

OKLAHOMA'S FIRST TELEPHONE

In the June, 1927 number of *Chronicles of Oklahoma* there was published an article, written by John N. Noble, entitled: "Early Telephone History of Oklahoma." No one else was as well qualified to write this story as Mr. Noble. He gave much interesting data that might have been lost forever had this article not have been written. However, from an old newspaper article I am convinced that Mr. Noble was mistaken concerning the date of the first telephones in Oklahoma.

In his article he says: "One of the first telephones west of the Mississippi River, if not the first, was built by E. D. Hicks in the year 1886, or about ten years after the invention of the telephone, and ran from Tahlequah to Muskogee."

Perhaps this was the first commercial phone, but from the following clipping taken from the *Cheyenne Transporter* of August 30th, 1884, it would seem that this Darlington—Fort Reno telephone antedated the Tahlequah—Muskogee phone by two years.

TELEPHONE

"Agent Dyer and our enterprising traders clubbed together recently to secure a telephone connection with Ft. Reno, a mile and a half away across the river, from which point telegraph communication is had with civilization via San Antonia, Texas, and Dodge City, Kansas.

"The telephones were put in last week by H. G. Chipchase, from Caldwell, the agent of the Union Telephone company, the Darlington connection being in Agent Dyer's office and the Reno end the telegraph office. The line works to a charm and already has proved a great convenience. Its value for everyday business and in case of high water, cannot be estimated. The line is free to the public, the expenses being paid by the enterprising business men of Darlington and Reno, the stage company passing the telephone agent

free to and from Caldwell. Those to first communicate over the line were Colonel Dyer, L. T. Rogers, J. H. Davis, George Bowhay, Lafe Merritt and the telephone agent. These parties were present at the first practical operation of the line.”

The above is from the *Cheyenne Transporter*, printed at the Cheyenne and Arapaho Agency, Darlington, I. T. August 30, 1884.