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HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHT OF THE TELEPHONE IN NORTHEASTERN ARIZONA.

The telephone systems in this northeastern part of the state started out in the early days, like they did elsewhere, as small independent companies competing with each other.

Telephone service came to this area over 50 years (Circa 1956) ago starting as small local exchanges in Winslow, St. Joseph and Holbrook, in that order.

Newspapers of those times reported news had reached Holbrook during the last week in January, 1907, by telephone of the serious injury of a resident of St. Joseph. The same issue carried information that telephone connections were completed between Holbrook and Winslow that same week.

Old time residents recall the first telephone service in Holbrook connected a wall type telephone in the old Arizona Co-cooperative Mercantile Institution at 101 East Central Ave. to a store operated in St. Joseph by J. E. "Ez" Richards late in 1906. Richards had formed a company known as the Northern Arizona Telephone Company at about the same time Fred W. Nelson formed the Arizona Electric Telephone Company in Holbrook.

By 1907, several telephones had been installed in St. Joseph with a connecting line crossing the Little Colorado River to the Aztec Land & Cattle Company's headquarters ranch south of St. Joseph.

Richards interested others in his Telephone Company and in March, 1907, the following directors were elected to the Northern Arizona Telephone Company: W. H. Clark, Holbrook; J. E. Richards and Capt. Henry Warren, St. Joseph; G. R. Bauerbach and J. A. Lyons of Winslow.

Nelson started construction of a toll line from Holbrook to St. Johns via Woodruff, Snowflake and Concho which was completed in April, 1907. This line was then extended to Eagarville and Springerville and a line was built in to Pinedale. The first telephone conversation over these lines was had shortly before noon on April 28, 1907, between Holbrook and St. Johns (County Seats of Navajo and Apache Counties). A few days later, Springerville and Eagarville (now Eagar) were connected. Early in May, the directors of the Arizona-Electric-Telephone Company held an annual elections and adopted plans to extend their lines from Snowflake to Taylor, Shumway and other points south.

Winslow had a Magneto exchange owned by an ex-Santa Fe railroad engineer in 1905. Originally, the line connecting Holbrook with St. Joseph and Winslow was strung on insulators that were attached to boards nailed to the Santa Fe Railroad right-of-way fence posts but the amount of induction from the heavily charged telegraph lines on the same right-to-way made further line improvements necessary.

St. Joseph's 14 telephone subscribers dwindled in the ensuing years to some three or four so the equipment and lines were sold to a re-organized company know as the Navajo-Apache Telephone system, Inc. at Holbrook. Lloyd C. Henning joined this new company on September 1, 1912. In the spring of 1920, directors of this company, which had also acquired the Nelson lines after several changes of ownership, petitioned the Arizona Corporation Commission for a slight increase in rates to help meet the expenses incident to "inaugurating 24 hours a day service". Since 1931, the Navajo-Apache Co. has been owned by the Henning family.

Many changes have taken place in the last 50 years in this area. St. Joseph (now Joseph City) no longer has a telephone exchange and the line that crossed the river to connect with the Hashknife (Aztec Land & Cattle Co.) headquarters and outside towns, has long since disappeared. Woodruff and Concho has fallen by the wayside but the other towns of Pinedale, Snowflake, St. Johns, Springerville, Eagar and together with the later towns of Taylor, Shumway, Show Low, Lakeside and McNary to be connected with the system have grown.

Over the years, it is interesting to note that local men, bankers, merchants, cattlemen, railroad men, newspaper men and others originated the service. Through thick and thin they held on, sometimes when their income, from a reduced number of subscribers, dwindled almost to the point it didn't pay the taxes.

Agreement for the sale by the Navajo-Apache Telephone System, Inc. and purchase by C. H. Jennings of all properties of the independent telephone facilities in Navajo and Apache Counties is now being worked out. (Circa 1956) Completion of the sale depends upon a number of contingencies including approval by the Arizona Corporation Commission, suitable action by boards of supervisors in both Navajo and Apache Counties and municipal administrations of Snowflake, Show Low, St. Johns and Springerville.

LLOYD HENNING WILL BE DOING SOMTHING AS USUAL WHEN HE RETIRES

After satisfactory completing of the current negotiations for the sale of the Navajo-Apache Telephone Co. Lloyd Henning, owner will retire with over 44 continuous years of telephone service with his company at Holbrook. He says he will be doing something as usual, however, when he retires.

"I do know one thing for certain" he said. "I'm going to continue to live and eventually die in Holbrook!". Lloyd was 71 on his birthday, the 15th of last November.

He added that he had no qualms about the future - that he had sufficient interests outside his telephone system that had been neglected for years to keep him well occupied for many years to come.

"I will devote a lot of time to getting the old records in shape as I haven't had time to even look them up". He wants to get the old telephone records together so that the history of the Navajo-Apache Telephone Company will not be lost to future generations as has the history of other earlier telephone companies who have gone this way before.

He also observed that he held no animus over the operations of his telephone system. "Anyone who has served the public as long as I have tried to, learned early that it is impossible to satisfy every-one, no matter how hard you try. We do the best we can within our limitations but we all find ourselves dissatisfied with conditions and people at times. A man is foolish to hold grudges - even personal ones. Life is too short and too good to spoil that way".

Lloyd Henning started his career as a cashier, janitor, fire builder and one man staff of a branch of a Winslow bank. He has served his fellow and citizens as a county official, from clerk of the court through County Supervisor and State Senator. He is a self-educated printer, editor, accountant, banker (Chairman of the Board of the First National Bank of Holbrook) and telephone manager. Because of his balanced judgment and civic interest, the majority of service and civic organizations seek his advice on community projects. He has nurtured, donated and kept alive the community's interest in the collection of books in the high school library named the "Henning Memorial Library". Lloyd early displayed the qualities of a solid citizen, with a genuine interest in those organizations that seek to bring out the best traits in mankind.