak Company as general counsel, rising to become its president and later chairman for 20 years.

In 1927 the company added 5,712 telephones and acquired another 318 through purchase of a connecting company. That brought the total in service to more than 90,000. Of that number, about 80 per cent were served from Rochester central offices. The territory outside the city was



John P. Boylan



T. J. Hargrave

### The spirit of service in the 1920's

The heroics of telephone operators helped call attention to the value of having a telephone. At about 11:30 p.m. on March 8, 1923, an operator named Miss Tierney answered a call from Chase 1328. She couldn't understand what the calling party was saying, but thought she heard the word "fireman."

The caller hung up and the operator referred the call to the night chief operator, a Mrs. Condron. She began calling each subscriber on that line. As she finished with the "M" party, the original caller came back on the line, speaking excitedly and in a foreign language. Neither was able to understand the other, except when the caller said "Una Street," which the operator interpreted as "First Street." She immediately called Information to ask on what street Chase 1328 was located. Told the "J" party was at 140 First Street, Mrs. Condron notified firemen who found the house filled with smoke and part of the first floor in flames. A man and his wife, suffering from smoke inhalation, were led to safety. The telephone operators were lauded by press and public.

In 1925, in Leicester, Livingston County, there was another illustration of this dedication to service. There the switchboard was located in the home of L. M. Strobel, the company's agent in the community. The Strobels' son, Noel, 14, came down with scarlet fever and the house was quarantined. Other members of the family were sent to stay with relatives, except Mrs. Strobel, who remained behind to nurse her son—and man the switchboard. Finally, she herself was stricken, but by that time Noel was back on his feet and he took his mother's place at the switchboard to maintain service.



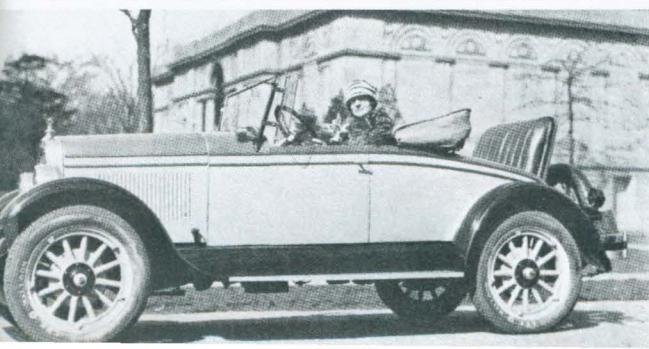
*Left row:* The installer who put in the 1,000th telephone in LeRoy in 1926, C. W. Sanderson, poses outside the customer's door.

*Center row, from top:* A training class for operators at the Fitzhugh Street building in 1927. The course lasted about three weeks.

This is B. Forman, the Rochester merchant who made the first trans-Atlantic call, from Rochester to London, in 1927. The 3-minute call cost him \$75.

*Right row, from top:* Information operators in 1925. The office, now known as Directory Assistance, is still located at Fitzhugh Street.

Lucy Sheridan, secretary to three company presidents and Bell's first stenographer in Rochester, at the wheel of the 1927 Chandler automobile she won for bringing in the most new members in an Automobile Club membership contest.



increasing in population less slowly. Two decades later, of course, this situation was to change dramatically. But then, and for some years to come, Rochester was the primary market, with a population of more than 300,000.

As in other areas of the nation, the Twenties were years of accomplishment in Rochester. The Eastman Theater and the Eastman School of Music were opened. Strong Memorial Hospital, the Lincoln Alliance Bank building, the Genesee Valley Union Trust building, the Rochester Theater, the Baptist Temple, were all built. The city's subway began operations and the first traffic signals were installed. In 1919, the Erie Canal aqueduct carried its last canal boat over the Genesee River, and the Broad Street bridge was constructed on top of it. The first Monroe County park, Ellison Park, was dedicated in the Twenties. You could buy a complete meal at the Richford Hotel for just 35 cents, a fine men's suit for under \$20. Six-room houses were selling for \$4,000 and new Model T Fords for \$300. And the fashion industry became the city's second largest employer, behind Eastman Kodak.

The company's progress reflected the times. In 1926, its revenues exceeded \$4 million for the first time and gross construction spending reached a new high of over \$2.5 million. The next year the 1,000th telephone was installed at Kodak Park and the Pavilion Telephone Company was purchased.

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### Working on the subway

Construction of the subway required Rochester Telephone to move nearly all aerial and underground lines that crossed the old Erie Canal bed. Much of its conduit had to be replaced, too. The Engineering Department complained that much of the work consists "of taking down and replacing perfectly good plant. In other words, for this expenditure we will have nothing to show that we did not have before."

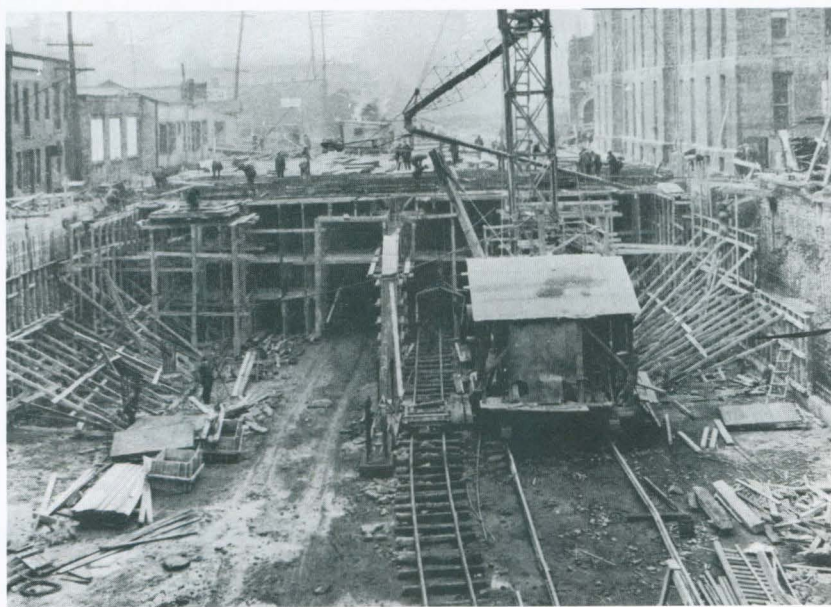
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*Right:* The Erie Canal aqueduct over the Genesee River in 1921, a year after it was closed and the canal diverted farther south. *Below:* The Broad Street bridge, which was built over it, shortly before it was opened to through traffic in 1925.

*Far right, from top:* The subway under construction near the Broad Street bridge in 1925. *Below:* Another view of the subway project.

Eastman Theater in the early 1920's.







The highlight of those two years was the completion of the Monroe Central Office, at Field and Henrietta streets, which is still in use today as a central office building and service bureau. Monroe served the entire southeastern section of the city (an enormous area, it was bordered on the north by the New York Central main line tracks; on the south and east by the towns of East Rochester, Pittsford and Henrietta; and on the west by the Genesee River and Alexander Street).

The transfer to the new Monroe exchange was accomplished in two phases: First, on November 1, 1926, the Park Avenue office was cut over, and two months later, on January 11, 1927, the Chase office. With the transfer, the Park office, at Park Avenue and Vassar Street, and the Chase building, at Park and South Goodman Street, were both abandoned.

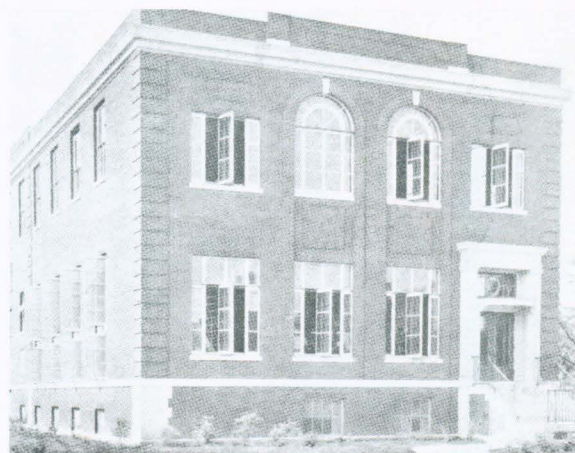
If 1927 was an excellent year, the next year was exceptional. Nearly 8,000 telephones were

*Above:* More than 400 employees honored Milton S. Baxter, chief clerk in the Plant Department, in 1929 on his 50th anniversary in the telephone business. The dinner was held at the Columbus Building.

*Right:* The Monroe central office building at Field and Henrietta streets in 1927.

added, the largest gain ever, stimulated by what the company called "a more aggressive business-getting policy," which included newspaper and radio advertising campaigns. Operating revenues increased to \$4.82 million, and earnings available for interest and dividends topped a million dollars for the first time. The average number of calls handled daily reached 436,000, up from 264,000 just six years earlier.

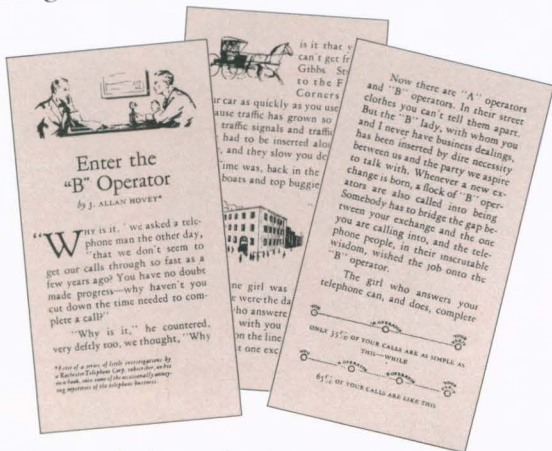
Rochester Telephone enjoyed another good year in 1929. In February, it reached the 100,000-telephone goal it had set for itself years earlier.





### “A series of little investigations...”

1927 was the year the company began enclosing inserts with its bills. Written by J. Allen Hovey, a local advertising copywriter, the folders were described as “a series of little investigations into some of the occasionally annoying mysteries of the telephone business.” That same year the company also began advertising on radio.



Rochester Telephone's first bill insert.

### The selling of the telephone

During the 1920's company employees were periodically enlisted to help sell telephones, with generally outstanding results. Speaking of a 1923 canvass, which went well over its goal, Frank T. Byrne, the commercial superintendent, said:

“When we consider weather conditions, the result is all the more wonderful. We know of cases where girls in our Traffic Department who, in attempting to reach a prospective applicant, had to drive over roads which were almost impassable, and in some cases were dumped into the snow banks. But they got the applications!”

A 1928 drive was even more successful, far exceeding the company's forecasts. A total of 1,622 new subscribers were signed up, or one for every employee on the payroll. Translated into telephones, the employees brought in more than 4,100 phones. The individual champion, with 54 signed applications, was Arthur S. Gibson, then an accountant and later a vice president-finance.



Arthur Gibson

With about 81.5 per cent of its 105,107 telephones in the city, the company noted: "The increase in density of telephone development in Rochester since this Corporation began its operations has been truly remarkable, the number of telephones per 100 of population having increased from 12.4 at the end of 1921, to 21.7 at the end of 1929, an increase of 75 per cent. This is an outstanding performance, and it is doubtful if any parallel can be found among cities comparable with Rochester."

1929 also was the year in which Milton S. Baxter, chief clerk to the plant supervisor, became the first employee to complete 50 years of telephone service. He had begun in 1879 with the Rochester Telephonic Exchange.

Near the year's end, in a radio address on the Lincoln-Alliance Bank & Trust Company hour over station WHAM, President Boylan said:

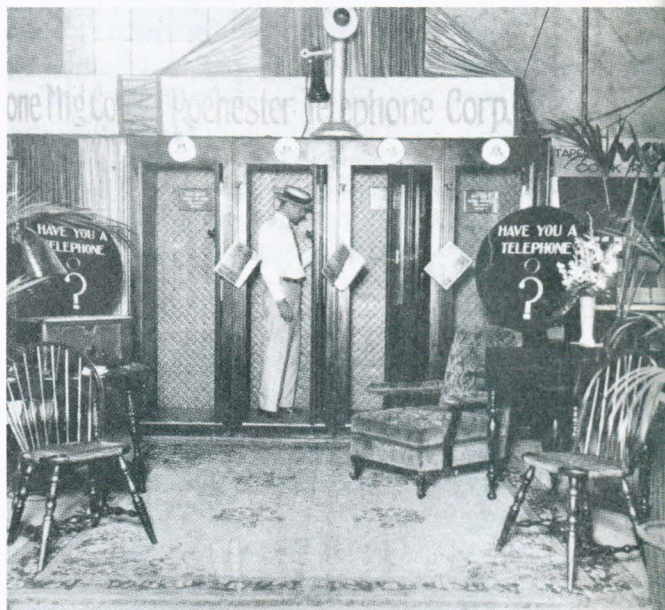
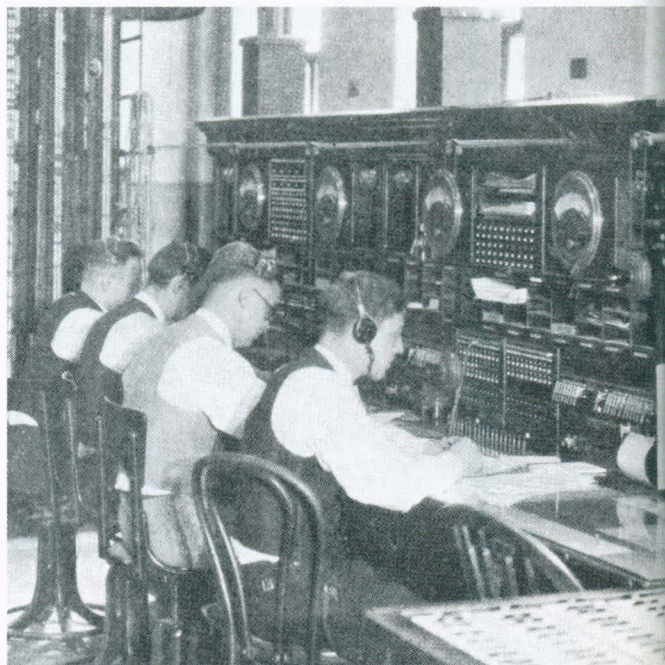
"...By the simple giving of directions to your telephone operator you can presently be connected to a telephone user in Czecho-Slovakia, in Spain or in South America, almost as readily as you can be connected with your neighbor, or with your friend on the other side of the city, or with someone elsewhere in the United States. This quiet, unobtrusive instrument, which a child could easily carry, has literally made a neighborhood of the civilized world, and placed almost everyone in it in the position of being able to talk to anyone else..."

"...Today a message can be carried half-way round the world, and the reply to it received, in a fraction of a second so small that only scientists can measure it.

"In Rochester and its vicinity...telephones carry as many as 400,000 messages every business day, and as many as 40,000 in a single hour..."

"The company's annual payroll of more than \$2,600,000, which represents about half of its revenues, is paid mostly to employees resident in Rochester. In 1929 it paid in taxes \$323,000 and is thus one of the community's largest taxpayers. In addition to its wage payments to its employees, it has consistently been the customer of Rochester manufacturers and suppliers and has, so far as it has been possible to do so, purchased its equipment and supplies locally. In the past nine years it has paid almost \$3,800,000 to the Stromberg-Carlson Tel. Mfg. Co. alone, for switchboards, telephone instruments and miscellaneous supplies..."

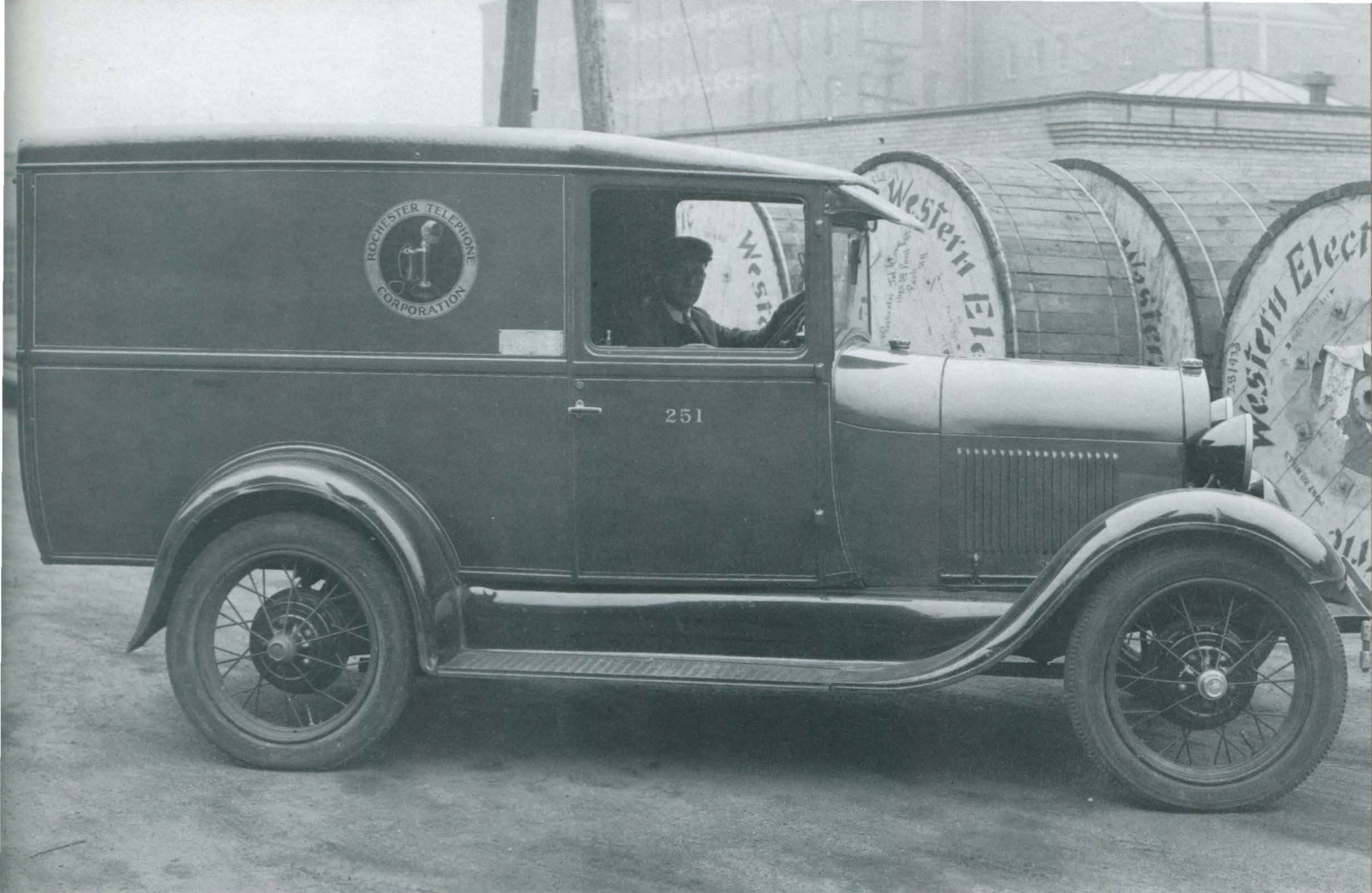
Good times, happy times. But six weeks earlier, on October 29, the stock market had crashed, signaling the beginnings of America's worst depression. The boom years had turned to bust.



Above, from top: Poles are loaded on a line truck at the St. Paul St. garage in 1929.

The Main test board in 1928.

The company's booth at the 1929 Rochester Exposition.



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### The first milestone

The company's 100,000th telephone was a desk set, installed in the home of Mr. and Mrs. William J. Lewis at 115 Inglewood Drive. Installers Charles Purdy and Carl Smith put in the set, but it was R. M. Bruce, plant superintendent, who supervised the installation and okayed the order to the Genesee Street central office.

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*Above:* This truck, based in the St. Paul Street garage, was used to deliver installation orders.

*Left:* The installation department in the 1920's and, above them, their bosses.



East Avenue in 1926.

## Hard Times

While the stock market crash of 1929 triggered the Depression of the Thirties, it took time for the shock to set in and paralyze the American economy. The long decline actually began in 1930. By 1932, American industry was turning out less than half its output in 1929 and paying 60 percent less in wages. There were few profits and fewer dividends; in 1932 American business lost \$5 billion. More than a quarter of the labor force, between 13 and 15 million people, were out of work, with two million of them roaming the country as transients in search of a job and hope.

People survived. They bought fewer houses or washing machines or new clothes. They drove their old cars farther and harder; the number of auto repair shops doubled during the Thirties. They enjoyed homelier pursuits—jigsaw puzzles, contract bridge, miniature golf, Monopoly, listening to the radio. With its tremendously varied and free entertainment, the radio was a wonderful investment in the Depression. By 1940, there were radios in 30 million homes, turned on for an average of 4½ hours a day. When families did go out, they most likely went to the movies for escape. In the mid-Thirties, the nation's 15,000

theaters drew as many as 85 million moviegoers a week, luring them inside with double and triple features, free china and bank nights.

The Thirties had its idols and heroes, too. Besides a galaxy of stars of the screen and radio, there were Joe Louis, Dizzy Dean, Babe Didrickson, and J. Edgar Hoover and his G-men. The criminals Hoover and his FBI agents chased, and shot, became household names—John Dillinger, Bonnie and Clyde, Ma Barker, Pretty Boy Floyd. They were years of discovery, too—sulfa drugs, the artificial lung, frozen foods, nylon. Labor invented the sit-down strike and organized the auto and steel industries. FDR's New Deal created a succession of agencies and reforms, including Social Security and unemployment insurance, as well as monumental structures like the Hoover and Grand Coulee dams.

By 1939, the worst was over—more people were working and wages were higher. And a new national character had been forged. Despite their troubles, the people had triumphed over loss and disappointment, suffering and heartache. Ahead lay the still greater tragedies of war, but for a few brief years life, as depicted by the New York World's Fair of 1939-40, seemed far more promising.

# 5

**“We are the first nation in the history of the world to go to the poor house in an automobile.”**

WILL ROGERS, 1930

**“I pledge you, I pledge myself, to a new deal for the American people.”**

PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT, 1932

*“They used to tell me I was building a dream,  
And so I followed the mob  
When there was earth to plough  
or guns to bear,  
I was always right there on the job.  
Once I built a railroad, made it run,  
Made it race against time.  
Once I built a railroad, now it's done,  
Brother, can you spare a dime?”*

“BROTHER, CAN YOU SPARE A DIME?”  
MUSIC AND LYRICS BY E.Y. HARBURG AND JAY GORMEY  
COPYRIGHT, 1932, HARMS, INC.

**“The Sudetenland is the last territorial claim I have to make in Europe.”**

ADOLPH HITLER, 1938

# Hard Times

**T**he Weather Bureau called it “the most disastrous storm of its kind ever experienced in Rochester.” On December 7, 1929, a rain and sleet storm brought down trees, telephone poles and lines. More than 2,500 telephones were knocked out of service. The temperature plunged, adding to the burdens of repair crews.

Ten days later another, worse storm struck. It began as freezing rain in the morning of the 17th and continued throughout the day. By evening, large tree limbs had begun crashing into streets. More freezing rain the next day increased the sheath of ice on exposed surfaces. The Weather Bureau reported: “Shrubbery was lying flat on the ground and the entire tops of many trees were broken off and touching the ground, so that on many streets the scene was one of utter destruction. Traffic conditions were the worst in memory, and some streets were almost inaccessible. The greatest monetary loss was suffered by the telephone and power companies.”

Indeed, the cost to the telephone company approached a million dollars for the two storms. It was, in the words of Robert Bruce, plant superintendent, “the worst blow local service has ever been dealt.” While emergency crews labored to restore service, high winds continued to bring down poles and wires until Christmas Day. Scores of communities across the state were cut off from communication with the outside world. Nearly all of the 36 towns in Rochester Telephone’s territory were out of reach by telephone.

The storm knocked out more than 9,000 telephones, 2,000 in the city but better than one of every three outside the city. It took nearly two months to put things right. By setting as many as 100 poles a day, repair crews restored service to all customers by February 15. The company threw as many as 600 of its own men into the effort; 150 others were sent into the area by other telephone companies; and another 100 men were hired as unskilled laborers. The undertaking required an enormous amount of materials: nearly 5,000 poles; 8,100 crossarms; and enough cable and wire to fill 99 freight cars.

A month later, disaster struck again. Fire leveled a block of buildings in Livonia, destroying the local telephone office. Again, men and

equipment were pressed into service around the clock. In less than 30 hours, all 608 telephones were back in service. The *Livonia Gazette* marveled at the accomplishment: “In this fast moving age, when everyone has come to rely upon the telephone as an absolute necessity, such a record of reconstruction brings home the magnificent service the telephone company is rendering...”

However, something that couldn’t be corrected by repair crews was happening to the nation. The Depression. Its steady inroads are reflected in the first sentences of three successive annual reports of the telephone company:

## 1930

“The results of the Corporation’s operations ... which are given in this report, are those of quite a satisfactory year, although they suffer a comparison with the two immediately preceding years (1928 and 1929), both of which were outstanding years.”



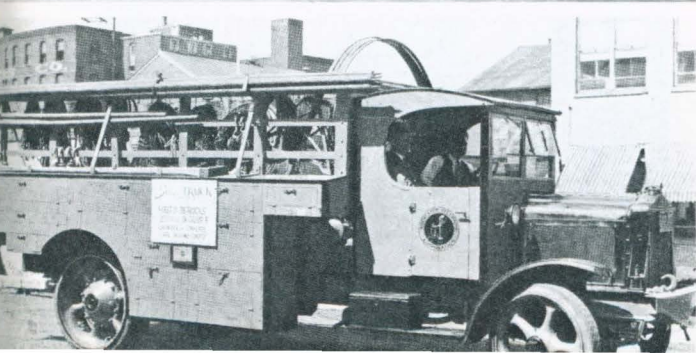
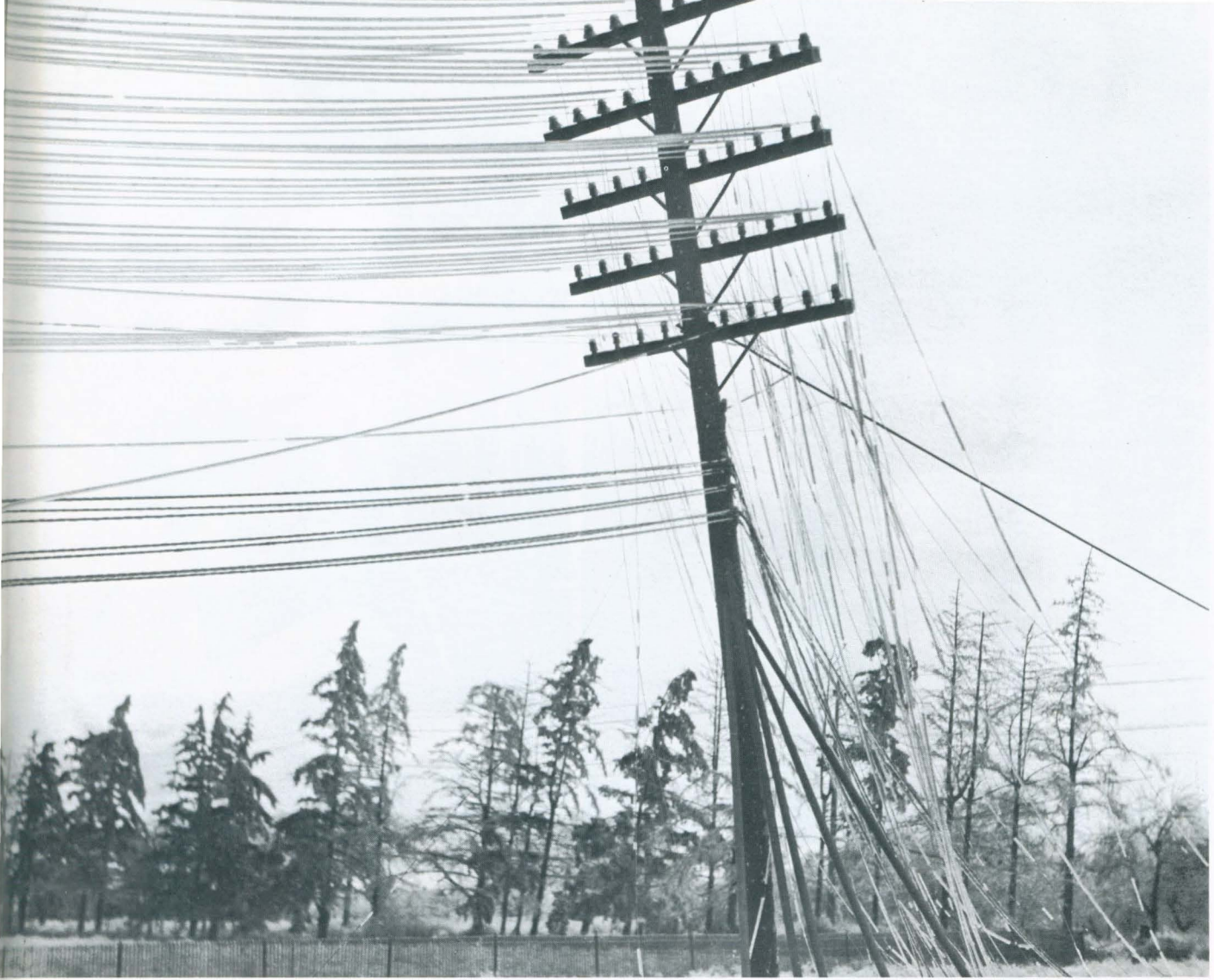
*Above:* The Fairport central office building shortly after it was opened in 1930.

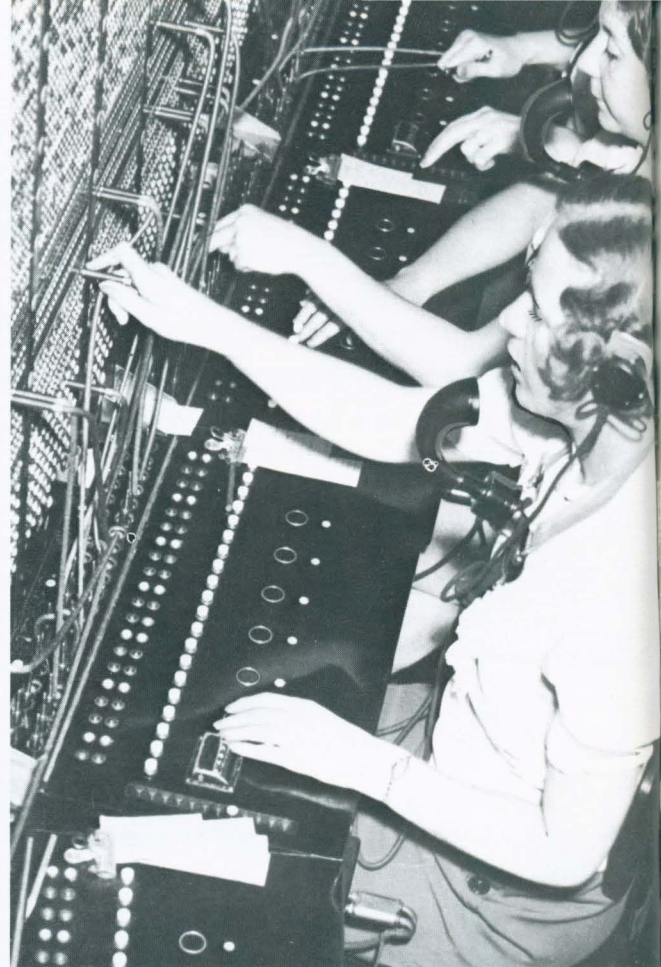
*Opposite page, top:* The sleet storm of 1929 left poles and lines sagging all over the territory.

*Center left:* The Livonia central office after it was destroyed by fire in March, 1930. Less than two days later service was restored.

*Below left:* This truck represented Rochester Telephone’s fleet in a 1930 safe drivers’ parade.

*Below right:* The intersection of East Avenue and Union Street in 1930. The flags tied to the ladder were a new idea, designed to give motorists advance warning of the barricade around the manhole.





### 1931

"The results of the Corporation's operations ... which are given in this report, are those of a satisfactory year."

### 1932

"The results of the Corporation's operations ... are given in this report."

In 1932, operating revenues fell short of the preceding year's. Earnings failed to provide the full dividends on the company's capital stock.

Another barometer of corporate health that fell during those years was the number of telephones in service. After reaching the 100,000 mark in 1929 with a net increase of 6,776 telephones, the company registered a gain of only

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### A matter of courtesy

Some polite phrases were restored for operators in 1936. Up until 1927, calls were answered with the words "Number, please" and, after the customer had given the number, "Thank you." These phrases were dropped that year in the interests of saving time in completing calls. But company officials later decided the savings in time were less important than courtesy and brought them back.

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3,479 in 1930, the smallest since its incorporation. A record high of 110,823 telephones was reached in 1931, due largely to the acquisition of the Perry Telephone Company. Not until 1940 would that highwater mark be surpassed.

Another index of those troubled Depression years was the average number of calls handled each day. Traffic had reached its peak in 1929, with an estimated 371,000 calls logged on an average business day. Calls then declined each year until leveling off in 1934. However, it wasn't until 1940 that that 1929 high was eclipsed.

Although the telephone had become enormously popular in the 1920's, it was still regarded by many as a luxury. As people sought to cope with the times, telephone cancellations began to exceed new orders. In an effort to stem its losses, the company trained special crews to visit those customers who were behind in their bills and persuade them not to discontinue their service. It was a difficult assignment and more often than not the customer had no choice but to surrender his phone until times were better.

In 1932 the number of telephones in service dropped by 11,051, plunging below 100,000. Despite the loss and its declining revenues and earnings, the company revealed plans to spend more than a million dollars for expansion. The Rochester *Evening Journal* saw hope in the

announcement: "...when it is dark and there are fears and doubts; when some are whistling and others are crying—well, it is encouraging to see a light in a friendly window."

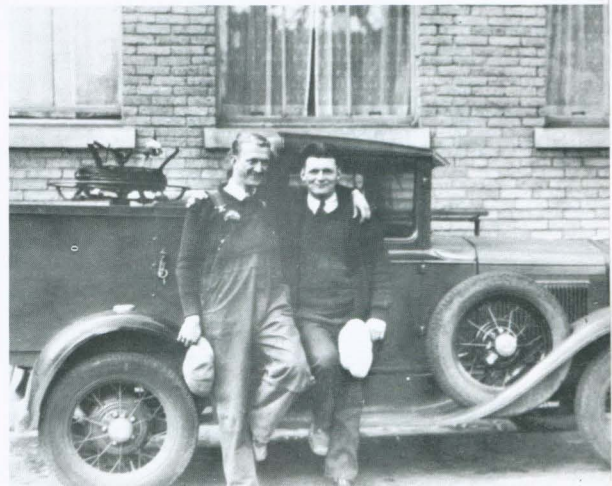
As economic conditions worsened, there was increased pressure for a reduction in telephone rates. In 1933, City Council made a formal complaint to the Public Service Commission, seeking a review of the corporation's rates. For its part, the company maintained rate reductions were "not only wholly unwarranted, but most untimely under present conditions." The Commission ultimately ruled out any investigation.

Despite efforts to "maintain the integrity of its personnel," there were continuing reductions in the employee body. The company began 1930 with 1,852 employees. Over the next four years, the number fell to less than 1,600. Not until 1947 would the 1930 high be reached and passed. The 1930 payroll of \$2.7 million, which was reduced \$700,000 in the next three years, wasn't equalled again until 1941.

Part-time schedules were introduced in some departments in 1931, and in 1933 the company found it necessary to reduce some wages. But the next year, because of shortened hours mandated by the National Recovery Administration, total personnel was increased by 32. Pay scales at that time ranged from \$19 per week for operators to \$45 for installers and linemen. However, because of part-time schedules and some across-the-board reductions, not all earned at those levels, especially during the early Thirties.

There were a few bright spots in the early Depression years. In 1931 a Culver operator, Margaret Molhoek, was chosen as Rochester Lilac Queen; the Perry Telephone Company was acquired; and employee camaraderie continued as strong as ever. This spirit of fellowship and partnership is evident in the memorabilia of their times—in their gossip columns and humor and in their snapshots.

The company's 1930-31 basketball team.



### A change in policy

In 1935, in an effort to spread jobs over a greater number of families, the company took the unusual step of announcing it would no longer employ married women.

"Women employees accepted for employment on and after January 15, 1935 will be notified that upon marrying they must resign, and this condition will be included in the application for employment which (they) must sign," the company advised employees.

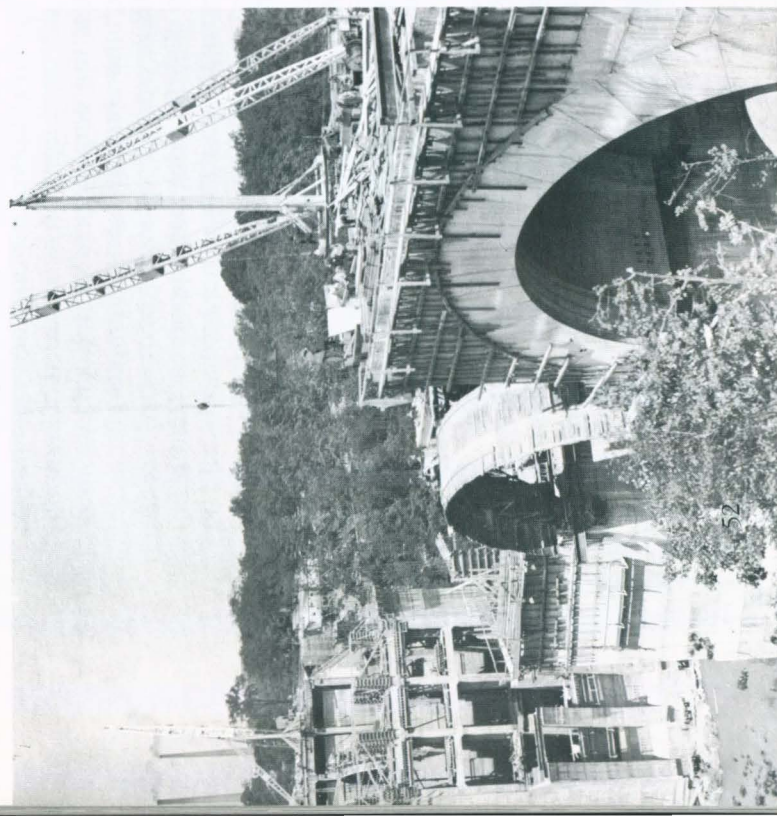
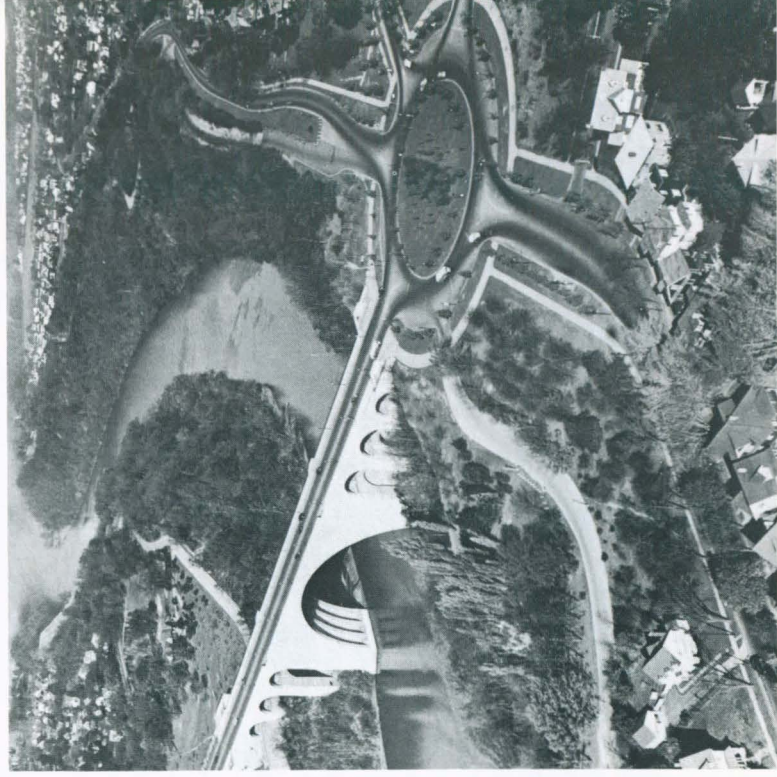
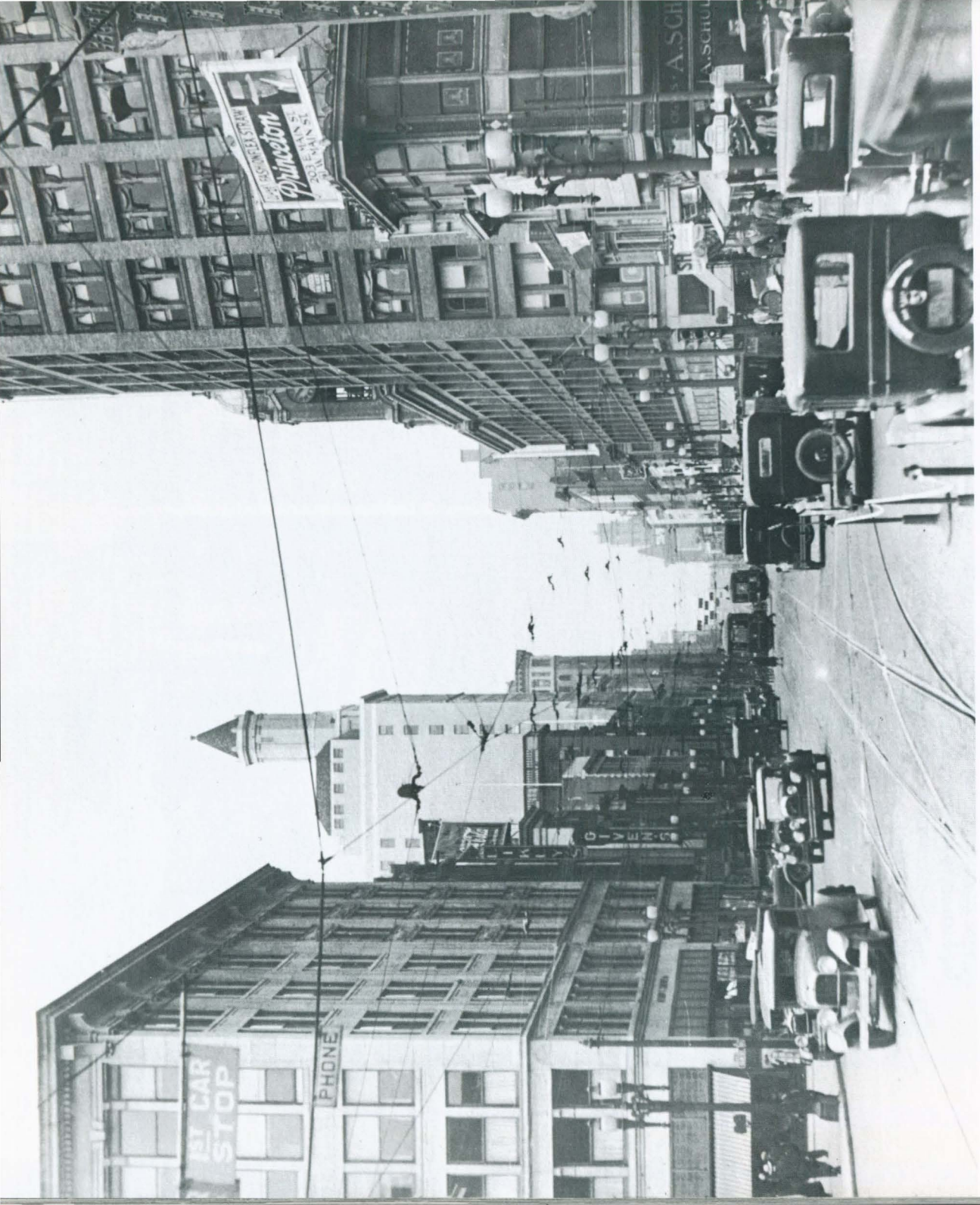
There were exceptions: Any married woman who was the principal support of a family because of the disability of her husband could be hired. So could a married woman employed as a matron in a cafeteria or as a charwoman or anyone with previous telephone experience hired for a temporary job.

*Opposite page:* Some operators at work in the mid-1930's.

*Above top:* The cable repair force in 1930.

*Below left:* Margaret Molhoek, Rochester's Lilac Queen of 1931.

*Below right:* Two repairmen of the 1930's, Wilbur Lightfoot, left, and Joe Dintruff, pose for a snapshot.



Although less prolific than the Twenties, the decade of the Thirties were significant years for Rochester. Two new high schools, Charlotte and John Marshall, were built. The University of Rochester began classes on its new River Campus, and the Colgate-Rochester Divinity School admitted its first students. The Veterans Memorial Bridge, the Rundel Memorial Building and the Masonic Temple and Auditorium were constructed, and Kodak added three stories to its State Street office building, to reclaim the distinction of having the tallest building in town. Near the end of the Thirties, as the economy began to improve, Kodak introduced paid vacations, and the number of outgoing flights from the city's airport doubled, to 8 a day. The last trolleys made their final runs in 1941, to be replaced by buses, and that same year the Chamber of Commerce proudly reported that out of every 100 families in Rochester all had radios and 93 owned cars. Those Depression years also left Rochester with some permanent reminders of the efforts of the Federal government to help revive the economy. At least eight Civil Works Administration projects were completed, among them the post office building on Cumberland Street, now abandoned for a more modern facility in Henrietta.

It wasn't until 1934 that the outlook began to brighten perceptibly for Rochester Telephone. 1932 and 1933 were the nadir years, with lower operating revenues and earnings insufficient to meet dividend requirements, with the balance

### Long distance move

The telephone played a novel role in construction of the Rundel Memorial Building, the main Rochester library, on South Avenue in 1935. Two-ton blocks of Vermont granite, each marked for its exact position in the masonry, were taken from flatcars on the subway by a huge crane operated by an engineer who could not see the blocks. But with telephoned instructions from a signal man who was in full view of the blocks, the crane engineer was able to place them in their exact positions.

*Above left:* Main Street East in 1931, looking west from Franklin Street. The sign reading "PHONE" identifies the wire as telephone cable.

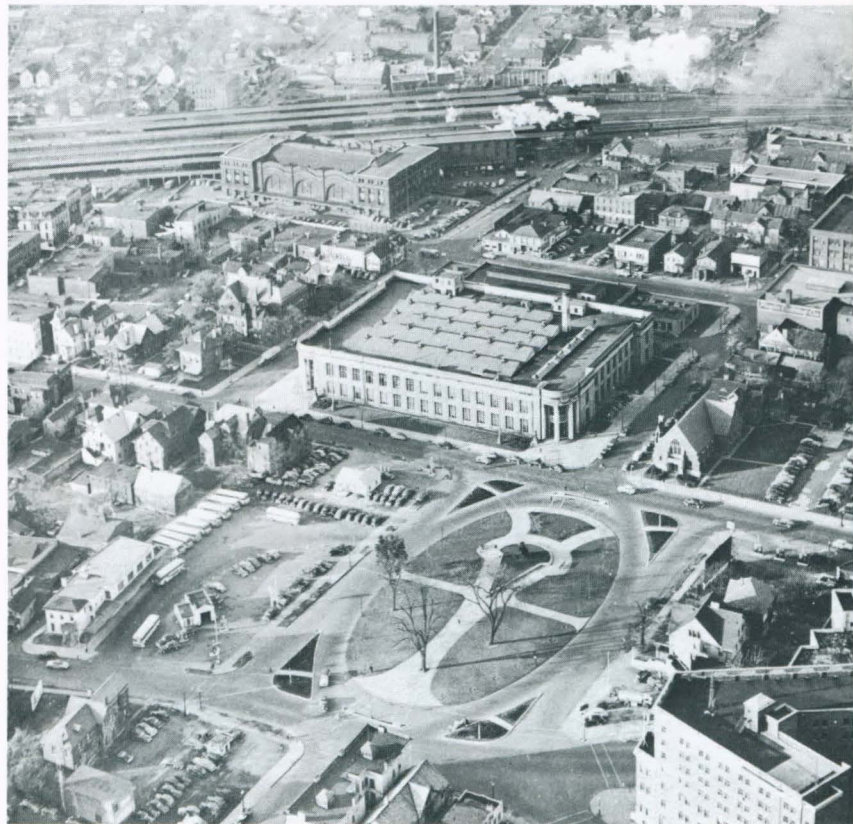
*Below, left:* The Veterans Memorial Bridge under construction in 1931. *Below:* An aerial view of the completed bridge and the St. Paul-Ridge Road traffic circle.

*Right:* Franklin Square in the late 1930's, with the post office in the center and the New York Central railroad station at the top left. The Greyhound bus terminal is at the lower left.



### Coast-to-coast meeting

In 1932, the directors held their January meeting by long distance telephone, another first for the corporation. Chairman Fred C. Goodwin called the meeting to order from the Hotel Huntington in Pasadena, California, where he was vacationing. On the other end of the line, in the company's Triangle Building offices, were these directors and officers, as pictured above: front row, from left, William B. Woodbury, John P. Boylan, T. Carl Nixon, J. Foster Warner; back row, from left, Frank J. Brookman, James W. Hubbell, Heber E. Wheeler, Raymond N. Ball, W. Roy McCanne and William J. O'Hea. All but Brookman and O'Hea were directors; they were both officers.



*Left:* Poles downed in sleet storm of 1936. *Center above:* Linemen work to remove a damaged pole so it can be replaced and wires repaired. In some areas, the storm was as bad as the one in 1929. Nearly every telephone in Canandaigua, for example, was put out of service.

*Center below:* An employee's identification card in the late 1930's.

*Right:* An aerial view of the Stone Street building in 1937.

### 'Beautiful but not dumb'

By 1935, the company's "Information" service wasn't supplying answers to just any old question. A local news item of that year read:

"Young women of courtesy, tact, patience and intelligence are the only young women the Rochester Telephone Corporation keeps on its 'Information' desks. They may be beautiful, but they can't be dumb.

"It takes eight girls, working eight hours during the main part of the day, and a lesser number during the night and early morning hours, to answer between 5,000 and 6,000 'Information' calls received at the telephone company's main office on Fitzhugh Street each 24 hours. The search time for these calls averages 17 1/10 seconds.

"But the telephone 'Information' desk is no longer, as it once was, a place for the dissemination of general information. The business there is now confined to the giving of telephone numbers that are not listed in the telephone directory and in aiding customers to find listed numbers that have eluded search.

"When the telephone company was more liberal with its information... the Information operators had to have at their elbows an almanac and a compendium of the Encyclopedia Britannica."

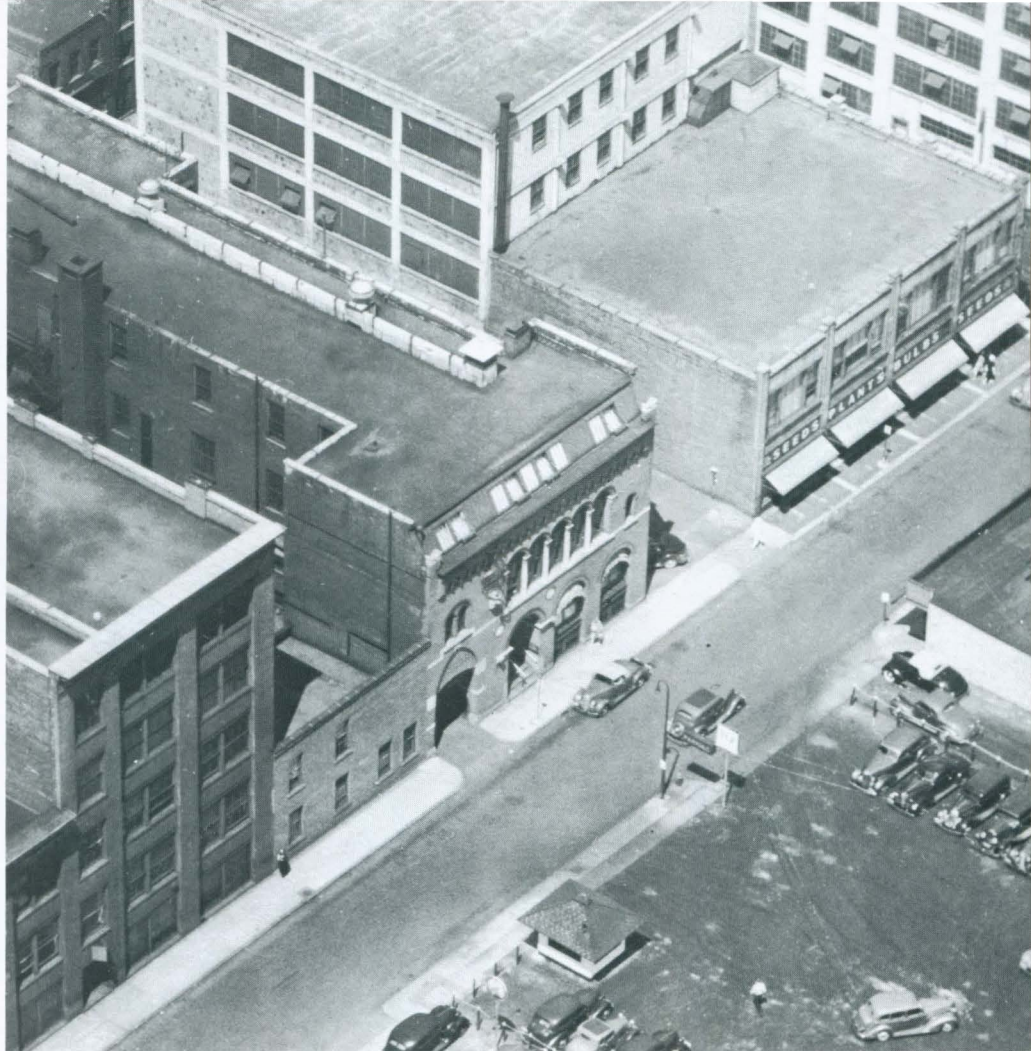
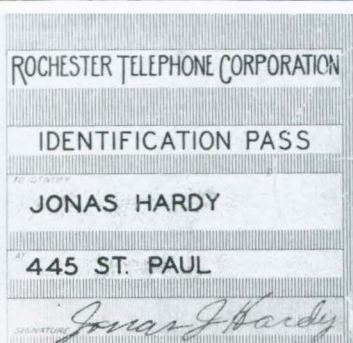
"Information" operators in 1937.



coming from company surplus funds. In 1934, both revenues and earnings were up slightly for the year. In contrast with the losses of the previous two years, there was a small increase in telephones, although more the result of fewer cancellations than any significant improvement in the economy. But the tide had turned. From then on the company made enough to meet its dividend payments, and there were increases in revenues and telephones each year.

The company filed for, and received, its first rate increase in 1937. For customers, the increase averaged only about 10 cents a month, which produced approximately \$60,000 in additional revenues for the company. The primary reason for the rate increase was a 35 percent rise in operating taxes the company experienced in 1937, largely from the combined effects of two new taxes, one of them the Social Security contributions required of employers.

During the Thirties another regulatory matter—establishment of the Federal Communications Commission and the extent of its jurisdiction—occupied the company. With the Communications Act of 1934, the newly-created FCC took over federal regulation of telephone companies from the Interstate Commerce Commission. Rochester Telephone saw its jurisdic-



tion as limited to companies able to complete interstate transactions by means of their own facilities, and to companies directly or indirectly controlled by such organizations. Since its plant was within a single state, and not controlled by another carrier under federal supervision, the company contended it should not come under FCC supervision.

In 1936, when the Commission ruled that the corporation was subject to its jurisdiction, the company appealed to the courts. Two years later, a U.S. District Court rejected the appeal, and in 1939 the Supreme Court upheld the lower court. The ruling, in effect, held that RTC was subject to FCC regulation because the company was indirectly under control of American Telephone & Telegraph Company. RTC preferred stock had been held by New York Telephone Company since the consolidation in 1921 and represented compensation for Bell System properties turned over to the new corporation. If dividends were omitted, the stock became voting stock, a situation that suggested control both to the FCC and the reviewing courts.

One immediate consequence was the resignation of four directors, all of whom represented the New York Telephone Company. FCC regu-

lations prohibited directors, officers, and certain classes of supervisory employees of one company subject to Commission authority from holding similar positions in another.

The decade was marked by the deaths of several men who had played major roles in the company's development: Frank J. Brookman, financial vice president since 1924 and general auditor of the corporation since its beginning; J. Foster Warner, a director of the corporation and predecessor companies for 40 years and the architect who designed many of the company's buildings; and W. Roy McCanne and Carl E. Lomb, both of whom had been directors of the corporation and its predecessor company.

In 1938, in Canandaigua, the company put into operation the first "universal" telephone exchange of its kind in the world. For over six months some 25 men labored to install the Stromberg-Carlson-made equipment, which permitted any operator to handle local, rural or long distance calls without transferring them to a special operator. Canandaigua was selected as the testing ground because of its size: 17 operators handling an average of 12,000 calls every 24 hours for 2,150 subscribers.

In November of that year, the company installed its eighth Rochester central office, Hill-



Evening rush-hour on Main Street about 1940, in the last days of the streetcars. The view is east from St. Paul Street.

side. The first new central office in 13 years, it was housed in the same Field Street building as the Monroe central office and was designed to provide additional facilities for the Monroe service area.

In 1940, the company met a test of another kind. On December 17, Genesee River water flooded regular city mains and operators were pressed into service to call residents to warn them of possible contamination. A total of 330 men and women, many from other departments, telephoned thousands of homes to tell them a city water main had broken and to "boil all water until further notice."

In 1941, the corporation completed 20 years as an operating company. In those two decades:

- The number of telephones in service more than doubled, from 54,346 to 120,657.
- The value of plant in service went from \$6,640,900 to over \$24 million.
- Total operating revenues rose 96.5 per cent, to \$5,888,963.
- The average number of messages handled daily increased from 264,100 to 485,800.
- Although it had been as high as 1,900, the number of employees increased from 1,264 to 1,717.

The year 1941 had been a good one for Rochester Telephone. Earnings were the fourth

best in the corporation's history, exceeded only by those of the pre-Depression years. But there was little cause for joy. The war in Europe was threatening to spread, involving the United States. On December 7 it did, and the next four years tested the nation's communications resources as never before.

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### Under the Genesee

One of the highlights of the pre-war year of 1941 came in July. Two submarine cables were laid across the lower Genesee River, one just south of the Stutson Street Bridge, adjacent to two previously laid cables, and the second just south of the coal ferry terminal opposite Boxart Street. The cables would serve an area in Irondequoit when the new Charlotte central office on Britton Road was cut into service later that year. To meet War Department specifications, the cables had to be 30 feet below water level, which required trenches varying in depth from three to 13 feet. During the dredging, crews raised a sunken boat, a 500-pound propeller blade, and several hand-hewn timbers.

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# 6

## War and Post-War

The arrival of the Forties marked the return of prosperity. But while the good life beckoned, Americans felt threatened by the war in Europe. Each evening the radio brought them reports of the Battle of Britain, of Nazi triumphs, of increases in defense production at home. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor ended whatever doubts people had over whether the nation should enter the war and strengthened the national will. For the first year of the war, the news was unrelievedly bad. When the Allies finally took the offensive, the first victories came in the Pacific, and by 1944, with the Luftwaffe virtually obliterated, Fortress Europe lay vulnerable to invasion, and the Japanese were reeling.

On the homefront, there were shortages and sacrifices and the endless, anxious waiting for news. Coffee, meat, butter, cheese, sugar and of course gasoline were rationed and smokers often stood in line for hours to buy one pack of cigarettes. The typical American family donated blood, bought bonds, saved tin cans and fats, collected old newspapers and scrap metal, cultivated victory gardens, and served as air raid wardens or air spotters watching for enemy planes that never came.

The Forties also were the years when American teenagers first made themselves

heard, when adolescence became recognized as something more than just an awkward age. They got their own magazines and advice columns, their own fashions and music. Bobby-soxers made Frank Sinatra the national heartthrob and bought his records and others by the millions—ten times as many were sold in 1947 than ten years before. No place in America seemed very far from a phonograph or a jukebox.

With V-J Day the great demobilization began. Ten million men were discharged within two years of the end of the year, most of them within months. The casualties were enormous—nearly 400,000 killed and 675,000 wounded—but the U.S. had emerged as the strongest, and richest, nation in the history of the world.

The GIs returned to a land that didn't have enough of just about anything—housing, cars, appliances, telephones. Colleges overflowed with returned veterans and inflation sent prices soaring. But as civilian production geared up, the shortages began to disappear. There was nearly full employment, and factory workers earned more than twice what they had made a decade before. By 1949, more than 100,000 television sets were being sold weekly and drive-in restaurants were popping up all over. After 20 years of challenge, the American people had rediscovered tranquillity.

### “Greeting:

Having submitted yourself to a local board composed of your neighbors for the purpose of determining your availability for training and service in the land or naval forces of the United States, you are hereby notified that you have now been selected for training and service therein...”

U.S. SELECTIVE SERVICE

*“Don't sit under the apple tree  
With anyone else but me,  
Anyone else but me,  
Anyone else but me, No, no, no  
Don't sit under the apple tree  
With anyone else but me,  
Till I come marching home.”*

“DON'T SIT UNDER THE APPLE TREE”  
MUSIC AND LYRICS BY LEW BROWN, CHARLIES TOBIAS  
AND SAM H. STEPT.  
COPYRIGHT, 1942, ROBBINS MUSIC CORP.

“As the bomb fell over Hiroshima and exploded, we saw an entire city disappear. I wrote in my log book the words: ‘My God, what have we done?’”

CAPT. ROBERT LEWIS, CO-PILOT OF THE ENOLA GAY

# War and Post-War

**T**he war brought Rochester Telephone's plant expansion, and that of the entire telephone industry, to a near halt. Because of restrictions imposed by the War Production Board, additions and replacements were mostly routine and expenditures minimal. The total value of plant in service from 1941 to 1945 increased only \$1.3 million. This came in the face of a steadily increasing demand for telephone service. The restrictions, plus shortages of materials and limitations on the installation of extension phones and new service, led to a backlog of applications, which lasted well into the post-war years.

Another significant effect of the war was to further postpone conversion to dial. William A. Pitbladdo, retired vice president-engineering & construction, recalls: "The Stone central office, an old two-wire office, required reinforcement. Something had to be done to increase its capacity and the decision was made to replace it with dial equipment. Traffic data were gathered, equipment quantities determined and the project got as far as a trunking diagram from Automatic Electric Company. It was at this point that the Federal government came out with an order to the effect that all central offices would be run at 105 percent of capacity until further notice. From that point on until the end of the war, it

was almost impossible to obtain any additional central office equipment for reinforcement. In a few instances it became necessary to transfer line equipment from one office to another to provide service."

Just weeks after the nation's entry in the war, the company opened what was to become its last new manual office. The Charlotte office, at Lake Avenue and Britton Road, had 20 operator positions, serving more than 3,100 lines. A year later, in Avon, the company opened its last new central office of any kind until well after the end of the war.

It was in 1943, when the company added 5,172 telephones, that it began to observe a change in customer habits: "This increase, while only about two-thirds as great as that of the preceding year, is noteworthy because it is the result of a very much smaller movement of telephones...With the wartime restrictions on the installation of new service...customers do not discontinue service except for weighty reasons."

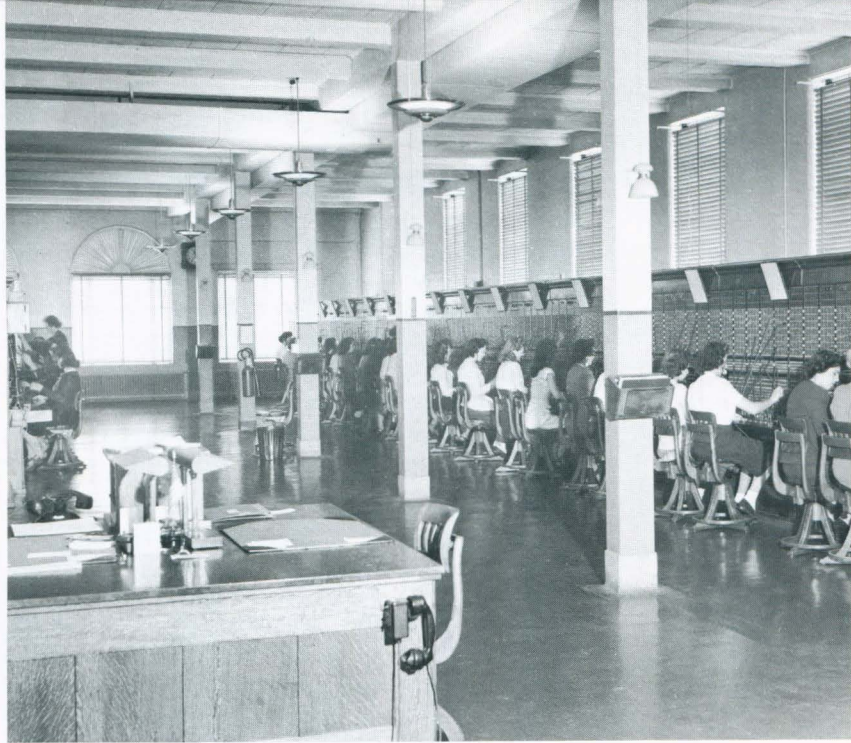
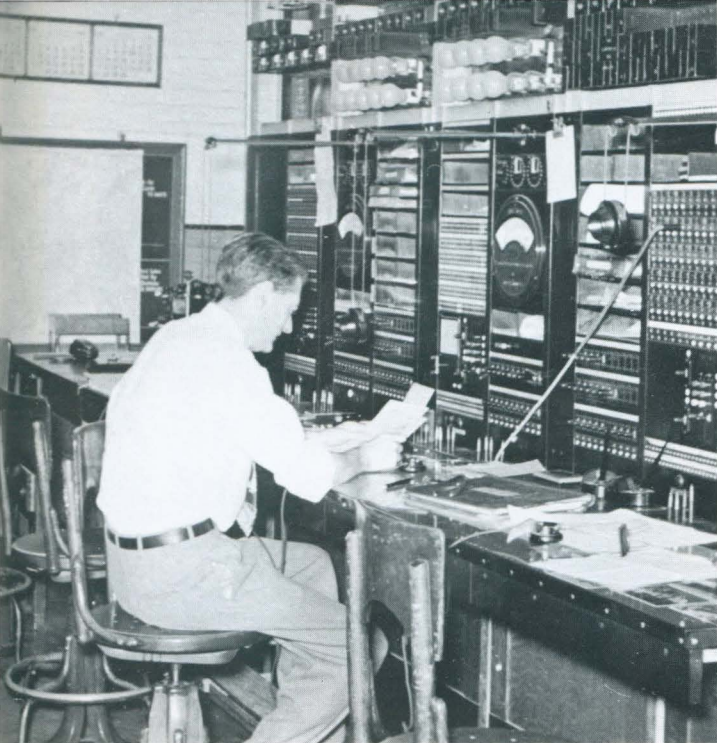
The next year, the increase in telephones dropped to just over 2,000. Applications for service far exceeded that number, with a waiting list of more than 4,000 customers—and that was only the beginning. In 1945, the backlog of applications for telephones doubled.

## No number necessary

In 1942, the company moved its Henrietta office to 5712 West Henrietta Road, just north of its former location. The office then served just 408 telephones; in 1978 the dial Henrietta-Rush central office, on Erie Station Road, cut into service in 1960, served nearly 20,000 telephones.

One of the operators in that office, Mrs. Ruth Berg, once recalled those pre-war days: "We knew everybody in town. People wouldn't ask for a number. They'd just say, 'Let me talk to so-and-so.' And you'd plug them in. And if somebody stepped out of her house for a few minutes, we could generally find her for whoever was calling her. We'd just keep ringing places we thought she'd be until we located her."





Another change was becoming evident, too—in the geographical mix of telephone development. Up until the war, 80 to 90 per cent of telephone growth was in the city. Beginning in the early 1940's, the proportion began to change; in 1945, only 56 per cent of the increase in telephones was in Rochester, a significant indicator of changing demand and of the suburban development to come. The trend was inevitable; the only questions were when and how fast, with forecasts complicated first by the Depression, then the recovery era and finally the war.

But now a backlog of 8,000 applications for telephones—with demand still exceeding supply—plus a growing population outside the city signaled dramatic change. At first, applications were ranked according to the regulations of the Civilian Production Administration, formerly the War Production Board, but the outlook, according to the company, was “that freely installed, unrationed service is still a long way in the future.”

The war also brought about a sharp increase in telephone use, for both local and toll service. The average number of calls handled daily in 1942 exceeded the half-million mark for the first time in history. All of the Rochester central offices were carrying close to capacity loads, and because additional equipment couldn't be obtained telephone users were repeatedly asked to make their conversations as brief as possible. In 1943, the company began using a signaling device to remind customers to shorten their local conversations. Every three minutes a tone sounded. Later that same year operators began to break in on long distance calls after the first five minutes to advise the parties that others were waiting to use the long distance facilities.



*Above left:* The Stone Street test board in the early 1940's; the deskman is Maurice Keenan.

*Above right:* Two scenes in the Monroe office in the early 1940's. The operators in the lounge are, from left, Josephine McWhorter, Alice Speis, Margaret Biek and Helen Minor Martz.

*Opposite page:* The Henrietta-Rush manual central office on West Henrietta Road in 1942.

In December, 1944, a massive snowstorm struck, paralyzing transportation and producing record calling volumes. It was the second fierce storm of the season. On November 29, a snowstorm accompanied by high winds blanketed the area, continuing until December 2. The result was 150 broken poles and nearly 1,700 downed lines. Because of snow-clogged roads, it wasn't until December 6 that all service was restored and only then at a cost of some 2,400 overtime hours. On December 11, the second storm struck. This one did less damage to the company's plant, but it created enormous demands on employees. Many operators walked to their offices and worked around the clock.

The end of the war in 1945 ushered in another sharp rise in telephone usage. The company reported: "The volume of traffic handled has vastly increased since V-J Day and despite the Corporation's continued efforts to induce telephone users to refrain from making unnecessary calls, there have been peaks of traffic which it was impossible to handle... Equipment and personnel for the satisfactory handling of these loads are still not available, and as a result the quality of the service rendered remains below

State Street after the snowstorms of 1944.

the accepted standards of good service." As a company official later observed, "Right when we needed operators and equipment the worst, they became the most difficult to get for our industry." Turnover rates among operators ran high in those days, too, with as much as 40 percent of the force changing in a year.

On April 12, 1945, the company experienced the busiest hour in its history as thousands of people rushed to their telephones when they heard of President Roosevelt's death. It was a crush that would far be surpassed with another president's death, that of John Kennedy in 1963.

Revenues and expenses advanced steadily during the war years. In 1942, operating revenues surpassed the \$6 million mark for the first time; in 1945 they exceeded \$7 million. While local service revenues continued upward, revenues from long distance calls rose more sharply. Some of the increase was the result of more favorable toll settlement arrangements with the Bell System, but the primary reason was the number of long distance calls being made between Rochester area servicemen and their families back home. Although long distance calling volumes had steadily increased in the Twenties and Thirties, it was World War II that





John W. Morrison.

demonstrated to the American public the value of a long distance call. For Rochester Telephone, toll service revenues more than doubled between 1938 and 1944, exceeding a million dollars for the first time in 1944. In the same period local service revenues increased less than 30 percent.

On the other side of the wartime financial ledger, expenses were affected by higher operator costs, largely because of sharply increased overtime payments and a new wage schedule that raised base pay approximately 8 per cent. The overtime was necessitated by the reduced number of employees, with the company estimating that it was short more than 100 employees, mostly in the Traffic Department.

In 1945, John Boylan was elected chairman of the board, filling the office left vacant by the death in 1942 of Fred C. Goodwin, who Boylan himself eulogized as the man who "more than any other was the mastermind that guided the company safely in the early years over the many rough spots on its path..." Boylan had been president and chief executive officer of the company for more than 18 years, the longest of any president before or since. Elected to succeed Boylan as president and general manager was John W. Morrison, vice president in charge of engineering. He had been with the corporation and its predecessor company since 1906. A native of St. Louis, he worked there with the Union Electric Light & Power Company before joining the Kinloch Long Distance Telephone Company in 1904. He came to Rochester during the effort to get the United States Independent Telephone Company off the ground. He began as a purchasing agent but soon got into engineering, becoming the corporation's chief engineer after the 1921 consolidation.

Two new vice presidents also were elected,

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### The unions at RTC

The labor movement at Rochester Telephone goes back to 1915 when the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers attempted to organize employees of Rochester Telephone Company. When the company refused to recognize the group, about 75 workers walked off the job. Five months later they voted to end the walkout, and many—but not all—were re-employed by the company.

With the passage of the National Recovery Act in 1934, employees formed the Employee Association of Rochester Telephone Corporation. In 1942, plant workers formed a separate union, the Genesee Valley Telephone Workers, which remained unaffiliated until 1946 when it became part of the National Federation of Telephone Workers. In 1947, the federation called a nationwide strike, in which the local organization took part. That same year the federation changed its name to the Communications Workers of America and in 1951 the local division became Local 1170.

The successor to the original Employee Association is known as the Rochester Telephone Workers Association, which has remained independent. It represents non-plant employees—operators, service representatives and other office workers.

As in the rest of the telephone industry, union-management relations at Rochester Telephone have been a mixed sort. The two major strikes in the company's history, in 1961 and in 1974-75, stemmed from an impasse in collective bargaining. In addition, there were several other walkouts.

Over the past 40 years, as openings have occurred, members of both unions have been promoted into management ranks. Most foremen were once craft employees and at least one former president of the CWA local rose to third-level management position.

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### To the rescue

In December, 1942, the company demonstrated the close cooperation among telephone companies when it sent men and equipment to the aid of the New York Telephone Company in Northern New York, devastated by a snowstorm. Five installation trucks each with two-man crews drove off first, followed later by two line trucks each manned by a crew of six.

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both of whom were destined to become president themselves. Donald H. Campbell had been plant superintendent and William A. Kern traffic superintendent. There were also three retirements of note that year: Robert M. Bruce, who began his career with Bell of Buffalo as an installer's helper in 1898, retired as vice president in charge of plant; Frank T. Byrne as vice president in charge of the Commercial Department, after 45 years of service; and Edward W. Wirth, after 23 years as superintendent of buildings and supplies.

Rochester in 1945 was bracing itself for the return of its soldiers and sailors. During the war its industry had contributed significantly to victory—38 plants won Army-Navy “E” awards for excellence. In the same year Mechanics Institute had become Rochester Institute of Technology, and Jose Iturbi completed an eight-year tour as conductor of the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra. In 1946, Kenneth B. Keating, an Army colonel, was first elected to Congress. To ease the housing pinch, Norton Village and Ramona Park were built for veterans and their families, and in downtown Rochester two landmarks disappeared—the Hotel Hayward and Liggett’s drug store, a fixture at Main and Clinton since before 1900.

Rochester Telephone’s new management team faced a number of sizeable challenges in the mid-Forties. One was the rising tide of applications for new service. Another was the long-delayed conversion to dial. Complicating both was the urgent need to raise funds to finance all the equipment and facilities required to do the job.

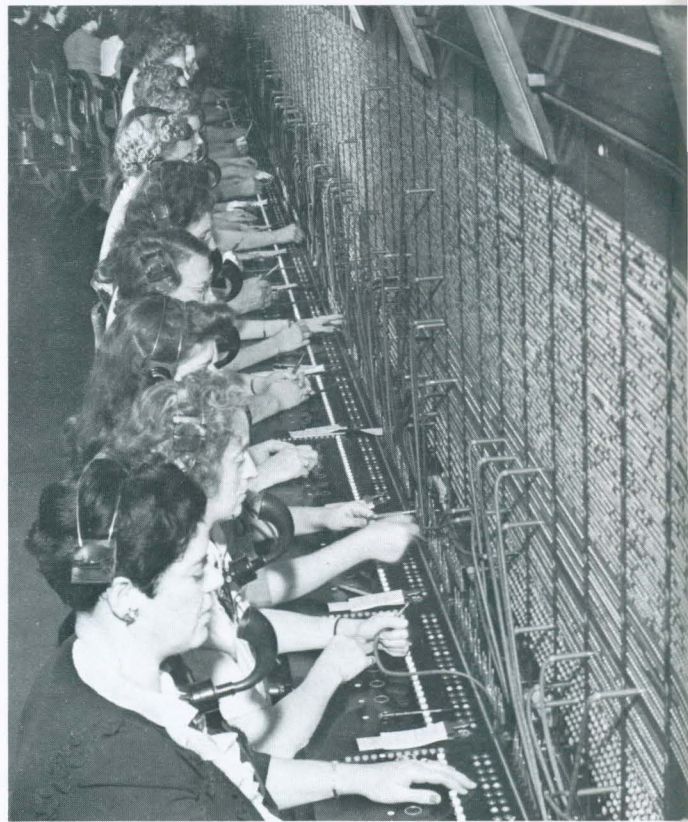
The public climate in which they had to work could hardly have been worse. During the war the public had been relatively tolerant of the deficiencies in service. But with its end criticism and complaints intensified. Letters to editors condemned service as “wretched” or “outrageous”. Initially, the newspapers were sympathetic; one editor’s note advised patience, observing that “...improvements are being

*Above:* Norton Village under construction. Waring Road is at the top of the photo.

*Center:* The New York Telephone toll board at Fitzhugh Street during the war years when long distance volumes began to swell. As part of the consolidation agreement, the New York company continued to run the long distance operation in Rochester for nearly 50 years.

*Below:* An installer, Tom Olsen, checks a service order before completing an installation.

*Opposite page:* Downtown Rochester from the air in 1948. The view is to the east, with the Genesee River cutting through the center of the photo.





made, but as in other fields labor shortages and material shortages make progress slow.”

In a public appeal, President Morrison asked for customers’ cooperation. And he urged parents to keep an eye on their children’s use of the telephone, especially in the Monroe exchange where a company survey showed that 24 percent of all calls were being made by children. Long distance service was subject to complaint, too. Although New York Telephone had nearly tripled its operator force in Rochester since 1941, there wasn’t enough equipment available to handle the increase in calls. Beginning in June, 1946, customers were urged to avoid placing long distance calls between 10 a.m. and noon because of the heavy calling loads during that period.

The city’s general strike on May 28 of that year further taxed telephone facilities. The company logged 696,000 calls that day, second only to its record load of 715,000 calls on December 14, 1944 at the height of a two-day snowstorm. Later that same year printers struck the city’s two daily newspapers, placing even additional strain on the local telephone system. As the public clamor grew louder, a Public Service Commission investigation was launched. The investigators con-

cluded that service was deficient in some areas, but primarily because the company could not obtain any new equipment. A planned dial cut-over should result in some improvement, they suggested.

Meanwhile, increases in telephones in service set records in both 1946 and 1947. In 1946, the company added 10,472, by far the largest gain ever made in a calendar year. The backlog, however, rose by more than 2,000. In 1947, the gain was 10,837 telephones, but unfilled orders for service neared 10,000. In 1948, the gain in telephones fell to 6,995 and the waiting list climbed to 11,700. The company attributed the worsening performance to a “reduction in Plant Department personnel occasioned by the corporation’s limited cash resources.”

The distress flag was clearly up. What had happened to the company’s cash position? Operating revenues in 1946 exceeded \$8 million for the first time, but operating expenses, not including taxes, rose 18.9 percent. In 1947, operating revenues increased 7 percent, and operating expenses 16.3 percent.

To retire some of its debt and improve its cash flow situation, the company in 1948 announced a plan to issue 67,500 shares of \$100 par value

preferred stock. The proceeds would be used to retire \$2,282,600 in other preferred stock and \$2,800,000 in demand notes held by bankers and the Employees Pension Trust Fund. However, when the issue was offered at public competitive bidding, there were no bids. The company had to defer any long-term financing and again borrow what it needed from banks.

There was some improvement in the company's financial performance in 1948, largely because of rate increases authorized by the Public Service Commission. Operating revenues were up 13.2 percent and the increase in operating expenses was under 12 percent. While earnings were better than in 1947, dividends were omitted.

The rate increases amounted to 10 percent on basic services and 12 percent on supplemental. While making them temporary, to expire in June, 1949, the Commission estimated that they would produce additional revenues of more than \$1.4 million. The company response was pessimistic. It said the increases were insufficient to enable it to attract the capital necessary "to increase its plant to meet the demand

for telephones and render good service." As evidence, it pointed to the lack of bids on its proposed preferred stock issue earlier that year.

The next year the company completed a financing, an issue of \$8.5 million sinking fund debentures. The proceeds from the sale were used to pay borrowings from banks totaling \$4 million; loans of \$1.7 million from the corporation's Pension Trust Fund; and indebtedness to the New York Telephone Company of \$1.2 million. Most of the remaining proceeds went to Federal Telephone & Radio Corporation for the dial switching equipment then being installed in the Stone Street building.

The Stone Street project marked the beginning of the company's long-awaited conversion to dial. The changeover had been postponed by the war, then delayed further by a problem described this way by Pitbladdo: "The trouble was that telephone equipment manufacturers, especially those making dial central office equipment, were taking care of their old customers first, rather than going out looking for new business with new customers. It took Rochester Telephone just about three years to start

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### How the company went public

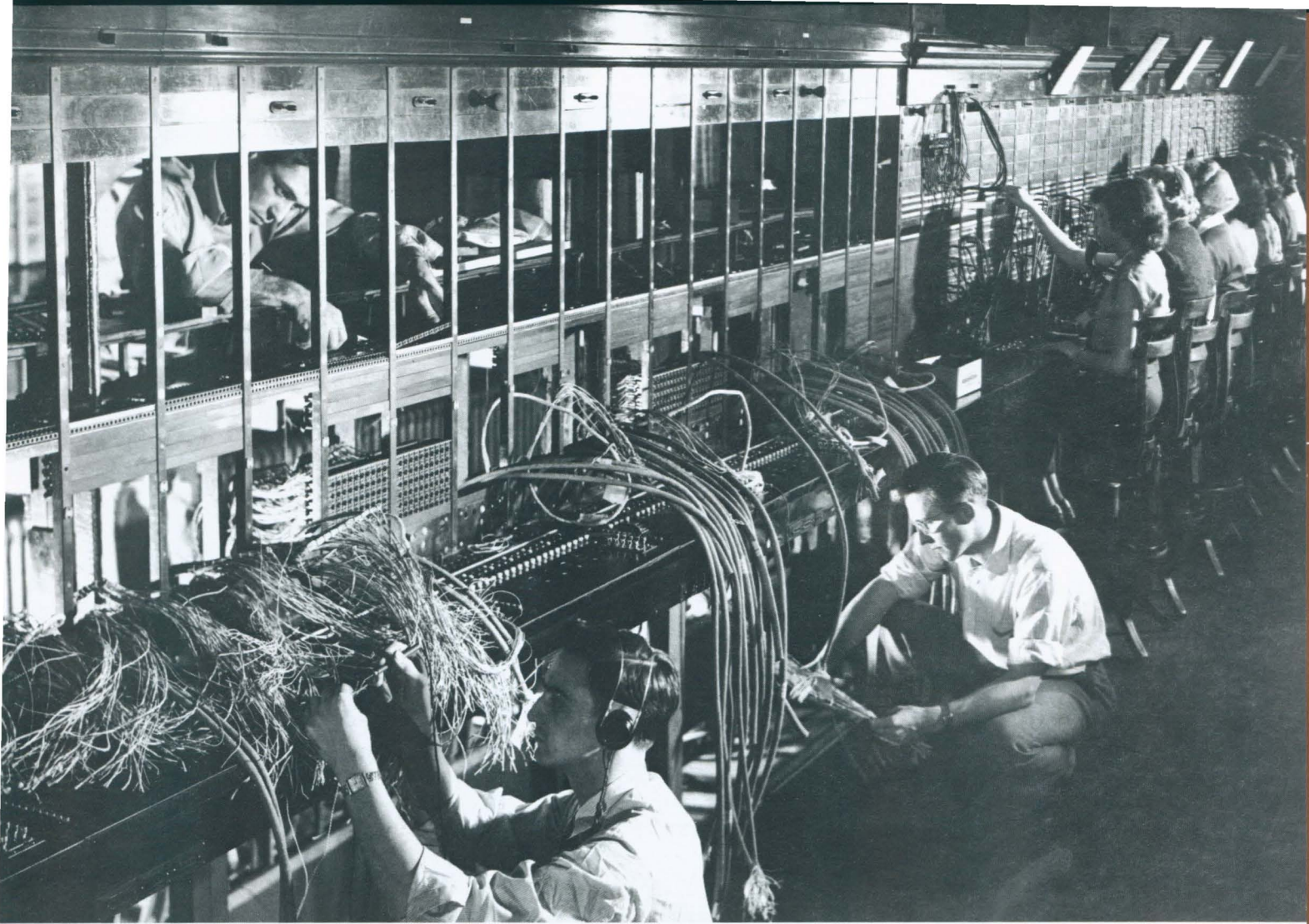
The company was opened to public ownership in 1944. By that time the owners of the majority of the common stock were President John P. Boylan; Fred C. Goodwin, Jr., the company's secretary and treasurer; six directors, Raymond N. Ball, Bernard E. Finucane, Sol T. Heumann, T. Carl Nixon, J. Craig Powers and Douglas C. Townson; and Frank E. Devans, a partner in the law firm of Goodwin, Nixon, Hargrave, Middleton & Devans, the corporation's legal counsel. They had purchased the stock from Fred C. Goodwin, one of the original majority holders of the company's common stock. A total of 1,000 shares had been issued in 1921, with 665 of them held by Goodwin; George Fuller, the company's president; and W. Roy McCanne, a director, to assure them voting control. By agreement, Goodwin had acquired all 665 shares with the deaths of Fuller and McCanne. He himself died in 1942.

In 1943, the new majority owners, through a bank loan, first purchased the 48,140 shares of second preferred stock from New York Telephone Company, also issued at the time of consolidation, at the option price of \$110 per share. They then purchased with their own

funds the remaining 335 shares of common stock held by New York Telephone, at the option price of \$110 per share, thereby becoming the sole owners of the entire 1,000 shares of common stock.

A month later the 48,140 shares of preferred stock were converted into 380,000 shares of new common stock, at \$10 par value, and the 1,000 shares of common stock were changed into 120,000 shares of new common, with the same \$10 par value. Underwriters sold the 380,000 shares to 2,800 buyers at \$15.375 per share, or an aggregate offering price of \$5,842,500. Of that, the majority owners received \$5,443,500, after deduction of the commission paid to the underwriters. They also continued to hold the 120,000 common shares.

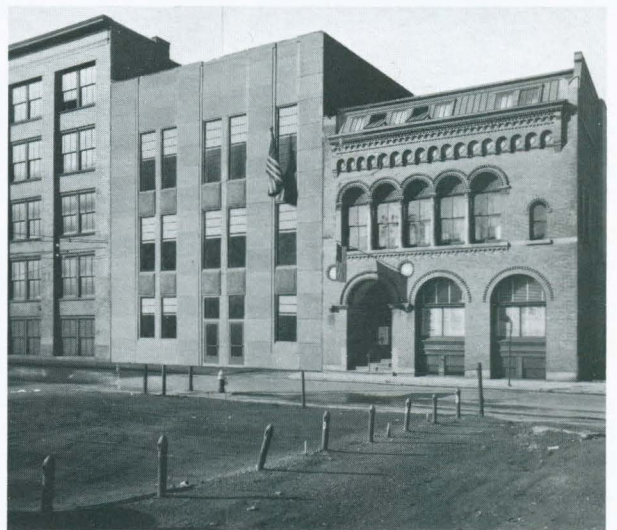
Since then, the company has made eight offerings of common stock through underwriters. The stock also has split twice, in 1965 and 1973, so that at the end of 1978 there were 9,450,646 shares outstanding, held by nearly 17,500 share owners from all 50 states, the District of Columbia and more than 10 foreign countries.



*Above top:* To handle increased calling loads, the Monroe switchboard at Field Street was expanded in the late 1940's. The installers in front are Carl Botticelli, left, and Bert Foos, with Walter Gilbert, Jr., working behind the board.

*Below right:* The Stone Street switchboard in its last months, before the dial conversion.

*Below left:* An undergrounding crew at St. Paul and Hand streets in the late 1940's. Workers, from left, are Chuck McGrath, Andy Neary and, kneeling, Fred Stoetzel.



getting relief. This was accomplished by contracting with the Federal Telephone & Radio Corporation, a subsidiary of International Telephone & Telegraph Company, to supply 7A-2 Rotary Dial Central Office equipment to replace our Stone and Main (manual) city central offices."

The first steps were taken in late 1945 and 1946 with the razing of a portion of the company's first buildings on Stone Street. Built in 1900, these structures housed the then Rochester Telephone Company's first shop and garage. In their place rose the first unit of the building that would contain the dial equipment to serve downtown Rochester. On August 27,

1948, two dial units were placed in service: Baker and Hamilton. Some 13,000 customers, mostly in the downtown area, were then able to dial their calls. In 1949, two additional dial units—Empire and Locust—were installed. Together, the four new units served 30 percent of the telephones in the Rochester area. For Rochesterians the dial era had begun.

*Left row:* Installers from all over the world helped wire frames in the Baker-Hamilton office. Center and below: The night of the actual cutover, with company officials watching intently.

*Right row:* The company's original Stone Street building before, during and after construction of the Baker-Hamilton office.

## Catching Up

Hula hoops, 3-D movies, Davy Crockett coonskin caps, Point of order, Mr. Chairman, Edsels, Estes Kefauver, Howdy Doody, Pat Boone, Cinerama, pink shirts and gray flannel suits, My Fair Lady, John Foster Dulles, Bill Haley and the Comets, Bermuda shorts, Willie Mays, Mickey Mantle, Rocky Marciano, chlorophyll gum, Sputnik, beatniks, Norman Vincent Peale, Marilyn Monroe, Charles Van Doren, doodles, fallout shelters, Jack Paar, I like Ike, eggheads, Elvis Presley...

Phrases, names, symbols, artifacts of another time—the Fabulous, Nifty Fifties. Bathed in the soft glow of nostalgia, it's an age that many Americans long to revisit, a time of apparent innocence and simplicity, as romanticized by the television, movies and literature of 20 years later. Fact or fable, the Fifties were years of real progress for the nation. Americans enjoyed unrivaled prosperity—by 1960, some 70 million people were working, 17 million more than in 1950. One quarter of all the housing standing in 1960 was built during the Fifties. Advances in medicine included the Salk polio vaccine and kidney transplants.

The Fifties had begun with another war, the third in a little more than a generation, this one a United Nations "police action" in Korea that was to claim 54,000 American lives. The decade ended with two new states joining the union, the longest steel strike in U.S. history, and a brief thaw in the Cold War when Soviet Premier Khrushchev visited Camp David and Disneyland, among other places. They were years of suburban sprawl, of ranch houses and backyard barbecues, of station wagons and power mowers. Young people went steady, married young, had lots of children and believed in togetherness. Movie attendance fell, giving way to the awesome appeal of television. Forty million TV sets were sold between 1947 and 1957, and by then the American family was said to be sitting in front of the tube six hours a day, seven days a week.

At the end of the decade, despite the happy times, despite the rising level of affluence, there was a general sense of restlessness and anxiety. The civil rights movement, fanned into flames from the spark set by the Montgomery bus boycott, was spreading. The crime rate was rising. The achievements in space, including a landing on the moon, lay ahead. So did Vietnam and the riots in the streets of the nation's largest cities.

# 7

“As we move forward into the second half of the Twentieth Century, we must always bear in mind the central purpose of our national life. We work for a better life for all, so that men may put to good use the great gifts with which they have been endowed by their Creator.”

PRESIDENT HARRY S. TRUMAN, 1950

“I have here in my hand a list of 205 names known to the Secretary of State as being members of the Communist Party and who nevertheless are still working and shaping the policy of the State Department.”

SEN. JOSEPH MCCARTHY, 1950

“We stand now in the vestibule of a vast new technological age.”

PRESIDENT DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

# Catching Up

**R**ochester Telephone's initial dial system in Rochester was the first installation of 7A-2 Rotary equipment in the nation. And for Rochester Telephone it was to be the last. Company engineers were disappointed with both the quality of the equipment and the way it was installed. And they later discovered something else—it was unsuitable for larger multiple office cities; it lacked the flexibility required for handling calls to and from switching offices equipped with other types of machines.

Yet at the time it was the only dial system that the company could obtain. Rotary automatic equipment was developed in the years following World War I by International Telephone & Telegraph Corp.'s associated manufacturing companies and laboratories abroad, but primarily by its Belgian subsidiary in Antwerp. Between the two wars, over 2 million lines were installed under widely varying climatic conditions in such cities as Shanghai, Paris, Cairo, Madrid, Budapest, Rio de Janeiro, Mexico City and Istanbul. The Rochester equipment was manufactured in Clifton, New Jersey, instead of at the regular plant in Antwerp, but installers were brought into Rochester from several different countries. William Pitbladdo, then traffic engineer, recalls workmen from Norway and Argentina, among others. He also remembers one of the problems that resulted: "One man would be sitting connecting wires on one side of the frame and he couldn't talk to the man on the other side because they didn't speak the same language."

Rochester Telephone had contracted with Federal for dial equipment in 1945. The program called for conversion of the Main and Stone central offices, which was accomplished, and ultimately completion of the rest of the network in the Metropolitan area, including the Charlotte, Culver, Genesee, Glenwood, Hillside and Monroe central offices. But after the experience of the first installations, Rochester Tele-

phone management felt it must look elsewhere. What it wanted was Western Electric equipment, and informal talks with the Bell System were begun. William A. Kern, then a vice president and a former New York Telephone executive, was one of those instrumental in negotiating an agreement.

The first Western Electric #5 Crossbar machine was installed in 1953, five years after the initial Rotary cutover. From that point on, the company averaged better than one new dial conversion a year, with most of the work done under the direction of Pitbladdo, who was named dial coordinator in 1950. The Brooklyn-born Pitbladdo, a graduate of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, joined Rochester Telephone in 1934 in the Plant Department. He would become a vice president in 1967.

Although the 1948 Rotary installation was the company's first major step in this direction, Rochester Telephone actually had been in the dial business since 1936 when a small unit had been put in service in Leicester, in Livingston County. Subsequently, a handful of other out-

*Left to right:* Improved tools and machinery made construction work easier in the 1950's. Left, a pole is moved to make way for a new highway. Center, a digger, manned by linemen Bob Curran and Pat Whitman, prepares the hole; at right, a closeup of the digger at work. Before the arrival of power tools, it took one man at least four hours to dig one hole. With machines, a two- or three-man crew could do 30 to 80 holes a day.



William A. Pitbladdo





Donald H. Campbell

lying communities were equipped with these community dial offices.

In 1950, the company named a new president and general manager, Donald H. Campbell, who moved up from executive vice president. He succeeded John W. Morrison, who retired that year at the age of 70 after more than 44 years of telephone service in Rochester. Campbell had begun as an apprentice in the Plant Department of the corporation's predecessor, the Rochester Telephone Company, in 1912. He became plant superintendent in 1944 and head of the Plant Department in 1945. The following year he was elected a vice president, and in 1947 executive

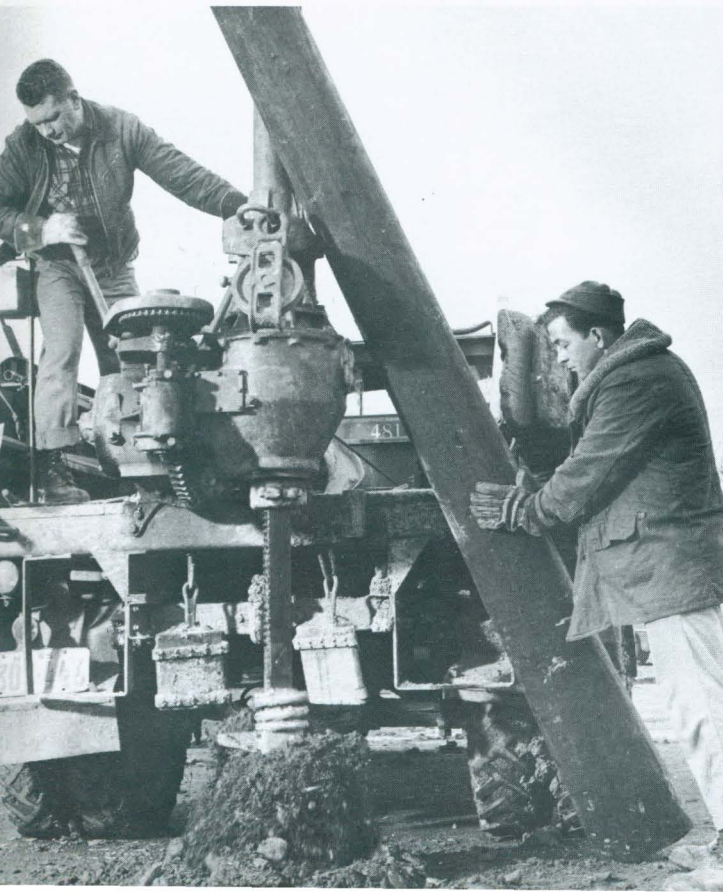
vice president. On becoming president, Campbell also was elected a director.

While Campbell's depth of experience was widely acknowledged, an editorial in *The Democrat and Chronicle* laid out the magnitude of the task that confronted him: "(Rochester Telephone) draws the wrath of its customers daily with slow connections, slower answers and broken conversations...Overcoming this dissatisfaction is a task that will test the tact, energy and vision of the new president."

Actually, service was somewhat better. In November, 1949, the Public Service Commission reported that the quality of service had "materially improved." Earlier that year the company had completed the dial conversion of all downtown telephones with the cutover, in two phases, of the Empire and Locust offices (the Empire designation was later changed to Emerson).

The company also stepped up its efforts to impress upon the public the scope and complexity of its operations. In August, 1949, it held open houses at its five manual Rochester central offices—Monroe-Hillside, Genesee, Glenwood, Culver and Charlotte. The public response was enthusiastic enough that the events were repeated in September and October at all five locations.

The rate case filed in 1948 that had produced two temporary increases was concluded in





December, 1949, with the Public Service Commission authorizing revised rates to yield additional annual revenues of about \$645,000. This was on top of the \$1.4 million awarded on an interim basis since the case had been initiated. That 1949 order also gave the company authority to raise the rate for local coin calls from 5 to 10 cents and early in 1950 Rochester became the first city in the U.S. to put into effect a 10 cent charge for local coin telephone calls.

The need for capital to finance the facilities to meet the escalating demands for service as well as to fund the ambitious dial conversion program continued to be a major concern. Since the war, most of the money for new construction had been raised by debt securities; now the company was looking to stock issues. There were five different offerings of common stock in the 1950's—in 1950, 1953, 1955, 1957 and 1959. By 1959, the number of shares outstanding had more than doubled while the number of Rochester Telephone share owners had climbed to more than 11,500, from less than 4,800 in 1950.

However, the money raised through the additional stock wasn't enough by itself to finance the company's mounting construction programs. Three issues of preferred stock were sold in the 1950's and another \$22,500,000 was realized through three first mortgage bond financings.

Aside from its insatiable need for capital, the company did well financially in the Fifties. 1950 marked the third consecutive year, since it touched bottom at the end of 1947, that it was able to report a substantial increase in earnings. The improvement did not go unnoticed by the financial community. The *Investment Dealers Digest*, for example, commented that the company "enjoyed a very encouraging turnabout" in 1950. While earnings slipped in 1951, revenue growth was steady, if not spectacular, during the Fifties, and the increase in operating expenses moderate.

Along with earnings, the number of telephones in service was also rising. The gain in 1950 was 9,212 telephones, bringing the company's total to 184,322. The increase was the third largest in the corporation's history. More significantly, over 80 per cent of the requests for business and residence main telephones were met during the year. However, the number of delayed orders for residence extension telephones increased, from 1,800 to 2,160, and many party line customers were still waiting for individual lines or other higher grades of service, some with increasing impatience.

In 1951, the corporation's 30th anniversary



year, the gain in telephones of 12,004 was the highest ever and raised the total in service to 196,326. New applications for telephones continued to pour in, with the company meeting more than 90 per cent of the requests and paring the backlog of orders from 2,540 to 1,650. The company installed its 200,000th telephone the following year. It had taken 50 years to reach 100,000 telephones in service; the next 100,000 had come 23 years later. And the 300,000th telephone was only eight years away.

Three times during 1952—at the end of April, May and August—all waiting applications for

*Opposite page, top left:* A public open house at a manual office in 1949.

*Center:* Cable splicers and linemen at work at the scene of a 1951 fire in Livonia that destroyed the feeder cable from the nearby central office. Service was restored the same day.

*Below:* New PIC (polyethylene insulated conductor) cable being installed in Irondequoit in 1955. The lighter cable was both easier to install and maintain.

*Right:* A familiar scene of the 1950's—an installer, here George Zimmer, puts in a family's first dial telephone.

*Above:* Engineers at work in 1953 plotting new and additional cable routes; from the lower left, clockwise, Bert Patterson, Bob Snaith and Bjarne Iverson.

basic telephone service were filled. However, a sharp rise in local industrial activity during the last three months of the year, together with a high level of home building, accelerated the demand for service, and by the end of the year the number of delayed orders again surpassed 2,000.

The 1953 gain of 12,809 telephones broke the 1951 record. From the beginning of 1954 to the end of 1959, the number of telephones in service reached 289,562, an increase of 70,838 telephones. And by the end of 1959 the average daily number of local calls had passed the million mark.

During 1954 the company reached its much sought objective of having sufficient plant, facilities and manpower to meet current demands for telephones. By 1955, after years of keeping waiting lists, the company could begin promoting extension telephones. The company also moved its executive offices in 1955. After nearly 35 years in the Triangle Building, it went across Main Street, to the second floor of the new Monroe County Savings Bank building at the corner of Main Street East and Franklin Street.

More telephones, of course, meant more plant, and during the "catch-up" decade of the 1950's total plant in service increased \$60 million, to more than \$94 million. The increase alone was nearly double the company's total plant in service at the end of 1949.

While the City of Rochester's population had already reached its peak by 1950, there was accelerating growth in the suburbs. Monroe

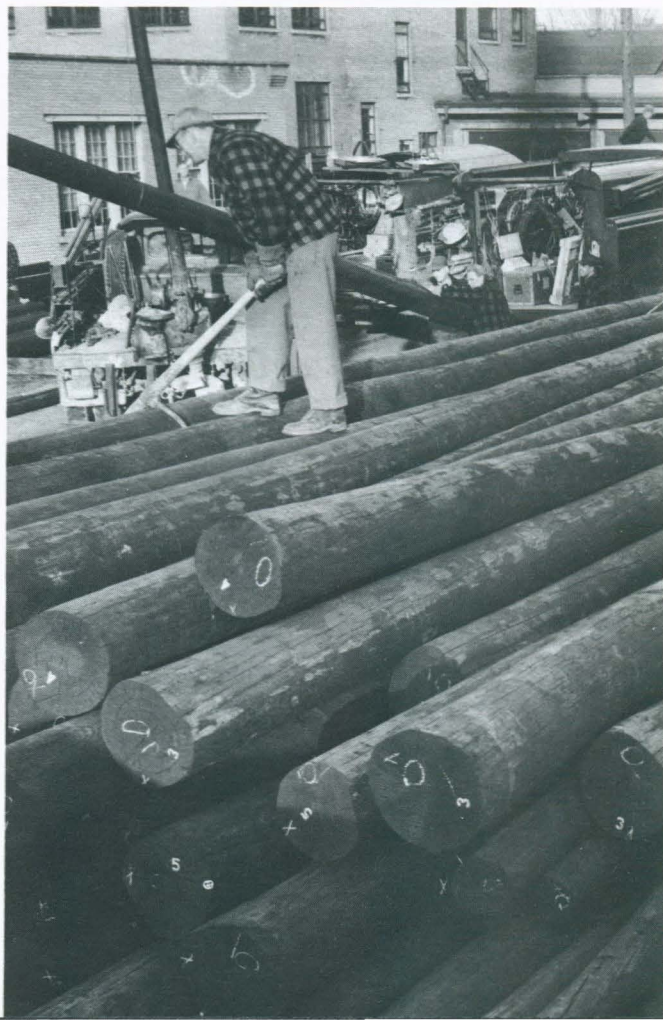
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### Explosions sent calls soaring

Local calling volumes set new records on September 21, 1951, the day of the natural gas explosions in the Twelve Corners area of Brighton. From about 1:30 to 3:30 that afternoon Rochester Telephone operators were deluged with calls, especially in the Monroe-Hilside office, which served the affected area. More than 30 extra local operators were called on duty and as the news of the disaster spread across the country, incoming long distance traffic also mounted, requiring additional toll operators.

With telephone lines undamaged in the explosions, the company made available a number of crews to the Rochester Gas & Electric Corp. to help in the clean-up effort. Three persons died as a result of the blasts, which destroyed or damaged 44 homes.

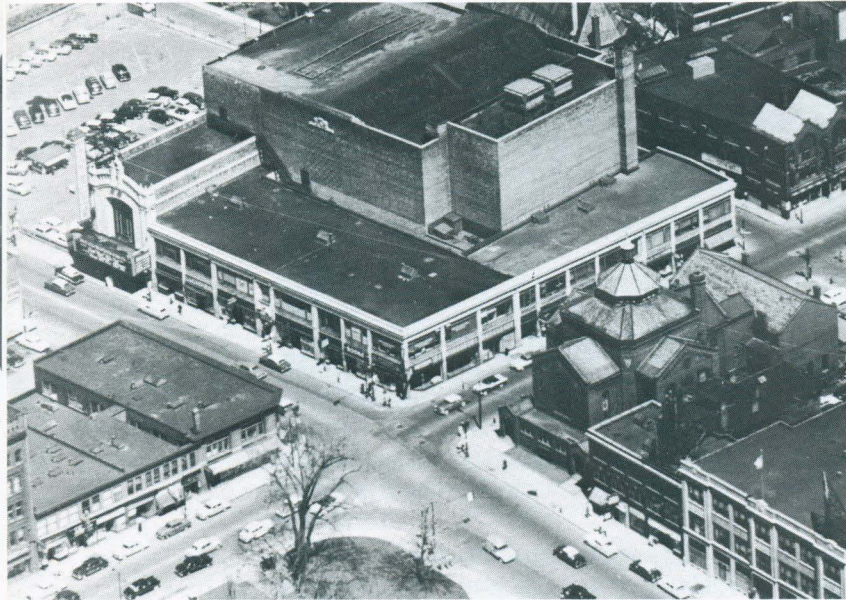
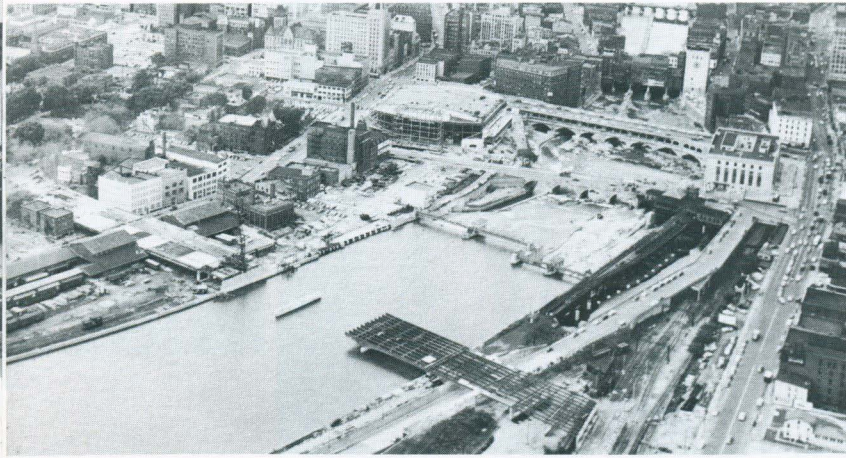
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*Above:* To keep pace with the rising demand for basic service, hundreds of miles of new cable were placed during the Fifties, both in the air and underground.

*Left:* Poles are readied for loading behind the St. Paul Street garage in 1954.



County's population had risen more than 20 percent, to 586,000, by the end of the decade, with the towns and villages outside the city registering a gain of 72 percent. And there was more explosive growth to come. Henrietta went from a semi-rural town of 3,400 people in 1950 to a busy suburb of more than 33,000 in 1970. Over the same period Greece's population tripled, and the towns of Brighton, Chili, Irondequoit, Penfield, Perinton, Pittsford and Webster also experienced enormous increases.

With the expansion came a burst of construction—of thousands of new homes; of the Eastern Expressway, the Inner Loop and Troup-Howell bridge; of suburban shopping centers; of a new General Hospital. In the city a new East High School and the Community War Memorial were erected, and work was begun on the Civic Center and Midtown Plaza, which was to alter dramatically the character of the downtown area. The county sales tax was introduced, and a second TV channel. The Temple Theater was torn down, with other major downtown movie palaces to follow within a matter of years. St. John Fisher College admitted its first students and the University of Rochester moved its coeds from Prince Street to the River Campus. Rochester's last veteran of the Civil War, James A. Hard, died at the age of 112; pitcher Johnny Antonelli was the Number 1 local sports celebrity; and the city's industry began to undergo a change of identity. General Dynamics took over Stromberg-Carlson, Burroughs Corp. bought the Todd Co., and Graflex and Commercial Controls both became divisions of out-of-town corporations. Even Sibley, Lindsay & Curr Co., one of the city's oldest establishments, was sold.

While much of the growth of Rochester Telephone in the 1950's can be measured in the hundreds of thousands of miles of cable laid, in the thousands of telephones installed, in new buildings and improved facilities, the development that most excited the public was the rapidly expanding dial conversion program. In May, 1950, the company began ordering dial equipment from Western Electric on a large scale. There were then four dial offices (all Rotary)—Baker, Hamilton, Empire and Locust—serving 44,000 telephones, all of them in the central business district of the city. In 1951, construction of a new building to house two new central offices was begun at 1035 Norton St., to serve customers on the city's northeast side and Irondequoit. The following year the building was completed and in November the first Western Electric dial units were delivered and the job of placing and terminating thousands of

wires begun. On August 2, 1953, the additional offices—Congress and Hopkins—were put into service and another 16,000 telephones were changed to dial.

That same year construction of another building was started and finished on the site of the existing manual office at 111 Field Street, which served the city's southeast side and portions of Brighton. In December, 1954, the new dial offices—Browning and Greenfield—were cut into service and the Monroe manual exchange silenced. Now there were eight dial offices in the city, serving more than half of the telephones in the Rochester area.

Another new dial central office building, adjacent to the Culver office on Hurstbourne

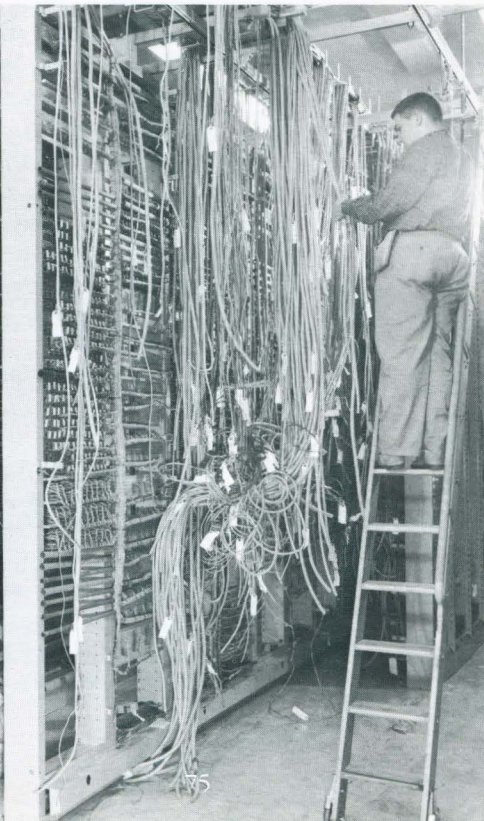
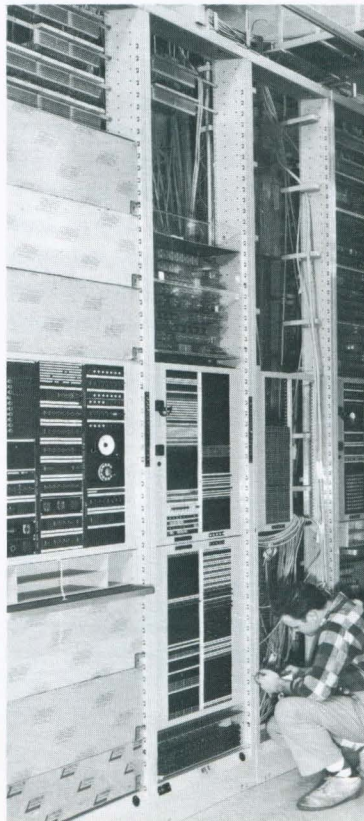
*Opposite page, above:* Downtown Rochester in the mid-1950's. The circle marks the site where the company's headquarters building was erected a few years later.

*Center:* Another view of downtown, this one when the Community War Memorial, at center, and the Troup-Howell bridge were both under construction.

*Below:* The intersection of Clinton Avenue South and Court Street in 1956—before Midtown Plaza and Xerox Square. Only the buildings at the lower right were still standing 20 years later.

*This page, above left:* A ceremonial ground-breaking for the Merchants Road dial office in May, 1953, with, from left, John P. Boylan, chairman; William A. Kern, executive vice president; and Donald H. Campbell, president. Right, the Norton Street office under construction in 1951.

*Below left:* A main frame is hoisted into position in the new Norton Street building. Right, Western Electric installers prepare to connect customers' wires to the frames.





Road, was completed in December, 1954. This office served the eastern section of the city, portions of Irondequoit and Brighton and later some neighborhoods across Irondequoit Bay, in West Webster and Penfield. The new units, Butler-Hubbard, were placed in service in November, 1955, giving the Metropolitan area another 15,500 dial phones.

Also in 1955, Pavilion and Hamlin joined the growing list of suburban communities with dial offices. Eight other community dial offices were completed in the 1950's: Wyoming in 1951; Naples in 1953; Victor in 1954; Castile in 1956; Caledonia, Lima and Scottsville in 1957; and Perry in 1959. In some communities, existing dial equipment was replaced with equipment of larger capacity, and additions were made to other offices.

After three consecutive years of dial central

*This page, above left:* Once the outside cables were brought into a new dial office, a cable splicer had to separate the wires and prepare them for connection to the frames.

*Above right:* The Business Office at Stone Street in the 1950's. Below, the adjoining public office.

*Right:* This portable microwave unit was first used in 1956 to send and receive TV signals for special events. The location is the roof of the Sibley Tower Building, with the view to the southwest.

office installations in the city, there was a lull in 1956. However, because of conversion projects on the drawing boards and the heavy demand for telephones, the company spent the largest amount on plant to date—more than \$9.7 million. That year the company also completed installation of microwave equipment to supplement wire and cable long distance circuits. And construction was begun on a Rochester crossbar tandem, which eventually would permit both incoming and outgoing toll calls to be dialed directly, bypassing the operator.

Dial cutovers resumed in 1957. In August, the company placed in service the Ludlow and Frontier dial central office units at 580 Fairport Road, replacing manual offices in the villages of East Rochester, Pittsford and Fairport. Subscrib-





ers in the three communities were then able to dial each other toll-free; toll charges also were eliminated between Rochester and the communities of East Rochester and Pittsford.

By the end of 1958, more than 75 percent of the dial conversion program in the Metropolitan area had been completed. The Beverly-Idlewood-Fairview office at 239 Genesee Street went into service that March, serving some 30,000 telephones in the southwestern part of the city and portions of adjacent towns and spelling the end of the use of the Genesee designation. Tandem switching for inward direct distance dialing also was put into operation, and major equipment additions were made to the four downtown dial offices to meet growth and provide improved grades of service.

Along with the steady parade of new dial central offices, the 1950's were characterized by a succession of rate cases. Until the 1948-49 case, the company had had only one rate increase in its history, in 1937. In June, 1951, the company filed to increase its rates, citing lower earnings, higher operating costs and rising federal income taxes. Two public hearings were held in 1951 and another in January of 1952. Although the quality of service was again criticized at the hearings, the Commission said

complaints it received actually had declined since their peak in 1946-47. In January, 1952, the Commission authorized increased rates for most local and supplemental services, to become effective the next month.

In September, 1954, the company filed for local service rate increases to meet continuing rising costs, principally higher wages and taxes. Two public hearings were held in the fall, with little opposition voiced. On December 21, the Commission authorized the increased rates substantially as filed. They became effective January 1, 1955. In its decision, the Commission said that in the three years since the company's last rate proceeding "...the Rochester corporation has made healthy strides toward the complete regeneration of its plant and facilities... Few welcome a relatively high level of rates and the many may be pardoned the grumbling when such status is combined with less than superior service."

*This page, above left:* The dial conversion program required visits to schools for classes on how to dial a call; the instructor here is the company's Ed Zimmerman.

*Below left:* The Fitzhugh Street complex in 1957, with each building identified by the year it was constructed.

*Above right:* Outdoor telephone booths like this one at Main and Stone streets began to appear on Rochester streets in the mid-1950's.



There was little argument that service was still less than superior. In 1955, magneto (crank) telephones were still in use in such communities as Scottsville, Caledonia and Lima. Hundreds of customers living in the booming Rochester suburbs were still reluctantly sharing four- and eight-party lines, unable to get the individual line service they were willing to pay for. Rates for a residence telephone had risen 35 percent since 1947, and for a business phone nearly 90 percent.

In September, 1955, death took John W. Morrison, former president and general manager, and John Craig Powers, a director of the corporation and its predecessor for more than half a century and a prominent banker and civic leader. Clayton E. Howden, plant superintendent, was elected vice president that same year. He continued to direct the Plant Department. Earlier, in 1952, Vice President Kern had been elected executive vice president, continuing in charge of the Traffic Department, and Arthur S. Gibson, controller and assistant secretary, vice president in charge of finance.

In June, 1956, the company experienced the second strike in its history. After 20 bargaining meetings had failed to produce agreement, Local 1170, Communications Workers of America (AFL-CIO), representing 800 Plant Department employees, went on strike for eight days. The union finally settled for weekly wage increases ranging from \$3 to \$5.50.

In February, 1958, the company petitioned

the PSC for an increase in local service rates, to produce additional annual revenues of \$2.1 million. This announcement triggered a series of critical letters to newspapers throughout the territory. Service was described as "25 years behind the times, poor, antiquated." The public hearings drew a parade of critics; even the Public Service Commission engineers testified that service was "entirely inadequate."

In August, the company got its increase, enough to boost its annual revenues some \$2 million—only about \$950,000 after taxes. But in granting the increase the Commission had some extraordinarily sharp words for the company's operations: "Listening to the testimony, it was impossible to escape the conclusion that the company is too compartmentalized; that its various heads of departments seem to be running separate empires; and that there is not sufficient exchange of knowledge or information... on day-to-day operations." Further, it branded as "inexcusable" the company's failure to provide adequate service in some areas, notably Canandaigua, Scottsville and Webster. As a result, it assessed a token penalty on the company by ordering a 30-day delay in applying the rate increases in those communities.

It was probably the most critical judgment the Commission had ever made of Rochester Telephone. And yet the public was still dissatisfied. A *Democrat and Chronicle* editorial observed that the Commission's "treatment was something like that of the bad boy who was given a spank-



ing and access to the cookie jar at the same time ... The PSC okayed the rate boost on the assumption that service will improve.”

That 1958 PSC decision marked both an end and a beginning. It was the end of the company's catch-up years when it spent an estimated \$45 million on dial conversion, dollars that it found increasingly difficult to raise. By 1958 the dial conversion program in Metropolitan Rochester was 80 percent complete, but the massive effort had exacted its price: With manpower and dollars concentrated on the purchase and installation of dial equipment, the quality of service had slipped. The cable network was overextended and overloaded; there weren't enough cable terminals to meet the growing demands for better service; customers had to wait from two to three weeks to have telephones installed. Later that year William A. Kern put it this way: "Because of our preoccupation with dial conversion, other things have suffered. Now we can start acting like a tele-



### Worth 'some friendly attention'

The company's listing on the New York Stock Exchange drew this editorial observation from the *Brighton-Pittsford Post*:

"...after so many years as the target of critical comment, the company ought to receive some friendly attention when it passes such a milestone. For the listing on the New York exchange is another sign that the company has emerged from its long stay in never-never land — financial and otherwise.

"There are a good many fascinating stories asking to be written about firms in this area, but few if any have sagas which quite equal the phone company's 60 years of ups and downs.

"No local company has ever raised hopes quite so visionary as the phone company; none has lived through such trying times after the brilliant dreams went pfft!..."

phone company. We've known how to all along, but we haven't been able to and carry out our conversion program at the same time."

If 1958 was the end, 1959 was the beginning and it proved to be a milestone year. In March, 1959, Rochester Telephone became the only independent, unaffiliated telephone company to be listed on the New York Stock Exchange. In April, it underwent a major reorganization of its general management with five new officers elected and a new post of senior vice president created. In August, the Northfield-UNiversity office at 3020 Dewey Avenue replaced the manual Charlotte office at Lake Avenue and Britton Road, adding another 25,800 dial tele-

*Above, left:* More than 400 employees, with from 25 to 50 years of service, at a service recognition dinner in 1950 at the Chamber of Commerce.

*Below left:* The Pittsford manual office in 1954. Three years later it was closed when the village went dial.

*Below right:* Telephone service being brought to another housing development.





phones and leaving only about 30,000 manually operated telephones in Rochester. In December, a new Plant Operations Center on West Henrietta Road was opened, consolidating construction and installation forces from around the Rochester area and providing brand new quarters for about one fifth of the company's 2,800 employees. With its opening, the company's old garage at 445 St. Paul Street, in service since 1924, was shut down.

Thus, the 1950's ended with a flurry of accomplishments, and with a severe ice and sleet

storm that toppled wires throughout the territory. Approximately 5,000 phones were put out of service over a three-day period. It took employees an estimated 50,000 hours, many of them overtime, to put things right. And at the peak of the storm, December 29, customers placed the greatest number of calls in company history, more than 1,500,000.

*Above:* The Henrietta Road operations center under construction in 1959 and, right, completed and in service. Southtown Plaza is at top right.

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### Telephone Pioneers...service is their goal

The telephone had already made its mark on American life when the idea for an industry-wide society of telephone people was first raised in 1911. In a letter signed by 169 Bell System employees, "early workers in the telephone field" were invited to help form an association under the tentative name of Telephone Pioneers of America "for the purpose of renewing and perpetuating friendships and fostering and encouraging such other worthy and appropriate purposes as may from time to time be suggested and approved."

The first formal meeting was held later that year in Boston, with 246 members on hand. One of the speakers was Alexander Graham Bell. Theodore Vail, president of AT&T and one of the key figures in the development of the Bell System, became the organization's first president. From those beginnings, the Telephone Pioneers have grown to become the largest social-industrial organization of its kind in the world, with more than 300,000 members, all men and women who have served at least 18 years in the telecommunications industry.

The first Rochester Pioneers began meeting in 1922 as members of the Empire Chapter, which embraced all of New York State and included employees of Stromberg-Carlson, New

York Telephone, Western Electric and AT&T, as well as of Rochester Telephone. In 1937, they formed the Genesee Chapter, which enjoys one of the highest membership enrollments of eligible employees of all 92 chapters. In 1979, the Genesee chapter had more than 1,000 members, with another 850 life members (retirees).

The triangular emblem of the Telephone Pioneers symbolizes the three principal purposes of the association: Fellowship, Loyalty and Service. In recent years the emphasis has been increasingly on service, with Pioneers performing countless activities—as hospital volunteers, organizing libraries for shut-ins, converting old switchboards for use in training handicapped children to use the telephone, repairing talking book machines for the blind, translating books and articles into braille, collecting and distributing used clothing for the poor, collecting eyeglasses for the visually handicapped, helping coordinate disaster relief programs, packaging and sending gifts to members of the armed forces overseas.

From a movement that began primarily as a social organization, the Pioneers have become one of the most service-minded groups in every community they serve.



# 8

## The Biggest Decade

The problems that had been smoldering for years inflamed the Sixties and seared the American soul. The riots in the cities, the assassinations, the campus uprisings, the casualty lists from a war that seemed to have no purpose and no end, all combined to leave many Americans confused and disheartened. By the mid-Sixties the national preoccupation was Vietnam and a war in which victory seemed unattainable and defeat unacceptable, a war that divided families and generations and changed the nation's politics.

It was really a decade of the young. It was young people who galvanized the nation with their antiwar demonstrations; it was youth that began smoking marijuana and launched the Beatles and a new wave of music; it was boys who first let their hair grow long and girls who first wore miniskirts.

It was an age of technology, too, of computers that could calculate millions of times faster than their creators, of

wondrous achievements in space, of organ transplants and artificial hearts, of the Astrodome and AstroTurf. It was in the Sixties that the nation's population reached 200 million. People's incomes rose substantially, with fewer people living in poverty. The proliferation of major league sports franchises made instant millionaires of youthful athletes. The last veteran of the Civil War died, the surgeon general declared cigarette smoking a definite health hazard, and under the pervasive eye of television more than 300 magazines and daily newspapers printed their final, final copies.

In 1979, the names and traces of the Sixties evoke memories of almost another age—James Meredith, Newton Minow, Vince Lombardi, Francis Gary Powers, Peter Max, Flower Children, Denny McLain, Billie Sol Estes, Virgil Grissom, the Boston Celtics, the Black Panthers, Mary Poppins, Huntley and Brinkley, Woodstock, Tiny Tim, Chubby Checker, Simon and Garfunkel, Eugene McCarthy, Stokely Carmichael ... But the people and the events of the Sixties were real and the dissents and violence they generated forever destroyed the complacency of the Fifties.

**“Let the word go forth from this time and place... that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans.”**

PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY, 1961

*“We shall overcome, we shall overcome  
We shall overcome someday  
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe  
We shall overcome someday.”*

“WE SHALL OVERCOME”  
MUSIC AND LYRICS BY ZIEPHIA HORTON, FRANK HAMILTON, GUY CARAMAN AND PETE SEEGER  
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**“It can be said now that the defeat of Communist forces in Vietnam is inevitable. The only question is how soon.”**

GEN. WILLIAM WESTMORELAND, 1967

**“That’s one step for a man,  
one giant leap for mankind.”**

NEIL ARMSTRONG, 1969

# The Biggest Decade

**I**n April, 1959, after 24 years with Rochester Telephone, William A. Kern was elected president and began to prepare the company for what was to be the period of its greatest growth. Kern, a Buffalo native and graduate of Colgate University, had worked eight years with New York Telephone—in New York City, Buffalo and Rochester. In 1935 he joined Rochester Telephone as district traffic superintendent. By 1945 he was a vice president and seven years later executive vice president.



William A. Kern

As president, Kern succeeded Donald H. Campbell, who became chairman of the board, replacing John Boylan, who had served the telephone industry for 67 years. Six months later Campbell also retired, having completed 47 years with the corporation and its predecessor. Also retiring that April was Arthur S. Gibson, who had been vice president-finance since 1952. He was succeeded by H. Elwood White, who had been controller and secretary. Clayton E. Howden, vice president since 1955, retired the next year after 44 years service. F. Mark Clark, commercial superintendent, was elected vice president-customer relations that April, but he also retired the following year. The new management team also included “an outsider”—

George S. Beinetti, a New York Telephone executive—in the newly-created position of senior vice president-operations. In selecting Beinetti, the directors departed from a long-standing tradition of promoting from within the company.

Under Kern's direction, the company immediately began the long and often difficult program of reorganizing itself and improving service. It got off to a strong start. In 1960, the company enjoyed its best earnings yet and added 14,689 telephones, more than in any year in its history. A record construction program of more than \$15 million pushed total plant over \$100 million. Dial conversions completed that year included the towns of Henrietta and Rush, where in March 2,600 customers began to be served by the new office on Erie Station Road. Many of them were so eager to try dial service that the company reported a flurry of calls just after the cutover hour of 2 o'clock on a Sunday morning. In June, the Livonia and Hemlock exchanges were converted to dial and their local calling areas expanded. In August, the manual Glenwood exchange was cut over to the new Clearwater and GLadstone dial office at 320 Lexington Avenue. That changed another 22,000 telephones to dial, bringing the Rochester Exchange to 95 percent dial. Only the Hillside exchange, served out of Field Street, remained manual.

Mechanization of customer bills also was introduced in 1960. Beginning that summer, customers received IBM punch cards with their bills and were asked to mail in only the cards with their payments. Late in the year, in November, a new operations center for northeast Rochester and Monroe County was completed at 1847 Empire Boulevard, Penfield. That year a new business office was opened at 66 East Avenue and the old one on Stone Street closed. The company's public office, where customers pay their bills and resolve questions about service, had been located at 63 Stone Street since 1921, with the exception of 1946 to 1949 when the Stone Street complex was being rebuilt. And there was a still bigger move ahead—in November, plans were announced to construct a headquarters building as part of Midtown Plaza.

The company's financial success continued in 1961. Earnings were up slightly and the first dividend increase since 1955 was declared, prompting the magazine *Financial World* to once again list Rochester Telephone among the "98 highest rated listed stocks" in the country. The total number of telephones in service reached 315,444, with more than 11,000 added during the year.

The year was marred by a nine-week work stoppage by the Plant Department employees, represented by Local 1170, Communications

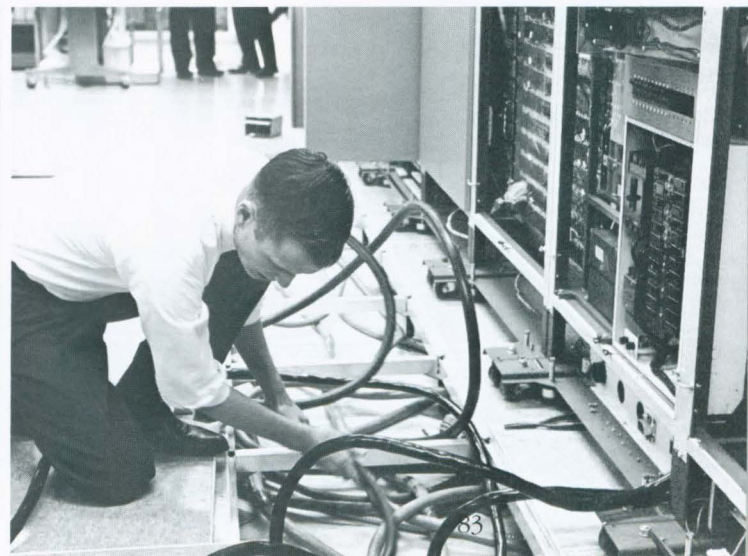
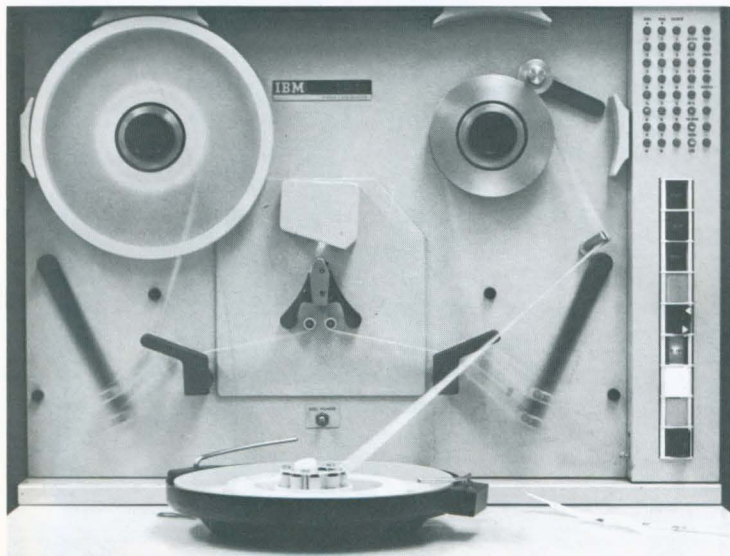
*Above:* President Kern at the company's 1961 annual meeting in his Monroe County Bank Building offices. By contrast, the company's 1978 Annual Meeting filled the Americana Hotel ballroom.

*Below left:* The face of a computer tape reader and, right, a new IBM system being installed at Midtown in 1963.

Workers of America (AFL-CIO). Most installation and construction work was halted, with only out-of-service trouble reports handled on a normal basis. As a result, when CWA members returned to work, they faced a backlog of some 7,000 service orders, more than 5,000 of them for basic service.

The strike also delayed several dial conversion projects that year. However, with management personnel taking over, the Webster and West Webster exchanges were converted to dial in June. The new Osborne-Trojan office, at 833 Ridge Road, served about 5,800 customers and replaced the old manual office in the village of Webster.

The company celebrated another milestone in 1961. On December 3, the dial conversion program in the Rochester Exchange was com-



pleted with the switching of the Hillside manual exchange to CHapel-Gilbert dial service. That same day more than 2,200 Brockport customers got dial service; outward Direct Distance Dialing—DDD—was established and put into effect for 87 percent of the company's customers; and toll-free calling was introduced between Rochester and the Ogden Telephone Company exchanges of Spencerport, North Chili and Hilton.

The real significance of the event of course was the end of manual service in the city of Rochester. From the day ground was broken for the first dial office in Stone Street, it had taken 15 years, an estimated \$45 million and the efforts of

thousands of telephone men and women. And there was still more to be done. Customers in Rochester's still rapidly expanding suburbs were seeking either dial telephones or a better grade of service; more than half the company's residence customers had four or more parties on their lines. But there were decidedly fewer complaints. And more compliments. President Kern took note of the upturn in a 1961 message to employees: "One of the symbolic changes in the telephone company and the way our customers think of us has been clearly demonstrated the past year through the increased volume of letters complimenting our personnel on their actions which have brought credit to us." Kern had the same kind of message that year at a meeting of the company's entire management team, the first in its history; "This meeting is symbolic of the new spirit of cooperation among all departments in the company, essential to our future growth and success."

1962 was another highly successful year. The company added more telephones than in any previous year in its history, 16,733; the sale of color telephones set a record; individual and two-party residential lines increased by 23 percent; and in the first year of Direct Distance Dialing the company enjoyed an appreciable increase in toll revenues. Earnings reached a new high, and for the second year in a row directors increased the dividend on the common stock. Of the \$15 million spent on construction, the largest single amount went for installation of aerial and underground cable to provide new service and improve existing service.

A highlight of the year was the opening of the four-story Rochester Telephone building at 100 Midtown Plaza. Leased for 25 years, the building brought together about 500 employees formerly located at four different sites—10 Franklin Street, 66 East Avenue, 360 East Avenue, and 63 Stone Street. The development of the Midtown Plaza complex—the Mall and Midtown Tower—presented the company with the largest single telephone installation project in company history. More than 20 telephone employees worked full-time at Midtown before its opening in April, 1962. Miles of wire and cable were strung through walls, ceilings and floors to provide service to the 4,000 people occupying the complex. By the end of 1962, more than 1,200 telephones had been installed, many as part of large internal dial systems.

Organization changes continued in 1962 with Gilbert A. Henner, former controller, elected vice president-finance, succeeding H. Elwood White, who retired after 40 years of service; and

*Opposite page:* The company's Midtown Plaza headquarters building being topped by its symbol in 1962; top, the building under construction that same year, and center, President Kern and Henry Gillette, then Rochester's mayor, cut a telephone cable to open the building.

*This page, top:* The CAMA (Centralized Automatic Message Accounting) board at Fitzhugh Street in 1961, the year outward Direct Distance Dialing was introduced in Rochester. The operators recorded the caller's telephone number for later mechanized processing. Inward DDD went into effect in 1958 with the completion of the first crossbar tandem.

*Below:* The company's Midtown public office.





with the election of George Beinetti as executive vice president. With the organizational changes came increasing attention to such areas as training, management development and recruiting, and safety. Until the late 1950's, for example, there had been little formal training in the classroom; it was largely accomplished on the job. However, by the end of the 1960's a full-scale training program for both craft and management had been instituted, involving as many as 85,000 hours in a single year. The company also began an extensive college recruiting program; many of the men and women hired in those years became members of top management in the Seventies, directing the company's day-to-day operations and helping to shape the important policy decisions of the future.

1963 was another successful year, with the highest revenues and earnings in history. More telephones—17,167—were added than ever before, and more money spent on capital expenditures, over \$18 million.

Fred C. Goodwin, Jr., secretary and treasurer, retired that year, marking the end of another era. The Goodwin name had been closely associated with the telephone business in Rochester for more than 60 years; his father, Fred C. Goodwin, Sr., helped organize the Home Telephone Company. The senior Goodwin was an original director of the company and one of the men instrumental in its development. His son had been active in the management of the company for 35 years.

There were continued service improvements in 1963. In January, 2,300 Scottsville and Chili customers, some of whom only a few years before were using magneto (crank) telephones, began to enjoy dial service from a new central office building on Stottle Road, in Chili. Simultaneously, toll-free calling was introduced to and from the Rochester exchange. In October, Mt. Morris went dial and a new business office was opened in Warsaw. Three years earlier the company had opened a brand new business office in Canandaigua.

In Rochester, the company's first building, erected in 1900 on Stone Street, was demolished to make way for a new three-story structure that would house Western Electric switching equipment to replace those first Rotary units installed in 1948. The company pressed forward in its mechanization program, too. With the addition of an IBM 1410 data processing system, it began to process all toll statements through the computer. Within the year the system would be utilized to compute and print all customer bills and to process service orders.



*Above:* A training session in pole-climbing in the late 1960's, and, at right, a class for switchmen.

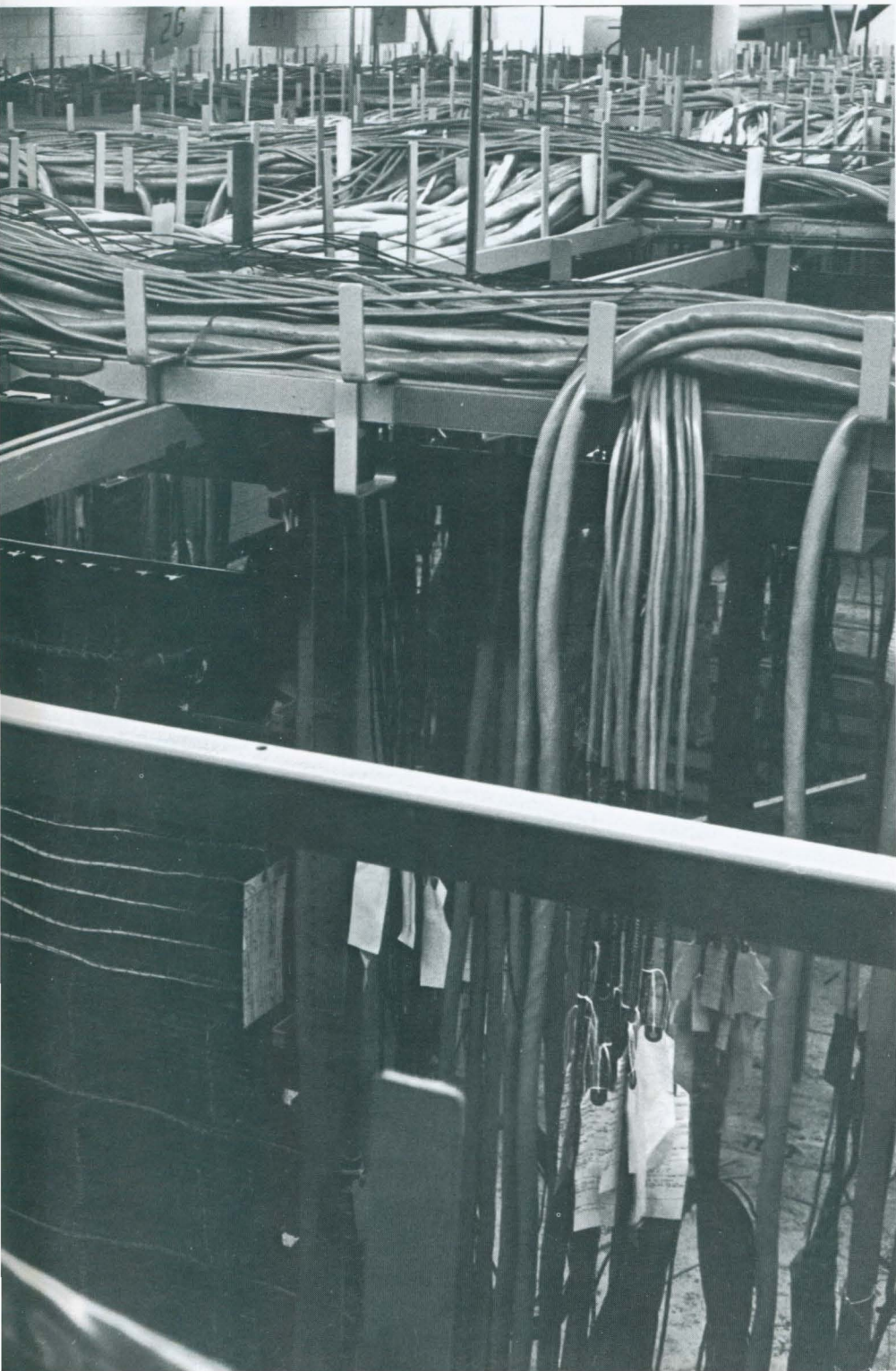
*Far right:* The wrecker's ball demolishing the company's original Stone Street building; below left, inside the new frame room, with cables awaiting connection to the frames; right, standing by to kill the old BAKER-HAMILTON-LOcust-EMerson numbers at the moment of the cutover in January, 1965.

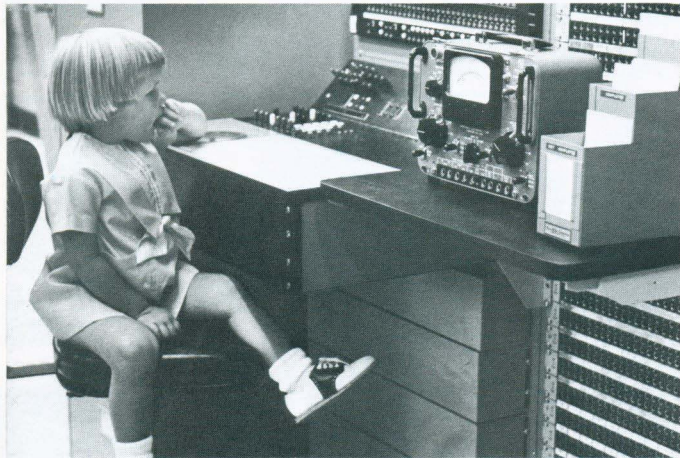
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### The decade in review

The company depicted its record of 1959-1969 in a slide presentation first shown at the 1969 Annual Meeting and later edited and shown throughout the community and on television. For those who realized how far the company had come, among them members of the press, it was an impressive show. The *Brighton-Pittsford Post* commented: "Surely one of the notable accomplishments in Monroe County in recent years has been the modernization of the Rochester Telephone Corporation... Operating a public utility is a difficult and often thankless task, for it is difficult to be both a successful business and a public service. The RTC is doing both superlatively well, and has gained this position against very substantial odds."

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1963 ended with President Kern recuperating from a heart ailment. Five months later, it took his life—he died in May, 1964, of a heart attack. A resolution of the Board of Directors eulogized him as “a man of great courage and intuition... He developed a strong organization to administer a growing company in an increasingly complex industry.” He was succeeded by George Beinetti, who in his first annual report the following year paid his own tribute to Kern as “the chief architect of Rochester Telephone’s dynamic growth and modernization.” Beinetti, a native of Albany, began his telephone career with New York Telephone in Albany as an engineering clerk in 1927 after graduation from high school. He later worked as a student engineer while studying at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, from which he graduated in 1933. He worked in Elmira, Olean and again in Albany before becoming division plant superintendent for the company’s Western area at Buffalo in 1955.

Under Beinetti’s leadership, accomplishments continued over the next few years. In addition to another record increase in telephones in 1964, the company spent more than ever before on construction—\$23.8 million. The dividend was increased for the third year in a row.

In January, 1965, about 15,000 Rochester customers began using new all-numerical telephone numbers when a new dial office at Stone

Street replaced the first metropolitan dial office activated in 1948. It marked the end of the first dial exchange names—BAKER, HAMILTON, EMERSON and LOCUST, all replaced by numbers. And with the change Rochester became the first major metropolitan area in the nation to be entirely equipped with the most modern dial equipment available.

Improvements also came in areas outside Rochester. In July, 1964, LeRoy went dial, and in October an improved dial system was cut into service in Cohocton. In June, 1965, manual service in Geneseo was ended with the switch to a dial system housed in a handsome new

George S. Beinetti





building; in July, Honeoye Falls was converted to dial; in October, Warsaw; and in December, Dansville. Overall, more than 10,000 customers were directly affected. Thousands of other customers in the company's exchanges outside Monroe County benefited from the expansion of their toll-free calling areas and from the introduction of Direct Distance Dialing. At the end of 1965, some 99.5 percent of all telephones in Rochester Telephone's network had access to the DDD network, compared with 83 percent nationally.

On November 9, 1965 the reliability of telephone service was vividly demonstrated. At 5:20 that afternoon the power went off throughout most of the company's territory and much of the northeastern part of the nation in the Great Blackout of 1965. But the telephones stayed on; in every central office back-up generators kept the switching equipment operating. Hundreds of telephone men and women remained on the job to handle thousands of calls that surged through the network. But aside from some delays in dial tone, caused by the huge calling volumes of that evening, the system withstood the crisis and for weeks afterwards customers were writing the company of their appreciation. "...it was a lifesaver to have unobstructed use of telephones," one businessman wrote.

In mid-1964, following George Beinetti's election as president, Jarvis M. Wilson was elected vice president operations, assuming

many responsibilities previously held by Beinetti. Wilson, like Beinetti, was a former New York Telephone executive who had joined the company as plant superintendent in 1960. He was to die in 1967, at the age of 61.

Other deaths in the Sixties included John Boylan, who died in 1960, a little more than a year after he retired as chairman; Donald H. Campbell, who had risen through the ranks to become the corporation's fourth president, in 1965; Raymond N. Ball, a director of the com-

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### All in the family

Traditionally, telephone men and women have been a closely-knit group; it's not uncommon for three generations of one family to work in the business. A survey in 1967 showed that of the company's then 2,700 employees nearly a fifth were related to each other—fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, uncles, aunts, cousins, nephews, nieces, or in-laws.

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*Above left:* The company's Geneseo dial and engineering center, which was placed in service in 1965; below, a young visitor at the employee open house that followed its opening marvels at a test board.

*Center:* A 1967 traffic accident on French Road in Pittsford brought out these repair crews, and, right, this 1964 fire in Brighton required extensive cable replacement.



pany since 1930 and a noted banker and community leader, in 1966, and T. Carl Nixon, one of the original organizing directors, died the following year. Justin M. Williams, corporate secretary and before that a department head for many years, also died in 1967.

With Wilson's death, James C. Henderson, a former New York Telephone executive who had joined the company a year earlier as planning engineer, was elected vice president-service. William A. Pitbladdo, company chief engineer since 1956 and a key figure in the dial conversion program, became vice president-engineering and construction. Adam J. Schwartz was elected secretary, with overall responsibility for community and industrial relations.

1966 was the culmination of the company's dial conversion program. The final office, in Churchville, went into service at 3:01 a.m. Sunday, May 15. It was a historic moment. As George Beinetti later put it, "...A new era was begun... There will be no more mass dial conversions affecting thousands of customers, but there will be huge equipment additions to maintain the fine dial service we now provide."

There were already signs of some of the improvements to come. Earlier that year the company had announced plans to build its first central office solely to accommodate future growth. The building, on Long Pond Road in Greece, would also relieve both the Dewey Avenue and Lexington Avenue offices. In the summer of 1966, construction began on the Metropolitan Rochester Long Distance Center, at 120 Plymouth Avenue North, behind the company's Fitzhugh Street complex. Equipment in the three-story building would handle all long distance calls originating in the Rochester area. Outside Monroe County the company completed an operations center at Mt. Morris in 1966 to serve as installation, repair and construction headquarters for the southwest portion of its territory.

Weather again tested the company's facilities and its employees that year. A snowstorm that began on Sunday, January 30, 1966, paralyzed the area for at least two days. With so many people stranded in their homes, calling volumes exceeded the peaks recorded during both the power blackout of the previous November and the day of President Kennedy's assassination. Operators already on duty when the storm began worked around the clock; many others walked to work from their homes. One employee made it to his job on snowshoes.

The Sixties were good years financially. Revenues and earnings rose each year; directors

### Safety through the years

In an industry that requires its workers to climb poles, descend into manholes, rig cable and drive millions of miles on the road every year, safety is a critical concern. Safety awareness programs, safety audits and training are conducted on a continuing basis. In the early days of the telephone, work was far more dangerous, involving greater heights, fewer protective measures and cruder tools. With today's improved work methods and technology, telephone work has become far safer.

While there's no existing record of deaths on the job before 1921, the year Rochester Telephone Corporation was established, only seven employees have died in job-related accidents since then. Three were fatally injured in traffic accidents; two fell from poles they were working on; one was electrocuted when he brushed against a high tension wire; and the seventh was struck and killed by a falling tree limb.



New linemen are shown how to check a pole for electricity before climbing.

voted dividend increases regularly; and the company enjoyed record gains in telephones. It recorded its 400,000th telephone in service in 1966, just six years after putting in the 300,000th.

Some of the revenue growth came from the introduction of new products and services—in 1967, for example, Touch-Phone, or push-but-

*Opposite page, top:* To meet the mounting demand for improved grades of service, cable construction and replacement continued throughout the 1960's.

*Below:* Contests among employees to increase sales of extensions and premium services were held frequently during the 1960's. Left, a group of plant foremen and their trophies; left, George Beinetti, as executive vice president, throws out the first ball in a 1963 Business Office contest which had baseball as its theme.



*This page:* Two of the special events of the 1960's that required special communications efforts: President Johnson's campaign stop at the airport in 1964, and, center, the 1968 U.S. Open at Oak Hill. The six women were telephone employees who provided change for coin calls and gave directions to spectators.

*Below:* The championship cable splicers softball team of 1965, which won five consecutive company titles in the 1960's.

*Opposite page, left:* Equipment for the time-and-temperature service, initiated in 1961, being adjusted at the Genesee Street central office by switchmen Chuck Cannioto and Pete Chapman, top. In extreme weather conditions, the service received as many as 40,000 calls in a day.

*Right:* Two window displays of the 1960's, both aimed at informing customers of important changes in their telephone service.

ton service, and TeleFinder, the direct dial paging service, came in. Three Centrex systems, through which telephones can be dialed directly without going through an operator, were placed in service that same year.

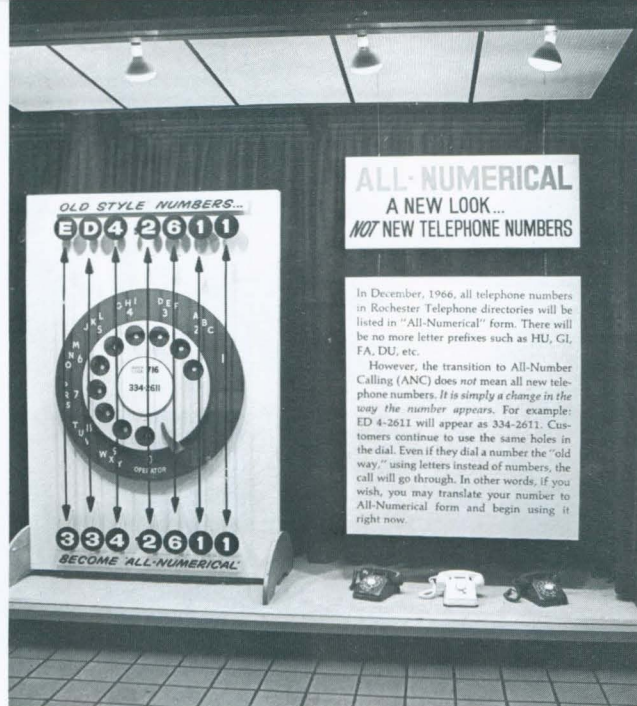
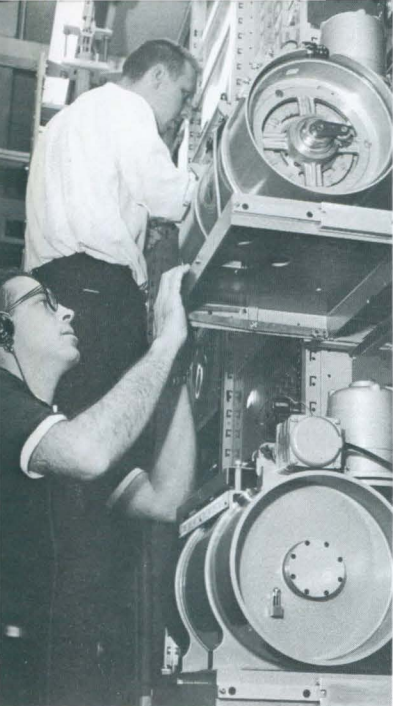
In 1968, the company wound up its installation of a communications system for Xerox Square, a job that took 11,600 manhours and more than 2,500 miles of wire. It also provided the communications system for the U.S. Open at Oak Hill Country Club, won in 1968 by a little-known Mexican-American named Lee Trevino; and it changed the name of its Information service to Directory Assistance, to discourage unnecessary calls.

George Beinetti said of that year, the final one in what came to be known as "The Biggest Decade":

"... It is appropriate that we set new records in 1968. It was the year of greatest growth for telephones added to our system—25,858. Our revenues and earnings were higher than ever before. We had more employees than ever before. We spent more on capital construction than ever before."

What had characterized this "Biggest Decade"? In April, 1969, at the company's Annual Meeting in the Sheraton Hotel, share owners heard a summary:

- The value of the company's plant had increased to \$234 million, from \$95 million in 1959.
- In 1959, the company spent \$12.8 million for capital construction, in 1968, \$27.7 million.
- The number of miles of wire in underground and aerial cable had nearly tripled, to 2,498,000, and during the decade all major cables were pressurized—with compressed air—to keep moisture out and in case of damage help crews locate punctures more easily.
- The employee body increased less than 6 percent, while the number of telephones rose more than 60 percent.
- The composition of Rochester Telephone's organization and its people changed, too. Ten years earlier the average age of 22 officers, department heads and district management heads was 55. By 1969 the company had almost twice as many of these positions, with the average age 44.
- Operating expenses, not including taxes, rose 89 percent during the period, to more than \$32.5 million. Taxes went up 138 percent. All this time, the price of basic service to the customer had remained the same.
- The number of private and two-party lines increased more than 250 percent. More tele-



### A farewell to familiar names

For many Americans, the telephone lost some of its romance with the advent of all numerical phone numbers in the 1960's and the elimination of familiar exchange names. Across the country such distinctive place names as Klondike, Nightengale and Rhineland passed out of existence. Here and there a few survived into the Seventies, but for the most part all were converted to numbers.

The industry had no choice—it was a matter of arithmetic. With the tremendous growth in telephones, companies were running out of pronounceable prefix names that didn't conflict with the area codes necessary for direct distance dialing. In addition, with the differences in alphabets, letter shapes and dial arrangements, international direct distance dialing would probably create further problems if letters were involved.

In 1947, in preparation for its dial conversion program, Rochester Telephone converted all its telephone numbers to four digits, preceded of course by the office or prefix. Two years later, for dialing purposes, the first two letters of the office names were capitalized and in 1956 a fifth digit was added, so that LOcusc 2000, for example became LOcusc 2-2000.

By then, many of the original office names had already been silenced. Stone, Monroe, Culver, Charlotte, Genesee and Hillside were all gone by 1966 when the company officially adopted all-number calling. Forty years earlier Park and Chase had been dropped. Main, dis-

continued in 1948 with the opening of the Baker-Hamilton dial offices, was resurrected briefly in the 1960's, but it vanished forever in 1966.

For the record, here are the life spans of the names Rochesterians once pronounced or dialed thousands of times a day:

#### Pre-Dial

Main*	1902-1948	Glenwood	1915-1960
Stone**	1911-1948	Charlotte	***1924-1959
Chase	1902-1927	Culver	1925-1955
Genesee	1906-1958	Monroe	1926-1954
Park	1911-1926	Hillside	1939-1961

\* Exchange established, but not by name, in 1879.

\*\* Exchange established, but not by name, in 1900.

\*\*\* Year it became part of Rochester Exchange.

#### Dial

Baker,		Northfield,	
Hamilton	1948-1965	University	1959-1966
Locust, Empire		Olympic	1959-1966
(Emerson)	1949-1965	Edison,	
Congress,		Keystone	1960-1966
Hopkins	1953-1966	Clearwater,	
Browning,		Gladstone	1960-1966
Greenfield	1954-1966	Dudley	1960-1966
Butler,		Osborne,	
Hubbard	1955-1966	Trojan	1961-1966
Frontier,		Chapel,	
Ludlow	1957-1966	Gilbert	1961-1966
Fillmore	1957-1966	Linden	1962-1966
Beverly, Fairview,		Tuxedo	1963-1966
Idlewood	1958-1966	Main	1963-1966

In addition, beginning in the 1950's, there were dial prefixes in the following Metropolitan communities: Brockport—Newton, 1961-1966; Hamlin—Woodlawn, 1955-1966; Scottsville—Murray, 1957-1963; and Victor—Warwick, 1954-1966.

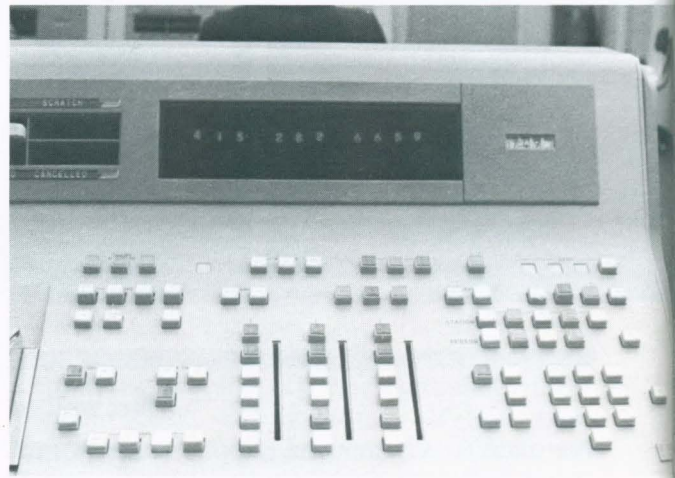
phones could be called without long distance charges, too; in 1959, a Rochester exchange customer could call 146,000 others without toll charges; by the end of 1968 that same customer could call 213,000. Fifteen suburban exchanges could be reached toll-free from the Rochester exchange in 1968, against just one in 1959.

• In 1959 applicants for telephones were told they would receive service in two to three weeks. By 1969 most residential orders were met within four days.

A customer attitude survey conducted in 1969 dramatically illustrated the extent of the company's progress. Some 92 percent of all customers contacted thought the company's service was either "good" or "excellent".

In 1969, the company completed work on its new long distance center on Plymouth Avenue. It was a massive project, involving hundreds of employees. Each central office had to be equipped with Automatic Number Identification equipment, to record customers' telephone numbers when they placed long distance calls; trunking capacity between the central offices and Plymouth Avenue had to be expanded; millions of dollars of equipment had to be installed in the Plymouth Avenue building, including new Traffic Service Positions for which operators had to be re-trained.

The actual opening was accomplished in two phases, with the cutovers about six weeks apart. What it meant for more than 200,000 Rochester Metropolitan customers was a new convenience in placing their long distance calls; they could



dial all calls direct, without any need to give an operator their number. For the company, it meant an appreciable increase in long distance revenues—45 percent alone in 1969 over 1968.

It also meant the official end of the other phone company in town, New York Telephone Company. Although the public was largely unaware of its existence, New York Telephone had continued to handle the long distance operation in Rochester as part of the consolida-





tion agreement in 1921. By 1958, Rochester Telephone had begun to handle some calls, assuming a greater role with the advent of Direct Distance Dialing. Most New York Telephone employees who worked in Rochester had already transferred over to Rochester Telephone when the final hour fell: At 1:02 p.m. Friday, July 18, 1969, the New York Telephone switchboard on the third floor of the Fitzhugh Street building took its last call. Now there was really only one phone company in town.

1969 was notable for other reasons: William A. Pitbladdo, vice president-engineering & construction, retired after 38 years of service. George Beinetti was elected president of the United States Independent Telephone Association, beginning a year of travel that would take him 35,000 miles and into more than a dozen states. Two of Beinetti's predecessors, John Boylan and Donald Campbell, had also served as president of the trade association.

For employees, one of the year's highlights was a series of meetings with the company's officers. Every employee was invited to one of 75 meetings, all held during working hours. At each meeting officers explained the company's

*Above top:* The Plymouth Avenue long distance center in 1969; below, a Traffic Service Position console, with the display panel showing the called number; right, the TSP office on the building's third floor.

*Lower left:* The final moments of three manual offices: Glenwood, Warsaw and Churchville. Right, the Hillside switchboard in 1961 in its last days before dial conversion.

activities and objectives, then fielded questions.

Financially, earnings reached a new high in 1969. Total plant went over \$253 million, and operating revenues increased from \$57 million to \$67 million. The Slimline telephone was introduced, to become one of the most popular sets in the company's history, and six more Centrex systems were installed, five of them in banks.

Rochester Telephone's excellent financial performance in the Sixties was due in large part to the tremendous economic growth of its service area. Paced by Xerox, employment rose more than 30 percent in the decade. While the city's population fell further, the suburbs were flourishing, with new housing developments,

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### The need for capital

As the company poured money into construction in the Sixties, its need for capital was undiminished. In 1960 and 1964, it went into the market for first mortgage bonds; in 1962 and 1969 it issued debentures; and in 1963, it sold preferred stock. In three other years—1961, 1965 and 1967—it issued common stock, most of which was bought either by share owners or employees. For the decade, long-term financing, either in debt or equity, amounted to more than \$108 million.

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*Top row, from left:* The excavation for Xerox Square in 1965; center, a construction engineer talks to the ground by telephone from the 27th floor during construction of the tower; right, telephone installers laying cable inside the tower.

*Bottom row left:* Joseph Avenue after the rioting of 1964. This particular telephone booth was undamaged.

*Below right:* The Xerox complex in Webster in 1974.

shopping centers and expressways altering their landscapes. The downtown skyline changed dramatically, too, with the completion of the Americana Hotel, the Civic Center, Midtown Tower, Security Trust Tower and of course Xerox Square, whose 30-story tower symbolized the phenomenal growth of the company that occupied it. From a firm with just 2,600 employees in 1960, Xerox by 1970 employed nearly 60,000, more than 12,000 of them in Rochester. Its manufacturing center in Webster tripled in size over the period, from 400 to 1,200 acres. During the Sixties two new campuses were developed, RIT's in Henrietta and Monroe Community College's in Brighton. There were two new television channels to watch, new suburban theaters and restaurants, a rising level of affluence and of expectations. Among some, especially blacks, there was increasing resent-

ment, which exploded in the riots of 1964. They focused new attention on their plight, generating both community action and the formation of self-help organizations like FIGHT. By the end of the decade there was a nagging new problem for Rochester: The economic growth that had distinguished the post-war years was beginning to slow. With the closing of several industries, unemployment began to increase.

The times were changing, and there was more uncertainty ahead. But the Sixties had been outstanding years for Rochester Telephone and while voicing concern over "the substantial obstacles ahead," President Beinetti struck an optimistic note: "...we really should start out the new decade with unbridled enthusiasm... We are fully aware of the changes that are taking place in this industry. It is the total communications industry now."



## Total Communications

The America of the late Seventies was vastly changed from the one of a decade earlier. Its mood was more subdued; the sense of excitement and urgency that burned through the Sixties had diminished, the causes that once divided the nation so bitterly seemed less critical.

The turbulence of the Sixties initially spilled over into the new decade. The Vietnam War and the sometimes violent protests it generated raged on; the crime rate continued upwards; inflation and unemployment persisted. There was a general air of disillusionment, of estrangement; nothing seemed to work like it used to, including the nation's biggest railroad, the Penn Central, which went broke.

It was also a decade when Americans were entranced with things electronic—there were ten times as many listening, watching, recording, copying and computing devices in use in the land as there were people. Digital watches and calculators, tape recorders, CB radios, plus nearly 600 million radios and television sets. There were more divorces in the Seventies and fewer births, more people living in trailers than ever before, six million.

And more women—by 1976 there were 5 million fewer males than females. The voting age was lowered to 18 and the Dow-Jones industrial stock index reached 1,000 for the first time. The famous and the infamous of the age included people like Henry Aaron, Alice Cooper, Clifford Irving, Evil Knievel, Patty Hearst, Bobby Fischer, Juan Corona, Thomas Eagleton, Lt. William Calley, Rev. Jim Jones, Angela Davis, Pete Rose. Its watchwords were Attica, Kent State, Earth Day, stagflation, light beer, pet rocks, Roots, OPEC and the oil embargo, women's lib, the Pentagon Papers and of course Watergate, which for all the trauma it caused produced a new spirit and a new balance of political power, as well as a new kind of president.

By 1979, an American born in 1917 had lived through four shooting wars, a Cold War, a Great Depression, domestic unrest unequalled since the Civil War, a presidential assassination and resignation. In his 60-odd years, he had witnessed extraordinary changes, in lifestyles, in social and political institutions, in moral standards, in technology... and in communications. Bell's first telephone of 1876 had grown to become 155 million, and the industry his invention had launched was undergoing profound change itself.

“The devil is at work in America. Everywhere you turn you see violence, pornography, hatred, crime, killing. Good is getting better, but evil is getting worse.”

BILLY GRAHAM, 1972

“To continue to fight through the months ahead for my personal vindication would almost totally absorb the time and attention of both the President and Congress... Therefore, I shall resign the Presidency effective at noon tomorrow.”

PRESIDENT RICHARD M. NIXON, 1974

“Not only is there no God, but try getting a plumber on weekends.”

WOODY ALLEN

# Total Communications

**T**he Seventies began auspiciously for Rochester Telephone. On April 14, 1970 the company reached 500,000 telephones in service—more than 13 states and 100 foreign countries. At the 1970 annual meeting, on the day following the actual installation, the company invited as its special guests the customers who had shared those milestones, from the 100,000th in 1929 to the 500,000th in 1970. At the meeting, President Beinetti put the company's achievement in perspective: "Rochester Telephone's revenues are not restricted to providing basic telephone service. We are in the business of providing total communications and that is not measured by the number of telephones in the field...Certainly we are still responsible for providing basic service, but our business has grown far beyond that and will change even more."

As an example of the changing source of revenues, Beinetti cited long distance service. Since the installation of the 100,000th telephone in 1929, toll revenues in absolute dollars had multiplied more than 34 times; the number of telephones had increased only five times.

While 1970 was the most successful year in the company's history, with revenues exceeding \$75 million and earnings rising 11 percent, it was also one of management innovation. A new department, Revenue Planning, was created; a systems planning group was established to

study more efficient and extensive use of high speed data processing techniques; and a special task force was assigned to put together the company's policy regarding interconnection.

Changes in top management found Adam J. Schwartz, former corporate secretary, in the new post of vice president-human resources; Peter A. Broikou, as secretary-treasurer; Donald W. Pearson, as vice president-administration. Gilbert A. Henner, vice president-financial resources and also a director, retired after 40 years with the company. Schwartz and James C. Henderson, vice president-operations, were elected to the board of directors, replacing Douglas C. Townson, a director for 33 years, and M. Herbert Eisenhart, a director for 27 years, both of whom retired. With his own retirement in 1971, after 45 years of service, Schwartz also stepped down as a director.

In keeping with its "design for the Seventies," Rochester Telephone changed the colors of its cars, trucks and vans from the traditional telephone green, which they had worn for half a century, to two shades of gold. The colors were chosen for both their appearance and visibility after a study by color consultants, artists and safety experts.

Despite lagging indices of economic development, the company spent more than \$25 million in capital investments during 1970. Construction was begun on two new central office buildings, one to serve the Gates-Chili area and the other in Perinton. Both units were designed to meet growing communications demands in suburbia.

In 1971, Rochester Telephone celebrated its 50th anniversary with another excellent year. It attained new highs in earnings and revenues, with sales of Yellow Pages advertising exceeding \$4 million for the first time (by 1978 they amounted to more than \$7 million). To keep pace with the communications needs of its territory and in anticipation of future demands, the company spent \$30.5 million for capital construction, the fifth consecutive year the construction budget exceeded \$25 million. The year's highlights included the opening in December of the Pixley Road switching center in Gates; placement of a portable, self-contained switching center in the Town of Farmington, to serve





*Above left:* A record number of customers and their families attended the open house at the new Pixley Road central office building in January, 1973.

*Below left:* The Farmington mobile switching center being lowered onto its foundation in 1971.

*Above right:* Construction and cable repair crews at the site of a major service disruption on Clinton Avenue South in 1970; below, a closeup of one of the mangled cables.

*Opposite page:* George Beinetti at the 1970 Annual Meeting with William J. Lewis, left, in whose home the company's 100,000th telephone was installed in 1929, and Kevin O'Brien, who ordered the 500,000th telephone 41 years later, in 1970.

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### The day the phones stopped

1970 was marked by one of the most serious disruptions of service in the company's history, with thousands of downtown business customers affected. On October 22, a Thursday, a contractor working on the Lincoln First Tower complex pounded a one-ton I-beam into six telephone cables carrying 8,600 pairs of wires. At mid-morning on a weekday, major businesses, including Rochester Telephone's own Midtown Plaza offices, suddenly suffered service disruptions. Initially, it appeared that it might be days before service could be restored to near normal. But with hundreds of company employees responding, partial service was restored that same morning and improvements continued during the afternoon. By 9 a.m. Friday, nearly 70 percent of the disrupted service had been restored, and by Monday service in every affected area was virtually normal.

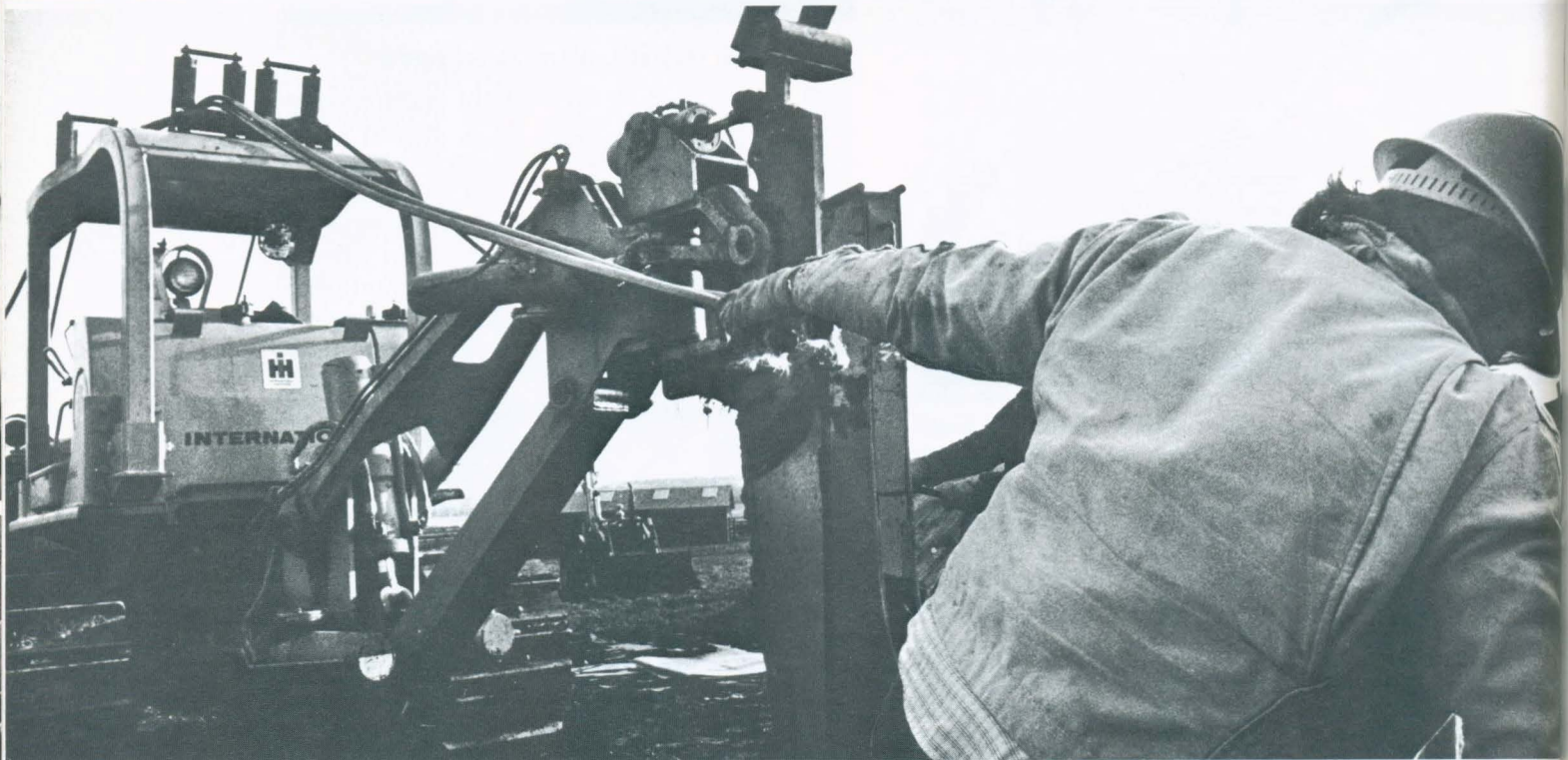
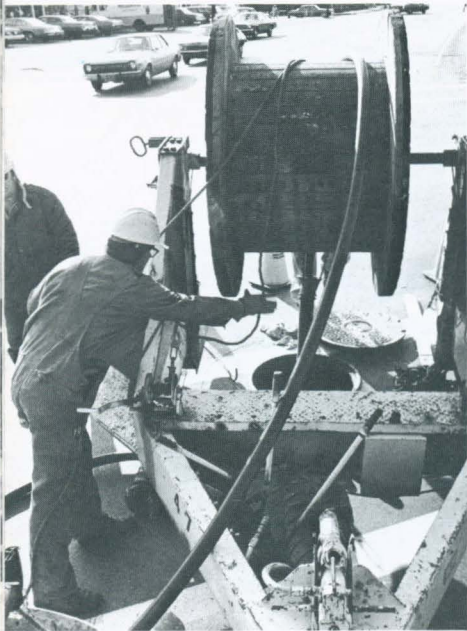
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that area's rapidly growing population; expansion of Touch-Phone service to make it available to 82 percent of the company's customers; and construction of a new operations center in western Monroe County, on Union Street in Chili.

To commemorate its 50th anniversary, the company established a professorship in communications at Rochester Institute of Technology. Named in memory of the late William A. Kern, the chair was created to foster communi-

cations research at RIT and to develop a diversified program in the communicating arts and sciences. The company provided \$175,000 for support of the chair, to be used over five years. Dr. Paul A. Miller, then RIT president, described the gift as "a significant tribute to Rochester Telephone's dedicated support of both the institute and of the community we both serve." In 1974, the original pledge was supplemented with a gift of \$425,000.

Funding of the Kern chair was only one of a



number of substantial donations the company has made to private colleges and universities within its territory through the years. It also has supported capital fund campaigns of RIT, the University of Rochester and St. John Fisher and Nazareth colleges.

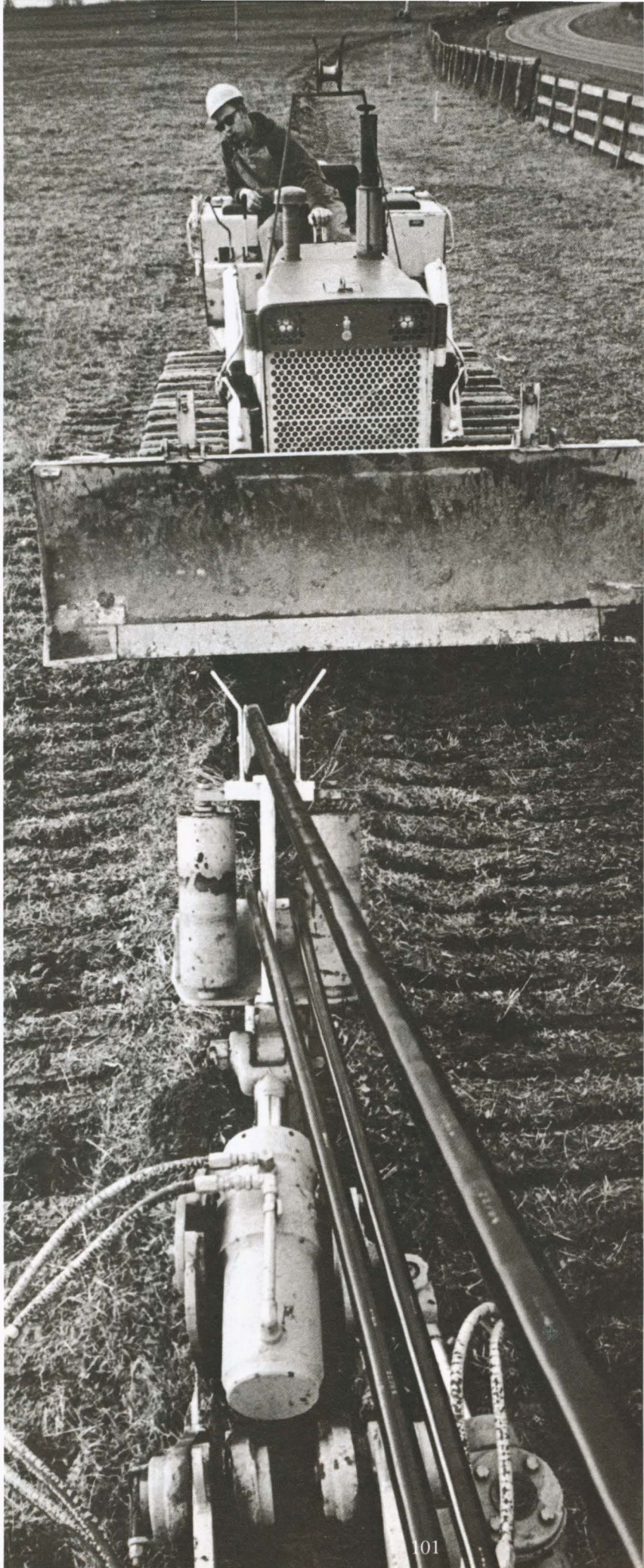
As an anniversary tribute to its own employees, the company established a \$200,000 Educational Assistance Fund to help them finance the costs of higher education for their sons and daughters. Up to \$12,000 is made available annually, to provide individual awards ranging up to \$1,000 a year.

1971 also was the year in which the company issued \$30 million in 30-year first mortgage bonds, until then the company's largest financial offering ever, debt or equity. Proceeds were used to repay short-term loans and to provide additional construction funds. And in August, in a dispute over work rules, Local 1170 of the Communications Workers of America went on an unauthorized strike against the company. The walkout lasted 23 days, with management people meeting service needs during that time.

In 1972, the company moved to acquire its first telephone company well outside the limits of its operating territory. The property, Sylvan Lake Telephone Company, served 6,000 customers in southern Dutchess County. The acquisition, Rochester Telephone's first of any kind since 1931, represented a significant change in the company's business philosophy—a decision to look outside its franchise area for growth opportunities. 1975 would see another acquisition.

Another highlight of 1972 was a record capital construction program of \$31.1 million. Other yardsticks of growth were gains in earnings and revenues, and reaching the \$300 million milestone in plant investment. The company also moved ahead with new products and services—Telefinder V. P., a direct dial voice paging service designed to supplement the Telefinder tone-only service introduced in 1967; a third channel for Improved Mobile Telephone Service, the direct dial telephone service for cars and trucks; and Touch-Phone service introduced in five more exchanges. Work was started on a special services operations center on Brighton-Henrietta Town Line Road, to serve as a headquarters for the technicians and vehicles that service the company's data, teletype and other complex equipment; and the company's

Undergrounding of new cable and existing overhead facilities became increasingly important in the 1970's. By 1978 more than 60 percent of the company's cable network was underground.





Perinton central office, the third built in five years just to accommodate suburban population growth, was opened for service.

The increasing importance of advance planning was underlined in 1972 with the election of a fifth officer, Richard M. Helmbold, who became vice president-engineering and construction. Since 1955, Helmbold had served in several departments and as operating staff manager, director of industrial relations and traffic manager. A year later, on May 15, 1973, he died at the age of 44.

1972 also was marked by a number of Public Service Commission decisions involving the company. The most publicized case was Rochester Telephone's interconnection tariff, which represented a unique and innovative approach to interconnection. The principle of interconnection—that is, attachment of customer-owned equipment to the telephone network—was established by the Federal Communications Commission in 1968. Until then, the telephone industry had generally prohibited any equipment but its own from connection to the telephone network. While the FCC ruling did not immediately apply to Rochester Telephone, the company recognized that intercon-

nection was inevitable and began an approach of its own that could anticipate its probable effects. Its tariff offered interconnection to both business and residence customers without requiring an interface device. Instead, the company proposed to use a network protection device developed by its own engineers, to be used in conjunction with inspection and certification of all equipment. This would not only insure protection of the network and employees working on it, but also enable the company to test the customer's access line right up to the point of interconnection. Since the tariff became effective, interconnection has become an increasingly important force in the industry, with many retail stores selling equipment directly to the public.

1972 also was the year of Hurricane Agnes and the destructive floods it spawned in Upstate New York. The company's Mt. Morris operations center was flooded, and more than 30 cable crews and 100 repairmen were called out to restore service knocked out by rain and the raging floodwaters. At the peak of the crisis, Friday, June 23, when the Genesee River crested downstream, local and long distance call volumes reached record highs.

In 1973, the company's officer ranks were expanded from four to seven in a management reorganization under which a new executive vice president and four new vice presidents were elected. James C. Henderson, previously vice president-operations, became executive vice president; Peter A. Broikou, vice president-financial resources; John H. Cline, plant manager, succeeded the late Dick Helmbold as vice president-engineering and construction; Alan C. Hasselwander, traffic manager, was elected vice president-service; and Thomas P. Riley was

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### Hall of Famers

Four former Rochester Telephone presidents are members of the New York State Telephone Association's Hall of Fame, which honors individuals whose contributions have helped the industry grow and prosper in this state. The four are George Fuller, John Boylan, William Kern and George Beinetti.

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promoted from customer relations manager to vice president-human resources. The four, together with Donald W. Pearson, vice president-administration, reported to Henderson. Earlier, at the company's 1973 Annual Meeting in April, share owners approved a 2-for-1 split in the common stock and an increase in the number of authorized shares from 6 to 14 million.

The company's expansion program continued unabated in 1973, with expenditures of \$34.3 million setting another record. Construction of the first electronic switching center got underway on Phillips Road in Webster; as part of the installation of a new communications system for Xerox, a third floor was added to the Stone Street central office building; in Canandaigua, the Chapin Street central office building was expanded one floor; a direct access intercept system was introduced in the Directory Assistance operation on Fitzhugh Street, enabling operators to provide customers virtually instantaneous information on new, changed or disconnected numbers; and the service order processing system was mechanized, with the computer handling all paper work associated with a customer's order, from the time the service is requested through the actual installation of the equipment.

While the company could report a number of

financial accomplishments at the end of 1973—an earnings increase of 12 percent, revenues of more than \$95 million, and the largest gain in telephones, almost 23,000, of any year since 1968—there were unmistakable signs that it couldn't maintain its progress without adjustments in local service rates. The rate of increase in operating expenses was outpacing revenue growth and, more important, more and more of its earnings were coming directly from its utilization of various Federal tax incentive programs. Without the use of tax credits, for example, the company would have experienced lower earnings in 1973, compared with 1972.

Against that backdrop the company publicly predicted that 1974 would be a critical year. It proved to be even more challenging than it had expected. As President Beinetti later observed: "The problems that confronted us in 1974 were both profound and unsettling..." They included a strike by employees represented by the Communications Workers of America; raging inflation; a business recession; and, finally, a decline in earnings.

The CWA strike began on November 22 after negotiations had reached an impasse. It was to become the longest strike in the company's history, ending 28 weeks later, on June 3. Service was maintained by the company's management



*Opposite page, above:* Popular fund-raising events of the early 1970's such as Hike for Hope and Walk for Water required special telephone facilities.

*Left:* A youngster shows her delight at trying out an operator's headset at an employee open house at Fitzhugh Street in 1972.

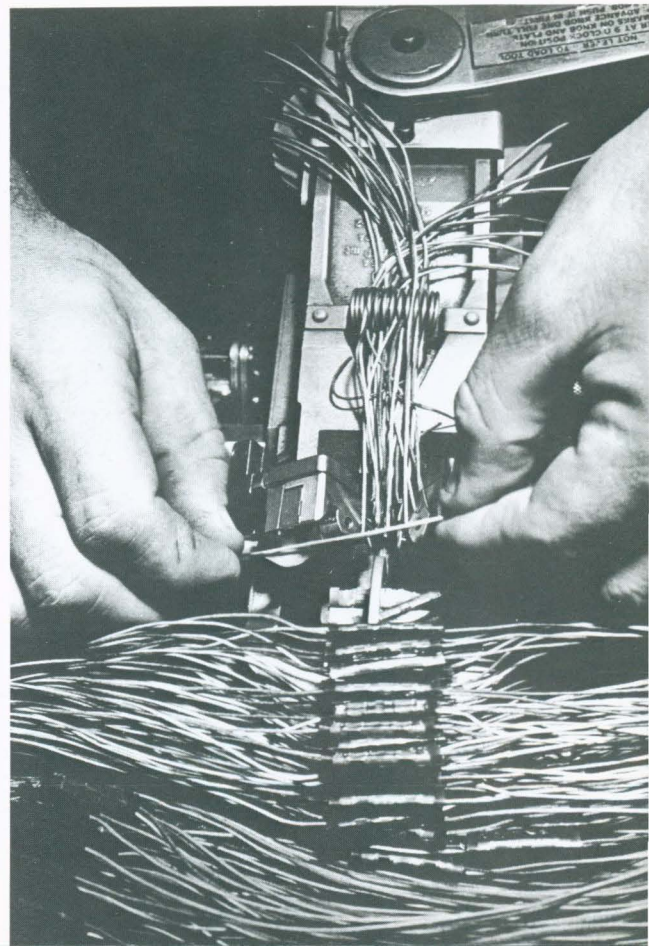
*Above:* 1972 floods stranded this van at the Mt. Morris garage.



personnel, along with the employees represented by the independent Rochester Telephone Workers Association.

The company's financial performance in 1974 reflected the bind it found itself in—squeezed between a rate structure virtually unchanged for 16 years and double-digit inflation. In August, 1974, it moved to improve its position by filing for rate increases that would provide an additional \$15.7 million in annual revenues, asking for \$11.7 million of it on an interim basis. The Public Service Commission, however, rejected the company's request for temporary relief and a year later authorized \$11.5 million in additional revenues, which amounted to a 14 percent increase in basic rates. It came too late to avert the company's first decline in earnings in more than 20 years. Net income for 1974 dropped nearly 25 percent. While operating revenues rose 5.8 percent, expenses climbed more than 13 percent and interest costs 26 percent.

There were several accomplishments during the year. With the contributions of the Sylvan Lake company, which was formally acquired in March, consolidated revenues exceeded \$100 million for the first time; another record capital construction program, this one of \$41.3 million,





was completed; and for the 14th consecutive year the dividend paid on the common stock was increased.

In April, 1975, there was another significant management change. James C. Henderson, executive vice president, became the company's seventh president and chief operating officer, succeeding George Beinetti, who was elected chairman of the board. Beinetti remained as chief executive officer. Before that, in March, the company completed the largest financing in its history, \$40 million of 30-year, first mortgage bonds. Proceeds went to repay short-term borrowings required for the company's construction programs since 1971. In June, the first "911" single number emergency system in the company's territory was cut into service, in Livingston County. And that same month tentative agreement was reached for another and larger acquisition, Highland Telephone Company of Monroe, New York, which serves a 335-square-mile area in Orange and

Ulster counties, about 45 miles north of New York City. The merger was completed in March of 1976.

One dramatic change occurred in the company's Business Office, where service representatives began to handle calls from residence customers by directly accessing their records through the computer. The new system virtually eliminated the need for customer paper records. A more visible change was in the work force. Through attrition, through an early retirement program, through continuing force adjustments, the company ended the year with 372 fewer employees than in 1974.

Financially, 1975 was a static year—earnings came to \$1.34 per share, against \$1.33 in 1974. Operating revenues totaled \$109.1 million, an increase of 8 percent over the previous year.

"On the whole, however," President Henderson noted in the year's Annual Report, "it was a year more auspicious for what it portended for the future than what it actually produced. Essentially, it was a year in which we laid the groundwork for future success—by updating our rate schedules, by extending technology and improving operating methods, by re-examining our entire organization to better prepare our-

*Above:* A service representative accesses a customer's toll billing statement for display on a CRT (cathode ray tube); right, before customer records were mechanized, a representative had to cope with paper records like these.

*Left:* A splicing machine helps speed connection of wires.

selves for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.”

In December, Peter A. Broikou, vice president-financial resources, resigned to pursue private business interests; his responsibilities were assumed by Donald W. Pearson, who became vice president-finance, treasurer and secretary. Earlier, in October, George Beinetti retired as chairman of the board and chief executive officer, concluding a career of more than 43 years in the telephone industry. He remained a director. James C. Henderson succeeded him as chief executive officer.

In his remarks before the New York Society of Security Analysts in July, George Beinetti reviewed the company's accomplishments since 1959, the year he joined the company and also the year the company was first listed on the New York Stock Exchange. He observed:

“Looking back to 1959...I can see vividly the tremendous changes that have evolved within Rochester Telephone—in our operations, in our financial performance, in the makeup of our management team. Interestingly, only two of the nine people who accompanied me to New York today were with the company then; nearly half of our current management team joined the company in the intervening period.

“I mention that only because it brings into focus the changes we all undergo. Certainly as a people, as a nation, we have been through tumultuous times since 1959—many of the events were unimagined back then. What happens in the next decade or so may well be equally momentous.”

And then he introduced the man who three months later was to become his successor, James C. Henderson.

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### Honors for Beinetti

In 1974, George Beinetti received the Distinguished Service Award of the United States Independent Telephone Association, the independent telephone industry's highest honor. Beinetti had served as USITA president in 1970 and as a member of its board of directors since 1964. In January, 1975, he was honored by his adopted community when he received the Civic Development Medal of the Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce. The medal is given annually to the individual who is judged to have made significant contributions to the community through his or her work in the field of civic development.



George Beinetti being congratulated by Dorothy B. Wadsworth, a company director, after he received the Civic Development Medal in 1975.

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## The Future Is Now

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“Now the times of plenty, the days of wine and roses, are over. We were in the lead car of the roller coaster going up, and we are in the lead car coming down.”

GOVERNOR HUGH CAREY, 1975

“The future of the telephone business may depend more on its ability to adapt to a changed environment than on its doing well in responding to the tasks of the business.”

INSTITUTE FOR THE FUTURE

“We cannot continue to presume that only we know what’s best for customers. We must learn to compete aggressively for their business and to offer them options.”

JAMES C. HENDERSON

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# The Future Is Now

**T**he election of James C. Henderson as chief executive officer in October, 1975, came just a few months short of his 10th year with the company. He joined Rochester Telephone in February, 1966, after 13 years with the New York Telephone Company, where he had been an executive in the Plant, Traffic and Engineering departments. In 1967, he was elected a vice president of Rochester Telephone and a director in 1971.

Henderson, at 47 the youngest president in the company's history, took over leadership on the eve of two significant anniversaries. 1976 was not only the bicentennial of the founding of the United States, but also the centennial of the invention of the telephone. And as it began its second 100 years, the telecommunications industry was undergoing profound changes. The competition introduced and encouraged by the Federal Communications Commission since 1968 was intensifying, with private ownership of terminal equipment becoming increasingly popular. In 1975, Rochester Telephone lost twice as many telephones to interconnection as it did in 1974 and by 1978 it would have 25,000 fewer business phones than five years earlier. At the same time, after several lean years, specialized common carriers, which compete directly with the Bell System's long distance network, were beginning to show a profit and aggressively seeking new customers. They began operations in Rochester in 1976.

While the industry continued to battle the new competitors in the courts and to press for Federal legislation that would limit their growth, Henderson was convinced that a restructured telecommunications industry was inevitable, and even desirable. In his judgment, a return to

the days when telephone companies were solely in control of service, from end to end, was impossible.

At the company's 1976 Annual Meeting, his first as president and which had as its theme the centennial of the telephone, he elaborated on what he believed to be the future direction of both Rochester Telephone and the industry: "Many of the changes we are undergoing could very well be in our best long-term interests. For example, some areas of the terminal equipment market clearly are not compensatory. By withdrawing from them, or at the very least pricing these offerings more realistically, we could greatly improve our profitability..."

"If we put our best minds to the challenges of our changing environment, I believe we can find significant opportunities to actually achieve a more profitable enterprise. But first we must recognize the inevitabilities of a restructured telecommunications system. Then we must apply some of the resourcefulness and ingenuity we have demonstrated as an industry in our first hundred years—to sort through the cross currents of change and to seize a major role in its reshaping. Done prudently, with imagination and in the spirit that made our industry so great, I'm convinced that we can enjoy continued success in the next 100 years."

*Right:* Sod being placed at Cornerstone Park, next to the company's Stone Street building, shortly before its opening in 1977; center, a portion of the crowd at one of the summer noontime concerts held there. The park was developed by the company for public use.

*Far right:* The furies of Western New York weather have constantly tested telephone workers; in 1976, in the middle of flooded farmland near Mt. Morris, a crew prepares to lower a cable for repairs; top, a communications technician, Charlie Miller, makes his way to an assignment near Cohocton in 1976 on snowshoes; below, braving blowing snow, an installer-repairman checks a repeater box near Fairport that same year.





James C. Henderson

To enable the company to respond more effectively to the industry's changing economics and technology, one of Henderson's first actions as chief executive was a major reorganization. Departments were rearranged, with four almost totally new ones created, including one devoted to marketing. John H. Cline, who had been vice president-engineering & construction, was elected vice president-state operations and assigned to direct the company's two subsidiaries in southeastern New York State, the Sylvan Lake and Highland companies. Alan C. Hasselwander, who had been vice president-service, became vice president-marketing and network, and Thomas P. Riley, vice president-human resources, was elected vice president-personnel and service. The fourth vice president, Donald

W. Pearson, retained his responsibilities as the company's chief financial officer.

There were also changes among the company's directors in 1976. Gilbert J. C. McCurdy, Dr. Louis K. Eilers and Dorothy B. Wadsworth retired or resigned from the board at that year's Annual Meeting. Of the three, McCurdy had served the longest. In his 33 years as a director, he had counseled four different presidents and had seen the company overcome its financial difficulties of the post-war years to become one of the strongest independents in the nation.

It was in 1976, too, that the company announced its plans to form a holding company to gain more flexibility in seeking new opportunities in telecommunications-related fields. Share owners overwhelmingly approved the proposal and the necessary petitions were filed with the Public Service Commission. Two years later, in March, 1978, despite a favorable recommendation from the PSC hearing examiner who presided over the case, the Commission rejected the company's plan, ruling that it was not in the public interest. In its order, however, it did stipulate that it would allow the company to diversify under its present corporate structure. This the company did several months later, establishing sales and consulting subsidiaries under a separate corporate name of Rotelcom.

Financially, 1976, 1977 and 1978 were all successful years. After a flat 1975, earnings in 1976 rose more than 42 percent, to more than \$17.6 million. With the contributions of both Highland and Sylvan Lake companies, consolidated revenues were up 14 percent, to \$136.1 million, representing the largest dollar increase



*Left:* Using a teletypewriter, a switchman tests for trouble in equipment in the company's first electronic central office, in Webster, in 1975; center, top, the electronic switching center on Brighton-Henrietta Townline Road shortly before its opening in 1977; and, below, the ESS system being installed at Plymouth Avenue.

*Right:* A Directory Assistance operator with a computer read-out of listings.

*Below:* President Henderson with a shareowner at an annual meeting; part of the record crowd at the company's 1978 Annual Meeting.



of any year in history. Most of the increase came from the rate adjustments that became effective in September, 1975.

The improvement continued in 1977, with earnings up 10 percent on a revenue gain of nearly 9 percent. Again, rate increases were instrumental. In August, 1976, the company filed for adjustments that would produce an additional \$12.3 million in revenues, later updating the amount to \$13.8 million to reflect adjustments in wages, taxes and other expenses. In July, 1977, the Commission authorized \$10.06 million in increased rates.

These rate adjustments, plus a substantial rise in long distance revenues, also benefited the company in 1978. Consolidated revenues for the year exceeded \$163 million, well over twice its revenues of 10 years earlier; earnings exceeded \$23 million, a gain of nearly 19 percent over 1977 and almost as much as the company's total revenues in 1958, 20 years before.

There were at least two other notable financial accomplishments of those years. One was the dramatic increases in dividends paid to

edge of change, was recognized by *Financial World* magazine in early 1979 when it named him one of the three top chief executive officers in the telecommunications industry.

Another improvement was in the company's cash position. In 1976, 1977 and 1978 the company was able to finance all of its construction programs through internally generated funds—that is, by earnings and depreciation. It ended each year with no short-term debt. While that performance was in sharp contrast to the frequent financings of the Sixties and early Seventies, it was symptomatic of the economic maturity of the company's territory.

For Rochester, the Seventies were years of moderating development. While Kodak and Xerox both expanded their manufacturing facilities, several other industries shut down or relocated operations, including such familiar names as Hickok, Stromberg-Carlson, Fasco and Superba Cravats. With the closing of the National Clothing Co. and E. W. Edwards stores, downtown suffered further erosion. Even suburban growth began to level off.

What this meant for Rochester Telephone was a slackening in the demand for communications. The Rochester area's spectacular growth of the Sixties had required major expenditures well into the early Seventies just to keep pace. Since then, the emphasis changed to refinements in service, such as expansion of Touch-Phone service and modern electronic switching systems, two of which were cut into service in 1977. One, housed in a new building on Brighton-Henrietta Townline Road, serves portions of the city, Brighton and Henrietta. The other, in the Plymouth Avenue long distance



share owners, an objective Henderson had set for his administration in 1975. That year the dividend paid per share was 76 cents. Three years, and five increases later, share owners collected \$1.31 per share. In 1978 the company paid out more in common stock dividends than it had earned as recently as 1970. This record, as well as his leadership of a company at the cutting



center, provides advanced communications services to Eastman Kodak and Xerox, which uses it to link more than 160 of its locations in the Western Hemisphere and Europe.

In addition, the company improved basic service in 1977 by mechanizing its Directory Assistance operation. Long regarded as a leader in the industry in finding new applications for the computer, the company teamed up with Computer Consoles Inc., a Rochester firm, to develop a system that enables operators to locate the most difficult listings in just seconds. Even sound-alike names can be called up instantly and the new or changed numbers relayed to customers.

While the provision of reliable service remains the company's paramount objective, the changing nature of the telephone business required increasing attention and a new focus on marketing and the development of new revenue sources. One result was the addition of an officer. In 1978, John R. Patterson, who had been director of market management-residence, operations with AT&T, was elected vice president-marketing and network, succeeding Alan C. Hasselwander, who was named vice president-network services planning. Among Hasselwander's primary objectives was the evaluation of the company's potential participation in the inter-city long distance market.

One of the most noticeable changes of the Seventies has been in the number of company employees. At the peak, in 1974, Rochester Telephone employed more than 3,300 men and women. By 1978, the number had decreased to less than 2,600. As the company explained in 1977, a number of factors were responsible for

the reduction, including greater utilization of new technology, increased emphasis on control of expenses and improved productivity. But it noted some less obvious reasons: Slower economic growth, which reduced telephone activity; higher non-recurring installation and service connection charges, which inhibited customer demand; and new methods of charging for installation work, which also had an effect on work volumes.

"In perspective, the labor force adjustments... are only a continuing reflection of the monumental changes taking place in the industry," the company concluded.

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### **'A senseless tragedy'**

The entire company was stunned in March, 1979, by the slaying of a cable repairman, Thomas P. Luciano, on Rochester's southwest side. He was working on a cable when he was shot and killed. It was the first incident of its kind in company history. In a statement, President Henderson said: "Under any circumstance, the loss of such a young man would be a tragedy, but the senseless manner of his death makes it far more difficult for us to accept and understand." A memorial fund was established for the benefit of his widow and two children.

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In anticipating and responding to those changes, Rochester Telephone designed several new services to give customers a wider range of choices and to encourage their active participation in selecting the service that was most

economical and appropriate for them. Henderson explained the company's philosophy in an article in *Telephone Engineer and Management*, a leading trade publication: "Through the years we as an industry, perhaps unconsciously, developed and encouraged a certain mystique about telephone service, creating a public perception of the telephone as an instrument that needs special expertise. Yet it's really no dif-

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### An equal opportunity employer

As a business whose success is inseparable from that of its territory, Rochester Telephone has felt a special obligation to the communities it serves. This commitment has been incorporated in the company's Affirmative Action Program adopted in 1971, which established objectives for increasing employment and career opportunities for members of minority groups and for women. Despite reductions in the work force in the 1970's, the percentage of minority employees in the work force has remained the same. In that same period more women have been promoted into higher level jobs. In addition, more jobs once predominantly held by men were filled by women, and, conversely, more men were working in what was once generally considered only female occupations. Recognizing that still more remained to be done, the company in 1979 reaffirmed its commitment to the principles of equal employment opportunity.



Beth Andres was named a frame supervisor in 1975; right, Carol White, a group chief operator.

---

ferent from many other household devices—people can learn to both wire and fix one... We cannot continue to presume that only we know what's best for customers. We must learn to compete aggressively for their business and to offer them options."

After a series of marketing studies, the company began to move in these new directions in 1977. It offered for sale telephones and outlets already installed. By owning his own equipment, the customer could save substantially on his monthly bills. Beginning the same year, customers who moved or ordered new service could re-use existing equipment on their premises and even convert outlets themselves to the new modular jacks, again at a significant savings.

The two subsidiaries established by the company in 1978 under the Rotelcom name represented another approach to the new environment. Staffed separately, Rotelcom Business Services sells business telecommunications systems of all kinds and sizes. A second Rotelcom division offers consulting services, primarily in the engineering field, to other operating telephone companies and to business organizations seeking more effective and efficient **ROTELCOM** communications systems.

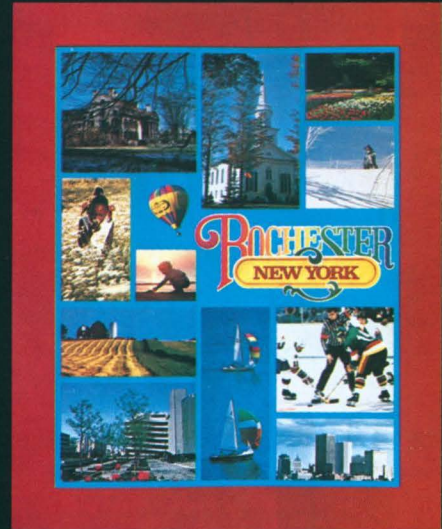
As they unfold, the changes taking place within the industry will undoubtedly continue to have a significant impact on the company's operations. As President Henderson observed at a 1978 seminar for management people: "There's a new telephone business. The combined effects of technology and regulatory change have created a more volatile industry, obsoleting many of our traditional practices and assumptions. Out ahead the telephone terminal itself will become more a symbol of communications than the actual instrument, with new devices and applications expanding its capability. By anticipating the changes and by working to develop and participate in new markets, I'm convinced that Rochester Telephone can successfully make the transition and emerge as a more versatile and efficient enterprise. We have a century of history, of service, working for us, and our future will be built on the foundations that telephone men and women have established over those first 100 years."

## The Color of the Times

Before the 1950's, the colors of the telephone industry were generally lackluster. Telephones were black, trucks were green. Directory covers, as well as most advertisements, were strictly utilitarian. Building designs were conventional.

The first breakthrough came in the telephone instrument itself. The initial changes were modest, but more vibrant colors and styles followed in the 1960's. Next, the new Rochester Telephone dial offices began to take on a different appearance, and by 1960 directory covers showed some personality. Still later came new and brighter colors for the company's fleet and more imaginative ads, especially on television.

The following pages briefly trace this blossoming of color in some of the more visible areas of the telephone business.



## Everything from 'A' to 'Z'

Modern telephone service would be virtually impossible without a telephone directory, yet Rochester's first directory didn't have a single telephone number in it, only the customers' names and addresses.

The community's first book, issued in November of 1879, had 32 pages of listings, 11 pages of advertisements, six pages of notices and instructions on how to use the telephone, plus a discussion of the dispute over who had invented the telephone (as a Bell of Buffalo directory, the article supported Alexander's Graham Bell's claims). Some of the customers listed in that 1879 directory were in the company's 1979 directory 100 years later—Alling & Cory, Bausch & Lomb, The Democrat and Chronicle, the Rochester Club, Sibley, Lindsay & Curr, Genesee Brewing Co...

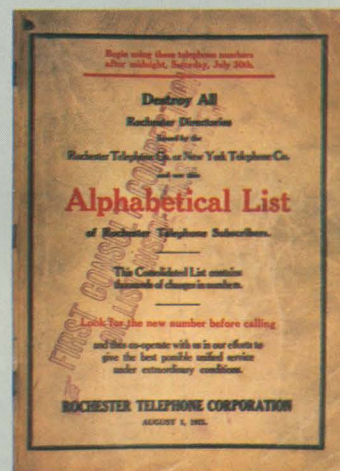
By 1910, Rochester Telephone Company's customers had been assigned numbers from 1 to 7644. Telephone number 1 belonged to Walter W. Powers of 234 East Ave., Hiram Sibley of 214 East Ave. had number 2. George Eastman, who lived down the street at 350 East Ave., had a much higher number, 5600.

Until 1947, Rochester's telephone directories carried advertising on the front cover. Directories then were usually published twice a year, with the Greater Rochester edition known as the Northern District book and the communities outside Monroe County combined in a smaller Southern District directory. In 1955, the title Northern District was dropped in favor of Metropolitan Area. Four years later illustrations were introduced on the cover, and full page color photographs in 1963.

Inside, the book's format changed greatly over the years, too. The preliminary pages—the section preceding the listings—were expanded and simplified, with information on community events and items of general interest added.

The appearance of the listings themselves may have changed most of all. In that first directory, the customer's names ran the full width of the page, without any abbreviations whatsoever. To reduce the heft of today's directories, listings are carried in five columns per page, with first names and addresses often abbreviated.

The Yellow Pages also have changed over the years, both in color and style. Once pink, Rochester Telephone adopted the standard yellow color for its business classified listings in 1951, along with the familiar Yellow Pages symbol. L. M. Berry & Co., of Dayton, Ohio, began as the company's directory advertising agent in 1919; by 1978 their arrangement had become the longest working relationship for both companies. R. R. Donnelley & Sons Co. of Chicago has printed the company's directories since 1949.



WINNING NEW FRIENDS EVERY DAY!  
*Beautiful Dry Cleaners*  
 Ring MAIN 24  
*Free Call and Delivery*  
**DOLLAR DRY CLEANING**  
 PLANT 301 22 PAUL ST

## ROCHESTER TELEPHONE DIRECTORY

NORTHERN DISTRICT • SUMMER 1937

**EMERGENCY CALLS**  
 Ambulance ..... Main 31  
 Fire ..... Main 31  
 Police ..... Main 31  
 Sheriff ..... Main 31

**ROCHESTER TELEPHONE CORPORATION**

FOR CHAS. W. NICHOLS TO GET YOURS IN THE MORNING LATER IN THE AFTERNOON AND TO BE FEEL-ALIVE NUMBER REFERRED TO YOUR ADVISOR'S OPERATION IN THE NAME NICHOLS AS A LOCAL CALL.

**35¢ TAXI 35¢**  
 4 Hours 75 Miles  
**MAIN 211** Public Agency Can.

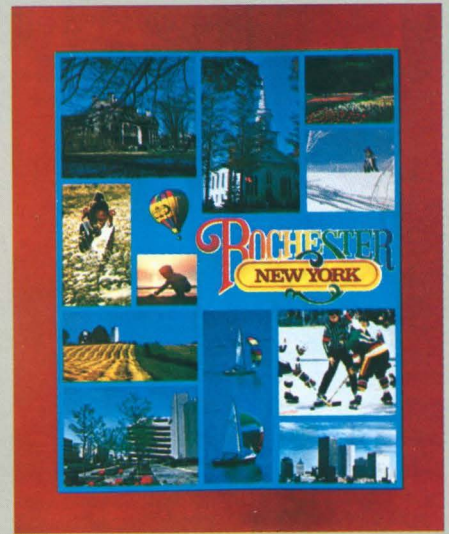
GREEN CAB AND BROKERAGE COMPANY • SHERLEY SPENCER, President

## Rochester

TELEPHONE DIRECTORY - metropolitan area

emergency calls fire police state trooper sheriff

ROCHESTER TELEPHONE CORPORATION



## ROCHESTER TELEPHONE DIRECTORY

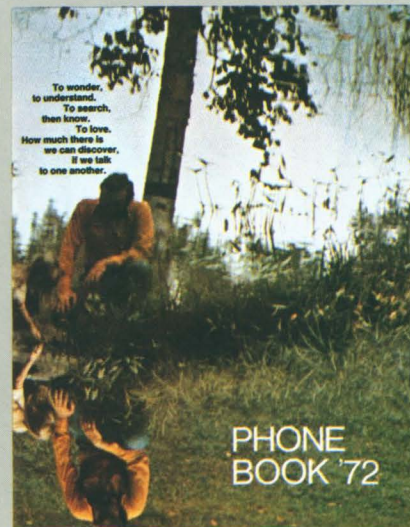
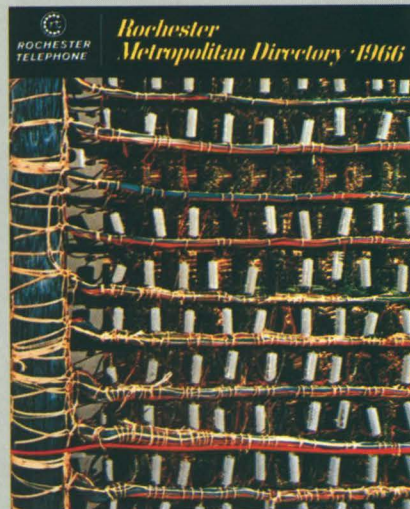
NORTHERN DISTRICT  
 1949

**EMERGENCY CALLS**

**ROCHESTER CITY EXCHANGES**  
 Ambulance ..... BAKER 0034  
 Fire ..... BAKER 0034  
 Police ..... BAKER 0037  
 Federal Bureau of Investigation. Call Information  
 Canal Street ..... CHANDLER 0000  
 Sheriff (Monroe County) ..... BAKER 0029  
 Fire .....  
 Police .....

**OTHER EXCHANGES**  
 Fire-Police-State Trooper-Sheriff  
 Call the Operator and say, "I want to report a fire",  
 "I want a Policeman", "I want a State Trooper",  
 "I want the Sheriff".  
 (If you can't remain at the telephone, tell the Operator where help is needed.)  
 Call Information for the telephone number of nearest office of Federal Bureau of Investigation.

**ROCHESTER TELEPHONE CORPORATION**



## From cranks to push-buttons

Since the beginnings of telephone service, the telephone instrument has remained the industry's most obvious, and visible, symbol. It has become one of the most familiar objects in the world.

The telephone of course is only one small part of telephone service. It works because of all the things connected to it—the wire and cable network, the switching equipment and other facilities required to complete calls. Yet over the years the changes in the shape and style of the telephone have reflected the continuing improvements in the quality and scope of the service it represents.

The first instruments, for example, were crude and, for the user to be understood, required a great deal of shouting. The longer the distance, the weaker the voice. Improvements in both transmitters and in transmission amplifiers increased the clarity. However, the sets themselves remained large and cumbersome; batteries and cranks were necessary to operate them.

By the early 1900's battery power to operate the phones was centralized at central offices, allowing the sets to become much smaller. The all-American phone of those years became the upright desk set, known as the candlestick, still in use in 1979.

In the 1920's, telephones took on a sleeker, more stylish look, in keeping with the Roaring Twenties. With a combined receiver-transmitter handset based on a European design, it was quickly nicknamed the "French" phone.

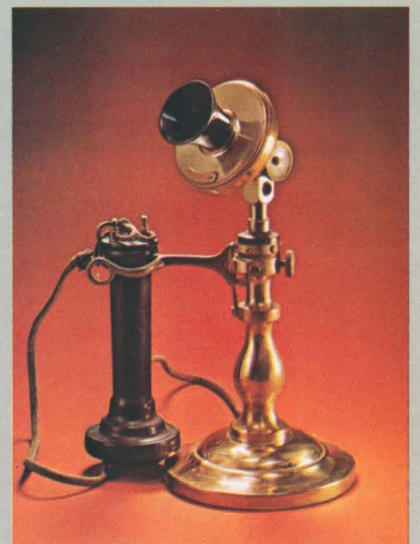
The most important development in the 1930's involved the telephone bell. Until then, separate bell boxes were required, but beginning with the sets of that decade the bell was placed in the base. First made of metal and later of plastic, vast quantities of this model were manufactured to meet the tremendous demand for service following World War II.

Color telephones were introduced in the 1950's, in both desk and wall styles. The desk set acquired a new kind of glamor in 1960 with the Princess set, whose compactness and illuminated dial made it a favorite with women and a natural as a bedroom extension. The Princess was later replaced by the Slimline telephone (Bell calls it Trimline), probably the most popular premium phone Rochester Telephone has ever offered; 35,000 were in service by 1978.

The Touch-Phone or push-button telephone made its first appearance in Rochester in 1967. Because special equipment modifications had to be made before it could be offered within a central office, expansion of Touch-Phone service was gradual. By the end of 1978, there were more than 150,000 in service, or about one out of every four telephones operated by the company.



1880



1897



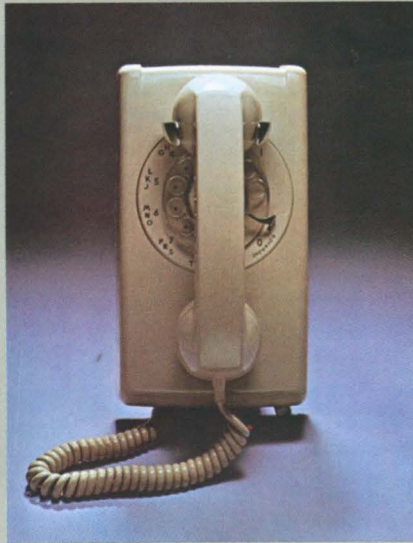
1910



1948



1928



1956



1967



1960



1969

# "Keeping you in touch" through the years

Like the telephone itself, telephone advertising has become far more sophisticated over the last hundred years. The first ads merely cited the "speaking communication" the telephone made possible.

A few years later the social prestige of having a telephone was emphasized, as expressed in this ad of the 1880's: "Telephones are rented only to persons of breeding and refinement ... There is nothing to be feared from your conversation being overheard. Our subscribers are too well refined to listen to other people's business."

To attract new subscribers and to encourage greater development of extension phones, the ads of the 1920's focused on the security and convenience a telephone offered. Over a two-year period Rochester Telephone ran more than 100 different newspaper ads, under such headlines as "A whispered word, and help is on the way"; "A telephone may mean a life"; and "For two cents, I'd get an extension telephone."

Although through the years most of the company's advertising has been informational in nature—announcing changes in rates, the arrival of new directories, expansion of local calling areas, etc.—in recent years the promotion of new products and services has gotten increasing attention. With the entry of competition in the terminal end of the business, ads also have been developed for special markets, such as small businesses.

As the content of the messages has changed so have the media used by the company to carry them. Where it once advertised exclusively in newspapers, later adding radio, by 1978 television had become its primary medium.

In a competitive environment, the company has also modified its advertising philosophy. Its theme now is the importance of communications in today's world and the professionalism, experience and expertise that Rochester Telephone brings to the job of providing it.

**Why mothers turn GRAY!**

Like a mother who is a child's guide, there are times when they need the services of the main household. They often take the law to their own hands and then wonder, "what of tomorrow?" Mothers, knowing mother's call interferes, look to the telephone. Mothers, knowing mother's call interferes, look to the telephone. Mothers, knowing mother's call interferes, look to the telephone. Mothers, knowing mother's call interferes, look to the telephone.

**ROCHESTER TELEPHONE CORPORATION**

**BURGLAR CATCHING**

it not for AMATEURS

Nowadays it is a wise man who knows that "detection is the better part of valor" rather than to battle with a prowler of the night.

Catching the modern criminal is dangerous and is strictly a job for the police. Why take this risk on yourself?

It's only a matter of seconds to get the police when you have a telephone. So it is safer to have a telephone—and cheaper, too.

Call our Business Office for one month or an extension telephone. (No charge on any pay station.)

**ROCHESTER TELEPHONE CORPORATION**

**TELEPHONE**  
may mean a LIFE!

Despite the warnings of the Health Bureau and the Automobile Club, like you to other with their cars also large the public of working in a garage. There must be some way open, so the family knows of an emergency, turned by the telephone.

When a person is overcome by gas or fumes, the telephone becomes a lifeline. Call for help, when the telephone becomes a lifeline. Call for help, when the telephone becomes a lifeline. Call for help, when the telephone becomes a lifeline.

**ROCHESTER TELEPHONE CORPORATION**

**IT'S DADDY!** There is just nothing like long distance to turn the miles into smiles. Use it yourself to gladden a heart tonight. Rates are lowest after 8 p.m. (and all day Sunday). Go ahead, someone will love you for it.

**ROCHESTER TELEPHONE**

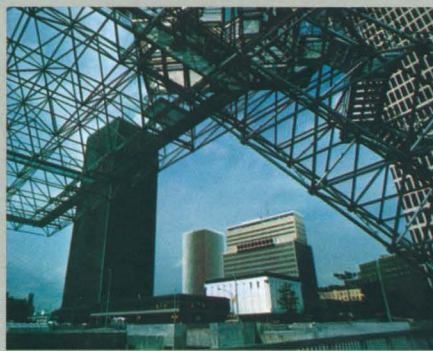
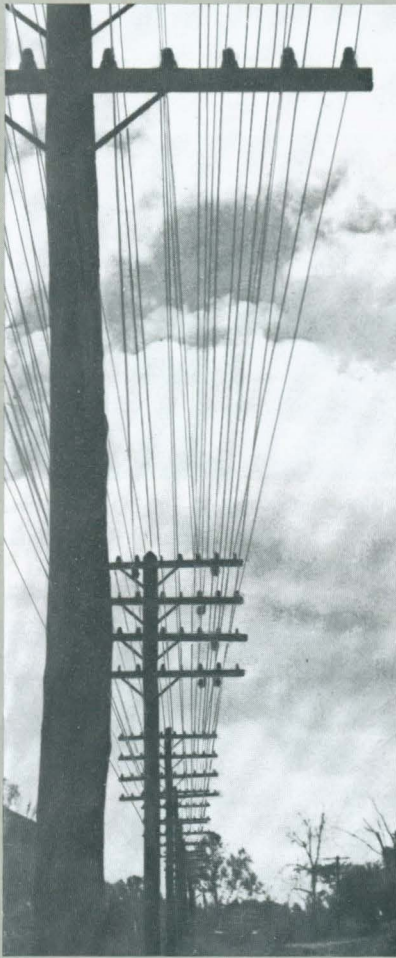
**ROCHESTER TELEPHONE**

**ROCHESTER TELEPHONE**

**ROCHESTER TELEPHONE**

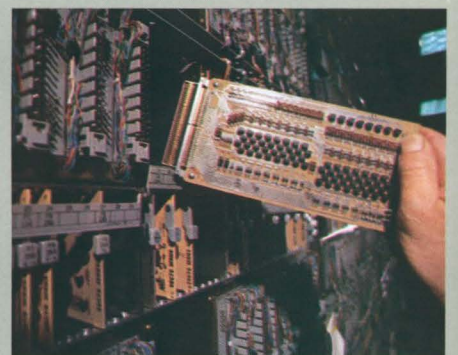
Three of the television personalities sponsored by Rochester Telephone through the years; from the top, Bob Lloyd, Bob Mills and Tom Decker





*I am a copper wire slung in the air,  
Slim against the sun I make not  
even a clear line of shadow,  
Night and day I keep singing—  
bumming and thrumming:  
It is love and war and money;  
it is the fighting and the tears,  
the work and want,  
Death and laughter of men and  
women passing through me,  
carrier of your speech,  
In the rain and the wet dripping,  
in the dawn and the shine drying,  
A copper wire.*

"UNDER A TELEPHONE POLE"  
CARL SANDBURG



## Directors of Rochester Telephone Corporation 1921-1979

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(in chronological order)

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 Fred C. Goodwin†\*  
 Peter O. Jacobs\*  
 Thomas E. Lannin\*  
 Carl F. Lomb†\*  
 W. Roy McCannet†\*  
 T. Carl Nixon†\*  
 John Craig Powers†\*  
 Frank T. Sage\*  
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 Heber W. Wheelert†  
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 Keith S. McHugh  
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 Victor E. Cooley  
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 Nutting Wigton  
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Frank P. Lawrence  
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 Robert M. Bruce  
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 Joseph B. Flavin  
 Adam J. Schwartz  
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(listed alphabetically)

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 Howard F. Carver  
 J. Wallace Ely†  
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 (nominee)  
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 Lucius R. Gordon†  
 Alexander D. Hargrave†  
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 Robert A. Sherman  
 Michael T. Tomaino  
 Richard L. Turner  
 (nominee)  
 W. Allen Wallis†

\*Original members of board  
in 1921

†Director for 10 years or more

## Acknowledgements

This book could not have been completed, probably within another hundred years, without the assistance of many people, the encouragement of associates and the spur of an immovable deadline. Together, they helped produce the pages that precede this.

Much of the basic research for *This Great Contrivance* was done by Herbert G. Jackson, Jr. Many other people made important contributions. Especially helpful were Bill O'Hagan, Bill Pitbladdo, Adam Schwartz, Dick Brookins and John Purcell. The support of Jim Henderson and Tom Riley was also instrumental. Special thanks are due Jarvis Kelly, who typed the manuscript and the 3,300 employee names that begin and end it.

Many of the photographs were made available from outside sources—the Albert Stone collection of the Rochester Museum and Science Center, the Local History Division of the Rochester Public Library, the Rochester Historical Society, AT&T, the Eastman School of Music, Eastman Kodak Company, the George Eastman House, and Xerox Corporation. Their courtesy is appreciated. Not all the subjects in the photographs, incidentally, could be identified, for reasons of both space and the lack of positive identification.

While the material in the book was carefully researched and checked, omissions and inaccuracies are probably inevitable. In the course of a hundred years, all sources don't always agree on names, dates or historical ramifications. Telephone terms also may occasionally be used imperfectly.

The question of the book's objectivity will have to be decided by more impartial readers. I can only say that no one, within the company or without, ever suggested to me that any material should either be omitted or included.

While *This Great Contrivance* is in name a corporate history, it is more the story of the telephone in Rochester and the people for whom the telephone has been a focal part of their lives—the men and women who installed and maintained it, who constructed its pole lines and cable, who connected its lines and wires, who completed the calls made through it, who compiled the service records and bills of customers who use it, who contributed in any way to its development and growth. If we have told their story well, all of them, together with members of their families, their descendants and the company's share owners whose investments have kept the telephones working through the years, should feel a new pride from their individual roles in it.

*Larry Howe*

Lawrence Howe  
Rochester Telephone Corporation  
March 31, 1979

## Photo Credits

The majority of the photographs in *This Great Contrivance* were taken on assignment for Rochester Telephone Company and Rochester Telephone Corporation. The credits on this page list the other sources of the photographs that appear in the book.

Photographers commissioned through the years and whose work can be identified include, in alphabetical order: Talis Bergmanis, Hal Campbell, Gary Geer, Byron Morgan, Andy Olenick, Lou Ouzer, Rowe Commercial Photographers and F. L. Schaeffer. Their contributions are greatly appreciated, especially those of Lou Ouzer, who was the company's principal photographer for more than 15 years.

Black and white credits: AT&T, Pages 2, 3, 9, 27; Eastman Kodak Co., Page 31; Eastman School of Music, Page 41; Gannett Co., Pages 54, 56, 75; George Eastman House, Page 11; Local History Division, Rochester Public Library, Pages 3, 4, 7, 10, 12, 21, 41, 52, 53, 60, 62, 63, 74; Rochester Historical Society, Pages 5, 7, 8-9; Stone Collection, Rochester Museum and Science Center, Pages 7, 16, 18-19, 21, 22, 24-25, 26, 27, 38, 40, 41, 52; Xerox Corp., Page 96.

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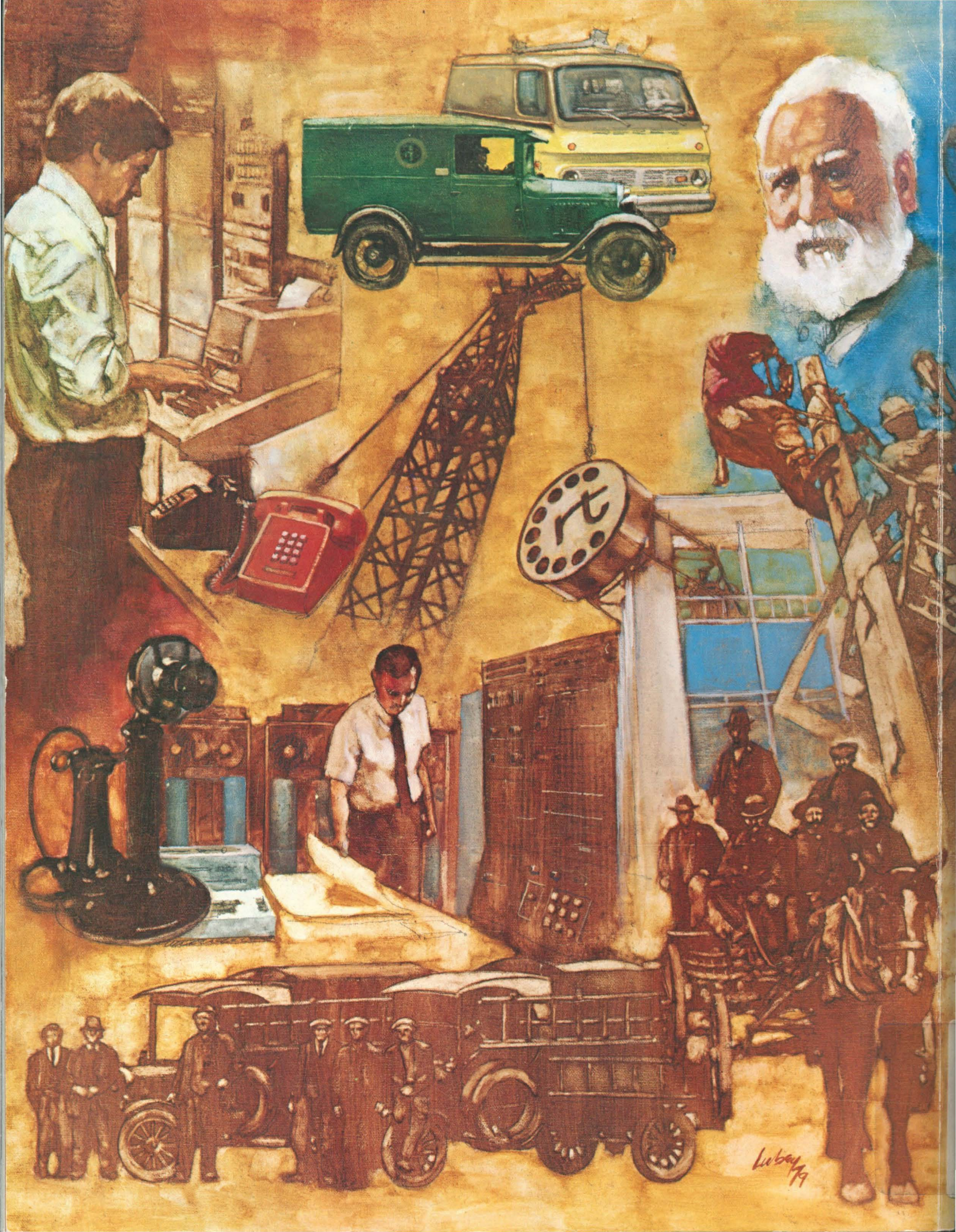
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