



An early 1900 telephone switchboard

A Telephone History

FOR

Carpentersville

Gilberts

East Dundee

Sleepy Hollow

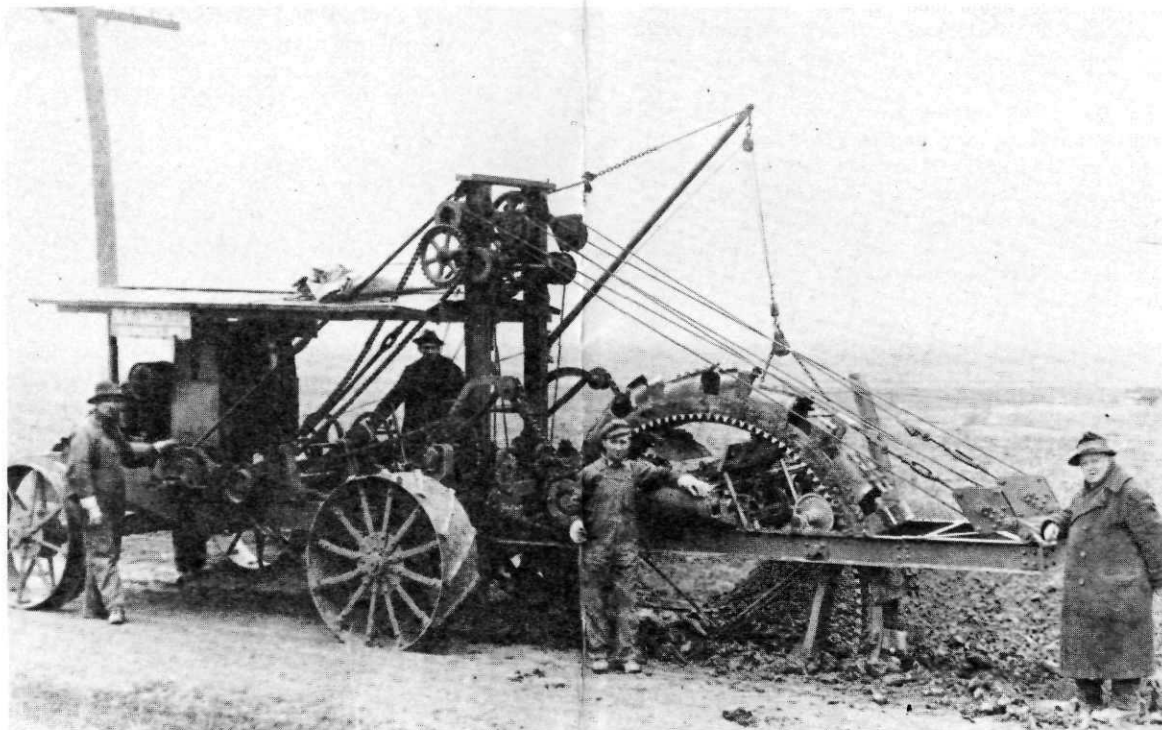
West Dundee

A scenic location in the picturesque Fox River Valley, the Carpentersville, East Dundee, Gilberts, Sleepy Hollow and West Dundee area was settled about 1830 by New Englanders and Scotch immigrants.

George McClure, a brigadier general of the War of 1812, was one of the first settlers and the community was called McClure's Grove.

Allan Pinkerton, the detective, achieved the beginning of his national fame while he worked in Dundee as a simple "copper" and rounded up a band of counterfeiters who operated on an island several miles up the river.

Only five years after Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone, the first "toll station,"



1918 trench digging machine for underground cable

what is now known as a coin or pay phone, was established in 1881 in the dry goods store of C. F. Hall. This was one of the earliest toll lines constructed by the Chicago Telephone Company.

Henry Baumann, a druggist, who was the son of an early settler, became interested in the telephone. B. E. Sunny, who later became chairman of the board of directors of Illinois Bell, went personally to Dundee to talk to Mr. Baumann and to appoint him toll manager at the tremendous salary of sixty cents a month. Mr. Baumann naturally felt that this was not a very lucrative proposition, but Mr. Sunny, full of faith, persuaded Mr. Baumann to "come in on the ground floor."

By the year 1893, the toll station had grown into an exchange of thirteen subscribers, and the switchboard was located in Baumann's store. Mr. Baumann had in view the goal of 100 subscribers and felt that when they had been obtained he could "lay down and quit."

But he did not, and worked as commercial agent in the area for many years until his retirement.

The first thirteen subscribers were apparently the most difficult to "sign up" and several were obtained by trading in vacant lots.

In 1893, the office was moved to larger quarters in the old Opera House at 25 Main Street. These quarters were later outgrown, necessitating the move in 1914 to 110 Main Street.

In the late 1890's, equipment was added so that party line service could be provided. Making a call on one of those early telephones was a lot different than today. All phones then were of the "crank" variety. When you wanted to make a call, you first had to listen to see whether one of the dozen or so other parties was using the line. Then you signalled the operator by turning the crank, and waited. The operator would crank you back, and your phone rang. You picked up the receiver and told the operator the name of the party you were calling—phone numbers didn't come into vogue in most places until later.

The operator called your party by cranking, and the other party answered by first ringing back. Then the operator told him you wanted to talk,

and he once again hung up and cranked. This rang the caller's phone. Then both could pick up their receivers and hold a conversation.

But the crank turning wasn't over. After you finished talking, both parties would have to crank once more to signal the operator they were through. Some people in Dundee and Carpentersville said it just wasn't worth all the trouble.

By the turn of the century, the number of phones had reached 57. Five years later Dundee's population of 2400 was served by 421 phones. Mr. Baumann's goal had been quadrupled.

In 1914 the common battery system had its birthplace in Dundee. This new system eliminated the perplexing and arm-wearying crank. Storage batteries were unknown and a combination of blue vitriol and zinc known as "Crowfoot Batteries" were used. Subscribers called central, but experienced much trouble in so doing for the ground rods frequently dried out. All one summer was spent in experimentation, and a trouble shooter, A. T. Wagner, straightened out much of the trouble by pouring several buckets of water around the individual ground wires.

By the end of the first decade of the 20th Century, Dundee telephones totalled 539, with 17 on one-party lines, 14 on two-party, 176 on four-party, 317 on Farmer lines, 3 on PBX switchboards, and --shades of modern telephone convenience -- 12 on extensions! At Carpentersville, there were 119 phones.

World War I gave great impetus to telephone development all over the world; and the Dundee and Carpentersville telephone system grew along with it.

In 1930, the number of telephones had grown to 849 in Dundee and 174 in Carpentersville. The population of the area was 5970.

1941 saw the installation of emergency engine-alternate equipment to insure the continuity of central office operation during wartime. This was the forerunner to the safety precautions which kept telephone service operating during the famous Northeast power failure in late 1965.

The war had caused severe equipment shortages and telephone service was at a premium in the early postwar years. By 1950, there were 2,186 telephones in Dundee and Carpentersville.

In March, 1954, a dial service program was announced. A one story and basement telephone building was constructed at 60 Water Street in East Dundee. And on April 30, 1955 dial service was introduced.

Three years later, phone users were introduced to a toll-free calling plan which included a free calling area to Algonquin, Elgin and Barrington.

Direct Distance Dialing came to the Dundee area on December 13, 1964. Touch-Tone telephoning--one of the most significant developments since the dial -- became available in this area on August 20, 1966.

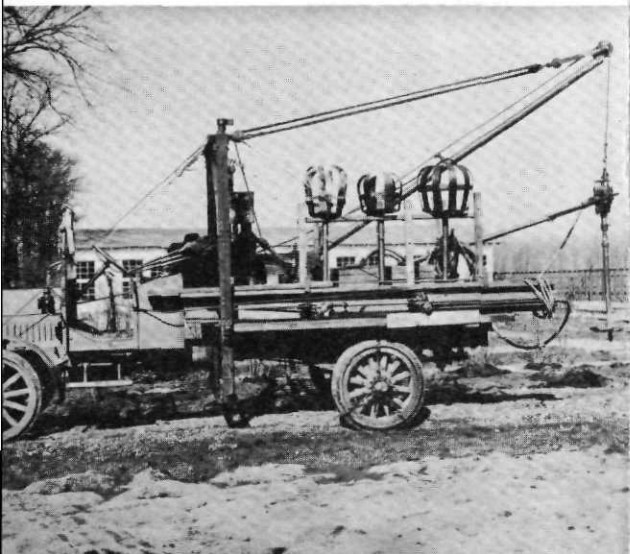
Based on the past, there's no telling what the future will bring, except for the certainty that it will be exciting and revolutionary. Satellites are in the sky to probe stars and planets, to keep an eye on weather patterns, and to help transmit communications.

Intercontinental TV has been transmitted by the Bell System's Telstar. Communications Satellite Corporation has been formed to put to commercial use this newly developed communications method. The day may not be far off when you can dial direct to Europe, Africa, or anywhere else on the globe as easily as you now dial Uncle John in San Francisco.

Another new development, Picturephone -- the see-as-you-talk telephone service -- is operating between Chicago, Washington, D C. and New York City.

Who could have guessed all this back in 1881, when there were only single lonely toll stations, that the day would come when almost every home would have at least one phone?

Who knows what we'll see tomorrow? No one. But it's fun to think about it.



Early earth boring machine



Illinois Bell