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The Story of the Telephone in Bangor

New England Telephone and Telegraph Company

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The
STORY
of the
TELEPHONE
in
BANGOR



England Telephone and Telegraph Company

You may be interested in knowing the story of the telephone in Bangor — how the first switchboard grew into the busy exchange of today.

We hope that this booklet will answer some of your questions and provide you with background information about the Bangor Exchange and our plans for its future.

NOV 1954
BANGOR
EXCHANGE
IN 1904

EARLY EXCHANGE

On June 1, 1880, telephone exchange service was introduced in Bangor. The National Bell Telephone Company of the State of Maine with Charles S. Pearl as Manager established its offices in the old library building on State Street on the site where the Bangor Savings Bank is now located. Although 46 subscribers had been furnished with telephone service prior to this, such service only provided a single connection with one of the other subscribers. Telephone poles were not considered necessary to this type service — instead, connections were made to customer's premises by means of wires strung from house to house with the consent of the respective owners.

Three employees were required to service the new magneto switchboard; the Manager and two girl operators. A May 1880 newspaper article described the new telephone exchange service as follows:

"The telephone exchange will be in running order soon. Connections have been made with Morse's Mill, Thaxter's Grain Store, the Union Insurance Office, Penobscot Exchange Hotel, the Maine Central Railroad passenger and freight

offices, Wheelwright and Clark's Store, the Bangor House, Thompson and Kellog's and Charles S. Pearl's Office. Mr. W. A. Vail of the Bell Telephone Company is running a line between Bangor and Old Town keeping the highway, connecting with Veazie, Basin Mills, Greatworks, Bradley and Old Town. This line is especially for the use of the sawmills and another line will be run on the same poles for the general public use. Instruments will be connected with the latter so that any person can step into the offices at these places, call Bangor, inform the operator here with whom he wishes to speak, and a messenger will be sent out to notify the man that he is wanted at the exchange to converse with the Orono or Old Town party. Several gentlemen have also made arrangements to connect their private residences with the exchange."

In 1885, the Bangor section of the State Telephone Directory listed 270 subscribers and because of the increase in the number of customers, it was necessary to move the telephone exchange into larger quarters in the Kenduskeag Block and to hire an outside lineman. By 1899, seven day operators and one night operator

were required to service the 575 subscribers in the Bangor exchange. Three outside linemen were also needed to maintain the more than 475 miles of strung wire in the area. During that year, public coin telephone service was offered for the first time. An advertisement which appeared in the Bangor-Brewer City Directory that year stated:

"Direct communication can be had with all principal towns and cities of New England and the Middle States over the wires of this Company. For the accommodation of non-subscribers and the public generally, the Company has established Public Telephone Stations . . ."

A list of the locations followed; four in Bangor, and one each in Brewer, Winterport, Kenduskeag, Orono, Stillwater and Old Town.

GROWTH OF EXCHANGE

In 1903, the exchange was moved to 186 Exchange Street and the magneto board was replaced by a manual common battery twelve-position switchboard which served 1,336 subscribers. At the same time, an eight-position toll board was installed to handle the steadily increasing number of toll calls originating in Bangor and its tributaries. "Extremely" long

distance calls were still infrequent at this time, and when a customer requested a call to New York, the operators vied for the honor of completing the connection, even though it meant shouting so loudly that the occupants of the next building could hear the details of the call.

Although the exchange was completely destroyed by the fire which swept Bangor in 1911, telephone service was totally restored within two weeks, again furnished by a manual common battery switchboard installed in the building at the corner of Hammond and Central Streets where W. T. Grant Co. is now located. At that time there were 3,788 customers in the Bangor-Brewer Area.

During the two-week interim period, temporary service was furnished by means of an unused section of the Orono exchange switchboard which was borrowed for the purpose and installed in the Penobscot Exchange Hotel.

NEW BUILDING

The new central office building on Park Street was completed early in 1931 at a cost of well over one million dollars. With the instal-

lation of tons of new equipment, the Bangor exchange was converted to dial operation, the cut-over taking place on May 23, 1931. Step-by-step type equipment provided service for 9,872 subscribers. At present, 7,285 lines, 10,990 main stations and a total of 15,880 telephones serve the residents of Bangor and Brewer.

TOLL CENTER

The present Bangor exchange, which acts as an Operator Office for Orono, Bradford, Eddington, Hermon, Old Town, Orrington, East Millinocket, Millinocket and Lincoln, is also the toll center for the following exchanges:

Bradford	*Enfield
Bucksport	*Etna
Castine	*Exeter
Corinth	*Hampden
Eddington	*Island Falls
E. Millinocket	*Kingman
Hermon	*Lee
Lincoln	*Levant
Millinocket	*Newberry
Newport	*Patten
Old Town	*Plymouth
Orono	*Seboeis

Orrington	*Sherman Mills
Winterport	*Smyrna Mills
*Alton	*Stetson
*Cardville	West Enfield
*Corinna	*Winn

*Independent Company Offices

LOCAL AND TOLL TRAFFIC

In sharp contrast to the amount of traffic handled by the Bangor exchange in 1880, the exchange handled the following average daily volume of traffic in 1953:

Local dial calls	110,371
Outgoing toll calls	3,550
Incoming toll calls	4,900
Information	3,365
Intercepting	305
Teletypewriter	154

PERSONNEL

There are 256 employees engaged in furnishing this service to Bangor subscribers:

Commercial Department	18
Plant Department	123
Traffic Department	115

This group processes monthly an average of 1,385 service orders, handles 1,375 calls for Repair Service, and concludes approximately 3,683 customer contacts received through the business office.

In addition to the employees mentioned above, 31 others are assigned to the Eastern Area Headquarters which is located in Bangor.

Executive	2
Commercial	2
Plant	
Staff	8
Central Office Equip. Inst.	11
Traffic	8

INVESTMENT—COSTS—RATES

Over \$5,000,000 has been invested in land, buildings and furnishings, and central office and outside plant equipment to provide service for the Bangor exchange. The annual cost, including payrolls and all other operating expenses, of furnishing such service in the Bangor exchange is approximately \$1,500,000.

It is interesting to note that in spite of the tremendous growth and improvement in serv-

ice which has taken place in the Bangor exchange, the cost of such service to the residential customers has changed very little. This is illustrated by the following extracts from the 1900 and 1953 Bangor rate schedules:

Monthly Residence Base Rates

	1R	2R	4R
1900	\$5.50	\$5.33	\$4.00
1953	\$5.75	\$5.00	\$4.50

THE FUTURE

Service in the Bangor exchange area continues to improve and expand. Present plans for this exchange include:

Extension of the base rate area.

Expansion of central office and outside plant facilities in order to meet continuing demands for service.

Construction of permanent micro-wave facilities between Bangor and Portland.

Installation of additional operator toll dialing equipment.

Construction of micro-wave system, Bangor to Corinth to augment telephone facilities.

Long range planning for Bangor includes the introduction of the 2 - 5 numbering plan, nation-wide operator toll dialing, installation of Centralized Automatic Message Accounting equipment and subsequent introduction of customer toll dialing.

CONCLUSION

If one considers that a Bangor subscriber can now call 20,639 other customers in the area with no charge for toll service, as contrasted with the comparative handful of people who could have been similarly called in 1900, he can easily realize how much American research and efficiency have done to improve telephone service while still keeping costs down. This "holding of the line" is even more impressive when one realizes that a dollar in 1900 had many times the purchasing power of the dollar today.

Much has been done in 75 years to bring service of high quality and low cost to the thousands of families and businesses served by the Bangor exchange, and with the continued support of the telephone family in the Bangor area, the same high level of achievement will be maintained in the years to come.

Do Not
Circulate

Our Policy - -

To furnish our customers the best possible telephone service at the lowest possible cost consistent with financial safety and fair treatment of employees.

New England Telephone and Telegraph Company