

LOUISA TELEPHONE CO. CHARTERED 1898

Compiled from Articles in the Central Virginia Newspaper
Louisa, VA

Submitted by
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The communications throughout Louisa County were strengthened considerably before the turn of the century with the formation of the Louisa Telephone Company.

A petition was made to the Hon. John E. Mason, Judge of the Circuit Court of Louisa County, to form a joint stock company for the conduct of a telephone business in the county. The charter was applied for June 27, 1898 and listed the following directors and officers: James O. Winston of Louisa County, president; S. D. Crenshaw of Richmond, vice-president; T. S. Winston, Apple Grove, secretary-treasurer; and F. W. Sims, Louisa and J. J. Mills, Apple Grove, directors.

The newly organized Louisa Telephone company listed its proposed routes for the communications lines as follows: 1. From the Court House to Apple Grove via Mineral City, Pendleton Station, Cuckoo or via Cuckoo. 2. From Louisa Court House to Poindexter's Store via Trevilians, and Lasley. 3. From Poindexter's Store to Zion to Gordonsville; and from Louisa Court House to Bells X Roads; to Yanceyville; to Ellisville and Bibb Store; to Bibb Store; and from Thompson X Roads to Shelton Mill, connecting across the Atlantic with Great Britain, Belgium, Holland, Germany and Sweden. This means that each of the 177 telephones operated from the Louisa switchboards may be connected with any one of 18,300,000 telephones in this country, and with about 3,500,000 in other countries.

Louisa telephone users now make about 1,000 local calls each 24 hours. Also about 40 connections with out-of-town points are established each day, according to a statement just made by A. S. Tanner, manager of the telephone company. The Louisa Central Office is served by direct trunk lines with Richmond and Gordonsville. From these offices, connections are established to more distant points. The Apple Grove, Buckner, Bumpass, Cuckoo, Fredericks Hall, Mineral and Pendleton communities are also served by the switchboards here.

The first telephones in Louisa County were installed by Judge F. W. Sims on a private line which he operated between his home and a farm in the Apple Grove Section. Judge Sims, realizing the value of telephone service, together with other farsighted businessmen of the community, organized the Louisa Telephone Company. The incorporators were James O. Winston, President,

Louisa; S. D. Crenshaw, vice president, Richmond; T. S. Winston, secretary-treasurer, Louisa. The incorporation papers were signed June 27, 1898. The company was formed to construct, operate and maintain telephone lines throughout the county and state.

The subscribers of this company, according to Mrs. Ada Flannagan, who operated the first telephone switchboard in Louisa, included the Bank of Louisa, F. M. Beale, W. E. Bibb, J. J. Boxley, Floyd Chaney, Chesapeake and Ohio Railway Depot, County Clerk's Office, W. J. Crank, B. L. Dickinson, H. Q. Dickinson, C. W. Donnally, W. R. Dunkum, A. F. Estes, Mrs. S. H. Flannagan, H. H. Hiter, J. A. Kent, Kent's Drug Store, Louisa Drug Store, Louisa Hotel, J. W. Nunn, Jesse Porter, Mrs. Wilmer Sims, Dr. W. O. Smith, Mrs. W. R. Goodwin and A. B. Woodward, Louisa; D. E. Bumpass, Mineral; Trevilians Depot, Lee Rosson, Trevilians; H. H. Walton Lumber company at Pendleton.

Louisa's first out-of-town telephone connection was with Richmond, a line having been constructed between these points about 1900. Soon after this, a line was extended from Louisa to Gordonsville and Charlottesville.

Mrs. Flannagan had charge of the telephone system for about twenty-five years, for both the Louisa Telephone Company and the Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Company of Virginia, predecessors of the Potomac Telephone Company of Virginia. Since July 1, 1912, the telephone service in Louisa and throughout the state has been furnished by the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company of Virginia. Also one of the associated companies of the Bell System.

According to records in the Louisa County Circuit Court Clerk's Office, Louisa County had telephones as early as 1900. The record reads, "We the undersigned parties of the first part, for value received, do hereby assign, grant and release unto the Louisa Telephone Co., a corporation, party of the second part, the privileges and right-of-way for constructing and maintaining a telephone from Bells X Roads, Louisa Co., VA. to McGehee's Old Post Office, on the line between said county and Fluvanna County of same state, as the same may be located, and as it may affect our respective lands; also the same company for branch lines to connect McGehee's present Post Office and H. W. Wright with said main line. Witness the signatures and seals of the parties of the first part, the 30th day of March 1900. Signed R. P. Holland, Jr., H. Richardson, J. O. Massie, W. Lee Wright, W. C. Perkins, Miss Mary E. Johnson, Robert Arnett, E. C. Wright, H. C. Wright, A. G. Wright, G. H. Thomas, J. T. Watkins, Nancy Poindexter, H. W. Wright and J. H. Crank."

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On August 6, 1900, another such document was recorded which read in part "en route from Col. William A. Winston's in Louisa county, via Orchid, Shelton's Mill, Hopeful, Rockville, Short Pump to Richmond, VA." Those signing the deed were F. H. Anderson, C. Y. Nuckols, F. P. Campbell, T. M. Campbell, R. E. Philpotts, J. M. Wash, Mrs. S. A. Alvis, J. W. Hicks, Mary E. Sargeant, C. L. Nuckols, G. H. Lacy, W. B. Brooks, G. S. Rigsby, Isaac M. Willis, Mary Dabney, M. H. Lloyd, J. B. Anderson (provided my cedars are not cut), T. C. Lloyd (my fence not to be injured), E. S. Shelton, Minnie Shelton, A. C. Attkisson, R. A. Ware, Matt Brooks, Richard Hollins, C. J. Murfey, W. M. Proffitt and Mrs. J. L. Meredith.

On May 21, 1900, a similar document was recorded reading in part, "en route from Louisa to junction with present line of said second part, a little above Trevilians as same may be located along or alongside of the pubic road of C. & O. R.R. between said points. This deed was signed by W. R. Goodwin, G. E. Shelton, H. H. Chandler, F. G. Perkins, W. S. Netherland, Ann E. Kennon, C. Danne, A. E. Hancock, C. H. Gates, C. W. Van Demark, R. T. Yancey, A. W. Timberlake, Coldman Gilliam and William G. Falkner.

It was on March 10, 1876 that Alexander Graham Bell spoke the first words over the telephone to his assistant, Thomas A. Watson, and in October 1876 the first two-way long distance (two miles) telephone conversation was carried on. With this in mind, it seems Louisa County was not so far behind after all.

Sources: Articles featured in the *Central Virginian Newspaper*, Thurs.- 1948; Thurs. Feb. 3, 1977; Thurs. Mar. 1, 1984.