

HAWARDEN...HOW IT ALL BEGAN

Chapter: 19

MIRACLE OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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Cell Phones, Smart phones, Apps, Android, Texting, Skype, Social Networking, all terms of the “New Generation.” For those of us who grew up in the “Good Old Days,” we remember party lines, pay phones, phones that hung on the walls, some that even needed to be cranked. Some may say things were easier then, as we only had two or three digit numbers to remember. Long distance was only used for special occasions and emergencies, and there were no Area Codes.

The twenty-first century has brought us access to communication that was never imagined in the years when Hawarden and Calliope were established.

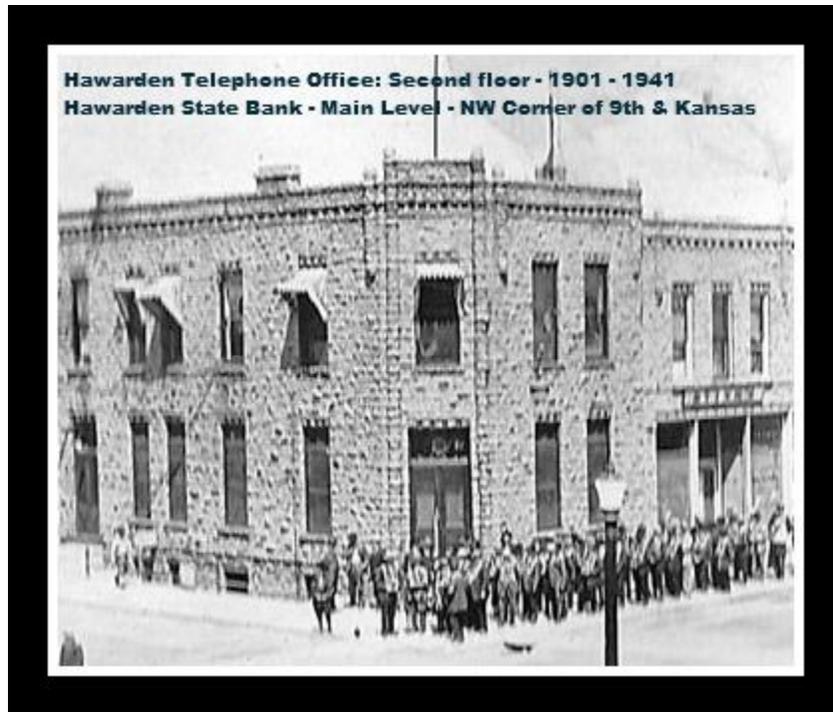
Who would have imagined that in a little over a century we would go from letters traveling across the miles by pony express and stage coach, taking weeks to arrive at their destination, to pushing a button marked “send” and instantly talking to people around the world. Who would have thought that almost every man, woman, and yes, even children would carry a phone in their pocket, to be reached no matter the time of day or the location? Who would also have imagined that this new invention would also eliminate the need for voices and ears; all you need now are fingers and eyes so you can text whoever you want to communicate with.

Let’s look back a hundred years or more to the election of 1899 when a franchise was granted to the Mutual Telephone Co. for a phone system. By January of 1900 the first order of phones was set up and working. The plant held seventy-five phones which could be expanded to one hundred and operated both day and night. Customers were asked to ring the bell when they finished a conversation to save work and time in the central office.

By 1901 Hawarden had established direct communication with Alcester and Beresford. In 1902 a board containing one hundred fifty drops was installed and lines would be run into the rural area in all directions.

In 1911 a new Monarch Magneto multiple switch board with 600 drops was added as well as a new directory including Alcester and Chatsworth. In 1915 an underground cable project was completed and in December, Miss Anna Barnes arrived in Hawarden to instruct the telephone operators in how to effectively handle their work. “Number please” is proper and being “patient” and “sweet” was essential.

The Telephone Company was originally located on the second floor above the Hawarden State Bank, located on the NW corner of Kansas Street and Ninth. In 1939 Northwestern Bell acquired the franchise in Hawarden and built a new one story brick office at 1007 Central Avenue; thus ending forty years on the second floor at the corner of Kansas (Central) and Ninth Street.



Russ Younie retired as manager of the phone company in 1956 after 32 years of service. Joe Reinders then took over as manager. In 1956 the telephone company started a \$63,000.00 improvement program on a new pole line project in Hawarden. Approximately 735 new telephones were installed between 1941 and 1956 and all phones to homes and businesses were private lines on completion of this project. Dial service preparations began in June of 1962 but would not be completed for 18 months. The brick one story building that housed the operators and equipment was moved to 16th street and remodeled into a home. A large telephone office replaced it in 1962-1963. All new equipment was installed in the new building resulting with new telephone numbers for all customers. On November 3, 1963 dial service began and customers began hearing a “hummmmm” instead of operators asking “Number please”. In 1970 touch tone replaced dial tone and more new equipment was installed to keep pace with the demand for the many additional calls each year. During his 34 years of service with the phone company, Mr. Reinders saw the system change from operators and magneto-crank telephones with an 8 party system to modern sophisticated equipment that eliminated the need for telephone operators and party lines. Mr. Reinders retired in 1981.

As I write this article, my mind is full of memories. Memories of phone numbers; ours was 84, our business was 170 and 64. If you were on a party line, you would add a “j” or another letter to the end of the number. Party lines possibly began the evolution of social networking! With a party line, everyone on your line (sometimes up to eight families) could “rubber in” on

your conversations. A small “click” while you were talking was a sure sign that your conversation was no longer private. News would travel with the speed of sound, or at least as fast as the dial would turn. Much like Face Book; only the telephone company picked your “friends”, and put them on your party line!

However we remember the telephone, it had to be one of the most significant inventions of the 20th Century. Wires crisscrossing the country, even under the oceans, and a loved one’s voice at the other end; it was a miracle then, and in my humble opinion it is still a miracle. The twenty-first century has already exceeded everyone’s imagination with satellites and computers and “clouds” to store our information. Who knows what the future will bring; those stories will undoubtedly be told in the 2037 History Book.