

EARLY TELEPHONE HISTORY OF OKLAHOMA

January 1927

FOREWORD

By R. L. W.

Into the telephone history of Oklahoma is indelibly written the record of growth of this great state. Not only did the telephone pioneers blaze a trail of progress, but they and their successors have in a large measure made possible the development of Oklahoma from virgin territory into a place of leadership in thirty years.

Through the medium of the telephone, Oklahoma today is a large neighborhood. Every town in the state is connected with every other town by long distance telephone wires. There are few rural sections which are not provided with telephone facilities.

A complete history of telephone development in Oklahoma would contain reference to every city or town of consequence in the state. Such history would trace the growth in population and the accompanying increase in the number of telephones. In fact, it would show that telephone development has been proportionately greater than increases in population, due to the ever broadening needs for quick communication with friends, relations and business enterprises. It would show the constant use of men, materials, and money to keep abreast of those needs.

Oklahoma has indeed been fortunate in the personnel of those who pioneered and developed its telephone system. They were and are men of integrity—men whose characters have never been assailed.

Back of the Southwestern Bell Telephone Company of to-day are the personalities of three pioneer Oklahoma business men who have not only watched and helped the state develop, but who have made possible the vast system of communication which touches every corner of the commonwealth. They are John M. Noble, E. D. Nims, and E. E. Westervelt. Their first association was at Perry.

Noble was a farmer, Nims was in the mercantile business and Westervelt was the first Santa Fe station agent in that town.

It was Mr. Noble who first saw the vision of a state-wide telephone system. For this reason the Foreword should give a glimpse of his early life.

Mr. Noble is the pioneer son of a pioneer father. The elder Noble settled at McPherson, Kansas, in 1872, when Newton was the western terminus of the A. T. & S. F. R. R. By hard work and thrift he provided enough money to send his sons through college. From the University of Kansas, John M. received his training in electrical engineering. Shortly afterwards he obtained a position with the Chicago Telephone Company. In 1893, along with other Oklahoma Pioneers, he homesteaded or filed on a farm near Pawnee, 30 miles from railroad or wire communication. There he remained until 1897. During those four years he was practically removed from modern communication or transportation.

It was while so isolated that he concluded Oklahoma could not progress without a system of communication. Then he borrowed money at two per cent a month. Backed by this money and his knowledge of the telephone business, he built a long distance telephone line from Pawnee to Perry in 1897 at a cost of \$2200. This small crude beginning was the foundation of the Southwestern Bell Telephone Company in Oklahoma, with over 500,000 miles of exchange and toll wire, 153 exchanges and nearly 4,000 employees.

Inasmuch as Mr. Noble has participated in Oklahoma's telephone growth as well as the business and industrial expansion of the state, it is fitting that he should write this history of telephone development.

EARLY TELEPHONE HISTORY IN OKLAHOMA

BY JOHN M. NOBLE

Regardless of the fact that the territory now embraced in the state of Oklahoma was but recently opened to settlement, one of the first telephone lines west of the Mississippi River, if not the first, was built by E. D. Hicks, in the year 1886, or but ten short years after the invention of the telephone, and ran from Tahlequah to

Muskogee. Mr. Hicks, who is still living in Tahlequah in 1927 and is District Manager for the Southwestern Bell Telephone Company, was the son of a Union soldier at Fort Gibson, Indian Territory. His mother was part Cherokee. One of the amusing incidents in connection with the construction of this primitive line, which was built mostly on trees, with a few trees cut for poles where native trees were not available, was that in securing the consent of the Cherokee tribe to build the line, it was with the understanding that it should not parallel any roads or paths. As a consequence it was built through the forest and from tree to tree in a very crooked and disorderly manner, without any surveys or other plan being attempted than the running of a wire.

The second step, and more properly speaking first commercial venture was the Missouri and Kansas Telephone Company starting in business in Oklahoma some time during the spring of 1893 and during that year constructing and putting into operation small exchanges at Oklahoma City and Guthrie. Here their work rested until 1897.

Active and aggressive telephone development really dates from the organization of the Arkansas Valley Telephone Company in December, 1897, by the writer and J. N. Coulter, and the first work done by this company was the building of a toll line between Perry and Pawnee, at a cost of \$2200.00. A little later on this toll line was extended to Stillwater. At this early stage of the development when these short toll lines had been in operation but about a year, it was realized that it would be necessary to materially increase the investment, and in the securing of additional funds for so doing, E. D. Nims, B. S. McGuire, (later Congressman) and E. E. Westervelt were interested in the enterprise, and the first work undertaken with the additional funds and personnel thus secured was the building of the Perry exchange, which began service in the fall of 1898 with from eighty to one hundred subscribers.

The directors or stockholders, being few in number, held frequent and prolonged meetings. Radical differences of opinion on minor matters were freely expressed,

but it can and should here be stated that as to the possibilities of the territory and business, and as to the general course to be pursued there never existed any radical differences of opinion. The writer cannot call to mind a single action of moment having been taken without the unanimous sanction of all interested parties. To this unanimity of opinion of the stockholders, more than to any other one cause, can be attributed what success followed.

The management from the beginning to the present has remained practically unchanged while the name of the Arkansas Valley Telephone Company was changed to Pioneer Telephone Company in 1902 and to Pioneer Telephone and Telegraph Company in 1904 and to Southwestern Bell Telephone Company in 1917. The two photostats showing lines in 1902 (this tracing made by the writer) and the one showing circuits in 1927 show the tremendous telephone development that has been made during the past thirty years. Headquarters were moved from Perry to Oklahoma City in 1904. When our line was built from Pawnee to Perry the latter was Pawnee's railroad point. The country was new and in many parts unsettled. In fact only a small part of what is now Oklahoma had been thrown open to settlement. Most settlers had little or no money. Their needs were few. It was a primitive state. Roads were few and poorly maintained; travel was mostly by horseback, hack or prairie schooner. In 1897 there were not to exceed 1000 exchange telephones or two hundred miles of toll lines in what is now Oklahoma. In January 1927 the Southwestern Bell Telephone Company alone has 30 millions of dollars invested in Oklahoma with 175,000 company-owned telephones, 17,400 farmer-owned telephones connecting and 6285 miles of toll pole lines with 38,100 miles of circuit. Other companies in the state will bring these totals to 270,620 telephones and 40,000 miles of toll circuits.

From 1897 to 1904 our principal method of securing capital was from those associated in the business and by borrowing short time money. In some cases where the demand for lines was sufficiently pressing we made advance sale of coupons good for payment of toll charges, coupons to be honored in payment of toll charges over

lines when completed. Properties as soon as built or purchased were security upon which to borrow money to rebuild or extend. Next to actual cash, credit was everything, and without the confidence that was early placed in us we could not have carried on as we did. During this period of local financing and what may be spoken of as the survival of the fittest on account of competition, more consideration was given to quantity than quality, with the result that as late as 1905 it was quite an effort to talk from Oklahoma City to the eastern side of what is now the state of Oklahoma. Good lungs were necessary. Lines were built out of any kind of material that could be purchased with all the money available. Yet many a weary day's travel was saved. As development progressed eastern money became available in the latter part of 1904, and here a period of expansion, building and rebuilding and purchase of properties began, and continued to the close of this review, or statehood in 1907.

Returning to early history under direction of F. C. Simpson, State Manager, and J. W. Wilson, following Mr. Simpson, and in active charge during this unusual development, in November, 1897, the Missouri and Kansas Telephone Company completed and put into operation a small exchange at El Reno, and in the fall of the same year constructed toll lines connecting their three exchanges. During the next year, 1898, their toll lines were extended from Oklahoma City to Norman, and in 1899 from Norman to Purcell, and in 1900 from El Reno to Chickasha. During 1899, 1900 and 1901 their lines were extended from El Reno to the Kansas line and from El Reno to Geary, and from Oklahoma City to Chandler, Stroud and Shawnee by the purchase of what was known as the Ed Overholser or Ganzel lines.

During the same active telephone development, between 1899 and 1901, the lines of the Missouri and Kansas Telephone Company were extended from Guthrie north to Perry, and a little later on to Arkansas City, Kansas, this work being immediately followed by their building of a line from Guthrie to Perkins, Stillwater and Cushing.

Previous to the extending of lines from Perry to the Kansas line, the Missouri and Kansas Company had entered into operating contracts and were operating their property in conjunction with what was known as the Northern Oklahoma Telephone Company. The Northern Oklahoma property included exchanges in the towns of Blackwell, Ponca City, Tonkawa and Newkirk, with connecting toll lines; also toll line to Arkansas City and Perry. After some two or three years, joint operation of lines of the Missouri and Kansas Company with the Northern Oklahoma Telephone Company and after the Missouri and Kansas Telephone Company had started preliminary work on their own parallel lines between Perry and the Kansas line, the Northern Oklahoma Telephone Company's property was purchased by the Arkansas Valley Telephone Company.

The Missouri and Kansas Telephone Company in the Spring of 1904 extended their toll lines from Purcell along the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railroad to Davis, Indian Territory; thence across country to and along the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad to Denison, Texas. Before the last named toll line extension was fully completed and put into operation by the Missouri and Kansas Company, their entire holdings in Oklahoma were sold and transferred to the Pioneer Telephone and Telegraph Company.

While the Arkansas Valley Telephone Company was making among its first telephone investments, there was being constructed by a Mr. Rush a line extending from Guthrie to Chandler, Stillwater and Perkins, tapping an undeveloped interior section of the country. Financial troubles overtook those making this primitive effort and their work, before completion, was sold under foreclosure to a Mr. William Knipe of Perkins at but a fraction of the first cost, and later on completed to the above named points, the ownership having passed to a Mr. Razy who operated same for several years. These lines were cheap in character and did not connect with the Missouri and Kansas-Guthrie exchange. Separate offices were maintained and the lines were without exchange facilities at any terminal until same were provided by the

Arkansas Valley Telephone Company. One of the principal uses of this line, which was equally true of all lines tapping an interior section of the country in those early days, was the forwarding of telegrams. Prior to this telegrams were confined to the extremely important cases, and were delivered by special messenger from nearest railroad point, and in some instances many miles causing both great delay and expense. This property was finally sold to and rebuilt by the Arkansas Valley Telephone Company.

With Chandler and Stroud as railroad points, there was organized what was known as the Parkland Telephone Company. The Parkland Telephone Company built lines from Chandler and Stroud to the then interior towns of Parkland and Cushing. These lines were purchased by the Arkansas Valley Telephone Company.

In competing for the trade of this same interior section of the country, the Choctaw Railroad Company, soon after building their lines of railroad through Shawnee, built a telephone line from Shawnee to Chandler, the notable feature in the construction being that copper wire was strung in lieu of iron, on native poles. This line served its purpose for but an exceedingly short time, passing into comparative abandonment, primarily on account of the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad Company extending their road from Sapulpa to Oklahoma City through Chandler, thus doing away with overland freighting from both Guthrie and Shawnee.

The Arkansas Valley Telephone Company purchased the Choctaw Railroad Company's Chandler-Shawnee line in its then dilapidated condition at the cost price of the copper used thereon and reconstructed the same. Ed Overholser, or a Mr. Ganzel, built a telephone line from Stroud to Oklahoma City for the purpose of supplying telephone facilities during the construction of the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad, and thereafter the diverting of trade of the many small towns springing up along the new line of railroad into Oklahoma City. The Overholser or Ganzel lines changed hands several times between Overholser and Ganzel, finally selling to the Missouri and Kansas Telephone Company and thence

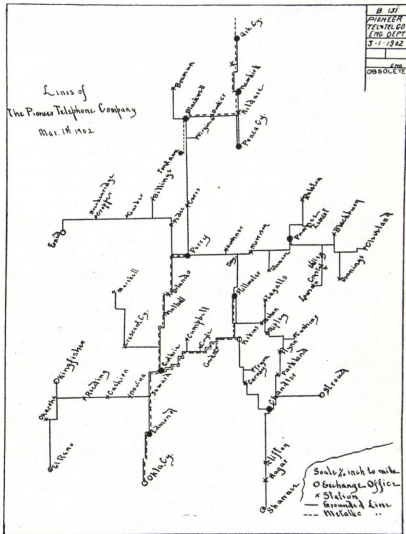
into the possession of the Pioneer Telephone and Telegraph Company.

The Northern Oklahoma Telephone Company was organized in 1897 or 1898 by Garrett Waite, A. H. Waite, E. A. Hildebrand, Ed L. Peckham of Blackwell, and built from Arkansas City, Kansas, to Newkirk, Ponca City, and Blackwell and later on extended their lines to Perry. They built small exchanges at Newkirk, Ponca City, Blackwell and Tonkawa.

The Oklahoma and Kansas Telephone Company was organized shortly after the opening of the Cherokee Strip and began the telephone development of that portion of the country between Enid and Caldwell, Kansas. A toll line was constructed connecting these two terminal points, and small exchanges established in Pond Creek, Medford and other minor places.

The Oklahoma and Kansas Company entered quite extensively into the building of numerous so-called farmer lines, this action on their part being, I believe, the first farmer line development in Oklahoma. These farmer lines in many cases were built under contracts that were non-remunerative, and the property of the Oklahoma and Kansas Telephone Company passed into the hands of a receiver, being purchased at receiver's sale by the Pioneer Telephone and Telegraph Company.

Parties from Bowie, Texas (late in 1899 or early in 1900) built an exchange at Enid, with second-hand apparatus brought with them from the Texas town. This exchange, limited in number of subscribers and started with insufficient capital to meet the demands of the rapidly growing community, had a more or less checkered career and was a short time later sold to a Mr. L. P. Bonebrake, who rebuilt and equipped this exchange on a somewhat larger and more permanent scale. Mr. Bonebrake owned and operated this exchange but a short time, selling to the Southwestern Telephone Company of Anthony, Kansas. This Anthony Company in turn rebuilt and built exchanges at Enid, Alva, Cherokee, and Carmen and light toll lines connecting these towns, and on March 1, 1905 sold their entire Oklahoma holdings to the Pioneer Telephone and Telegraph Company.



In providing a Guthrie Terminal for the Razez and Perry-Guthrie lines and in the interesting of additional capital, the Guthrie Telephone Company was organized, fifty per cent of the stock being subscribed by Judge Frank Dale, Judge A. G. C. Bierer and Joseph W. McNeal of Guthrie, and fifty per cent by the Arkansas Valley Telephone Company. A franchise was secured and an exchange constructed in the early part of 1901, this property was purchased by the Pioneer Telephone and Telegraph Company in 1904.

The Perry-Enid line was constructed in the fall of 1900 and the spring of 1901. Immediately following this was the building of the Pawnee, Cleveland, Blackburn and Jennings lines.

The building of the Guthrie-Perry direct line and the Perry-Enid line called for a better class of toll construction in the north, and the Northern Oklahoma lines previously referred to were rebuilt.

Certain holders of Arkansas Valley stock made investments in telephone property separate and distinct from the Arkansas Valley Telephone Company. J. N. Coulter, together with local Pawnee capital, organized the J. N. Coulter Construction Company and built lines from Ponca City to Grayhorse and Ralston, connecting with the Arkansas Valley Telephone Company at both Ponca City and Ralston; also from Jennings to Tulsa, connecting with the Arkansas Valley Telephone Company at Jennings, and the Indian Territory Telephone Company at Tulsa.

It will be noted that the J. N. Coulter Construction Company investments, although not in any way actually a part of the Arkansas Valley Telephone Company investments, were closely allied, Mr. Coulter being one of the principal owners of the Arkansas Valley Telephone Company's stock and one of the promoters of the Arkansas Valley Company. The J. N. Coulter property in its entirety was later sold to the Pioneer Telephone and Telegraph Company.

In 1897 or 1898 the Oklahoma-Southwestern Telephone Company was organized. This company became engaged in the building of toll lines and exchanges to the

west of El Reno at Clinton, Elk City, Bridgeport, Arapaho, Weatherford, and Sayre. This company was owned in part and managed by a Dr. Charles E. Davis, with headquarters at Weatherford. Shortly after the completion of lines from El Reno to Sayre and the building of several exchanges mentioned above, the Oklahoma Southwestern Telephone Company extended their toll lines from El Reno to Oklahoma City and built an exchange at Yukon. This property was operated by the builders but, a comparatively short time, that portion lying to the east of El Reno being sold to the Pioneer Telephone Company in 1902, and that portion to the west of El Reno to the Topeka and El Reno Telephone Company.

With lines entering Oklahoma City and others building, all having connections which precluded connecting with the then existing Oklahoma City Missouri and Kansas Telephone Company's exchange, the necessity for a terminal for these lines became apparent and the Citizens Independent Telephone Company, whose stock was held principally by Kansas parties, was organized and began the construction of the Oklahoma City exchange, in competition with the Missouri and Kansas Telephone Company.

The Citizens Independent Telephone Company apparently had but little conception of the amount of capital required to build and keep pace with the growth of Oklahoma City and it was only a short time before they found themselves in financial trouble and the property was then offered for sale, and in April, 1902 was purchased by the Pioneer Telephone Company.

Shortly after the building of the Guthrie exchange and the giving of toll service to the exchanges reached by the Arkansas Valley lines, a demand for toll service in all directions became very pressing. The Arkansas Valley Telephone Company took prompt steps to meet this demand. There had previously been constructed a small exchange at Okarche with a toll line, hardly entitled to the name, extending from Okarche to El Reno. In the clearing of the field for the building of a better toll line, the small Okarche exchange and primitive toll lines were purchased at a nominal consideration and dis-

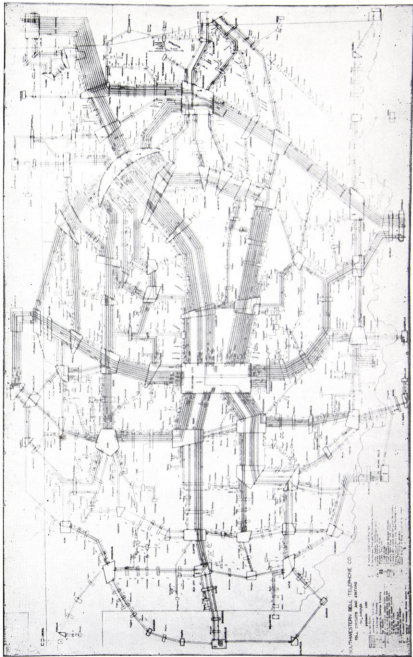
mantled, our company building toll lines connecting Guthrie and El Reno via Kingfisher and Okarche.

With this company's lines now reaching in three directions from Guthrie, the fourth was built late in 1901 to Oklahoma City.

With the opening of the country to the south and west of El Reno to white settlement (1901) the Topeka and El Reno Telephone Company was organized by Geo. Bellamy, C. O. and E. E. Blake and Dr. H. T. Smith of El Reno and associates and grew very rapidly, building or buying exchanges at El Reno, Chickasha, Lawton, Hobart, Cement and Anadarko, connecting these exchanges by toll lines and making connection with the Arkansas Valley Telephone Company's lines at El Reno.

The Topeka and El Reno Telephone Company continued in business until after the organization of the Pioneer Telephone and Telegraph Company, selling their entire holdings to the latter company in 1906.

About 1900 there was organized in what was then Indian Territory several telephone companies of more or less importance, the organization being along similar lines to that of the telephone companies in the western half of the present state. Principal among these companies might be mentioned the Indian Territory Telephone Company with headquarters at Vinita under the management of a Mr. Dudley Ellis, and with exchanges at Vinita, Pryor Creek, Tulsa, Sapulpa and Chelsea and toll lines connecting same, some of their property being the result of purchase from other companies or individuals, the Tulsa exchange being purchased from a Mr. Hall; the Muskogee National Telephone Company, actively controlled by a Mr. A. Z. English, with headquarters at Muskogee and exchanges at Muskogee, Okmulgee, and Checotah and toll lines connecting same; the South McAlester-Eufaula and Telephone Company, actively controlled by Wm. Busby and Mr. D. M. Haley, with headquarters at South McAlester and exchange at South McAlester, Eufaula and Wilburton and toll lines connecting same; the Choctaw Telephone Company with headquarters at Caddo and exchanges at Caddo and Atoka and toll lines from Denison, Texas to South McAlester; the Chickasha-Choctaw Tele-



phone Company with headquarters at Durant and exchanges at Durant and Hugo and toll lines connecting same, together with toll lines from Durant to Denison, Texas, on the pole line of the Choctaw Telephone Company.

The above named companies had their principal offices in towns along the lines of the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad and served the communities along same and tributary thereto. All of these companies were purchased separately by the Pioneer Telephone and Telegraph Company, except in the case of the South McAlester-Eufaula Telephone Company only a majority of the stock was purchased.

In addition to the above named companies there were companies at Bartlesville, Claremore, Tahlequah and Tishomingo, each building exchanges in their principal towns, together with toll lines in one or more directions therefrom.

In the extreme eastern portion of the old Indian Territory there was organized what was known as the Breedlove Telephone Company. This company built exchanges at Sallisaw and Spiro and toll lines connecting same, together with a line extending from Fort Smith, Arkansas, to Wagoner, each of these companies' property being separately purchased by the Pioneer Telephone and Telegraph Company.

Several other comparatively unimportant lines were purchased by the Pioneer Telephone and Telegraph Company and its immediate predecessors, among which might be mentioned a toll line extending from Castle to Fort Smith, Arkansas, through Weleetka along the Fort Smith and Western line of railroad, and from Hugo to Bokhoma along the St. Louis and San Francisco railroad.

About 1901 the Long Distance Telephone Company at Shawnee was organized. This company, although not a part of the Arkansas Valley Telephone Company, was a cousin, so to speak, among the stockholders of the Long Distance Telephone Company being E. D. Nims, David McKinstry and James F. Noble, Mr. Nims and Mr. McKinstry both being stockholders of the Arkansas Valley Telephone Company and James F. Noble, the writer's brother,

was familiar with and interested in the success of the Arkansas Valley Telephone Compy.

Prior to the organization of the Long Distance Telephone Company there had been put into operation an exchange at Shawnee. The management of the existing exchange possessed many peculiar operating ideas, among which was one to the effect that long distance and exchange investments were and should be separate and distinct, and would in no way provide suitable facilities for the doing of other than strictly local business. Shortly after the organization of the Long Distance Telephone Company, and after repeated efforts to bring about harmonious relations between the existing exchange and toll lines entering Shawnee, a second exchange was installed by the Long Distance Company.

The Long Distance Company grew very rapidly, confining their principal efforts to the building of toll lines. Immediately upon the completion and putting into operation of the Shawnee exchange, toll lines were built to the south reaching Ada, to the east reaching Holdenville, and along the then new line of railroad of the Frisco Company between Scullin and Sapulpa.

In the carrying out of the development schemes there was organized what was known as the S. S. S. Telephone Company, of which the Long Distance Company was half owner of stock, local parties owning the remainder. The S. S. S. Telephone Company built and operated lines from Shawnee to Stroud and Sapulpa. The Long Distance Telephone Company secured by purchase the small exchanges at Ada and Roff, the entire property of the Long Distance Company being taken over by the Pioneer Telephone and Telegraph Company at the time of the taking over of the property of the Pioneer Telephone Company and the later on referred to North American Telephone and Telegraph Company.

Shortly after the organization of the Long Distance Telephone Company and during this time of very active telephone development throughout both Oklahoma and Indian Territory, there was construction work started along the main line of the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad, substantial toll lines being built by the North

American Telephone and Telegraph Company, the principal portion of this company's stock being handled by C. N. Haskell, G. W. Barnes and other Ohio parties. Some of the same parties holding this stock had previously made investments in telephone properties in Ohio and Texas, and it was the express purpose of the North American Company to construct telephone lines from Joplin, Missouri, through McAlester to Denison, Texas, with a branch from McAlester west through Oklahoma, no definite objective point being stated.

There was a meeting arranged between the principal owners of the North American Telephone and Telegraph Company and the Pioneer Telephone and Telegraph Company and the necessity for duplication of investments, so far as these companies were concerned, was eliminated, the North American company stopping their construction work at Holdenville, the then eastern terminus of the Long Distance Telephone Company.

The construction work of the North American Telephone and Telegraph Company proceeded in an intermittent manner along the main line of the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad, a pole line being constructed from Wagoner south to the Red River, and from McAlester west to Holdenville, and some material distributed between Wagoner and Joplin, Missouri. Here their work rested, for various causes, one of which was their inability to make satisfactory operating contracts with the various companies through whose territory they had constructed pole lines.

The principal points along the Missouri, Kansas and Texas railroad were supplied with telephone exchange service by local companies, and these local companies, working in conjunction with each other, had toll lines in operation throughout the entire territory through which the North American Telephone and Telegraph Company were projecting and had constructed pole lines.

The North American Company never completed or put into operation any portion of their investment in Indian Territory. Certain portions of their work were completed by the Long Distance Telephone Company, and the entire property of the North American Telephone and Telegraph

Company was taken over by the Pioneer Telephone and Telegraph Company.

The Pioneer Telephone and Telegraph Company immediately negotiated with the various companies operating over the line with the various companies along the line of the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad Company, and under same completed the work of the North American Telephone and Telegraph Company, thereby converting the investment into a going and profitable property.

Until Statehood there was no power, other than competition and supply and demand, to regulate prices or policies. Our company early recognized the need for a standard basis of quoting toll rates and adhered strictly to it and insofar as possible we had our rates adopted by the companies with whom we connected. This plan called for rates on an air line basis from point of origin to point of destination and regardless of how the line ran, or the number of line owners. Before this the through rate was determined by adding the sum of all the local rates.

We worked out a plan in connection with our air line method of quoting rates to make settlement on air line basis from point of origin to point of transfer and from point of transfer to point of destination, regardless of the class or kind of line, and as our line was usually better than the other companies' it was not difficult for us to secure their consent to such an arrangement.

With the expiration of the original Bell patents many manufacturing and operating telephone companies sprung up, most of which did not remain in business very long. In older territory there were many mutual operating companies, that is, the farmers of a community organized and put in a system for their own use. Usually the business men participated but these organizations were known as farmers' mutuals. They spread like a network connecting with each other and made toll line construction a rather hazardous adventure. If the farmers thought they were being overcharged for service they put in their own switchboard, only too often to find that there was not the profit in the telephone business that they had expected. Some of these sprung up in our territory and were pur-

chased by us. In 1904 when we took over the Enid property the farmers had built a pole line into Enid and were preparing to put in an exchange. After several weeks of almost continuous conference we worked out a contract with a very low switching rate that permitted the farmers to talk anywhere they could over rural lines, it being *agreed between parties to this contract that town to town calls were to be considered as toll calls and be routed and paid as such.* This somewhat impractical arrangement worked out a rather happy solution of these mutual difficulties in that it satisfied the farmers, appealed to the business man as it let him talk over these farmer lines to the farmers and permitted the Pioneer Company to construct toll lines between towns that he could use for his private business.

The Arkansas Valley Telephone Company from its beginning saw the need for a service that could be used by all and at rates the public considered fair and attempted to keep pace with the growth of the state, constructing lines wherever business could be developed to warrant and irrespective of the number of companies involved, or the miles of line used, quoted rates and asked the public to pay on basis of shortest direct single company line between points, thereby removing cause for complaint on the part of the public and incidently removing inducement for the building of a competitive shorter and more direct line. It is significant that while these items are being written, telephone service between all points in Oklahoma and all points in England has been provided. Such has been the development in a few short years.