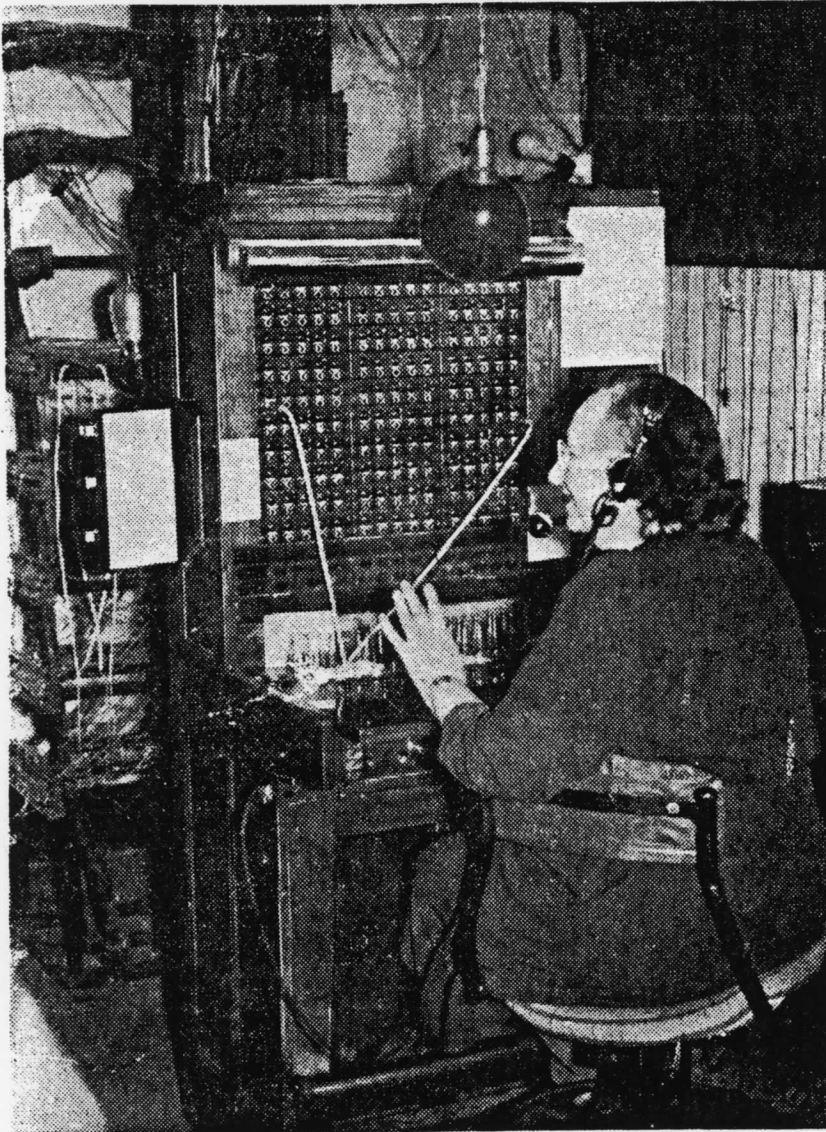


# Daleville Phone-Exchange Years Ago

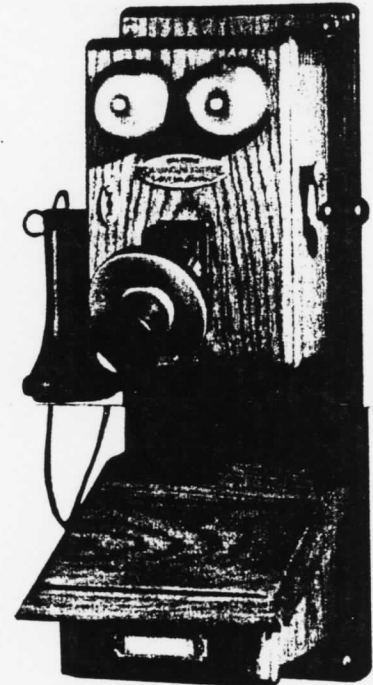
DECEMBER 7, 1980

## Album



For years Mrs. Georgia Benzenbauer was an operator at the Daleville Telephone Company's exchange in Daleville. She was photographed the evening of April 2, 1953, by Wiley W. Spurgeon Jr., then a college student and now executive editor of The Muncie Star and Muncie Evening Press. Spurgeon and two friends, also rail buffs, were visiting signal towers in Madison and Delaware Counties. The three decided to call at the Daleville exchange. Dale Boyd, now president of an electronics firm in California, and Dick Greene, columnist for The Muncie Star, made the trip. The Daleville exchange was sold to Indiana Bell Telephone Co. a few years later and the dial system was installed. Mrs. Benzenbauer retired, and died July 11, 1972 at age 80.

a historic telephone.



Circa 1882

Several rules and regulations "for the guidance of telephone patrons" were printed on the one-page directory. Included were:

*To call, turn the crank once, quickly, then take down the hand telephone and place it to the ear. The Central Office will answer immediately by telephone.*

*To secure good service answer calls promptly by telephone (do not ring back.) Stand with the lips four to eight inches from the transmitter, articulate plainly, talk in an ordinary tone of voice (strictly avoid shouting), and restrict the use of instruments to those who are entitled to it under the contract.*

*When through talking, hang up the hand telephone promptly, and give the crank one quick turn as a signal to the Central Office to disconnect the wires.*

*When not in use, the hand telephone should always be left hanging upon the fork; otherwise a call cannot be received, and the battery will "run down" rapidly.*

*The Central office will give all available information regarding trains. Railroad companies object to the annoyance of repeated requests for such information, but furnish it to the Central office for distribution.*

*Report alarms of fire to the Central office; do not undertake to call the fire department direct.*

*Any person may, with the consent of subscriber, use the telephone in cases of accident or fire.*

# Phones a Part of Local Life for Nearly a Century

Telephone service in Muncie, now one of the most modern telephone systems anywhere utilizing new electronic call-handling equipment, began modestly in 1880 when the first telephone exchange was established by the Wilcoxson and Long Telephone Company.

The office was on West Main Street between Walnut and High. No records have been kept of the early operation and it isn't known how many telephones were in service then.

In 1884, the Midland Telephone Company, later known as the Central Union Telephone Company, purchased the property and installed some modern equipment, and in 1891, the exchange office was moved to the Little Block on East Main.

In 1891, a one-page directory was printed out and this was the first directory of record in Muncie.

The directory listed 120 phones in service (both business and residential). Some examples of numbers: 1 was the number of the county clerk; 72 rang up the high school; 28 the fire department; 22 Ball Brothers Glass Works; 30 the Kirby House Hotel; 26 the Daily and Weekly Times; 44 Western Union; 17 Delaware County Bank; 113 the mayor's office, and 119 the Central Union Telephone Co.

Most long distance calls in Indiana (outside of Delaware County) could be made for 25 cents each. The charge for calling Daleville was 20 cents and Selma and Yorktown cost 15 cents.

It took 25 cents to call Dayton, Ohio, and 35 cents to reach Greenville and Hamilton, Ohio.

Those charges permitted calls of up to five minutes.

The Muncie National Telephone Company opened an exchange on March 22, 1897, serving about 100 telephones in direct competition with Central Union Telephone Company.

In 1900, the Central Union Company bought the property of the Muncie National Company for \$9,000 and

dismantled the telephone plant. At the time, the Central Union Company had about 675 subscribers.

Central Union by that time operated exchanges in several central Indiana communities and in Indianapolis.

The Delaware and Madison Counties Telephone Company was established in 1902 and operated until 1912, when the Central Union Company bought it. At that time Delaware and Madison Counties Telephone Company had about 1,000 customers and Central Union about 4,800.

Indiana Bell Telephone Company was formed in 1920, succeeding Central Union.

For many years of the 1902-1912 existence of two phone companies in the city, they were commonly referred to as the "Old" and the "New," with progressive merchants advertising that they had both lines, and physicians and other professionals having them both, of necessity.

Exchanges during these years were located in the three-story building in the 200 block of East Jackson Street, across the alley from the Hotel Delaware, and upstairs in the Traction Terminal building, southeast corner of Charles and Mulberry.

When Bell became the successor company, the exchange stayed in the Jackson Street building, from which Bell finally moved in the 1960s.

The Yorktown system was the first one in the county outside Muncie to be acquired by Bell. Later Albany and Eaton were purchased, with dial conversions following.

Dial telephones came to Muncie in 1939, and direct distance dialing a quarter of a century later.

Daleville and Gaston were county "holdouts" among privately operated phone systems, retaining their local, switchboard-and-magneto telephone networks until well after the second half of the century had begun. They, too, were converted to dial systems soon after acquisition by Bell.

In 1939, there were 10,000 phones in service to be converted to dial operation. Today, the exchange in Muncie has 71,000 telephones and handles more than 400,000 calls daily.

The business office is located at 333 S. Madison and the switching center at 329 E. Jackson. Albany, Eaton, Gaston and Yorktown have their own switching centers and all other services are provided from Muncie. The Daleville exchange is a combination one with Chesterfield.