

OMAHA'S EARLY OPERATORS

Recollections of Pioneer Workers at the Telegraph Key.

EFFECT OF THE SPEEDING YEARS

Finest bunch of Telegraph Talent Ever Gathered in the West—Some Still in the Harness, Some Drift Into Other Professions.

A reminiscence article by J. W. Hayes, "Looking Backward at Omaha," published in the Telegraph Age, recalls by name and incident the splendid band of Morse alphabet experts, who worked the keys in the gate city some thirty years ago. "It is eloquent of the fact," comments the author, "that the telegraph has proved a valuable stepping stone in the lives of hundreds of operators who have graduated from the key into the larger possibilities of life. Of the little band employed at Omaha in the late seventies, it will be observed that a number of them who left the service have since acquired success and large wealth."

Mr. Hayes' articles follow: It would have been hard to find, outside of New York, as fine a lot of operators and gentlemen as were collected in the Western Union office, Omaha, in the late '70s. The work of the office was of such an exact nature that only the flower of the profession was eligible for service. Frank Lehmer, the manager, was well liked by the public and popular with his employees and was a good company man. His father, William Lehmer, was receiving and delivery clerk and was a general disciple of the old school. One of the best operators in the country at that time was Frank E. Knight, who was the day chief. Mr. A. G. Drake was night chief, and like Edgar B. Beecher, the all night chief, performed his duties to the satisfaction of all. The operating force, as nearly as I remember, was as follows: Willis J. Cook ("Bill"), whom Walter P. Phillips has immortalized in picture and story; Court M. Cunningham, P. J. Tierney, George W. Gardiner, George McMahon, Judd S. Thompson, Levi S. Wild, James H. Largay, Edward J. Fulum, Nicholas C. Burke, George F. Stewart, Clifford E. Mayne, Edward Rosewater, O. H. Gray, Frank P. Williams, Timothy Collins, John Kelly, H. M. Goewey, "Dad" Armstrong, John L. Morris, Harry Nichols, Thomas F. Kehoe, Crosby J. Ryan, Henry Smith and others whose names have passed from my recollection. George Gardner, whose generous nature is of fragrant memory, was our lineman.

The employees at the Atlantic & Pacific telegraph office were: L. M. Rheem, manager; Aaron B. Hilliker, J. W. Ellsworth, and Miss Fannie Wheeler, operators; George M. Myers was operator in Superintendent J. J. Dickey's office and L. H. Korty was Colonel Dickey's chief clerk.

Changes with the Years. Of the little band of operators that were in Omaha at the time I write of there is not one remaining in the old capacity. Colonel J. J. Dickey, who was superintendent of the Western Union Telegraph company at this point for a quarter of a century, died on December 29, 1903. George M. Myers is now and has been for many years past, one of the leading capitalists engaged in electrical enterprise at Kansas City, Mo. William Lehmer was gathered to his fathers some ten years ago at a ripe age. "Bill" Cook succumbed to the Panama fever fifteen years ago. James H. Largay and T. F. Kehoe died of consumption. H. Milton Goewey was a victim of the dreaded fever scourge in Memphis in '78. Harry Nichols died in the south many years ago.

Frank Lehmer has become a successful banker in Colorado. Frank B. Knight tied up to the telephone service early in its existence and is now abundantly reaping his reward at Dallas, Tex. A. G. Drake is with the Postal Telegraph-Cable company

in Chicago and I hope is doing well. The most unique figure next to "Bill" Cook on the force was Edgar B. Beecher, who was a man of varied ability and experience. He could turn his hand to anything and his accomplishments came in very handy in his later life. Mr. Beecher is now a prosperous business man in Los Angeles, Cal. Court M. Cunningham went to New York many years ago and is still there with the Western Union Telegraph company. Nicholas Burke has been a prominent figure in telegraphic and newspaper circles in various parts of the country. Timothy Collins is a "big policeman" now and does duty in Buffalo. Clifford Mayne became a millionaire, went to California and was lost in the crowd of other millionaires on the Pacific coast. Frank E. Williams has long been with the Associated Press in Louisville, Ky. Judd S. Thompson is in Washington with the Western Union Telegraph company. Homer Gray is considerable of a tourist. He was a brainy young fellow and should have made his mark.

Growing Gray in the Service. George McMahon has grown gray in the service of the Western Union Telegraph company in New York and holds a responsible position in the Central Cable office at 16 Broad street, that city. George W. Gardiner rose to be assistant electrical engineer of the Western Union Telegraph company, but during of life, owing to continued ill-health, he committed suicide on October 26, 1900. Levi S. Wild is now manager of the Western Union Telegraph company at Butte, Mont. Edward Rosewater entered journalism, a profession in which he rapidly rose, and is now the proprietor and editor of The Omaha Bee. Crosby J. Ryan is the manager of a branch office of the Western Union Telegraph company at Detroit, Mich.

His Five Drift Apart. Of the Atlantic & Pacific force Mr. Rheem is now a prosperous doctor of Minneapolis; J. W. Ellsworth, who was the youngest brother of George Ellsworth, the celebrated operator, whose handiwork in tapping wires was of great help to the confederate, General Morgan, in his invasion of the north during the civil war, went west and is now ranching somewhere in New Mexico. Miss Fannie M. Wheeler was probably one of the finest women operators and electricians of her day. She married a Mr. Merryfield, and later returning to the telegraph service, is now in Colorado. Aaron B. Hilliker was one of the greatest characters ever known to the profession. He was a born actor, a minstrel singer, a good newspaper man and a first-class telegraph operator. I don't know his whereabouts, but I hope that prosperity is attending him. L. H. Korty was ever a kind, affable gentleman and a thorough telegraph man. He is now and has for many years been superintendent of telegraph of the Union Pacific railway, with headquarters at Omaha.

There was not much to amuse the young man coming from the larger centers in Omaha and after a year's sojourn in the then frontier town of the Missouri most of the operators whose names I have mentioned in the following force: N. M. Sawyer, manager, now deceased; V. DuComb Green, George W. Jones, bearing the sobriquet of "Nip," given him because of his proclivity to nip or clip off his words in key transmission, and W. A. Williams, operators. "Comb" Green holds a responsible position with the Telephone company in Toledo. "Nip" Jones is a business man

of Ogden, Utah, and W. A. Williams is a wealthy citizen of Seattle. Mr. Charles F. Annett, now manager of the Western Union Telegraph company at New Haven, Conn., was at the time mentioned manager of the Atlantic & Pacific Telegraph company at Cheyenne. There was a strong bond of friendship uniting the members of our little community, which has lasted these many years, and it will be a pleasure, no doubt, for them to read the names of their old colleagues once more in this retrospective glance.

WOMAN'S UNIQUE INDUSTRY

Breeding Guinea Pigs for Market Proves Profitable Undertaking.

An industry unique and profitable is operated in Muskegon, Mich., by a woman. This is the raising and breeding of guinea pigs for the market, and the proprietor of the new and novel form of raising money is Miss Caroline E. Mosher. By profession Miss Mosher is a stenographer and has held the position of police and justice court stenographer in Muskegon. Tiring of the monotonous work of stenographer three years ago she sought to find an occupation more profitable and less requiring. She considered the prospects of a squash farm, but her attempts in this direction were not with failure. "Then," said Miss Mosher, "I conceived the idea that the raising of guinea pigs might be profitable. Since then it has been my occupation." Two years ago she made her start with one pair of pigs. Now she has an average of 300 pigs on hand all the time. Easily cared for, the guinea pigs are very profitable, as their cost is small and they sell for large prices.

The output of Miss Mosher's novel farm is sold mostly to universities and governmental hospitals, where they are used for laboratory purposes. The blood and organs of a guinea pig are said to be more like those of a human being than are those of any other animal. Among Miss Mosher's largest customers are the United States Marine hospital at Washington, the University of Wisconsin at Madison and the Parks-Davis company at Detroit. The farm's supply is often sent as far away as Mexico. Miss Mosher also sells a few guinea pigs as pets. They are said to make a very quiet and cleanly domestic animal. Last spring Miss Mosher furnished the stock for the tests made at Grand Rapids in the city water supply examination.

For these little animals Miss Mosher receives good prices. At wholesale they bring 75 cents apiece, while in retail lots the price is \$1.50 each. If she is able to raise a pair of black guinea pigs she may receive as high as \$20 per pair. Miss Mosher ships about 100 pigs a month. The 600 pigs are kept in a barn 12x20 feet in thirty small pens, which are placed in tiers. To feed them requires one hour a day. They take very small quantities and eat hay, grain, corn, potatoes, carrots and bran. The guinea pigs multiply rapidly. They breed every four or five weeks, are healthy little animals and live four or five years.

"Profitable" said Miss Mosher. "Well, they pay as well as stenography."

To Make a Canary Sing. Generally any kind of soft, brilliant noise will tempt a bird to sing. A canary hung in a kitchen will usually start his song if he hears, say, the sizzling of a frying pan. We utilize special devices to tempt the shy singer, who is perhaps rendered the more beautiful by finding himself in novel surroundings. For this purpose we employ whistles and song organs, which artificially reproduce the "songs" of the roller. This latter method is found to be irresistible when all other plans have failed. The bird feels apparently that he is being challenged and forthwith responds to the challenge by pouring forth the best of his song.—London Post.



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