

**THE
EARLY CORPORATE
DEVELOPMENT**



**OF THE
TELEPHONE**

THIS brief history of the early growth of the Bell Telephone organization was written by the late William Chauncy Langdon when he was Historical Librarian of the A.T. & T. Company, and was published originally in the July, 1923, *Bell Telephone Quarterly*. A reprint in booklet form was issued in 1935 which embodied, as does this edition, certain timely revisions in the concluding section.

THE qualities which characterize the Bell System of the present day have all grown from right beginnings made by the small group of men through whose vision and practicality the telephone industry was started fairly on its way toward universal service. Bell, Sanders, Hubbard, Watson, Forbes and Vail seem, each in his own line, instinctively to have known the principles, the methods and the practice which in less than fifty years would make of the telephone a well centralized federation of companies, a sound financial institution, an efficient and progressive engineering utility, and therefore the habitual reliance of the civilized world.

While Alexander Graham Bell himself never carried the invention of the telephone beyond its elementary stage, he foresaw in very specific detail the possibilities of universal communication to which, with the addition of the exchange and long lines systems, his invention would ultimately be developed. In an address which served as a prospectus for a group of London capitalists, dated March 25, 1878, Mr. Bell wrote (with slight omissions), —

“It is conceivable that cables of telephone wires could be laid underground, or suspended overhead, communicating by branch wires with private dwellings, country houses, shops, manufactories, &c., &c., uniting them through the main cable with a central office where the wire could be connected as desired, establishing direct communication between any two places in the city. Such a plan as this will, I firmly believe, be the outcome of the introduction of the telephone to the public. Not only so, but I believe in the future wires will unite the head offices of the Telephone Company in different cities, and a man in one part of the country may communicate by word of mouth with another in a different place. Believing as I do that such a scheme will be the ultimate result of the telephone to the public, I will impress upon you all the advisability of keeping this end in view, that all arrangements of the telephone may be eventually realized in this grand system.”

