

HELLO! CENTRAL!

IF ONE CAN CORRECTLY TAP IN THE MANY NUMBERS REQUIRED, IT IS POSSIBLE TO TALK TO SOMEONE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD WITHIN A FEW SECONDS. FROM MANY LOCATIONS OR FROM ONE'S VEHICLE A CONVERSATION CAN BE HELD IN WHICH THE MESSAGE COMES THROUGH LOUDLY AND CLEARLY. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE FOR SEVERAL PERSONS TO SPEAK TOGETHER OR NOT TO ANSWER THE PHONE AT ALL - JUST RECORD THE MESSAGE. NEW INNOVATIONS ARE BEING CONSTANTLY OFFERED; EVEN AS WE WRITE.

'Twas NOT EVER THUS. TELEPHONE SERVICE WAS ESTABLISHED IN DETROIT IN 1877. ONLY SIX YEARS AFTER ITS INVENTION WE FIND THE TELEPHONE IN BRIGHTON. IT WAS 1882 WHEN THE JUDSON BROTHERS' STORE (NW CORNER OF GRAND RIVER AND MAIN ST.) BECAME THE SITE OF THE FIRST PAY STATION IN THE AREA. A CALL COULD BE MADE TO DETROIT OR LANSING ON A LINE RECENTLY INSTALLED BETWEEN THESE TWO CITIES. SINCE IT IS NECESSARY FOR ANOTHER TO HAVE A PHONE BEFORE A CONNECTION CAN BE ESTABLISHED IT WAS NOT A VERY BUSY LOCATION.

HOWEVER THE ORIGINAL PHONE, A WIRE ATTACHED TO A SALMON CAN ON EACH END, WAS ALREADY IN USE BY DR. MCHENCH TO CONTACT HIS WIFE AT HOME. HE'D TAP ON THE CAN IN HIS OFFICE, THE SOUND FOLLOWING THE FINE WIRE ATTACHED TO TREES AND POLES, AND THEN SHOUT INTO HIS CAN.

G. S. BURGESS, WHO OWNED A RETAIL BUSINESS, 334 W. MAIN, BECAME THE FIRST TELEPHONE SUBSCRIBER IN BRIGHTON A FEW YEARS LATER. LESS THAN 1" THICK WAS THE MICHIGAN TELEPHONE COMPANY DIRECTORY, PUBLISHED IN 1899, LISTING ALL THE SUBSCRIBERS IN THE STATE AND IN WINDSOR, ONTARIO. THERE WAS FOUND G.S. BURGESS AS THE ONLY PERSON IN TOWN WITH A PHONE.

IT WAS 1904 WHEN SETH B. JACOBS, EDITOR OF THE ARGUS AT THE TIME, AND F.T. HYNE, OWNER OF THE F.T. HYNE & SONS ELEVATOR, BEGAN SELLING STOCK IN ORDER TO BRING A LOCAL EXCHANGE INTO BEING. ONE CAN ONLY SPECULATE ON THE DIFFICULTY THESE TWO VISIONARIES ENCOUNTERED IN CONVINCING INVESTORS OF THE VALUE OF THIS NEW CONTRAPTION. PROBABLY NOT TOO DISSIMILAR TO THOSE INVOLVED WITH FUNDING THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE RAILROAD, THE PLANK ROAD, CARL CONRAD AND HIS ELECTRIC PLANT (1897), TV ENTREPRENEURS, ETC., ETC.

WHEN SUFFICIENT FUNDS HAD BEEN ACQUIRED THE ARGUS OFFICE, 430 W. MAIN, WAS THE SITE OF THE SWITCHBOARD AND THE FIRST TELEPHONE OFF THAT SWITCHBOARD. THE ARGUS WAS ASSIGNED THE NUMBER 10.

IN THE JUNE 24, 1911, ISSUE OF THE ARGUS ONE MIGHT CLIP OUT THE BRIGHTON DIRECTORY OF THE LIST OF SUBSCRIBERS. AT THE RISK OF TEDIUM WE MAY LIST THEM IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF TRAIL TALES. (TO BE CONTINUED. THE WRITER, MARIEANNA BAIR, IS ANXIOUS FOR READERS TO CONTRIBUTE ADDITIONAL COMMENTS, STORIES, ETC. 229-6402.)

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 481
BRIGHTON MI 48116-0481