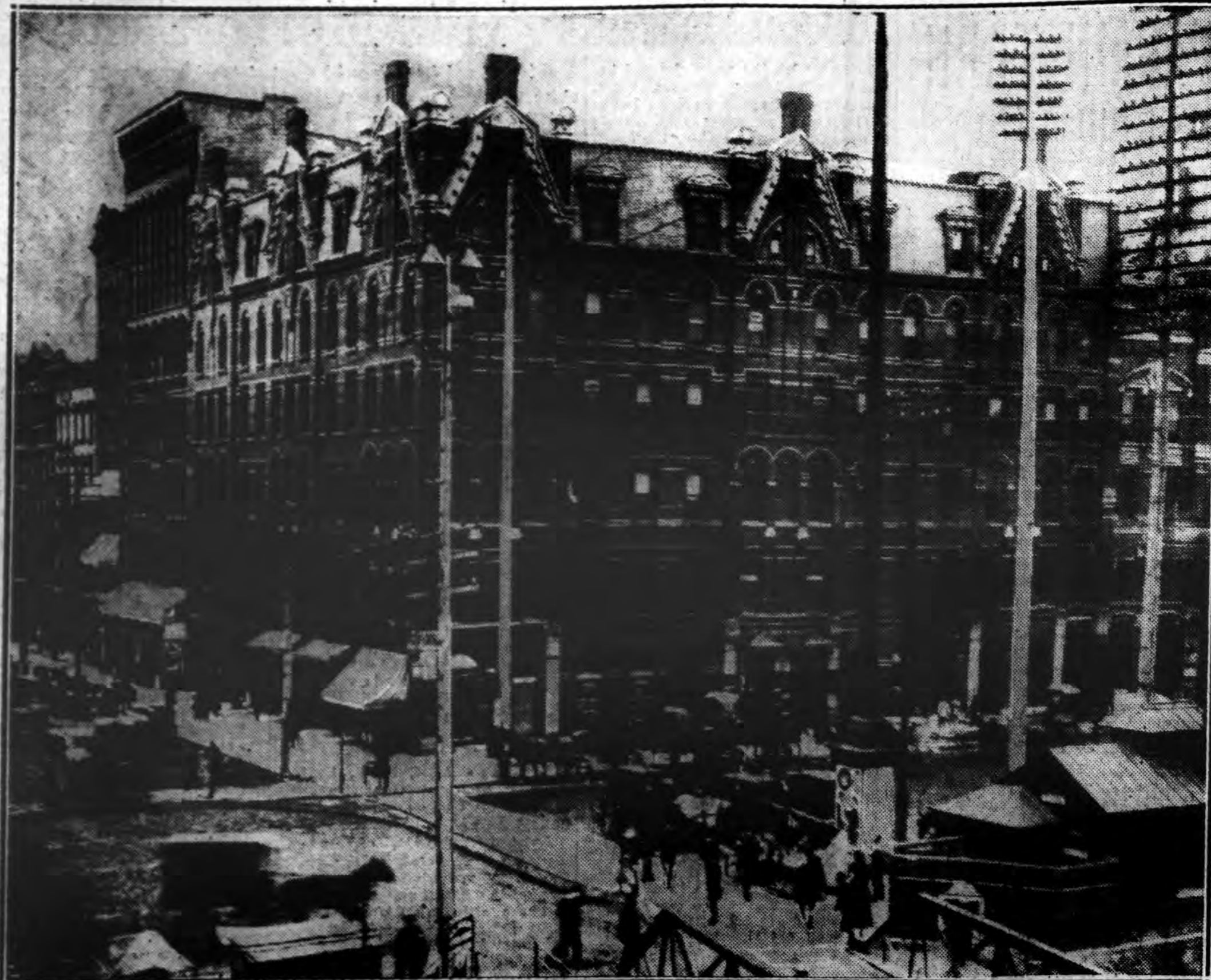


MECHANICAL MARVELS FEATURE CITY'S PHONE SYSTEM



Horses jogged up and down Salina st. without being bothered by traffic signals when this picture was taken. It shows the old Wieting block at Salina and Water sts. in 1887 when the main tele-

phone exchange was located there and the section was a maze of wires suspended from 90-foot poles. It was there that early telephone history was made.



W. W. NICHOLSON.

A pioneer in the telephone development of Syracuse and Central New York was Walter W. Nicholson, who was general superintendent of the old Central New York Telephone and Telegraph Company.



Here is the present main office building of the New York Telephone Company, representing an investment of \$1,500,000 and housing the division offices as well as three machine switching exchanges.

MOST MODERN DEVICES SERVE 42,000 SUBSCRIBERS

(This is the eleventh of a series of articles which will appear weekly in the Saturday edition of The Syracuse Journal, to permit Syracusans to become familiar with the inside story of the great industrial and commercial enterprises which have played important parts in the development of the city.)

By RICHARD E. WELCH.

Fifty-eight years ago when Fred C. Brower, then a locksmith and safe expert in Syracuse, returned from the centennial fair at Philadelphia, his imagination fired with a new invention called the telephone, he little realized that during his life he would see that instrument become one of the main cogs in the modern commercial and industrial machine.

Today any one of the approximately 42,000 subscribers to telephone service in Syracuse can communicate with any one of the more than 33,000,000 telephone stations throughout the world.

Mr. Brower, who died in 1931, was the real pioneer of the telephone in Syracuse and it was to a great extent his activities in acquainting the public with this new wonder that started the spread of its use. Today Syracuse and its environs is served by the New York Telephone Company, associated with the American Telephone and Telegraph Company.

It was a crude device which Alexander Graham Bell exhibited to the throngs who attended the Philadelphia centennial but Mr. Brower, who was somewhat of an inventor himself, saw possibilities in it when others saw it only as a toy.

The Syracusan obtained a set of instruments as well as a short-term license contract for the entire Central New York territory from Professor Bell. Then he installed the first telephone in Syracuse, connecting his store at 317 E. Genesee st. with his home at 610 S. Crouse av. This was as crude as Pro-

fessor Bell's set-up, with the connecting wire running over rooftops and through trees, but it worked.

Many wished to see the contraption work, so a public demonstration was staged in the Wieting opera house on Feb. 28, 1878. A Western Union circuit was leased and music played into a transmitter in Auburn was heard from the stage of the theater in Syracuse while the audience gaped in amazement.

From that point the telephone ceased to be a toy and became of commercial use. William A. Sweet installed a line from his shop in S. West st. to his home in James st. George K. Collins had one from his home to his law office; Hamilton S. White put in a line from the fire headquarters to his home, and Alexander Davis, whose estate is now Thornden Park, had a private line to a downtown office.

But then the need came to connect these private lines, so Matthew J. Myers secured a sub-license from Mr. Brower and opened a central office in the Gridley building, with a cord switchboard and 16 subscribers. The first call was placed through this exchange by Mrs. S. Gurney Lapham. About the same time D. L. Pyke opened an exchange in the Wieting block.

The Pyke and Myer exchanges later merged into the Syracuse Telephonic Exchange, with messenger boys to call subscribers to the telephone. George Whelan, who later was one of the founders of the United Cigar Stores, was one of these messengers. There are two original subscribers to this exchange in the present telephone book. They are Mrs. Mead Belden of 763 James st. and Judge Frank H. Hiscock of 930 James st.

In 1887 the company was sold to the Central New York Telephone and Telegraph Company, with branches in Auburn and Utica, and the central office was moved into the Wieting block. By that time there were 250 subscribers and the central office had eight local operators and two toll operators. The lines were tested every morning by the operators, who rang a cheery "good morning" to every home and office.

The downtown section soon became a network of wires, suspended from 90-foot poles, and need was found for other means to care for the lines. In 1897 application was made to construct a subway system to carry the cables.

This work was started in 1899, and in the same year the telephone company moved into its own office in Montgomery st.

Much of the work of mapping out plans for the new system, which was then the finest in the country, was done by C. A. Nicholson, then general manager, and Walter W. Nicholson, general superintendent.

The company had 2,100 subscribers and capacity for 4,600; 27 operators, a payroll of 91 persons and cleared an average of 21,211 calls a day.

On July 1, 1899, an independent company, known as the Syracuse Telephone Company, was incorporated and opened an exchange in the Snow building. J. F. Stockwell was general manager. This company was reorganized in 1905 to become the Onondaga Independent Telephone Company and moved into the old Crouse stables in S. State st.

In 1906 the Central New York Company moved into the building now located at 321 Montgomery st., which became the Warren exchange. Syracuse became an auditing center in those years and the territory of the business office was expanded with the growth of the company.

Mergers of telephone companies came in 1909 when the New York Telephone Company was formed, with the Central New York Company as one of the units, and in 1911 the New York Telephone Company purchased the Onondaga Independent Company. W. W. Nicholson was then general manager of the division.

When the two Syracuse companies were merged, the central offices were connected and Syracuse was served by two exchanges, known as Warren and James. Later Prospect exchange, which still exists, was set up to care for Solvay and surrounding territory and a Salina exchange for rural lines.

With all telephone service in the city centralized, the company's growth from that point kept pace with the development of the city. Up to this point all connecting of local calls had been made entirely by manual operators, but engineers were developing machine switching devices.

In 1922 the dial telephone made its first appearance in the city and in June 29 of that year nearly 5,000 stations were placed in the new exchange, known as "2." Syracuse was the first point in which more than one machine exchange was installed and is now almost entirely served by this system.

The main office at E. Fayette and S. State sts. was erected in 1928 and now houses three machine exchanges as well as the business offices.

In this building are exchanges "4," "5" and "6," while

exchanges "2" and "3," as well as the toll department and the cafeteria for employees, are in the Montgomery st. building.

In addition, the company operates a Prospect exchange in Solvay and the "9" exchange, located in a sub-station in S. Salina st., near Seneca st. The system has been arranged to care for future growth of Syracuse for years to come without great alteration. Cables are laid so that when exchanges "7" and "8" are needed they can be constructed and placed in service at any point in the system.

Syracuse is now a division headquarters in the New York Telephone Company for the Central New York area and is also headquarters for the division's auditing department.

All statements to subscribers in the division are prepared and issued from the Syracuse office. An average of 141,000 bills a month are issued from the Syracuse office at six-day intervals. This involves the handling of an average of 600,000 toll tickets a month.

Officials of the company are proud of the results of their safety work among employees and of the fact that the company's fleet of 99 cars and trucks have won recognition in safety campaigns conducted by the Syracuse Chamber of Commerce. During five months in 1934 the company's Syracuse fleet operated without an accident causing personal injury or property damage, driving an average of 74,000 miles a month.

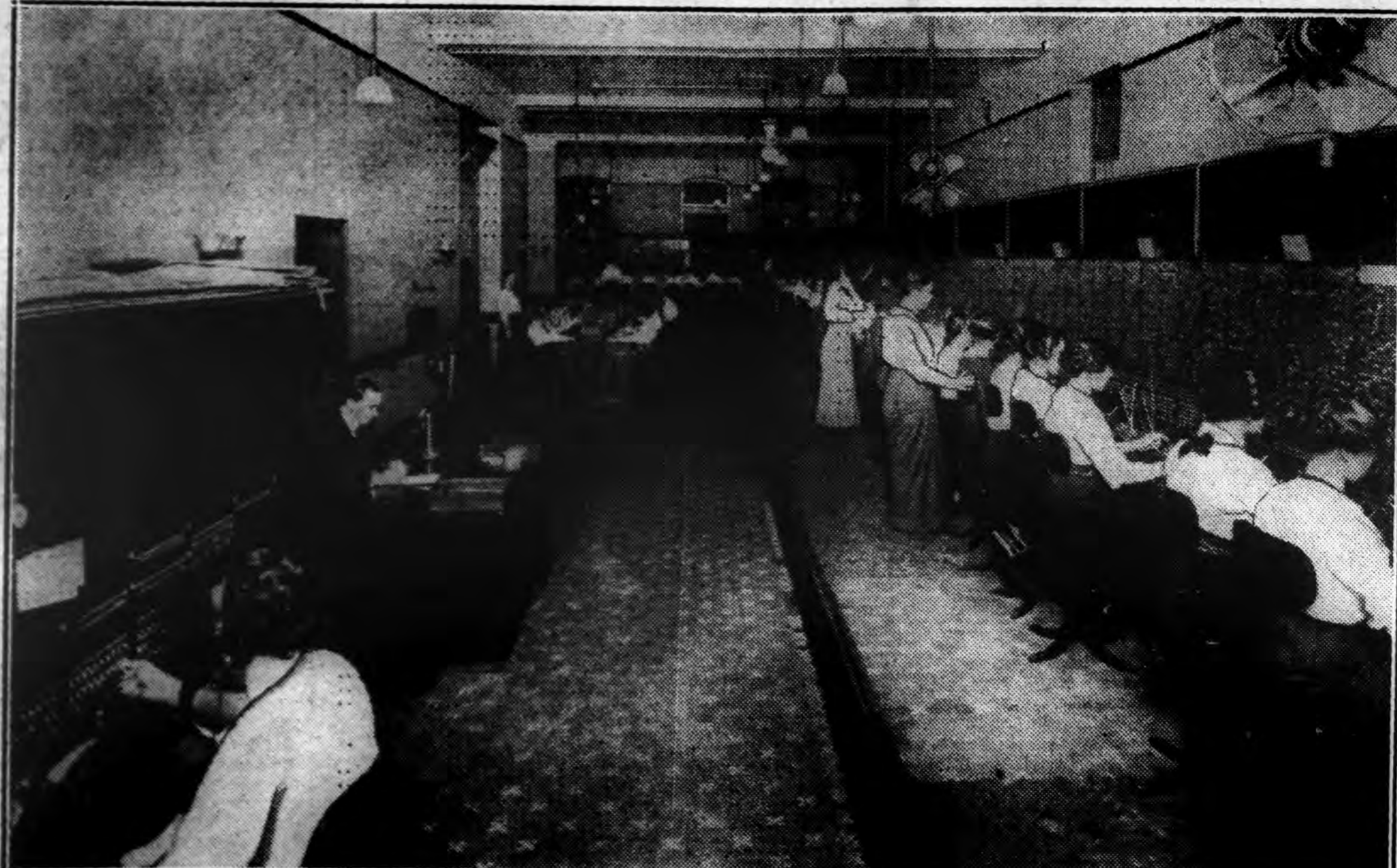
The present main office building is a show place in Syracuse. The offices are informal and yet dignified and so arranged that subscribers can sit at desks to transact business and are not required to stand at a counter.

The building alone represents an investment of \$1,500,000, a far cry from the first telephone instrument brought to Syracuse by Mr. Brower, and yet a direct result of that incident.

It is interesting to note some of the developments of the national telephone system. In 1884 the first telephone connection was made between New York and Boston. The system has stretched from New York to Chicago in 1892, to Denver in 1911, Salt Lake City in 1913 and in 1915 the continent was spanned from Boston to San Francisco.

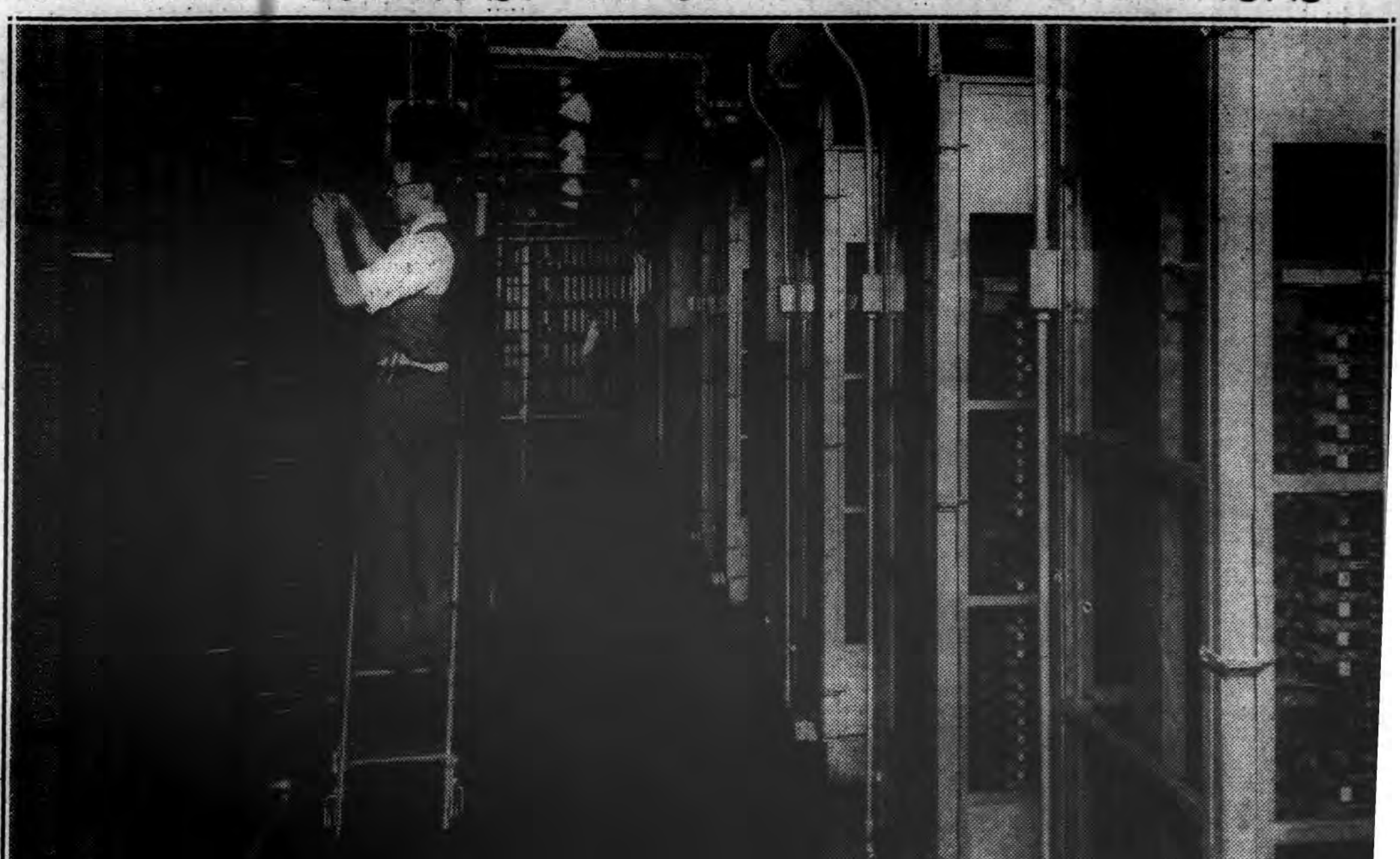
After that developments came thick and fast. Radio came into play for trans-oceanic conversation, for ship-to-shore calls and in 1927 telephone service to England was inaugurated, via wire and radio. Then Mexico, South America, Cuba, Bermuda, all of Europe, South Africa, Siam, Hawaii were added with other countries until today 92 per cent. of the world's telephones are within reach of any Syracusan.

PICTURES OF FORMER AND PRESENT EXCHANGES FURNISH VIVID CONTRAST IN SWITCHBOARD OPERATIONS



What a contrast is shown in the two pictures here. Above is the old Warren exchange in the days when all telephone connections in the city were made by hand and the "hello" girl was

familiar to every person who used a telephone. This exchange was located in Montgomery st.



Here is a modern exchange, one of the mechanical switching units located in the new telephone building at S. State and E. Fayette sts. All calls coming in from dial telephones are put through

these intricate machines with uncanny precision, every step in the process being automatic.