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Notes on Recent Occurrences

BANCROFT GHERARDI RETIRES AS A. T. & T. VICE PRESIDENT AND CHIEF ENGINEER AFTER A DISTINGUISHED CAREER OF 43 YEARS OF BELL SYSTEM SERVICE

NEARLY 600 men and women of the Department of Operation and Engineering of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company gathered on April 21 to do honor to Bancroft Gherardi, Vice President and Chief Engineer, retiring at the end of the month after 43 years of notable service to the telephone industry and a career which brought wide recognition of his achievements both within and outside the Bell System. He was presented with a Washington desk and chair, and with a choicely bound volume which bears a message of tribute and the signatures of all present and many former members of his Department.

Prefacing the book of signatures of all the members of his Department, which was presented to Mr. Gherardi on their behalf by Miss Louise Barbour, of the Traffic Division, is this inscription:

“ Bancroft Gherardi:

“ On the occasion of your retirement as Vice President and Chief Engineer of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company, the members of the Department of Operation and Engineering have gathered to express regard and esteem for your inspiring leadership and your distinguished career.

“ You have been a vital force in the remarkable development and growth of the communications indus-

try during 43 years of Bell System service and we honor you for your outstanding achievements.

"We individually wish you health and happiness in the years to come."

In presenting the desk and chair to Mr. Gherardi, B. S. Stevens, Engineer in the Plant Engineering Division, took occasion to review some of the outstanding features of Mr. Gherardi's distinguished career. He said:

"Under the continuous leadership of Bancroft Gherardi, the Department of Operation and Engineering has become a vital force in the forward progress of the Bell System. In this progress of the largest private business enterprise in the world we, in this department, have felt the inspiration of orderly accomplishment of our individual parts. We know that this has been greatly due to the guidance of a man with unsurpassed background of sheer telephone ability fired by honest zeal and tempered by broad human sympathies which have won him our esteem. It is this feeling of esteem which prompts our congratulations to him on his well earned right to whatever leisure he may choose.

"Whatever his choice, it is safe to predict that anything he may say or do about the art of electrical communication will further its advancement. His record of 43 years of active participation and leadership in this advancement spans the period of development in this country from about 300,000 to more than 19,000,000 telephones. It reaches back to the time when telephone subscribers cranked their hand generators and a 1000-mile connection from New York to Chicago was truly long distance. It has come down to this day when metropolitan dial systems are commonplace and when a telephone conversation around the world via wire and radio has actually taken place.

"Throughout this period of rapid evolution in the communication art, nothing has stood out more than the successful or-

ganization of the technical forces in all the branches of business activity involved. In the direction of this organization work the record of Bancroft Gherardi has been outstanding and can be visualized only in part by a brief recital of some of the events in his career.

"In 1895, with the Degrees of B.S. from the Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute, M.E. from Cornell, and a Post Graduate M.M.E. also from Cornell, at the age of 22 Bancroft Gherardi started his telephone career testing some of the relatively few telephone cables in the area now operated by the New York Telephone Company. Telephone authorities in New York and New Jersey thought well of this young man's work in traffic as well as plant engineering, and in 11 years, five of them spent as Traffic Engineer of the New York Company, he became Assistant Chief Engineer of both Companies.

"About a year later, when Mr. Vail, just after becoming President of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company for the second time, set about developing a strong headquarters staff in New York, he moved promptly to bring about the selection of the right man for the important job of Engineer of Building and Central Office Equipment. The right man was Bancroft Gherardi, who has completely justified the foresight of his selection.

"Three years later it became clear that Plant Engineering in the Bell System should benefit if guided by one man. Bancroft Gherardi was the man, and he served nine years as Engineer of Plant in charge of Plant Development and Standardization for the Bell System. His record on that job, during which he directed such accomplishments as the Boston-Washington underground cable and the first trans-continental telephone line, made him the logical choice for Chief Engineer.

"Two years later, with the development and research activities of the System separately organized, it was recognized that advantages should result from focusing responsibility for those activities of the A. T. and T. general staff relating to the engi-

neering and operating technique of the Bell System. The logical focus for this responsibility was Bancroft Gherardi, and he became Vice President and Chief Engineer in charge of the Department of Operation and Engineering of this Company.

"We know Mr. Gherardi's record as the head of this department. We know of his great personal influence in his relationships with all of the field and staff leaders in the Bell System. We know that he has played a great part in establishing good relations with the power companies whose network of lines parallel the telephone lines so extensively in this country.

"Perhaps some of us are not so familiar with his other related activities which have caused engineers and scientists in other walks to enlist his aid and to do him honor; for instance, we have just referred to his relations with the power companies. In this he led in the formation of the Joint General Committee of the Edison Electric Institute and the Bell System, and is Bell System Chairman of that Committee. He is also Bell System Chairman of the Joint General Committee of the Association of American Railroads and the Bell System, which is concerned with similar problems.

"In the A. I. E. E. Mr. Gherardi has been a manager, Vice President, and was President during 1927 and 1928. He has served on such Committees as the Executive, the Edison Medal, the Finance, the Headquarters, the Public Policy, the Research, and the Constitution Revision. He has represented the Institute upon the Board of Trustees of the United Engineering Trustees, Incorporated, the Library Board, the National Research Council, the United States National Committee of the International Electrotechnical Commission, the John Fritz Medal Board of Award, and other bodies. He served as President of the United Engineering Trustees and as Chairman of the John Fritz Medal Board. During his association with the A. I. E. E. he has been the author of many important contributions included in their transactions.

"Let us just mention some other jobs which have occupied part of his leisure time:

Trustee of Cornell University
 President of the American Standards Association
 Representative of the Bell System in charge of Relations with the International Advisory Committee on Telephony
 Chairman of the Engineering Section of the National Academy of Sciences.

"Some of his honors should be mentioned also, such as Honorary Degrees of Doctor of Engineering from the Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute and from the Worcester Polytechnic Institute, and the emblem of the Fourth Order of the Rising Sun, which was conferred upon him by the Emperor of Japan. In 1932 the American Institute of Electrical Engineers awarded the Edison Medal for that year to Bancroft Gherardi 'for his contributions to the art of telephone engineering and the development of electrical communication.' Quoting from the Institute's announcement of this award:

'His broad vision as to the place of communication not only in the affairs of the people of the United States but also in world affairs, and his initiative and skill in the development of engineering and operating organizations and in the development of the art generally, have contributed enormously to the growth and success of present day communication.'

"Mr. Gherardi, it seems to us that with this record behind you, you may wish as the spirit moves you in the future to express yourself in writing now and then. If this should be so, it would please this group of people to have you accept for such use a desk and chair of a type favored by the first Presi-

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dent of this country, who was a great engineer and who exemplified many of the qualities which we have found in your leadership of our work."

WILLIAM H. HARRISON ELECTED VICE PRESIDENT
AND CHIEF ENGINEER OF A. T. & T. CO.

WILLIAM H. HARRISON, who was elected on April 20 to succeed Bancroft Gherardi as Vice President and Chief Engineer of the A. T. & T. Co., was born on June 11, 1892, in Brooklyn, N. Y., and after graduating from high school in 1909, he obtained a position with the New York Telephone Company as a repairman. In 1911 he was transferred to the repair shop, where he was engaged in apparatus inspection, assembly, etc. On December 4, 1914, he became associated with the Engineering Department of the Western Electric Company and was assigned to circuit design work. During a portion of this time he was also a student at Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, where he was graduated in 1915 in Industrial Electrical Engineering.

In 1918 Mr. Harrison became associated with the American Telephone and Telegraph Company in the Engineering Department. This department was divided in 1919 into two groups, one concerned with problems of operation and engineering and the other concerned with problems of development and research. Mr. Harrison became identified with the first group, and in 1924 was appointed Equipment and Building Engineer. Four years later, on December 24, 1928, he became Acting Plant Engineer, and on October 1, 1929, he was appointed Plant Engineer. In 1933 he was elected Vice President in charge of Operations of The Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania and The Diamond State Telephone Company, assuming his new post on April 1 of that year. A few months later he was elected a Director of The Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania and appointed a member of the Executive

Committee of the Board of Directors. A similar election and appointment were made shortly thereafter with The Diamond State Telephone Company. On February 1, 1937, he was appointed Assistant Vice President in the Department of Operation and Engineering of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company, succeeding K. W. Waterson.