

## HELLO! CENTRAL! (cont)

It was in the rural area where the 'party' line was in use for the longest period. A private line would have been impossible or too expensive. Local historian, the late Bill Pless, writes that (living on Grand River) they were on a party line with every farmer between Brighton and Howell on the same line. One turn of the crank would get the Howell operator - two, the Brighton operator. With about 18 on the same line one can imagine the combination of rings (cranks) necessary to call the correct neighbor. (And one had to be quick to even get the line.) This would ring in every party line member's home. Occasionally one could be sure the neighbors were also privy to the conversation. 'Central' would ring one long ring and when all the receivers came down, the weather report or other exciting news relayed. There are stories told of alerting the entire neighborhood to an emergency by calling only one person.

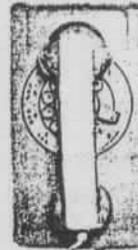


1954 "500" Type Color Desk Set. Basic colors - white, beige, green, pink and blue - made phones fit modern decor.

By c. 1952, it was fashionable to purchase telephones in a color which was coordinated with one's decorating scheme. Also promoted was the suggestion that more than one phone in a home would be a great convenience. Also about that time the male telephone operator came into being. You can be sure more than one caller quickly hung up the phone, upon hearing a man's voice, thinking an error had been made in dialing. Operators could always tell when school was out. Students, arriving home, found it necessary to call friends with whom they had been all day and the switch board lit up like a Christmas tree. Some things never change.

For many years a building just off Cedar Street, near the mill pond, housed the telephone exchange until it became too crowded and obsolete. The city eventually acquired the building and local dramatists have made good use of it in its guise as the Mill Pond Theater.

The February 9, 1972, issue of the Brighton Argus pictures an architect's rendering of the new exchange building proposed to be built at 1701 E. Grand River. It was April, 1974, right on schedule, when Michigan Bell officially opened the communication center and treated area merchants and officials to a lunch and a short program as part of a tour of the facility. Today that building is for sale, having outlived its usefulness. (By Marieanna Bair. To be continued. Additional comments and stories are most welcome.)



1956 Wall Telephone. A convenient extension phone in many basic colors for kitchen, basement, patio and garage.

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