

THE TELEPHONE NEWS



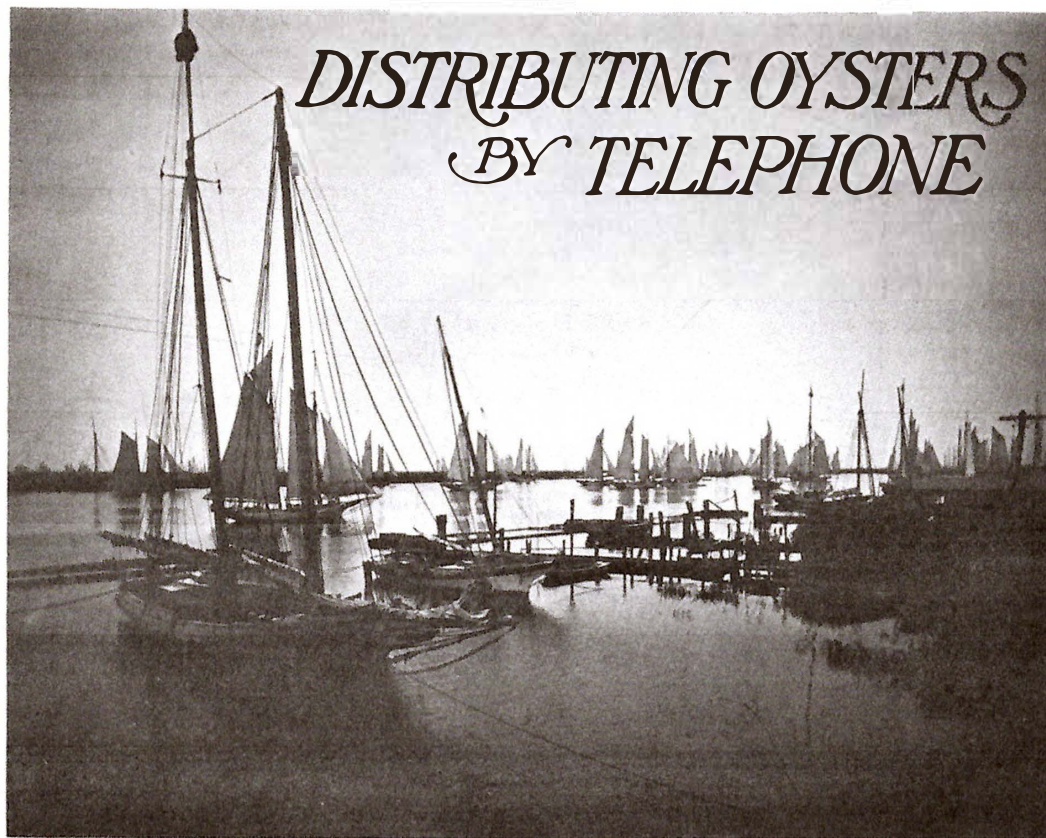
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DISTRIBUTING OYSTERS BY TELEPHONE



A Veteran South Jersey Oysterman Tells Some Interesting Things about an Important Industry

"GET along without it? *Not on your life.* Oystermen do 'most everything by telephone these days—buy, sell, open and close deals of all kinds,—everything. Why, we—"

Clang-g-g-g! Clang, clang-g-g!

The vibrant call of a big Moore gong broke in on the Captain's superlatives. A moment later, from the deep shadows at the shore end of the wharf on which we stood, a lusty shout arose: "Captain See! Ho, Captain See!"

"Excuse me a minute," said the Captain, and away he hurried to answer his telephone. The summons came so much in the form of a verification of the man's statement that we all smiled at the thought. Captain See, our informant, had just begun to initiate us into the complexities of oyster planting, growing, harvesting and distributing. We were catching our breath in anticipation, for most of the natives with whom we came in touch in the vicinity of Maurice River, New

Jersey, seemed peculiarly reticent about talking of their vocation. The writer's companion vouchsafed the explanation that this frame of mind grew out of the several unfair "write-ups" of the oyster industry which had found their way into print. The natives felt justly incensed over their publication. Naturally they cast a cold eye on the man who came to town with a camera under his arm and a pencil back of his ear.

But old Captain See, veteran of almost a half century of oystering trade, took us at face value, so to speak, and accepted our statement that we were not there to criticise. And once in his confidence it looked as though our way to a knowledge of the wonderful South Jersey industry would be comparatively easy. The Captain had been pointed out to us as one of the best informed men in the neighborhood.

It was a beautiful sight we saw when first we came to the edge of the Maurice River. Oyster boats of every variety were just sailing in from

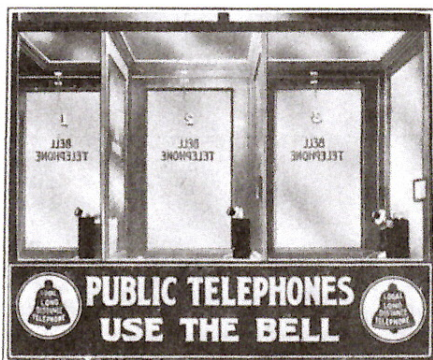
the beds after a busy day. Many of them were big, graceful schooner-rigged boats; and as they tacked back and forth across the river in the slant of a freshening breeze they presented a spectacle seldom seen by the landsman—especially in mid-winter. Each boat was loaded to its capacity with either oysters or clams. As they reached their mooring places they dropped into position with a great clatter of rigging and flapping of sails. We were afforded a splendid first impression of the place.

Presently Captain See returned. He was still smiling. "That was Mr. K. calling:—Mr. K. is a big oyster dealer in New York, you know. See that float-load of oysters beside yonder wharf? I telephoned him yesterday about 'em—they're his now. Just closed the deal for a carload. Wait here a minute; I'll show you what he's going to get."

The enthusiastic demonstrator stepped briskly
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First Window Booths in Our New Jersey Territory, Camden, N. J.

The special window booths recently installed in Camden have proved a thorough success both from a revenue and a service standpoint. The druggists who have devoted their windows to this purpose are very much gratified at the results. Photographs of several installations here



Window Booths, Hinski's Pharmacy, Camden, N. J.

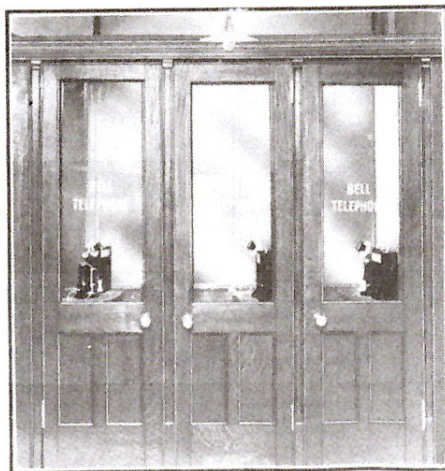
reproduced give an impression of what can be done where the work seems justified.

The first shows the pharmacy of Oscar N. Hinski, Haddon Avenue and Federal Street—the first store in South Jersey where this kind of equipment was installed. It was necessary for the subscriber to alter the interior of the store, thus increasing the floor space and adding greatly to its good appearance. His single "open" telephone was replaced by a three-compartment special window booth installed during the latter part of December, 1911.

The second shows the store of William N. White, Broadway and Stevens Street, with practically the same equipment as that of Mr. Hinski. At this location two public telephones were formerly installed, one of which was in a booth.

The third illustrates what has been done at 1100 Kaighn Avenue, where Paul N. Litchfield has a branch store. This installation replaced a single public telephone.

The fourth shows the latest installation thus made in Camden, namely, at the store of E. W. Collins, Third and Arch Streets. In each instance the woodwork was chosen to match the store



Window Booths, White's Pharmacy, Camden, N. J.

fittings and great care was taken to add to the good appearance of the stores.

The increased revenue in every instance (varying from 100 to over 300 per cent.) surprised the druggists and was especially pleasing to the members of the Commercial department who had the work in charge.

Atlantic Coast Division

J. R. ANDERSON, Division Correspondent

Atlantic District. A telephone was ordered on February 17 and installed the same day in the Illinois Avenue home of an Atlantic City subscriber. A member of the household telephoned to the Wire Chief at 6 A. M. the next day to thank the Company and to say that the service had been of great benefit in the night to a sick person in the house.

AVIS.

Bridgeton Sub-District. A wind and lightning storm which passed over South Jersey February 21 and 22 did somewhat of damage to our plant. It blew down 9 large poles and burned out the end section of the No. 6 cable, located on Broad Street, Bridgeton, putting about 250 subscribers out of service. This storm was followed by one of exceedingly high winds and rain which made an additional lot of work besides delaying the repairing of the damage of the first storm. The



Window Booths, Litchfield's Pharmacy, Kaighn Avenue, Camden, N. J.

Cape May-Bridgeton trunk was reported out of order, and when the trouble was located it was found that the roof of a sawmill at Delmont, N. J., had been blown through the entire No. 3 line and had taken all the wires with it. Repairs to all of the damaged plant were promptly made.

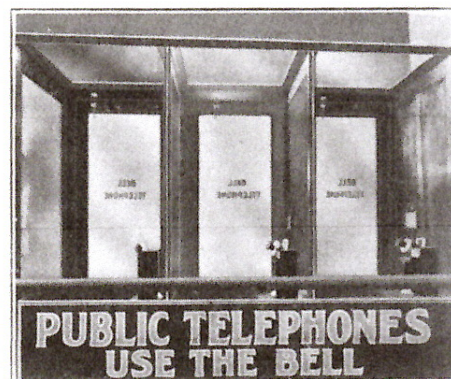
LORE.

Camden District. In Merchantville the Public Service Company has made certain changes in its plant giving us more clearance on the poles on Park Avenue, Cove Road and Centre Street. This change will clear several undesirable conditions that prevailed heretofore and will be a saving in maintenance and additional plant in this vicinity.

CROXTON.

Doylestown District. The following letter has just been received from a teacher in one of the schools in the rural districts where we have recently placed a large "Bell Telephone System" map:

"My dear Mr. Callanan:—I want to thank you, and through you the Bell Telephone Com-



Window Booths, Collins' Pharmacy, Camden, N. J.

pany, for the map which you so kindly furnished the Laurel Bend school. I can't tell you how much I appreciate the map, for it is as ornamental as it is useful.

"Sincerely yours,

HEN NESSY.

Norristown District. The necessity of telephone service in suburban residences was again demonstrated recently in the Norristown District when a man who resides in one of the suburbs of Norristown applied for service. He wished it to be installed as promptly as possible, as four members of his family became ill about the same time—three being taken with diphtheria and one with typhoid fever. The man is employed in Norristown and it is necessary for him to be at his work every day. Consequently he was unusually nervous until service was installed. Fortunately we were able to install it about three hours after the application was signed.

BEERER.

Distributing Oysters by Telephone

Continued from page 1

down to the water's edge, picked out as many as he could grasp of clean-looking bivalves, and came back with them for our inspection. We agreed that they were beauties.

"Know anything about oysters?" inquired the Captain.

"Know they're mighty good to eat—that's about all. We don't mind learning, though; that's what we're here for."

"Well," he began, "I reckon I can just about tell you all you care to know about 'em. It's been my life-work for many a year—since I was a barefooted kid, in fact. If you've time I'll begin at the beginning and tell you something of an oyster's life."

"Every year about the first of July a thousand or more boats are scattered down through this bay planting oyster shells, sand and stones. That's the first step. A few days later, about the 10th of July, the oyster spawn bursts and comes to the top of the water. It is only a small speck at that time—looks very much like a grain of pepper. The heat of the sun hardens the speck and turns it into a shell. It sinks to the bottom and sticks to anything it may strike. You see, that's why the oystermen planted those shells and

things. If they didn't, that little speck of a shell would settle down in the mud and fail to mature properly. It's a queer thing, too; the oyster spawn comes to the top of the water and the clam spawn goes down into the mud and sand.

"Between the middle of July and the first of September the little speck I've been telling you about grows to be, say, an inch long, and the workmen find a hundred or more of them sticking to each one of the shells which were planted. As the little shells keep on growing they crowd each other off the original resting-place, dropping off one by one. Then the small oysters are taken up and transplanted on the various leased grounds about the cove. They're nice size oysters, ready for the market, in about three years."

"Pardon me," the writer interrupted, "what was that you said about leased grounds?"

"Oh, yes," answered Captain See, "I'll tell you all about that. All New Jersey land under tide-water below mean high tide is owned by the State. Every bit of this land occupied to cultivate oysters is leased from the State of New Jersey by the oyster planters. The State derives a big revenue from this source. The leases are for the term of one year. All the expense of policing the oyster grounds, of protecting the lessors, and of maintaining an organization for this purpose is borne by the State.

Scope of the Oyster Industry

"You probably do not realize how big an industry it is. In one county—Cumberland County—the value of the annual oyster crops exceeds the annual value of the wheat crop of the whole State by a round million dollars. In New Jersey we have, as nearly as we can figure it out, 375,000 acres of land under tidal water, which means, of course, that it can be cultivated for shell fish of one variety or another. Of that total there are 30,000 acres of natural seed-beds. Here is where the oysters grow naturally and where we gather our seed. For planting purposes the State is leasing 28,700 acres at from 50 cents to \$1.00 per acre. As nearly as it can be estimated there is an investment of \$5,000,000 in the oystering business in the Maurice River Cove. In Cumberland County a thousand families, averaging five members to the family, are entirely dependent on it for their existence. In addition, hundreds of men are 'imported' during the busy season. They come from several parts of the State, a great many from the Delaware Shore. The busiest season is from the first of September until the first of January. During that time as many as fifty carloads a day are shipped from our two stations, Bivalve and Maurice River. When you consider that one car holds approximately 100,000 oysters you can imagine how high our figures run. It means a business of \$2,000,000 a year. One oyster planter and shipper owning large grounds will ship an average of 1,000,000 oysters a week. The reason for such immense shipments is that we have sand 'grounds' here (a sandy river bed); and that's the kind which yields oysters of the best flavor.

"Bivalve and Maurice River are luckily located to produce good 'fattened' oysters. What's 'fattened' mean? Well, there's a whole story in that process alone, and there has been a great deal of discussion about it lately. Briefly, it means this: When oysters are dredged from salt water and brought in here they have a strong salt flavor that's objectionable to many consumers. Their odor is unpleasant to some. When the cargoes come in the boats tie up right in this vicinity, and here the catch is culled and 'laid out' in floats. All along both shores you'll see this process in

operation. The oysters are allowed to lie in these floats during two tides, and you'd be amazed to see the difference in them after they have had their 'drink,' as we say.

"The water that flows over them is neither fresh nor of the pronounced salt flavor peculiar to that in which they grow, but it is a brackish water just the same; and that's what oysters seem to crave. The tides flowing over them tickle their palates, as it were; the oysters open their shells and drink in a portion of the new liquid. This 'drinking' process has several effects—it dissipates the sea odor and modifies the objectionably strong salt flavor; but it leaves the oyster still an oyster—and, most of us think, a better oyster.

The Discussion over "Drinking"

"As I said before, there has been a great deal of talk about our 'drinking' process. Some of the authorities on the subject went so far as to insist that all oysters which had had their drink of brackish water, and consequently had been cleaned and fattened, should be labeled 'adulterated' before they could be shipped. That point of view, however, is rapidly being displaced by a more sensible one. The best experts in the business have been employed to investigate the subject and they tell us some mighty encouraging things. They say the 'fattened' or 'freshened' oyster is cleaner and sweeter; that it looks better—since it is plumper, firmer and whiter; that it stands up better after opening, receives its additional water in natural ways; that it selects brackish water in preference to fresh; and, finally, that it keeps better through shipment and while in the market. All of these things strengthen us in our long established belief that oysters, instead of being injured by this process, are benefited by it.

"The New Jersey State Oyster Commission has backed us up handsomely in our defense of 'floated' oysters. It has done many things to help us in developing our great natural resource. We are always trying to bring it up to its greatest possibility, you know, and it's a big proposition. Many people are surprised when they learn that it is one of the greatest industries in the eastern section of the country.

"A moment ago I started to tell you how the New Jersey authorities backed us up in our work. For one thing they've placed a handsome and well-equipped boat on the local oyster grounds to protect the beds from pirates who persist in carrying on their work. Illegal dredging, by the way, has come to be a business of itself with a certain class of oystermen. It is being fought constantly. Dishonest oystermen seem to find it a great temptation to poach on the grounds of neighbors. Their methods are crafty and it is a hard job to convict one of them. Every night our boat, the *Cypher*, darts up and down and around the coves and turns the rays of its powerful searchlight across the waters of Delaware Bay in search of law-breakers. This vigilance has deterred many an evil-minded oysterman from thieving. The pirates keep after our men continually, not only in the cove and the bay, but they come right up here where the oysters have been culled and 'laid out' to float. We employ a number of watchmen to guard against such thievery—one to every twelve floats. Their wages are paid by the shippers. The men who fill these positions—the watchmen, I mean—live in floating cabins, and from sunset to sunrise, in all kinds of weather, they row about in their little boats with their oarlocks carefully muffled; they realize the importance of their picket duty."

"Do many of the shippers and planters have telephone service?" we ventured to ask.

"I don't know one who has not," promptly

answered the Captain. "Experience has been a great teacher to us in that respect. I think you will find that every dealer of any importance has direct line service—and he certainly makes use of it. During our busiest season those big Moore gongs are ringing all the time. Buyers and sellers keep the wires hot. Some are close at hand and others are at a great distance. Our lines connect with your Port Norris exchange. During the colder weather I understand that our service is much facilitated by the fact that we have the use of trunk lines which are heavily loaded with summer resort traffic in pleasant weather. It works out just right for us. When vacation weather comes we don't have much need of long-distance service. It is in the winter that we want it;—and when we need it we want it pretty quick."

By this time the river was literally crowded with incoming craft. Our attention may have seemed to be drifting. Captain See turned in the direction we were looking and saw the point at once.

"Fine sight, isn't it? Those fellows leave here long before daylight—anywhere from two to four o'clock. They're out on the beds ready to dredge by the time day breaks. There are about 400 big schooners right around here. Then, of course, there are hundreds of smaller boats—scows, garveys and open gasoline launches, ('snapshots,' as the boys call them). Do you notice that those schooners don't have to depend on the tricks of the wind to do their dredging nowadays. Each has a gasoline engine equipment in addition to its sails. The engines run winders also, so that when a dredge is filled with oysters it is hoisted to the deck of the boat with scarcely any manual labor such as used to make this work a real hardship. And of course when the wind dies out the power is used to run the boats in from the oyster grounds after the day's work.

"See that big number on yonder mains'1? There are over a thousand oyster grounds around here, and each one of them is staked and numbered. The large numbers on the mains'ls correspond with those of the oystermen's grounds. During the past year about 26,000 acres of oyster beds in Maurice River Cove were under cultivation. Naturally our boats are on the go from sunrise to sunset. The stiffer the wind blows the more the dealers are pleased, for it means a bigger catch. By a wise provision of the law dredging stops at sunset. At that time they all come sailing up the river as you see them now.

Where the Telephone Enters

"I haven't gone into much detail about the use of the telephone in distributing our catches. You probably realize for yourself just about how necessary we find it. You see, the oyster is a perishable product. We can't afford to let them lie around and spoil. It frequently happens that a dealer will have an extra fine supply on hand. He knows his biggest buyers are located in New York, Philadelphia, Western Pennsylvania, Baltimore, and so on. You can take my word for it, we spare no expense at such a time. It's up to us to solicit orders for those oysters. Formerly we had to get in touch with the trade personally, by telegraph or the comparatively slow mail service. Since the telephone came to town, however, we are much better off in that respect. We can call up a prospective buyer, get his close attention in a few minutes, tell him just exactly what kind and how many we have on hand, and what we will take for them; and there you are. The deal is closed before we hang up. I do not think you will find a single oyster dealer ready to say he would care to go back to the old-time methods."



DISTRIBUTION BY TELEPHONE

