

Wayside

The Wayside Telephone Company



Left to right: Michael Natzke, Edwin Kiekhaefer, Tom Monahan, Joseph Hoffman & John Natzke.

On the pole are: Charles Zellner (top), Henry Rahn (left) & Charles Kiel (right).

The first telephones installed in Wayside were at the Thomas Monahan's Tavern, The Wayside Hotel, operated by George Frosch, and the home of Joseph Hoffman.

Shortly thereafter, on July 21, 1908, The Wayside Telephone Company was incorporated by Joseph Hoffman, Thomas Monahan and John Natzke. The business and purpose of the corporation was to carry on a general telephone business. Original subscribers of two shares of stock included Hoffman, M.J. Natzke, Monahan, Natzke, Michael Natzke, Fred Birkholtz and Francis Sullivan.

In 1909 the first switchboard was purchased and Joseph Hoffman was named to tend and repair the switchboard and to furnish a room for it, all for a total of \$200 per year. The switchboard remained in the Hoffman home until the conversion to the new push-button system. This is the current home of Mr. Hoffman's grandson, Darrell (Diane) Suchomel.

In 1911 the company purchased a new magneto switchboard. This switchboard was kept in service

until 1957 and in 1993 was donated to the Wisconsin Telephone Museum in Tomah.

On February 22, 1922, a severe sleet storm virtually destroyed all telephone lines. After several meetings, officials of the company, with financial aid from the local bank, voted to rebuild the exchange.

Over a period of years, the Wayside Telephone exchange area grew more north in the township and Wayside was no longer centrally located. The manual switchboard became overloaded and the service outdated. In 1966 the company made application to the United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Electrification

Administration, for a loan to convert to a dial system. On August 8, 1967, a ground-breaking ceremony was held and marked the start of construction of the present buildings in the Village of Morrison, WI.

During the summer of 1968, another bright chapter was added to the local telephone history when all the telephones were changed from manual to modern one party push-button operation. This made the Wayside Telephone Company the first to provide this type of service in the State of Wisconsin. In the 1980's Wayside along with North East Telephone Co. from Pulaski, WI were major partners in creating Cellcom, a cellular provider. In 1985 the electro-mechanical dial switch was changed to a digital switch.

In 1992 the Wayside Telephone Company was acquired by PTI (Pacific Corp). In 1998 PTI sold the Wayside Company to CenturyTel, a Louisiana based corporation. The Wayside exchange is managed by the Randolph, WI District which also includes Denmark, Luxemburg, New Franken, Casco, Brussels, Seymour, Black Creek, Nichols, Forestville, Little Sturgeon and Shiocton.