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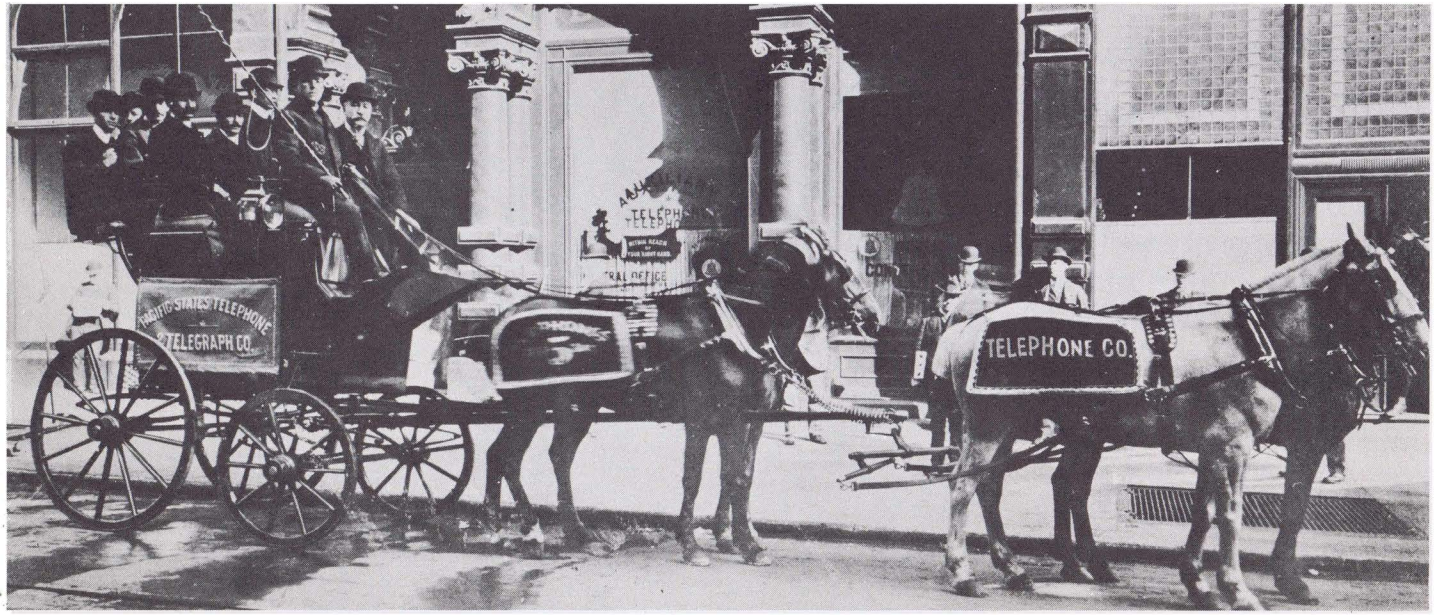
OUR FAMILY ALBUM



San Francisco — 1901

Merchandising at the turn of the century. Commercial salesmen in "tally-ho & four" used in a sales campaign.

The reason for it all . . . *the customer*. The early telephones weren't too handsome. But they carried voices pretty well. And they carried the promise of better things to come.

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OUR FAMILY ALBUM

It's always fun to look at an old family album. Particularly when it belongs to your own family. The faces of the people look out at you across the faded, yellowed years. You look at their strange clothes, the bearded faces, the piled up hairdos. You wonder what they were like and how they felt about things. They sit up stiffly in buggies hitched to bored looking horses. They lean proudly on shiny cars or against new buildings long since rusted and crumbled. They lived in a different, a horse-drawn world and so it is easy to think that their lives were simple and problem-free.

When you look at their faces closely you can see that they were real people. They grin self-consciously or try to look important . . . as if they knew that some day a stranger's eyes would see the picture. They make "faces" to prove they were having fun and didn't take themselves *too* seriously. And sometimes they look a little sad, as if posing for a picture made them suddenly aware that the days of their lives were fluttering away.

This album is made up of such pictures. It belongs to all of us. It shows some of the men and women who built Pacific Telephone. It isn't only an album of officers of the company, of course. A telephone company is built by all

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kinds of people doing all kinds of jobs. It shows some of these people at their switchboards, at their desks, using tools . . . working, living, building.

And learning. These forebears of ours were building from scratch. Even though the world was paced by horses' hooves, there were plenty of problems. The telephone business they were building, for instance, was painfully new. They couldn't learn it from books because they weren't written yet. There was only one telephone expert, a Mr. A. G. Bell. And he would have been the first to admit that he knew more about the problems than the answers. There were no telephone oldtimers to train minds and guide hands . . . no Instructions, "Specs," Practices, or General Letters. Every idea was new, every invention the first of its kind, every problem something new under the sun.

And things happened fast. A switchboard became obsolete even while it was being built. The wonderful "American Speaking Telephone" itself was changing shape about as often as Parisian fashions. The telephone changed from a mere toy, to a luxury, to a convenience and then to a necessity in a few years' time. These were a few of the people who wrought the change.

So, like in any family album, some of these first members of our Pacific family look self-conscious or filled with self-importance. But you will also see that many of them look a little proud of themselves. Maybe they were conscious of building more than a business. Maybe they had a feeling they were building something that gives a business life and spirit . . . a tradition, a heritage; something that would last and grow when they were only faces in a family album. One thing is certain. "They builded better than they knew."

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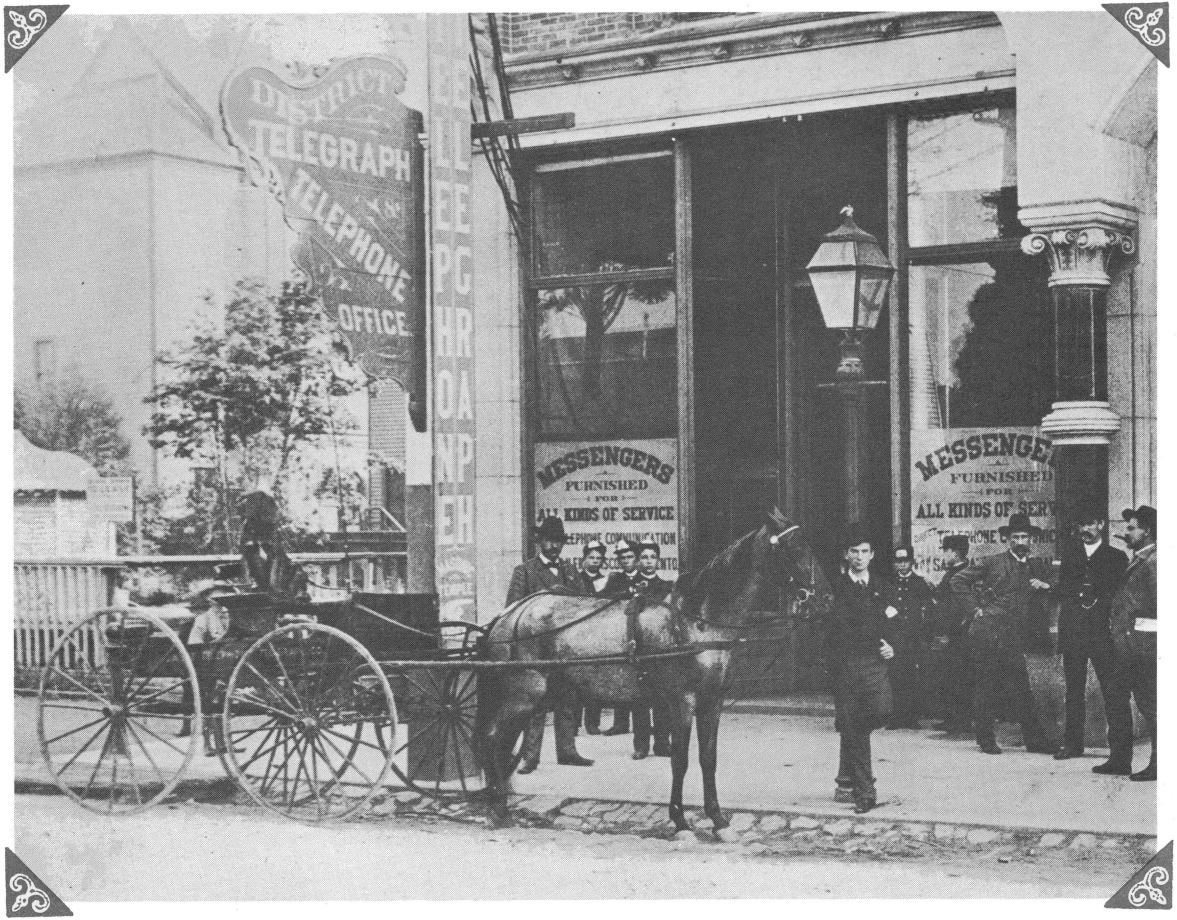

Oakland —1884

All the city's telephone people, except two operators working upstairs. The man holding the company horse was Commercial, Traffic, Plant, and Directory Manager, Wire Chief, Service Rep., Accountant, Chief Operator, BS & MV Supt., Buggy Driver, and a few other things. He worked harder than the horse.

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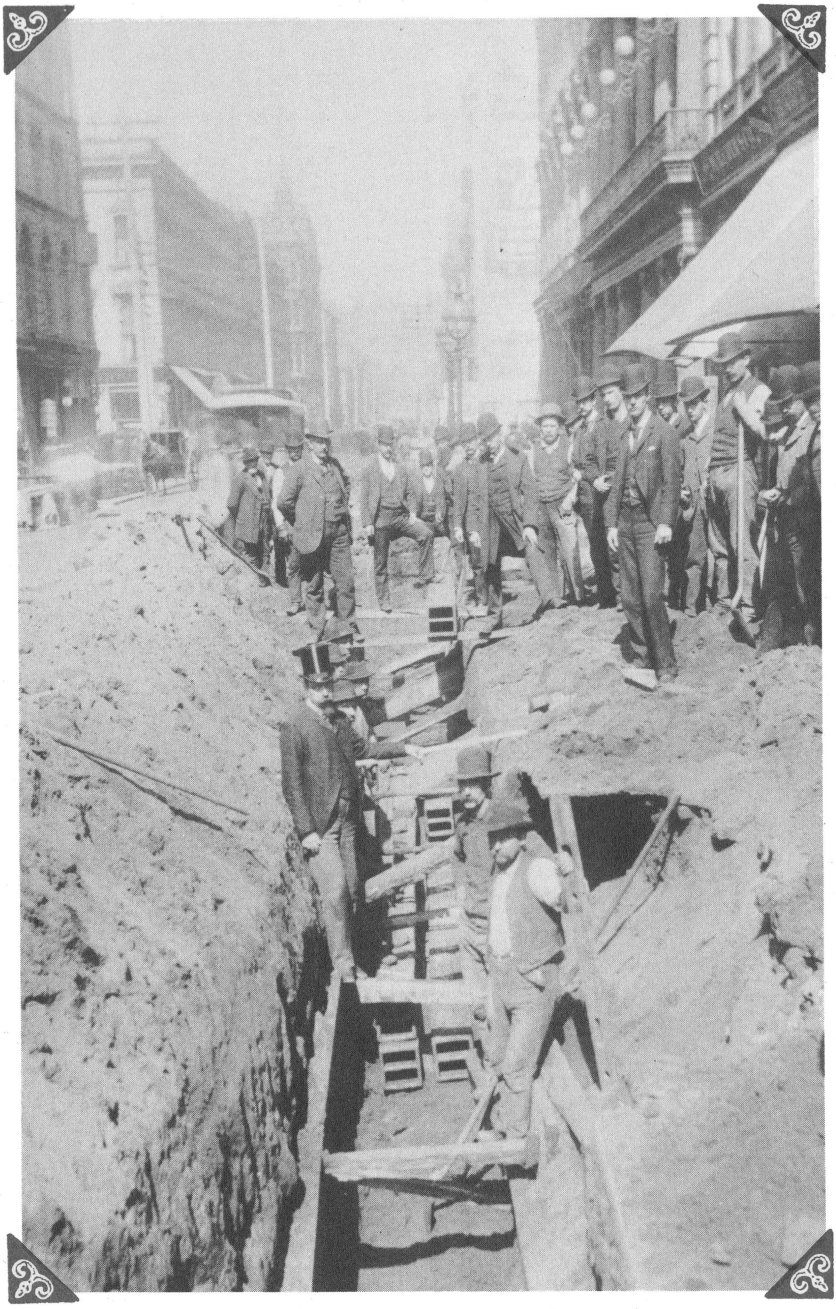

San Francisco —1891

Our first president, John Sabin, standing in a section of the first underground cable trench. Telephone lines were getting pretty thick in the big cities. Everybody was happy to see them go underground.

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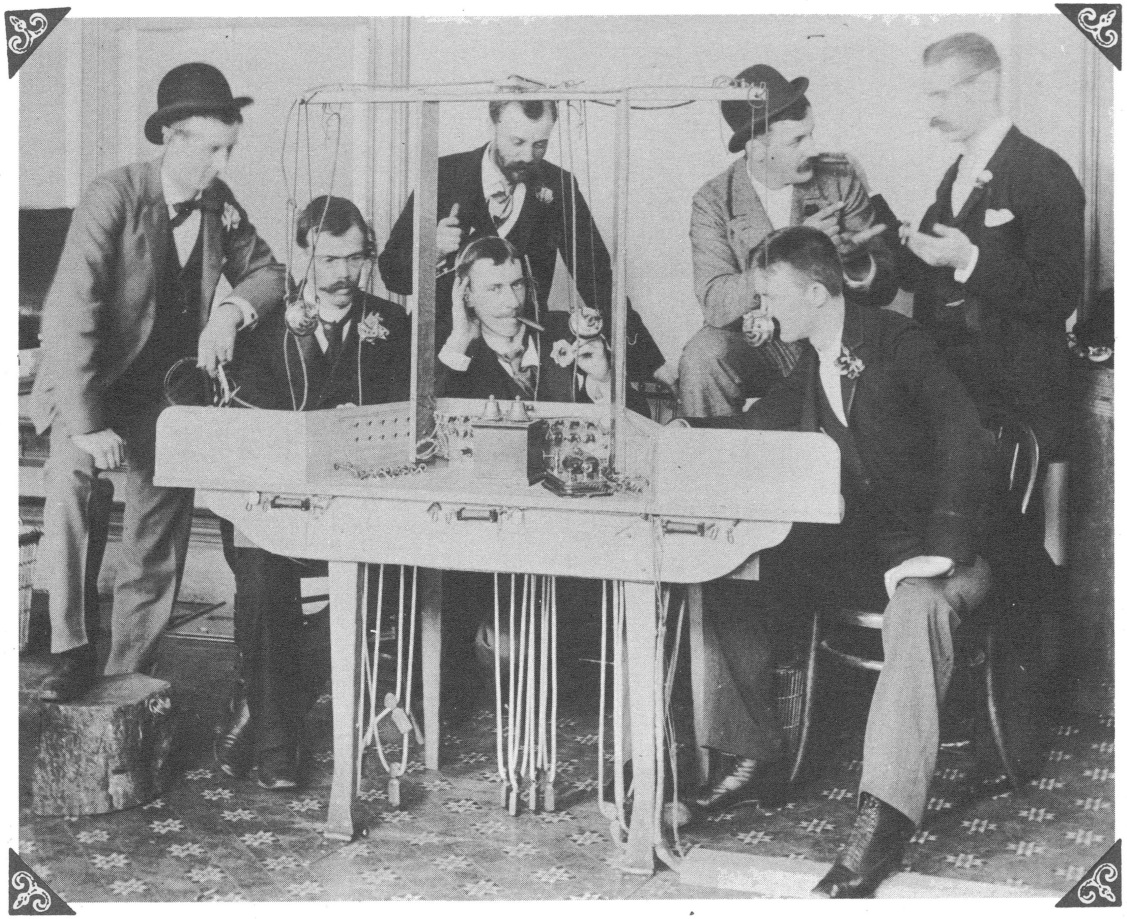

San Francisco —1892

This group from the Chief Engineer's Dept. was checking out a new type of switchboard. The engineers were so well dressed they made the board look pretty plain.

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Outside Walla Walla, Washington — 1893

The construction chuck-wagons aways did a bit of advertising. The cooks were busy. Putting up toll lines made big appetites.

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Portland —1895

This Commercial business office was a pretty popular place in winter time. It had central heating—a stove in the center of the room.

Spokane —1896

Business was pretty brisk in this toll office, too. But the messenger boy usually had time to peek over his huge white tie at the day's news.

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Oakland — 1899

Plant men learned early in the game that safety belts can save lives. This splicer lived to tell the story. The belt saved his neck . . . the wires saved his bowler.

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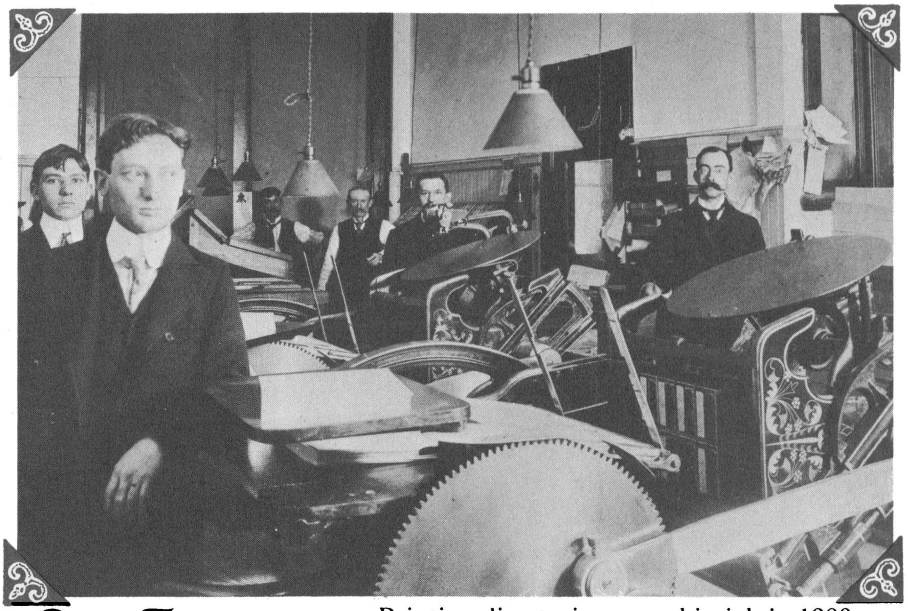
Stanwood, Wash.—1900

This is an early construction crew . . . 11 men and 2 horses. Some of the men were still wearing Spanish-American War leggings and "Rough Rider" hats.



San Francisco —1900

Printing directories was a big job in 1900, but it was to get much bigger. We were printing our own then. The man with the "handlebar" at right was startled by the flash.

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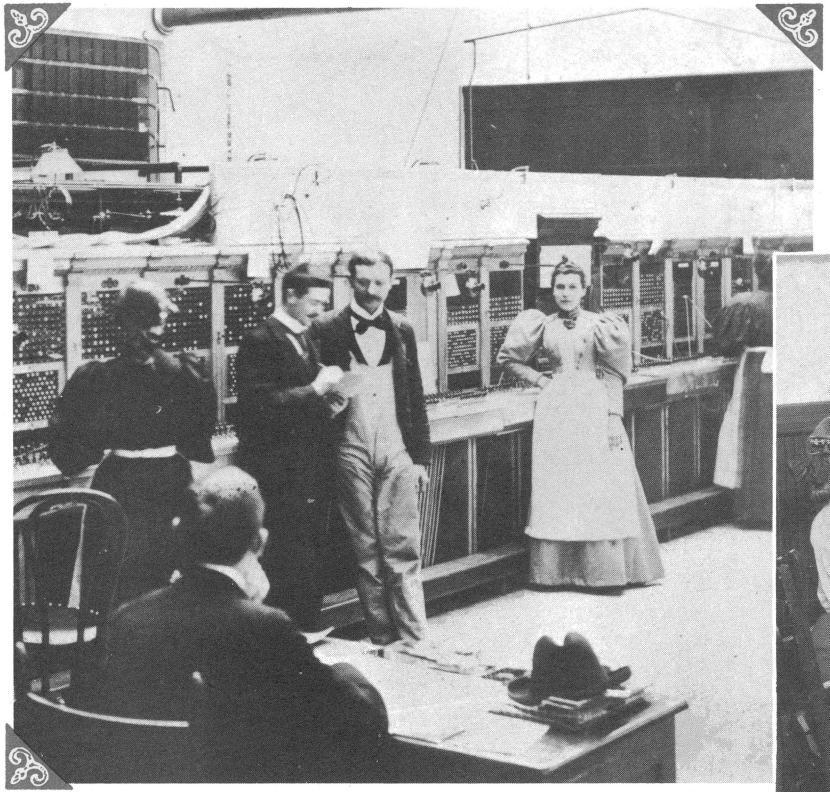

Los Angeles —1901

Some operators wore aprons over their long dresses . . . and some plant men wore overalls to protect their satin vests and boiled shirts.

Seattle —1902

High collars and high boards. The Chief Operator sat up as straight as her nickel-plated telephone.

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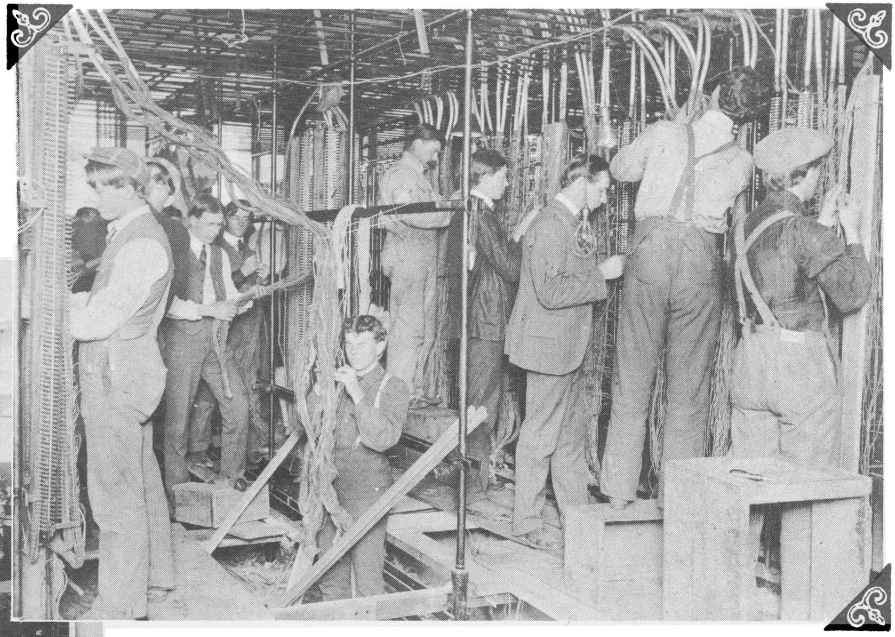
San Francisco —1906

This is the old Auditing Dept. now the Accounting Dept.

Many businesses of the period still hired male "clarks" exclusively. We found that women are prettier . . . and good workers.



Los Angeles —1903

Putting in a new office has always been a lot of work. The Plant men working in this "pot-head" vault probably seldom ordered spaghetti for dinner.

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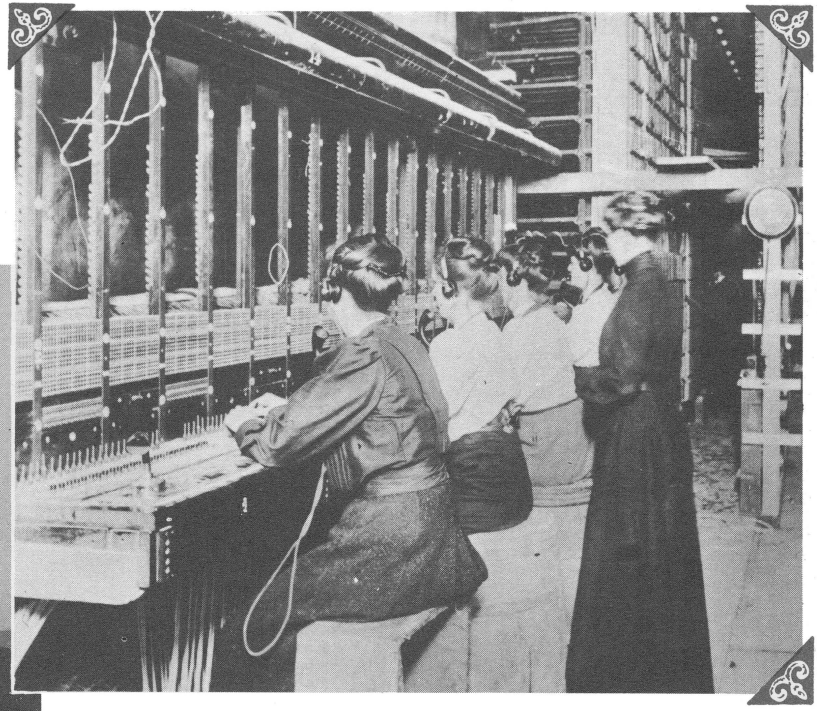
Los Angeles —1906

These Plant engineers needed two telephones . . . the regular "stand-up" and the new-fangled dial telephone.



San Francisco —1906

A few terrible hours of heaving earth and roaring flames and *old* San Francisco died. Telephone people worked around many clocks to put together battered equipment; San Francisco lived again.

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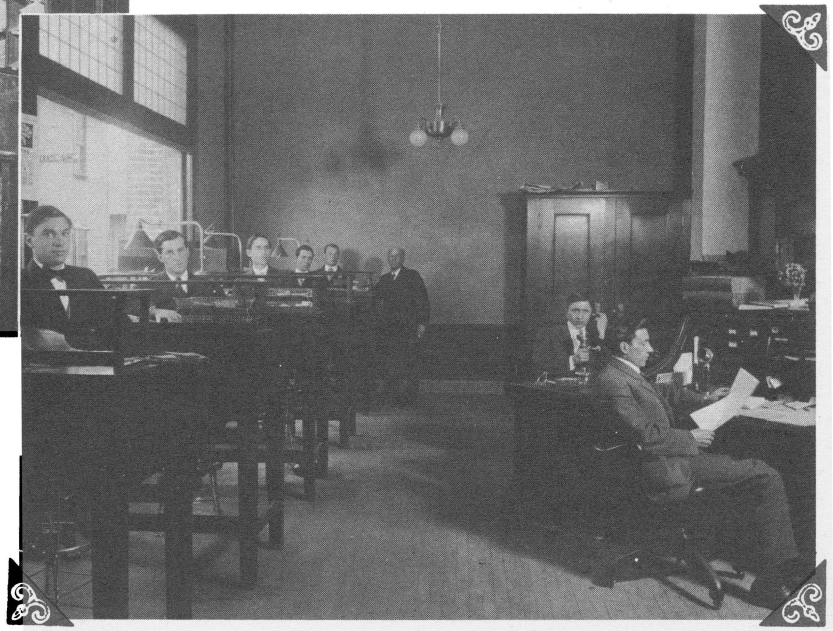
Los Angeles — 1908

Plant men and women still work together in Service Centers. Styles have changed a bit, though.



Los Angeles — 1909

This is an early Accounting Office. The objectives were the same then . . . getting out accurate bills promptly.

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Spokane — 1909

The operators' lounge didn't have a radio, but it had a piano . . . complete with stylish tasseled cover. It was a good place to relax and rest your spats. (See girl, seated left front.)

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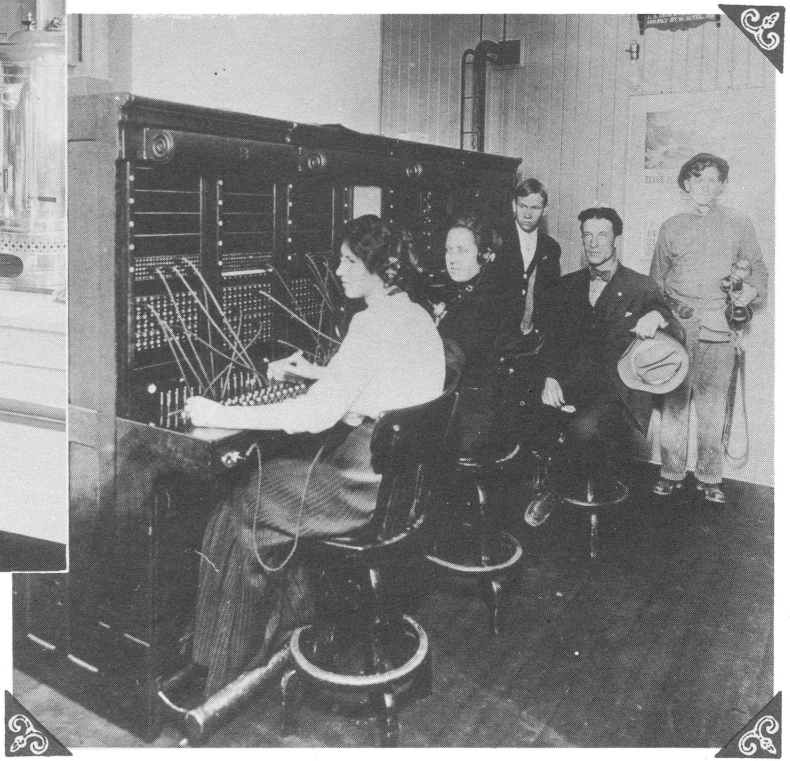
Los Angeles — 1909

The Chef and the counter girls almost look like nurses, but this was a company cafeteria.

Red Bluff, Calif. — 1911

In 1911 you could still put all of some cities' telephone people in one small room . . . and have room for the switchboard.



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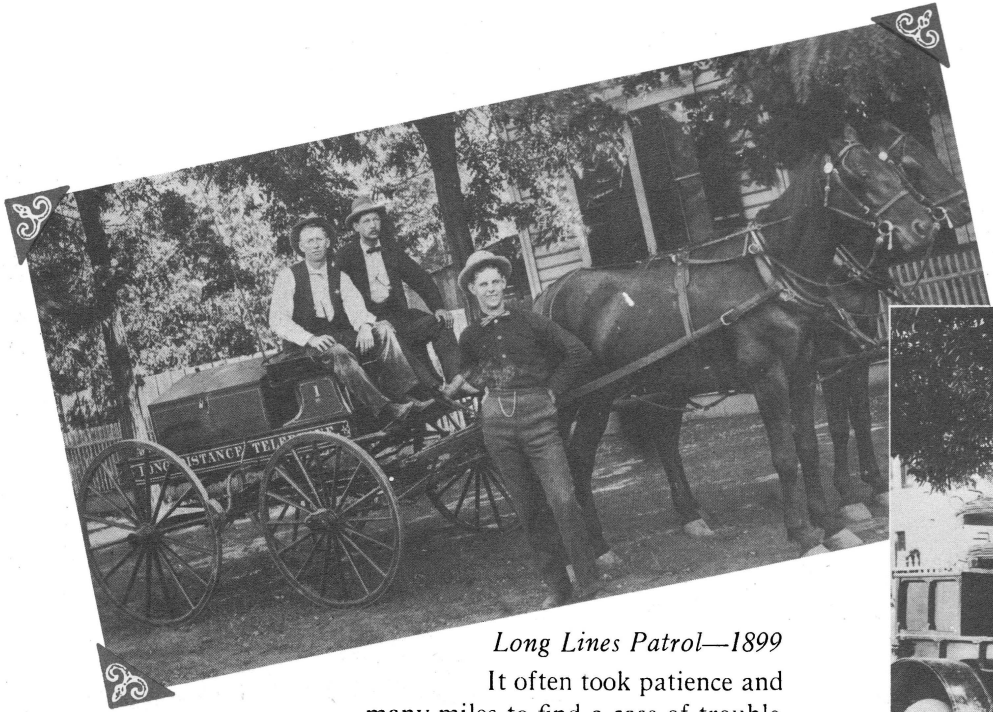
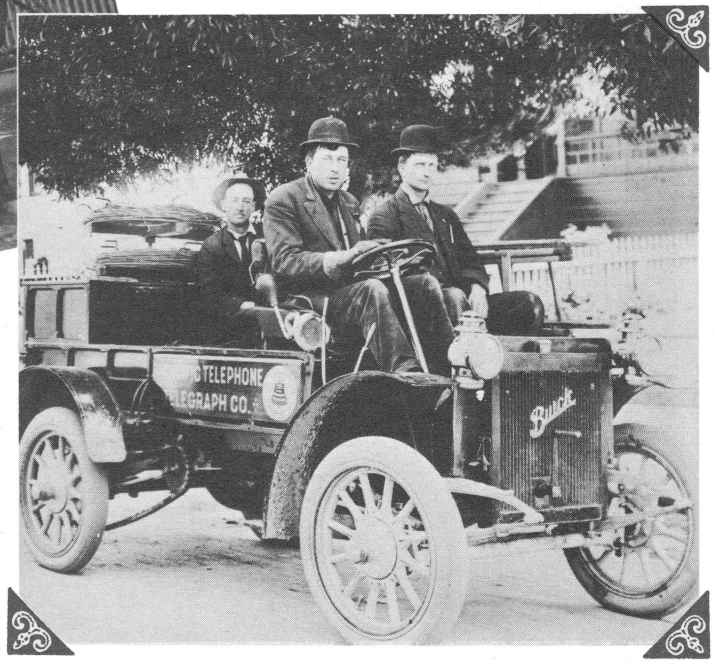
"Horses into Horsepower"



Long Lines Patrol—1899

It often took patience and many miles to find a case of trouble in the toll lines.



Repair Truck—1911

This chain-drive Buick had every possible accessory . . . including kerosene lights and bulb horn. Bowlers were standard equipment.

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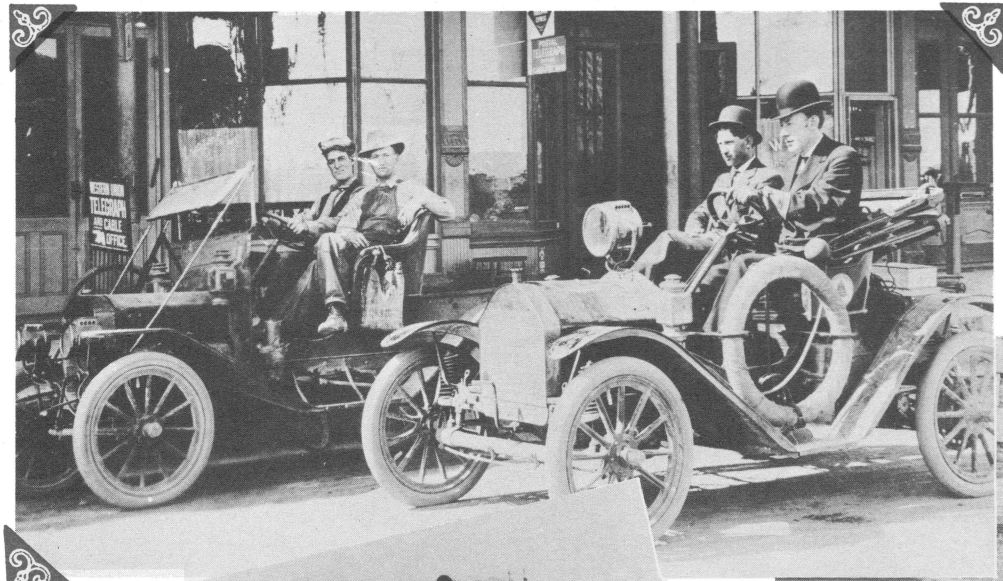
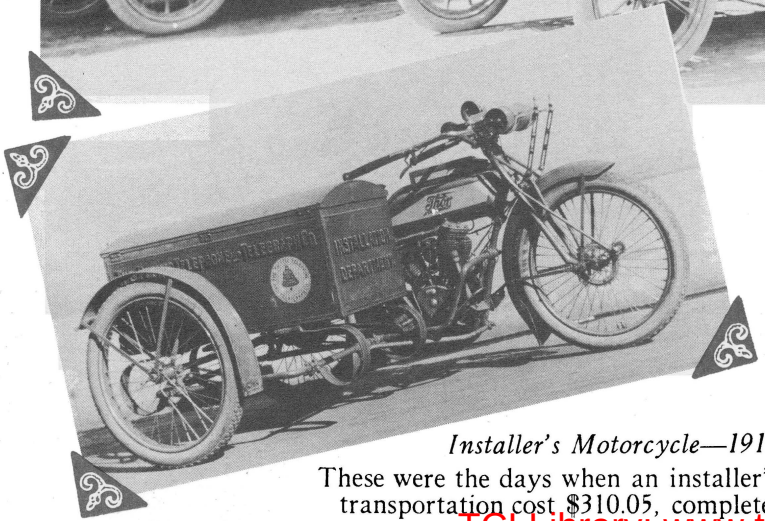


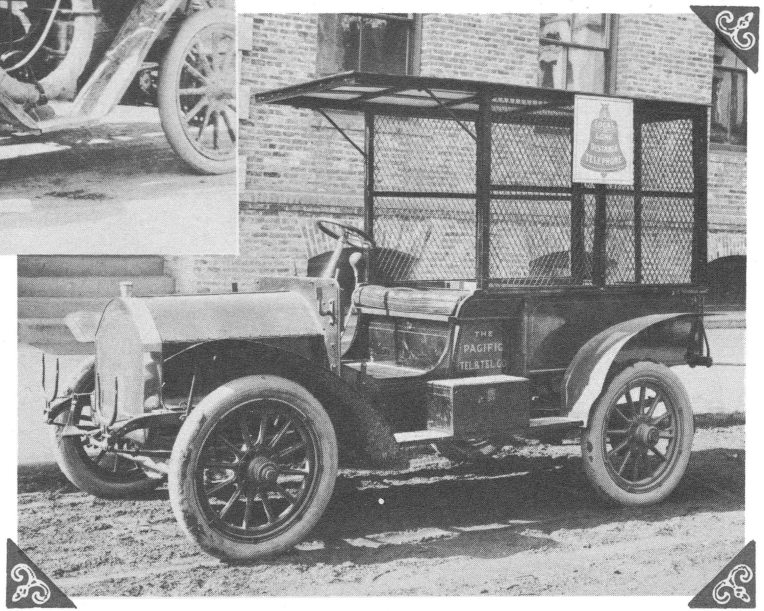
Construction & Maintenance Cars—1911

These cars weren't lined up for a "drag" race . . . just a photograph.

Disconnect Truck—1912

Dogs ran when they saw this truck coming . . . they thought it was the dogcatcher.





Installer's Motorcycle—1913

These were the days when an installer's transportation cost $310.05, complete.

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San Andreas, Calif. — 1913

Switchboards in smaller towns used to be located in all kinds of strange places. But most often in drug stores and hotel lobbies.

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Ashland, Ore. — 1914

The Commercial business office has always been a key part of any town. This is the old Ashland office, apparently pictured during a parade outside.

Hot Springs, Nevada — 1914

The dream of the transcontinental telephone line was being turned into a reality by these men. Notice the water wagon (4 horsepower).

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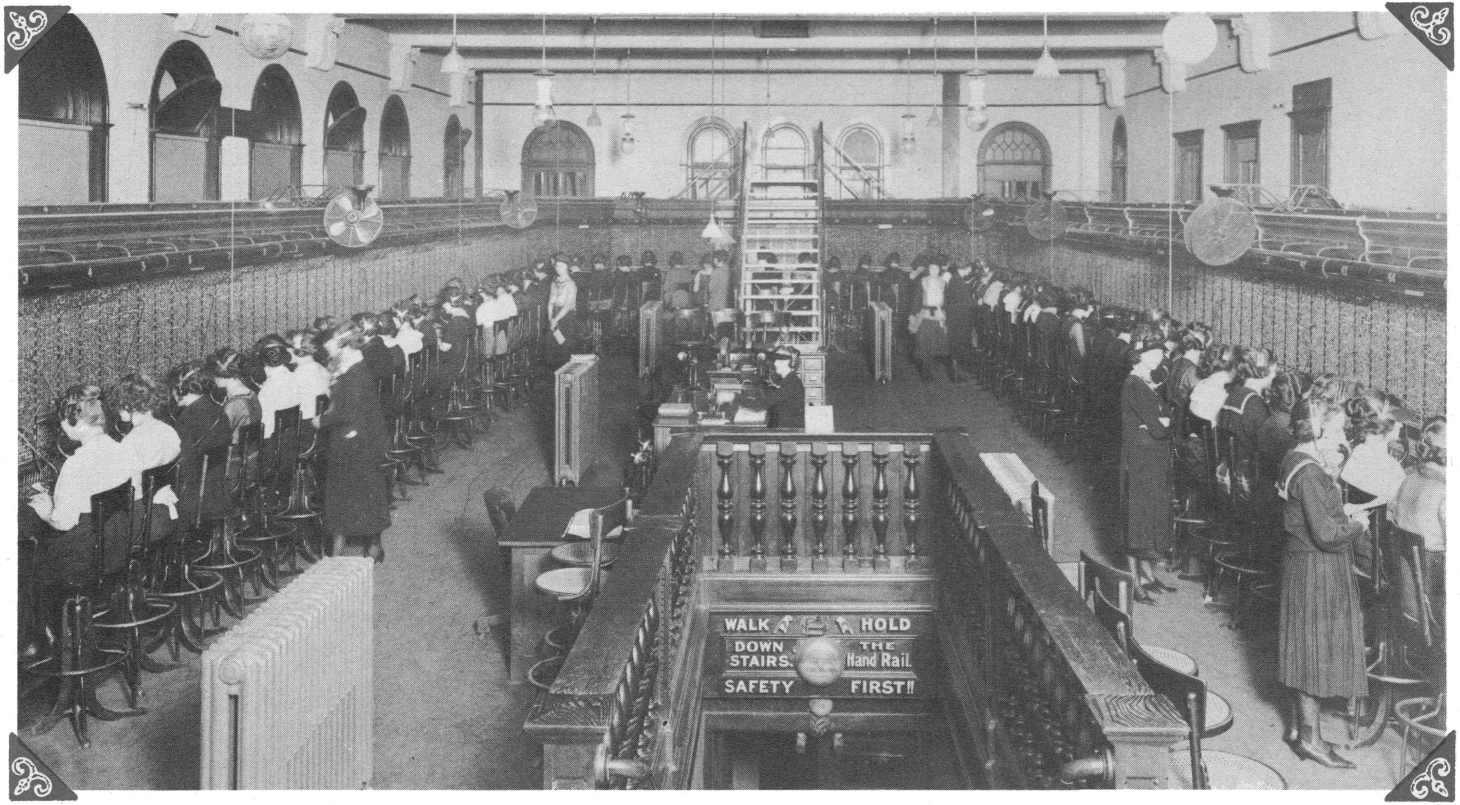
Portland — 1917

Offices were getting bigger, boards were getting taller, and skirt hems shorter. Navy blouses were pretty popular. So was safety. (Note sign.)



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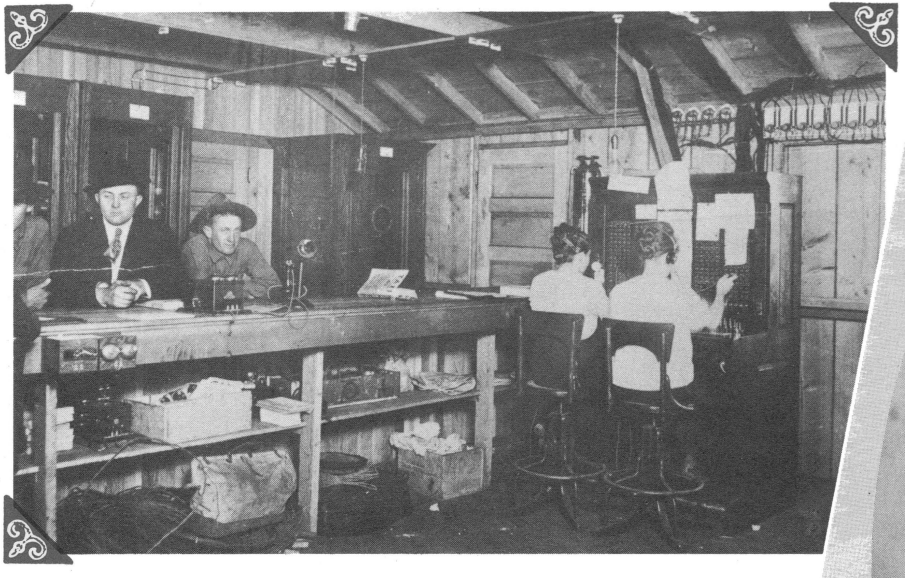

Camp Lewis, Wash.—1917

This is the first Camp Lewis pay station. The camp telephone stations of World War II were a bit more homey.

1918

When we entered World War I many Pacific Telephone people joined up. We sent a Signal Battalion to France. Many operators served overseas.

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Sacramento

—1922

By the early 1920's we knew the telephone was here to stay. It had become a real part of what we were beginning to proudly call "the American Way of Life." And we had a feeling that the part the telephone was to play in the future would be even more profound. The past was considered with pride—the present with confidence—the future with great expectation. From our vantage point in present time we know these feelings of the '20's were justified. And we, in our turn, can share them.

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