

MUTUAL TELEPHONE COMPANY CONNECTS HUNDREDS OF PHONES

The year which is now drawing to a close has been a year of unprecedented growth and progress in the affairs of the Multnomah & Clackamas County Mutual Telephone Company. The volume of business has been greater during the year 1924 than for any previous year of the company since its organization in March of 1906.

In March of this year the telephone company changed hands, K. A. Miller and son, Bayard A. Miller, purchasing the controlling interest in the company's affairs. Besides Mr. Miller and his son, who are the president and the vice president, respectively, of the company, Miss A. M. Hoss is the secretary and treasurer and also has charge of the office. She is assisted in the office by Miss Ora Sweek, Miss Sweek's twin sister, Oral, is the chief operator. Four other young ladies, Lillian Markwart, Bernice Beers, Ella Baker and Mildred Zeek, complete the exchange operator staff. Mrs. I. T. Bent has been for over four years the efficient night operator and Mrs.

Curtis Woods has lately been added as a relief operator.

Three linemen are busily engaged in installing new telephones and making necessary line repairs. One of these, the foreman, W. S. Everett, began work with the company in 1914, but three years later enlisted in the world war and saw two years of active service. He returned to the employ of the company in 1919 and took charge as foreman in 1920, which position he has filled satisfactorily ever since.

Ernest Christensen began work as a lineman in 1916. He, too, enlisted in the service, being enrolled as a member of Uncle Sam's family from December, 1917, until the same month a year later. He began work for the company again in September, 1923.

Ed. Sell entered the employ of the company as a lineman at the time Mr. Christensen resumed his work.

The Sandy exchange board, including Firwood and Dover, is in charge of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Christensen. The former has been employed by the company since 1912, for eight years

being the foreman of the linemen working staff. Since 1920 he has had charge of the branch exchange at Sandy. The chief operator at Sandy is Miss Nettie Schmidt and her assistant is Katherine Mutchler.

At present there are 856 subscribers in the Gresham exchange and 187 in Sandy, making a total of 1043 patrons in the territory of the Multnomah & Clackamas Mutual Telephone Company. The Corbett and Damascus lines are owned and operated by independent corporations, although listed in the Gresham directory and reached through the central office here.

The increased patronage of the telephone in Gresham would indicate that an extension of the plant, particularly as to switchboards, of which there are but three, as an early requirement, is not to be ignored.

According to the figures of December, 1923, the value of the company's equipment is around \$50,000. It is capitalized at \$30,000 and has, roughly speaking, 150 stockholders. It has about 900 miles of wiring and nearly three miles of cable. For the benefit of some who may not understand what is meant by the cables, it may be stated that a telephone cable is a lead-encased pipe carrying from 50 to 100 pairs of wires. As rapidly as possible these cables are being strung, as the damage from sleet storms is thereby greatly lessened by the protection of the lead pipes around the cluster of single wires.

The wiring connections between Gresham and the Twelve-Mile corner were seriously interfered with in the severe silver thaw three years ago, and at that time it was talked of stringing a mile of cable between the two points where the wires are particularly exposed, but as yet nothing has been done in regard to it. The cost of a mile of cable containing 50 pairs of wires is between \$2500 and \$3000.

An added feature during the past year has been the building of a public night booth between the telephone office and the county agricultural office, the booth being accessible all hours of the night from the hall between the two rooms.

An extremely useful device, which has lately been installed on the desk of the secretary, is the Hush-A-Phone, a voice silencer, designed for confidential conversation, clear transmission and office quiet. It is made of aluminum and provides for the desk phone all the features of the phone booth with the added ones of comfort and convenience. They are being rapidly introduced wherever telephones are in use. The company here has accepted the agency for the Hush-A-Phone, which, it is thought, will soon be an office necessity.

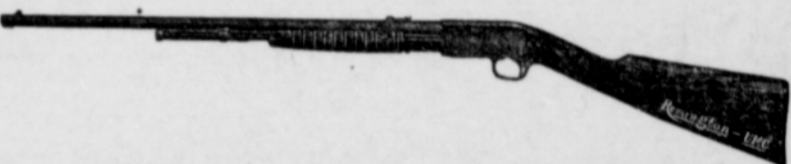
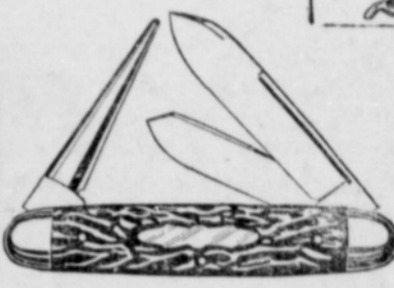
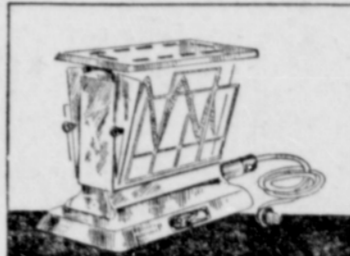
In conjunction with the telephone

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question, it might not be amiss to mention a few matters that are more or less in the abstract. In spite of well trained and efficient operators, there are occasions when Central fails to immediately respond to a ring. After ringing the second time, Central is told in no gentle tone to "wake up." (Of course this couldn't happen in Gresham, but it has been known to in other places). If Central still continues to sleep, the receiver is put up with a bang and the phone is rung many times.

Now the fact of the matter is Central is not asleep. Neither is she reading a novel nor has she gone on a journey. She is right there on one of the most nerve-racking jobs known to the feminine toiler. The trouble is that a large number of persons have decided to place calls at the same time, hence a "rush." Continual ringing will not get the party any sooner. The call was registered at the first ring by a tiny shelf called a "drop" opening down in front of the operator. She proceeds to plug in the calls as rapidly as her active brain and nimble fingers will permit, in the order of first come, first served. She is as anxious as the patron to get the calls through and clear the board.

Some have even been heard to disparage the suburban telephone system, comparing it with the exchange of a city 300 times the size of the small place. No doubt if the rates of the country phones were raised on a par with those of the city, the farmers' lines would have ample means to install a more satisfactory system. Portland has the Western Electric common battery board, equipped with electric light signals in red and white. The flashing of a certain colored light signifies the end of a conversation.

The central operator in Gresham has no means of knowing when a conversation is ended except as one short ring is given, according to the instructions on page 3 of the telephone directory. The local exchange has the magneto board, a necessarily inferior one to those in use in large cities.

A little kindly Christmas tolerance interspersed with a few words of commendation occasionally would work well in promoting better service, says the management. Mankind is always ready to criticize, but how rarely does it commend. It would be a great benefit to the public and the telephone company as well if subscribers would acquaint themselves with the mechanism of their local exchange board and not place the blame on the long-suffering hello girls for the things they are powerless to remedy.

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