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The Telephone Comes To Calaveras County

The remarkable development of the telephone has occurred almost within the lifetime of our elder members. To many of us younger ones, telephones have always been a necessity. Some of the greatest advances have occurred within the last quarter-century, little noted in a rapidly changing way of life. How easy it is to learn to dial, unaided, across the country and how easy to forget the complicated process, and the excitement, when we had to enlist the aid of several operators to put through such an ambitious call.

Although the first telephones were put in service in the county as early as 1878, they were little more than a curiosity to most Calaveras residents until the middle 90's. Then the telephone age suddenly burst upon the county. Nearly everyone, it would seem, tried to get into the act. Franchises were granted to persons of initiative and vision in most of the populated areas. Innumerable mining companies, farmers, ranchers, sawmill operators and others started their own private lines, sooner or later hooked into the closest exchange. Then the Sunset Telephone-Telegraph Company, later merged into the Pacific Bell Company, tied these together into a county wide system, connected to the outside world over their toll lines. This spectacular development took place within the decade centered on the turn of the century. But the tremendous growth of use of the telephone has come about in the half-century or so since those days. Several local directories, in the beginning years of these exchanges which we have included in this issue, clearly show that telephones were a luxury and primarily a business facility rather than a home convenience. Compare these directories with the 8000 or more listings in our book today.

The ingenuity and surprising success of the many homemade and privately sponsored lines of those long ago days are reflected in the establishment of two "Independents" still operating today in the County, the Calaveras Telephone and the Volcano Telephone companies.



EARLY DAY EQUIPMENT

This is what some of the equipment looked like that was used by Jim Tower of the Calaveras Telephone Co. in early days. His son, Howard, poses beside some items that will bring back memories to many of our elder members. Howard later overhauled this equipment and exhibited it at his talk before the Society.

Calaveras Telephone Company

We were fortunate, last February, 1973, in having Howard Tower, president and manager of Calaveras Telephone, tell us about the beginnings of the telephone industry in this country and how it came to our own rural Calaveras communities. We have added a few more details to Howard's presentation, with his help and that of a few others, and we found some pictures that pertain to the subject. As it is with many of our "Las Calaveras" articles, we have just scratched the surface of the topic at hand, and hope that others will do further study into the matter.

When we speak of the telephones in Calaveras County, we are speaking of the history of the telephone industry. Say the word "telephone", and most Americans probably think of Alexander Graham Bell or the company formed to promote his invention. Pick up a telephone, however, and it could well belong to an independent (non-Bell) company, for twenty million 'phones, one

out of every six in this country, are operated by Independents. Although most of the business is transacted by the twenty-five Bell companies, there are still more than 1800 individual independent concerns.

The telephone did not have an auspicious beginning. The invention was patented by Alexander Graham Bell in 1876, when he was 29 years old, and that year was first shown publicly at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia.

The new device confounded the prophecies of many. The business world took little notice of it and the general public showed amused indifference. Prior to Bell's invention, for example, the "Baltimore County Advocate", of Towson, Maryland, 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. The authorities who apprehended this criminal are to be congratulated, and it is hoped that this punishment will be prompt and fitting."

A Western Union Telegraph Company report, prepared in 1882 stated that "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." It concluded that Western Union should not invest its capital in the device, since "any development of the kind and scale which Bell so fondly imagines is utterly out of the question."

Despite lack of recognition or capital, Bell, his assistant, Thomas Watson, and two others formed a trusteeship in 1877, the same year that Bell received the second patent to his invention. In 1880, the American Bell Telephone Company was organized. Almost immediately, many competing companies were formed, and Bell and his associates spent the next eight years in one of the most expensive and protracted patent litigations in our history. Finally, on March 9, 1888, the Supreme Court of the United States sustained the Bell patents by a vote of four to three. Chief Justice Waite delivered the opinion of the court, stating that "the new art he (Bell) has found will belong to him and those claiming under him during the life of his patent."

Despite the legal protection enjoyed by Bell, his rivals formed more than 125 competing companies before the basic patents expired. Most of the rivals did not progress beyond the stock-selling stage: few ever sent a telephone message.

By 1894, competition began in earnest, since Bell's exclusive right to manufacture, use, and sell his invention expired in accordance with patent law. At that time, there were fewer than 240,000 telephones in the entire United States, and the majority of these were on business premises. In the next three years, more than 6000 non-Bell companies were started, throughout the country. The Bell system concentrated its efforts in the larger cities where potential subscribers were plentiful and near at hand. The non-Bell concerns, on the other hand, extended the telephone service to the smaller cities and rural regions, thus helping to brighten an isolated way of life.

Although the telephone experience of the first Independents may have been limited, their enthusiasm and ingenuity were not. Some of the early do-it-yourself systems required very little capital or equipment, and a typical operation usually began with a canvass of potential subscribers to raise money. Equipment was purchased, lines strung from rooftops, and, miraculously, a town could talk. At times the operation was even simpler, particularly in farm areas too far apart to install connecting lines. Farmers and others pooled their resources and established their own system some using barbed wire fences already in place to conduct the current. This uninsulated wire worked satisfactorily as long as moisture or other materials didn't interfere with the hoped-for path of electricity.

Single families often operated these small businesses in rural America. The women usually ran the switchboard in the kitchen and the men repaired lines and installed telephones when required. Of course, there were also those with stronger financial backing, with systems rivaling Bell's in sophistication. It has been the family tradition, particularly, that has continued in the Independent telephone industry, and many of today's Independent leaders can look back on a record of service that began with their grandparents.

The Bell system clearly saw the implications of the Independents' growth. On the one hand, it was satisfied with the smaller rural and farmers' mutuals, since Bell would have found it expensive and unprofitable to serve remote areas. On the other hand, the Independents in the larger cities often brought stiff competition. Two or three separate companies developed in some cities, but the lesson was slowly learned that two companies in one town reduced the service of each, or doubled the cost.

Although by the mid-1890's most Independent telephone companies were still small, to Bell interests they were still competitors. When litigation or competition failed to stifle them, the Bell system tried to purchase them outright. Even the determined ones which held out, however, could not hope to compete against Bell in the area of long distance toll lines. Few of them had sufficiently large resources or facilities with which to build their own toll systems, and the Bell system could refuse access to its lines.

Here in California, Bell had a competitor of sorts in the Sunset Telephone-Telegraph Company, organized as a toll system in 1883. Pacific Bell, however, shrewdly managed to get control of the energetic newcomer, by swapping a license to operate under Bell patents for Nevada, Oregon, Washington, Arizona, part of Utah, and all of California except the city of San Francisco for 51% of the stock of the company. In 1889, Pacific Bell reorganized as Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company, and formally took over Sunset's physical assets into their systems. Sunset continued to operate, however, as a separate company for a number of years, as a Bell subsidiary.

The ingenuity of the Independents was best exemplified by their early improvements to the telephone. Much experimenting was done prior to the expiration of the Bell patents, and this laid the

groundwork for future successes. The most spectacular was the development of the dial system by Almon Brown Strowger, a Kansas City undertaker. In 1892, Strowger's first unit went into service in La Porte, Indiana. Its design was based on a model Strowger had built in a circular collar box, using 100 pins and a lead pencil.

The original La Porte instruments had five push buttons lined up in a row. If the user wanted to call number 21, he simply pushed the first button twice and the second once. Since larger numbers tended to produce human errors in counting, Strowger later introduced a large dial in place of the buttons. Thus, he was the inventor of the dial system and a user of push-buttons many years before the latter have been popular. His dial system spread quickly among Independents, but the Bell system did not adopt it until 1919.

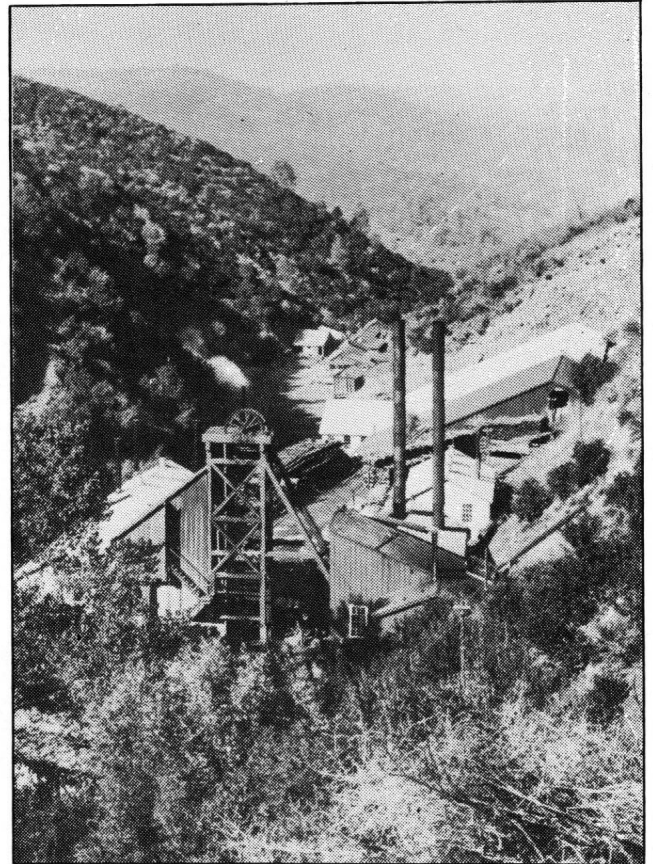
The independent manufacturing and operating companies pioneered a number of other developments including a handset telephone, the forerunner of the instrument in use today. It contained the transmitter and receiver in the handle and was connected by a cord to the telephone. In addition, Independents were the first to use selective ringing on party lines, and they made scores of improvements in switchboards, transmitters, and receivers.

The manufacturers have thus played a most significant part in the rise of Independent telephony. Their very existence in the early days inspired the formation of operating companies. They were, of course, interested in selling their product, but they were also interested in building a better and stronger Independent telephone industry. It can be said without successful contradiction that there probably would not be an Independent industry if it were not for the efforts of the manufacturers. It was Alexander Graham Bell who made the first invention, but it has been the thousands of inventions and improvements that have taken place in subsequent years that have truly made the communications industry what it is today.

With this background of the development of the telephone industry, we now turn to Calaveras and trace the coming of the telephone to our own communities.

The telephone arrived in Calaveras County, only two years after Bell's first patent, at Mokelumne Hill. The "Calaveras Chronicle" proudly reported on November 30th, 1878:

If Mokelumne Hill doesn't absolutely lead the van of progress it at least holds a position well up in front. The only thing that the town lacked to be abreast of any other place in the world was a telephone and now that need has been supplied. Johnny Terrill, our enterprising telegraph operator, just determined that Mokelumne Hill should lack nothing in the electric line that any other town could boast of - not if he could help it - and so he got a couple of Bell telephones, put up a line between the telegraph office and Leger's Hotel and set half the folks in town to talking through them. The line works first rate. In fact it is remarkable how clear and distinct the sound is when a gentleman at the Leger end of the line softly whispers "Come up and take a drink". Call at



GWINMINE & LOWER RICH GULCH

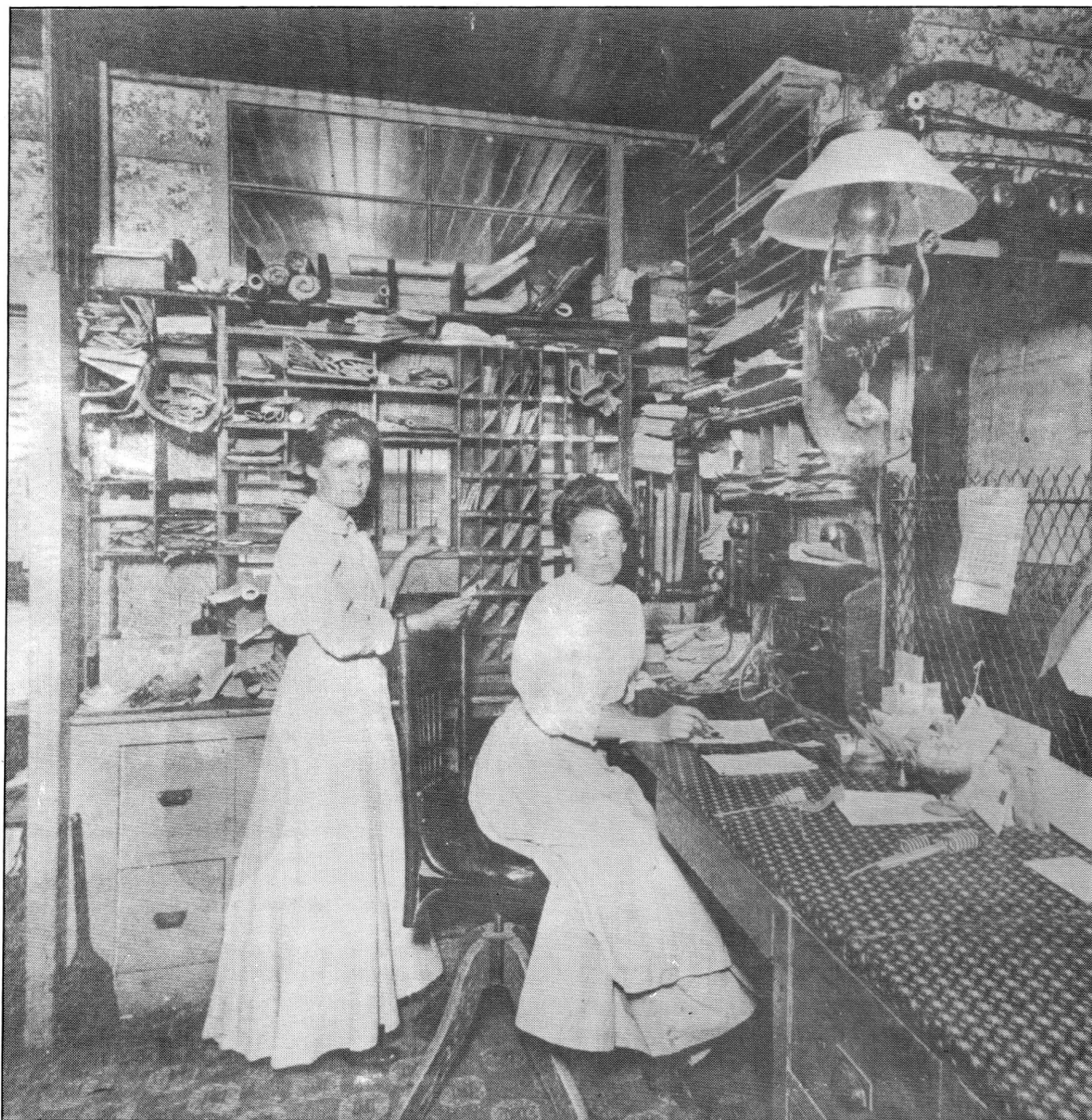
The gulch, just below Paloma, was an important spot in the 60's, 70's, early 80's, late 90's and up to 1908. The Gwin Mine was a big employer and a good gold producer. The postoffice was named, logically, Gwinmine, and the town boasted a large rooming and boarding establishment, and a number of cabins up and down the gulch, as well as the many mine buildings. During the early period of operation, when the Gwin family was in charge, the county's first telephone system was installed in the mine. In the latter period of operation, some of the first long distance lines in the county connected the Gwin office with Jackson, Mokelumne Hill and Valley Springs.

From Society Files

Terrill and Peters and behold the wonders of the telephone.

Terrill's success with the Leger line soon led to a more ambitious project, as the "Chronicle" stated on December 21st:

Mr. J. B. Terrill of this place, the well known electrician, has secured a contract for putting three of the instruments into the Gwin mine. They will certainly pay for themselves in a short time by obviating the necessity of traveling up and



VALLEY SPRINGS EXCHANGE - 1908

The Lillie girls ran the post office and telephone exchange, which were crowded into a corner of the store at Valley Springs. Louisa Lillie Plier is sorting mail, and Mary Lillie Carven is catching up on her paper work between calls. The series of bells just to the right of the

lamp belonged to various private or farmers' lines, hooked into the Valley Springs exchange. Part of the facilities shown are on exhibit at the County Museum in San Andreas. This exchange was established on April 1, 1899 with 6 subscribers. J.V. Lucas was manager.

Courtesy of Curator George Poore

down the shaft. everytime connection between the mine and surface is required. Insulated wire will be used so that there will be no annoying breaks to interrupt communication. The authorities at the mine will find the telephone just the thing.

then on January 18th, 1879:

Johnny Terrill, our local electrician and telephonist, put four Bell telephones into the Gwin mine this week. The wires run from the 1400 foot station to Mr. Gwin's residence, to the office of the Superintendent and to the mouth of the shaft. Hereafter the telephone will be used in giving signals for the guidance of the engineers at the hoisting works. The "Phones" work first-rate, the wire down the shaft being laid in the air-pipe where it is kept perfectly dry and is not liable to injury.

The Gwin mine closed down in 1882 and the telephone seems to have been, for all practical purposes, neglected for a number of years in this county. A few private lines, however, mostly installed by mining companies or ranchers, were put into use. But the county was quite isolated from the outside world except for the telegraph. The reorganization of the Sunset Telephone-Telegraph Company in 1889 as an operating Bell subsidiary paved the way for the telephone boom.

The reactivation of the Gwin mine in 1894 by the progressive Thomas and McClure management led the way for countywide telephone service. The "Calaveras Chronicle" noted on February 2nd, 1895, as follows:

Chronicle" noted on February 2nd, 1895, as follows:

Mr. Oscar Pfortner of San Andreas, who has the contract for constructing a telephone line between this place and the Gwin Mine, has a force of men at work putting up the necessary poles and stretching the wires. By the first of next week everything will be in readiness for sending messages.

A week later, the "Chronicle" had a further progress report on the telephone "excitement:"

The telephone line between this place (Mokelumne Hill and the Gwin mine will be in working order Monday next. We will be in direct communication with Jackson in Amador County (through Gwinmine-Ed.) There is also a strong possibility that a line will be run from the Gwin mine to Valley Springs and Mr. Pfortner who is putting up the line between this place and the mine is also figuring on a line between this place and West Point. The up country line will pass through Rich Gulch, Glencoe and Railroad. A branch line is also to be run from the main office in the Chronicle building to the residence of Dr. Blaisdell on East Center Street.

By June, 1896, poles were going up on the West Point line, which came to be known as the Calaveras Telegraph and Telephone line. The "Chronicle's" June 29th item was as follows:

Work on the West Point telephone line is being pushed rapidly ahead. The poles are now all in place as far as Glen-

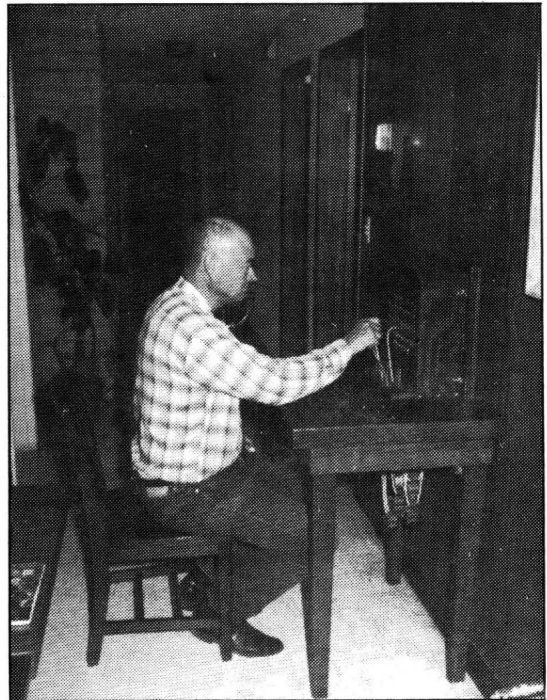
coe. and it is expected that the line will be in working order by the 4th of July.

But the work didn't proceed as fast as was planned. By the first of August, the poles were finally in, and it was hoped that soon they would be stretching wire. At last, on November 14th, the "Chronicle" was able to report:

The West Point telephone line is now in good working order. The office is in the Chronicle building, and rate established is 30 cents per message.

The office at Moke Hill was moved to Peters' Drug Store. The following February it was announced that West Point would soon be connected with Pine Grove and Volcano, a project promoted by Dr. Goodman and Mr. T. A. Wilson. In June, 1896, the County granted a franchise to Wilson and Nougues for that line. The Wilson-Nougues line and several others were later consolidated under Lagarmarsino ownership as the Volcano Telephone Company. A central switchboard was established in the Volcano area in 1903, and the various lines hooked into this board. Mr. W. Gilman Snyder purchased the company later, and in 1950 it was sold to the James Welch family. Today Volcano has more than 800 subscribers in Calaveras County, and a much larger number in Amador.

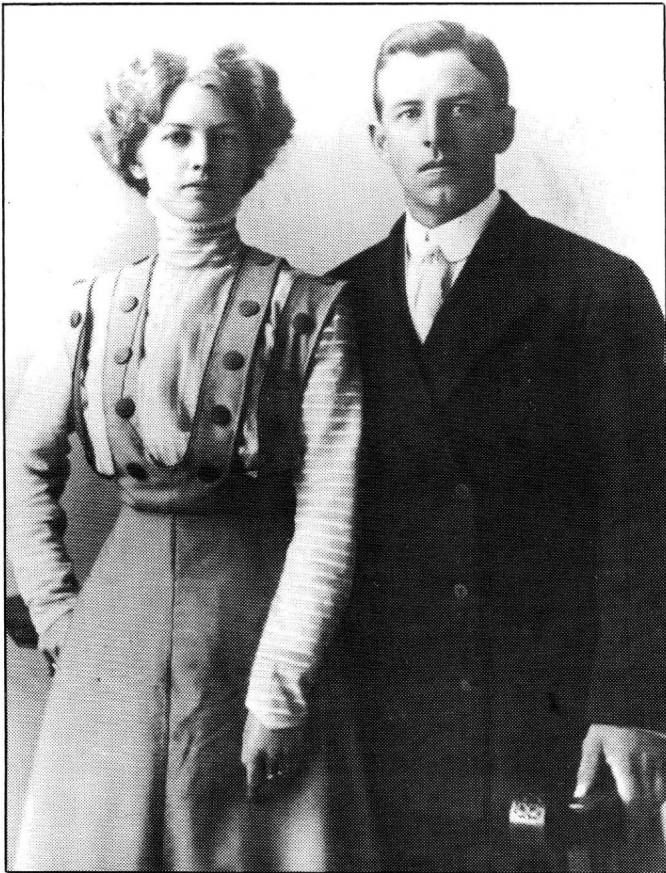
On April 24th, 1897, the "Chronicle" reported:



VOLCANO'S FIRST SWITCHBOARD

James Welch, manager and owner, demonstrates on the original Volcano Telephone Company's switchboard installed in 1903 by Joe Lagomarsino. The board is now on exhibit at Volcano's Pine Grove office.

Volcano Telephone Company



THE JAMES TOWERS

Laura Hazelquist and James A. Tower were married in 1909. At that time, Jim had already been operating the Calaveras Telephone Company for some five years, serving the southwestern part of the county, and Laura was his first switchboard operator.

Loaned by the Tower Family

The telephone line between here and the Gwinn mine is now in first class working order. The box is in the Washington Market.

May 1, 1897:

The West Point telephone line is to be extended to the Eureka Saw Mill, and on May 15th, a further item:

The Washington Meat Market in this place is now connected with their slaughter house by telephone. The line is about a mile and a half in length.

The Mokelumne Hill exchange was not formally established until July 23, 1898. Mr. C. A. Werle was appointed agent, and some 35 "stations" were soon connected. By 1904, these had increased to 49. But Mokelumne Hill was facing a drastic decline in fortunes, as gold mining continued to dwindle. By 1920, only 8 stations were connected. But during the 20's and 30's there was a resurgence of

mining activity, and from 16 to 30 stations were active. Again by 1940, a low point of 19 connections was reached, and then began a strong and steady increase to the present 300.

MOKELUMNE HILL DIRECTORY - 1899

- Main 41 Baldwin, L. Saloon
- Main 26 Blaisdell, F. E., M.D.
- Main 28 Burce, E. E. Res.
- Main 23 Burlison & Bruce - Calaveras Chronicle
- Main 324 Burt, J & Son, Gen'l Mdse, West Point
- Main 313 Burt, J. Calaveras Tel & Tel, Glencoe
- Main 353 Calden, Geo. W., Museum Saloon, West Point
- Main 314 Calaveras Tel & Tel Co. L. Schumann
- Main 34 North Star Gold Mine & Dev. Co.
- Main 325 Davidson, M., Gen'l Mdse.
- Main 331 Eureka Mill & Lumber Co. Powerville
- Main 61 Gallaher, S., Calaveras Tel & Tel Co.
- Main 31 West Point Sawmill
- Main 63 Hexter, L., Butcher
- Main 36, Hexter, L., Slaughter House
- Main 27 Hughes, S.M., Livery Stables
- Main 43 Jacobs, C., Gen'l Mdse.
- Main 35 Jacobs, C., Res.
- Main 37 Kiser, M. A., Saloon
- Main 88 Krim, H. W., Alcazar Saloon
- Main 311 Lampson, A. Blacksmith & Wheelwright
- Main 33 Lampson, A., Res.
- Main 21 Levaggi, B., Calaveras Tel & Tel, West Point
- Main 354 Lewis, E. H., Stables
- Main 74 Mayer, J. W., Oasis Saloon
- Main 64 McCarthy & Bruce - Calaveras Tel & Tel, Saw Mill - West Point
- Main 11 Pallaton, A., Mariposa Hotel
- Main 24 Peck, Frank W., Gen'l Mdse
- Main 29 Peters, T. C., Druggist
- Main 39 Pickering, J. C., M.D. Ofc.
- Main 91 Prindle, C.E., Mok & Campo Seco Canal Co. & Mining Co.
- Main 73 Seeman, F. M. Chili Gulch House
- Main 351 Wilson, T. A., Gen Mdse, W. Point
- Main 51 Werle, C. A., Soda Ice Works.

One of the early private lines was called the Polk Line, which ran from Angels Camp to Murphys and Arnold. In the Nineties, Angels was the largest and busiest community in the county, and so holds the honor of having the first "city" exchange which opened on October 5, 1895. This closely followed the arrival of Sunset's new toll line, as the Calaveras Chronicle noted on September 14th, 1895:

Angels Camp is now connected with San Francisco by telephone. The first message on the new Sunset line having been transmitted Tuesday last.

The Sunset company continued to expand their service in Calaveras County, as the "Chronicle" records on June 29th of the following year:



THE FIRST ANGELS EXCHANGE

Doctor John B. Dorroh (fourth from left), lines up with his employees, associates, and customers at the City Drug Store. Dr. Weirich is the other gentleman with hat.

One of the two girls is Eva Gazzola, the first operator. The exchange was in the back room, through the door at the right.

Courtesy of Earl Edmiston

The double line telephone line which is to run through this county is fast nearing completion and in about one month more the work will be finished. A connection has already been made at Angels. There are at present 65 men in the field.

The first Angels office was in the City Drug Store, whose proprietor, Dr. John B. Dorroh, assumed the duties of agent. The first operator was Miss Eva Gazzola. Later the office was moved across the street to where Dr. Cooper's office is today, above the former Calaveras County Bank. A second move was made back across the street into the building now occupied by Edmiston's studio and the Stockton Record. Some of the early operators in-

cluded Florissa Smith and her daughter Ada, Lillian Pecchenino, Carrie Morgan, and Raffeleta Segale. Marguerite Tennyson went to work for the telephone company in 1917, in the upstairs office, and for most of her 35 years with the company, served as head operator.

The Angels Exchange has always been the largest in the county as well as "Central" for most of it. Starting with 44 stations, it reached 220 by 1909 when G. W. Patterson took over as agent. The closing of the deep mines at Angels caused the exchange to shrink to 161 stations by 1920. Then it slowly built back up and by 1934 listed 309 stations, then 1045 by 1956, and over 3000 today. A considerable part of the recent increase has been due to 'up-country' connections in Murphys, Hathaway Pines, Arnold, Avery, etc.

ANGELS CAMP DIRECTORY - 1899

Dr. Dorroh, Agent

- Main 221 Angels Drug Store, W. Trewartha
 131 Angels Hotel, Otto Dolling, Prop.
 41 Angels Iron Works, Demarest, and Fullen
 141 Angels Stable, Lane and Raggio, Prop
 101 Arendt, M. Gen'l Mdse.
 414 Bisso, B. Gen. Mdse
 359 Brown Mining Co. Mining
 111 Calaveras Hotel, Mrs. G. Rolleri
 211 Cross, J. Warehouse, Chas. Adair, Agent
 91 Davey and Carley Dry Goods and clothing
 411 Dorroh, J.R. Demarest, G.M. Co.
 61 Dorroh, Jno R.M. D. Ofc
 63 Same. Res.
 261 Drake Property Ltd, Leopold Meyer, Supt.
 201 Freeman, Dr. C.H. Phy. & Sur.
 407 Hawley, E.F. Angels Brewery
 271 Lightner Mine G.C. Hyatt, Pres.
 281 Lagomarsino Bros.
 171 Laingenberger, Mrs. C. Res.
 686 Love A. Livery Stable
 21 Manuel, M.H. Lumber Yard, Murphys
 193 Manual and Garland, Gen. Mdse. Murphys
 191 McKay Bros. Lumberyard
 161 Melones Mine W. C. Ralston, Supt.
 356 Morgan Bert, Davy Crockett Saloon
 321 Pache, Geo F. Phy & sur
 231 Prince, B.R. Hotelkeeper
 311 Ralston, W.C. Melones Mine Robinson Ferry
 81 Rasmussen R. Genl Mdse and Express Office
 151 Reed and Hutchinson Mountain Echo
 415 Rolleri, Mrs. S. Meat Market
 355 San Justo Mining Co. D.C. Nichols Supt.
 351 Santa Ana Gold Mining Co. C.J. Steedman Vice-Pres, Com-
 pressor
 251 Sevenman, G.W. Phy.
 358 Smith, W.A. Hotelkeeper
 71 Stickle Co. The Utica Ofc.
 51 Same. Genl Mdse Store
 361 Thomas, E.I. Plumber
 413 Thompson, A.B. San Domingo Gold Mining Co.
 31 Utica Warehouse, W.W. Emery
 181 Weirich, E.W. Md. Ofc.
 291 Wesson, Fred, Central Park Hotel
 357 Wood, P. F. Postmaster

Private Lines 1909

Pierano and Stephens 3 subscribers at Sheepranch
 Murphys, 15 subscribers

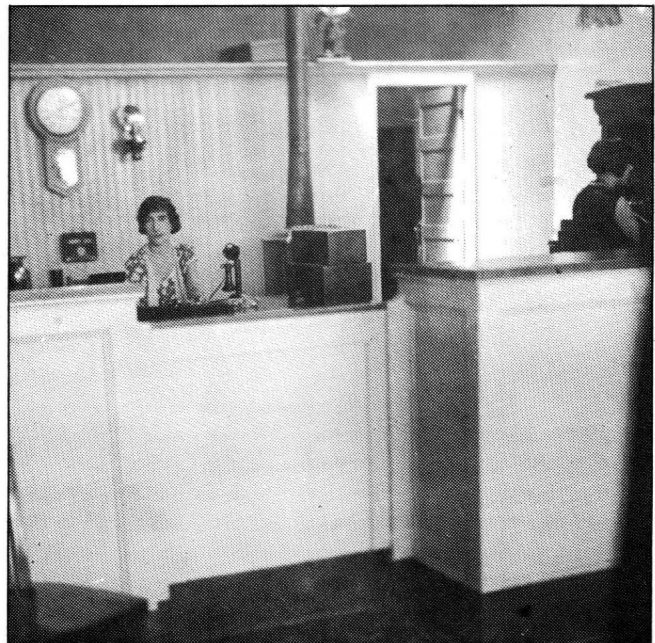
By 1896, it was apparent to the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors that they would have to put the telephone under a franchise system to protect the existing lines and to prevent useless duplication. There was still duplication in the private lines of the ranchers and others. Dr. John March, in Burson, for

instance, had three separate telephones in his kitchen (handy for Mrs. March to answer) for coverage among the widely separated people he served.

In June, 1896, the County Supervisors granted a telephone franchise to Linn and Butler of Murphys, and Hosea G. Allen and John Raggio of San Andreas were also granted a franchise. Things were happening fast in Calaveras County, and the "Chronicle" was able to state on June 13th that:

The poles for the Sunset Telephone line have been deposited on the ground between Mokelumne Hill and Angels. The line extends on into Amador and Tuolumne Counties and when completed, the principle mining towns from Chinese Camp to Plymouth will be put in direct communication.

A telephone box, consigned to the station in his place, arrived in Valley Spring last Saturday and Fred Winkler the freighter who was to deliver it here (San Andreas) being heavily loaded put the box on the brewer wagon which was being driven by Lem Wylie. On the way Wylie lost the box which was picked up by a peddler from Burson and taken home with him. The loss caused considerable annoyance until its whereabouts was finally learned and the property turned over to its owner.



ANGELS CAMP EXCHANGE

Irene Pecchenino fills in for Chief Operator Marguerite Tennyson, one day in 1930. Marie Oneto is busy at the switchboard.

Loaned by Mrs. Marguerite Tennyson.



SAN ANDREAS EXCHANGE
 Mayme O'Connell at the post she faithfully occupied for many years. This snap was taken in 1913. Mrs. A.I. McSorley, wife of the Superior Judge, and Will Dower, Attorney, got caught in the snap while conducting business at the telephone office.

Courtesy of Mrs. Norma Cerruti

Lem's fondness for the bottle was rumored to have had a causative relationship to this incident:

The first San Andreas telephone office was in downtown San Andreas, and J.F. Treat, Jr. became agent in 1899. Miss Kate McQuig was one of the first operators. Later the office was moved into the building between the present library and Blewetts' Cafe. Mayme O'Connell became operator and manager of the small exchange in 1909, a position she held for many years. The office made another move, back across the street, up near the old post office, later.

Starting with 18 subscribers in 1896, the San Andreas exchange has had a steady increase over the years reaching 103 in 1929, 212 in '41, 500 in '53, 1045 in '62, and over 1500 today.

SAN ANDREAS - J. F. TREAT JR. AGENT - 1899

- Main 61 Calif. Exploration Ltd, Blue Lakes Power Plant
- 62 Same. B.C. Condit - Res.
- 63 Same. Fourth Crossing
- 64 Same. W. L. Homnold, Res.
- 123 Cassinelli D., Court Street, Gen'l Mdse.
- 126 Clapp. J. F. Ft. Wayne L.M. Co. (Gold M. Co)
- 135 Coulter A. H., Poplar Grove Hotel
- 124 County Hospital
- 151 Ford Gold Mining Co., W. M. Ford, Sec'y

- 117 Gottschalk. C.V., Superior Judge, Ofc.
- 114 Same. Res.
- 125 Holland J.A., M.D.
- 144 McGuirk C.F., Livery Stable
- 145 McSorley A.I., Res.
- 31 Metropolitan Hotel, S.E. Redmond. Prop.
- 153 Raggio John., Stage Ofc.
- 41 Reed & McSorley - Atty-at-Law
- 113 Snyder J.J., Dist. Atty.
- 11 Solinsky F.J., Atty-at-Law
- 131 Same Res.
- 133 The Calaveras Prospect, C.W. Getchell
- 111 Thorn. B. K. Sheriff
- 115 Tiscornia G., Gen'l Mdse.
- 141 Treat. J.F., Jr. Res.
- 121 Washburn, Mrs. M.A., Livery Stable
- 143 Wells & Wall, Calaveras Citizen

Of the many private lines, it is worthwhile recalling the meticulously engineered "Fricot City" line, with its sawn redwood poles neatly bolted into concrete footings. Nearby, the isolated residents of Calaveritas and the adjoining ranchers put in their own line, buying for some \$200 a discontinued trunk line from Fourth Crossing to Angels.

Telephone service came more slowly to the southwestern part of the county. Milton had a line to the outside by 1899, but it was not until seven years later that townspeople had the luxury of



ANGELS EXCHANGE

Not too many years before the highly sophisticated automatic dialing equipment took over the job, the Angels switchboard was a very busy place. Supervisor Dorothy Staten watches over her five operators, who, if

private telephones, and the ranchers the hookup to call outside their local farm lines. By 1909, the directory showed Alexander Brown as agent, and lists these subscribers:

Calaveras Gold Dredging Co.
 Claude Collins
 C. Gall
 E. F. Gall
 M. F. Gregory
 D. Helms
 S. D. Hildebrand
 A. D. Hunt
 Lee M. Langford
 James M. Lisenbe, Jenny Lind
 Albert Meyer
 G. F. Morrill
 Edw. V. Powers
 W. J. Robie

we could see them better, would prove to be Catherine Schena, Gail Monte Verda Conrado, Madeline Dragone Curlich, Rita Valero, and Joan Mayo.

Loaned by Mrs. Marguerite Tennyson

Sinclair Bros.
 So. Pac. Co.
 J. H. Southwick
 John J. Thompson
 C. A. Willets

The Milton exchange remained small, and even today there are less than 20 subscribers.

About 1895, James A. Tower, of Salt Springs Valley, then a teenager, built a telephone line from his mother's home to his elder brother, Jacob's, a mile away. This line was so successful that Jim, with his brother's encouragement, constructed a line to Hodson. At that time, Hodson had just been built as a company town to provide quarters for the employees of the rapidly expanding Royal mine. Jake Tower had opened up a butcher shop there, and Jim's telephone line became a very useful means of communication between the shop and the ranch. Some forty-five years or so later, curiously enough, another Tower brother,



THE BARBED WIRE LINE

Howard Tower, manager of the Calaveras Telephone Company, points out one of the old insulators used by his father, "Barbwire Jim", on one of the early lines in Salt Springs Valley. There were a number of such lines in those days, in this and other counties, but reception often left a lot to be desired.

Calaveras Telephone Company

Frank, found a rich high-grade gold pocket almost directly under the site of the old butcher shop at Hodson.

The Tower line to Hodson worked so well that the manager of the Royal mine, John C. Kempvane, commissioned young Tower to build a line from the mine office at Hodson to the telegraph office at Copperopolis. Soon, most of the neighboring ranchers and businessmen wanted telephone service, and Jim Tower was truly in the telephone business by the turn of the century. Because he used barbed wire fences for many of these lines, he became known as "Barbwire Jim."

The Calaveras Telephone Company, as Jim Tower's hobby soon became, negotiated its first connecting company agreement with the Sunset Telephone Company in 1899, and thus brought its subscribers into telephonic contact with the outside. In 1904, the Calaveras County supervisors granted to J.A. Tower:

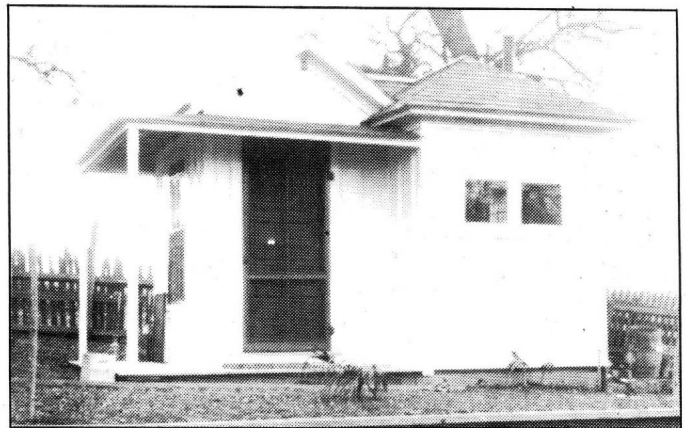
"The franchise, right, privilege and permission for himself, his heirs and assigns, to construct, maintain, and operate in, upon, along, and across and over the highways, roads, avenues, driveways, by-roads, lanes and public ways and other public grounds in the said County of Calaveras, and the villages and towns thereof, such poles, masts and other superstructures as may be necessary for the construction and maintenance of a complete telephone system."

This franchise was for 50 years and saw the Tower system develop into a modern Independent telephone company, serving the communities of Copperopolis, Jenny Lind, and surrounding ranches and mines. Today, there are more than 230 subscribers to this little company, covering a large area, in terms of square miles, and providing first class service to many isolated ranches and homes.

We are all familiar with recent telephone history. We saw the dial phones installed in the late forties and fifties, with some of our local exchanges receiving new and often quite improbable names.

		Dials installed
Mokelumne Hill		
West Point	Axminster - 3	1948-9
San Andreas	Skyline - 4	1957
Angels	Redfield - 6	1953
Murphys	Park - 8	1953
Valley Springs		
Felix & Copperopolis		1951
Jenny Lind		1951
Milton		1948

These names, it soon turned out, were merely a transitory subterfuge of the telephone people to phase us into the all dial, all number era. And now we find it difficult even to remember our interim exchange names, no longer used, for we are too busy trying to keep all those seven or ten digits in mind as we dial.



THE FIRST OFFICE

Calaveras Telephone business was operated out of this office at Felix (Salt Springs Valley) for many years.

The new office is at Copperopolis.

Calaveras Telephone Company

