

From <http://forgottennewengland.com/2012/03/23/yesterdays-telephone-numbers-glenview-montrose-and-ulysses/>

March 23, 2012

Yesterday's Telephone Numbers: GLenview, MOntrorse, and ULysses

By [Forgotten New England](#)

In those long ago days before cell phones, speed dialing, and stored numbers, folks like [Tommy Tutone](#) telephoned girls like 'Jenny' by actually dialing 867-5309. If he was a modern type, he may have even punched the number into the telephone's touchtone keypad, an innovation that was several years old by the time the song was released in 1981.

And, 20 years earlier, in 1962, [Gladys Horton](#) and the Marvelettes sang of a woman who urged men to call her at BEechwood 4-5789 so they could "have a date, any ol' time".

A generation before, in 1940, Glenn Miller and his Orchestra, memorialized the phone number of Manhattan's [Hotel Pennsylvania](#) with the song [PEnnsylvania 6-5000](#).

Do you find it easier to remember the telephone numbers of your childhood home or friends, than those of any one of the ten cell phones and landlines in your family today? There was something about dialing a telephone number (or even punching it into a touchtone number pad) that helped commit it to memory.

The telephone companies didn't always think so, though. As seven-digit phone numbers were introduced during the middle of the 20th century, companies like [New England Telephone and Telegraph](#) added exchange names to existing phone numbers to help people remember the two digits added to the beginning of their phone numbers. Locally, the [New England Telephone and Telegraph Company](#) called its [telephone exchange names](#) 'central offices' when they were implemented in the early 1950's. In September 1954, in Massachusetts, along came GLenview for Lowell, ULysses for Tewksbury, NIagara for Tyngsboro, and MYrtle for Westford. (ALpine for Chelmsford came soon after.) The two initial letters of the central office names, always capitalized, represented the two initial numbers of the phone number to be dialed. Hence, as it's explained below, GL3-2181 becomes 453-2181:

New Central Office Names and Numbers

People in Lowell and other Exchanges have probably heard about the new "Central Office" names for Lowell. Beginning Sunday, September 19th, the Lowell Telephone Exchange will be divided into two parts. Each of the parts becomes what is called a "Central Office" and each will have a special name associated with its telephone numbers. These names are:

Glenview and Ulysses

Other Exchanges will also have new "Central Office" names:

Billerica will become MONTrose — Tyngsboro will become NIagara
Westford will become MYrtle — So. Hudson, N. H. will become MIssion
Wilmington will remain OLiver



The first two letters (to be capitalized in the new directory) of these names will be used, in the present plan, by long distance operators when making calls to this area. Telephone numbers associated with the new Central Office names and numbers must contain five figures, and many present numbers in these Exchanges will also be changed.

Why are these changes necessary?

The establishment of new Central Office names and numbers is a simple and necessary step to pave the way for **WIDE RANGE DIALING!**

Ultimately **WIDE RANGE DIALING** will enable you to dial calls direct to all parts of the United States and Canada. It will bring better than 50 million telephones right to your fingertips.

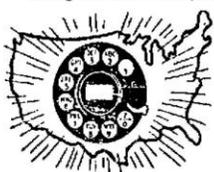
WIDE RANGE DIALING will not come overnight. It must be developed step by step in each community, and it will be some years before the nationwide plan can be completed. There are three major requirements upon which **WIDE RANGE DIALING** depends:

1. A Uniform Numbering Plan — to provide a distinctive individual designation for every telephone in the United States and Canada.
2. Automatic Switching Equipment — to speed Long Distance calls to the proper telephones over the shortest available route, in compliance with directions dialed by the telephone user.*
3. Automatic Message Accounting Equipment — to make a continuous accurate record of the details of all Long Distance calls, so that the people who make them may be charged correctly.*

*Such equipment is already in use on a limited scale in many communities, including several within New England.

Uniform numbering plan

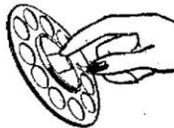
Obviously, the first requirement for a nationwide system of dialing is a nationwide system for numbering. This system must



eliminate duplications, and insure that every telephone shall have an individual designation that will permit automatic equipment to reach that particular telephone swiftly and accurately.

With **WIDE RANGE DIALING**, these individual designations will be made up of combinations of figures and letters . . . as "Area" designation, a "Central Office" designation and "Station Number".

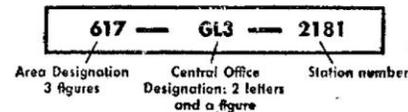
The "Area" designation identifies the general area. The United States and Canada have been divided into more than a hundred such "Areas" . . . some of them comprising an entire state, or, as in heavily populated areas, parts of states. New England has been divided into seven such "Areas" . . . each has its own 3-figure combination.



Central Office Names

The "Central Office" of an Exchange in which a telephone is located will also have a designation which will consist of the first two letters of the Central Office name and a figure. There are two requirements for a Central Office designation. It must not duplicate any other designation in the area it's located in . . . and it must be easily spelled and understood. For efficient operation of **WIDE RANGE DIALING** it is necessary to avoid the use of community names. Therefore, while Exchange names will remain the same, Central Office names are being changed to meet technical requirements.

The last step which is necessary to **WIDE RANGE DIALING** is of course, the "Station Number" — the figures which identify a particular telephone instrument. Put them all together and they'll look like this:



On simple pulls of the dial and within seconds — you'll be able to call any telephone in the United States or Canada. That's the future — with **WIDE RANGE DIALING!** And the changes in your Central Office Names and Numbers are part of the step-by-step plan to pave the way for the coming of this amazing new development in telephone communications.

With the new changes coming in September in the Lowell, Billerica, Tyngsboro, Westford and Wilmington Exchanges, all that will be required is to dial two letters and five figures on calls between Central Offices. On calls within a Central Office, dial five figures only.

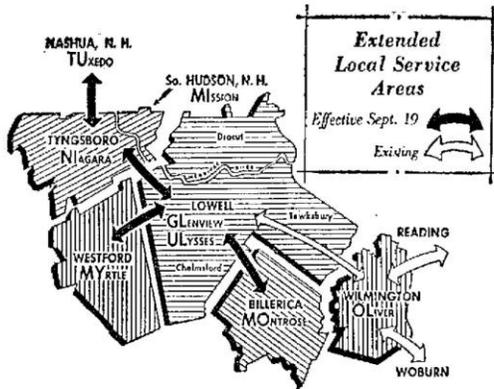
NEW ENGLAND TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH COMPANY

The idea behind central office names, beyond helping memories and expanding the pool of available numbers, was to enable 'wide range dialing', or allowing people to dial American and Canadian numbers directly into their telephones, without the assistance of an operator. The new system also standardized the numbering system and ensured that each telephone received a unique number.

Under this system, telephone numbers contained three components: an area designation (now known as an area code), a Central Office designation (consisting of the first two letters of the central office name and the first number thereafter, and the station number (or the last four digits of the telephone number).

Extended Dialing

FOR THE LOWELL AREA AT LOCAL RATES



Another big step forward in telephone service for the Lowell area will be taken in September with the creation of three new local calling areas. Beginning Sunday, September 19, calls made either way between the exchanges of Lowell and Billerica; between Lowell, Tyngsboro and South Hudson, New Hampshire; and between Lowell and Westford will be handled on a "local call" basis with no out-of-town charges. This project reflects the modern idea of convenient, practical telephone service which is to group exchanges with a strong community of interests into extended local calling areas.

These exchange groupings will bring many additional telephones within the local calling range of anyone telephoning in such communities.

NEW CENTRAL OFFICE NAMES AND NUMBERS

As part of a plan for eventual nationwide dialing, every telephone exchange must have one or more special names associated with its telephone numbers. These are called "central office" names. The first two letters of these names (capitalized in your directory) are dialed by long

distance operators on incoming calls and by customers when making calls between offices. Each telephone number will have five figures so that after you have dialed the two letters you then dial the five figures of the number you want.

**NEW OFFICE NAMES
TO BE USED IN EXCHANGES
BEGINNING SEPTEMBER 19**

Lowell becomes *GLenview* and *ULysses*
Billerica becomes *MOntrose*
Tyngsboro becomes *NIagara*
Westford becomes *MYrtle*
South Hudson becomes *MIssion*
(Wilmington remains *OLiver*)

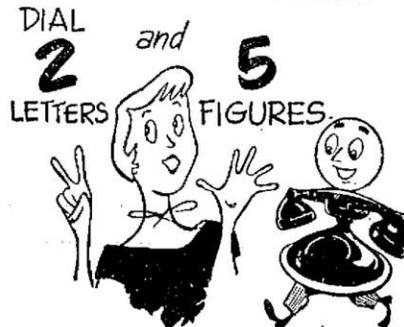
TO DIAL WITHIN YOUR OWN CENTRAL OFFICE

Customers calling *within* any one central office will not dial central office letters — only the five figures listed in the directory. For instance, if your telephone has a *GLenview* number and you want to call another *GLenview* number, simply dial the five figures listed for the telephone you want.



TO DIAL BETWEEN CENTRAL OFFICES

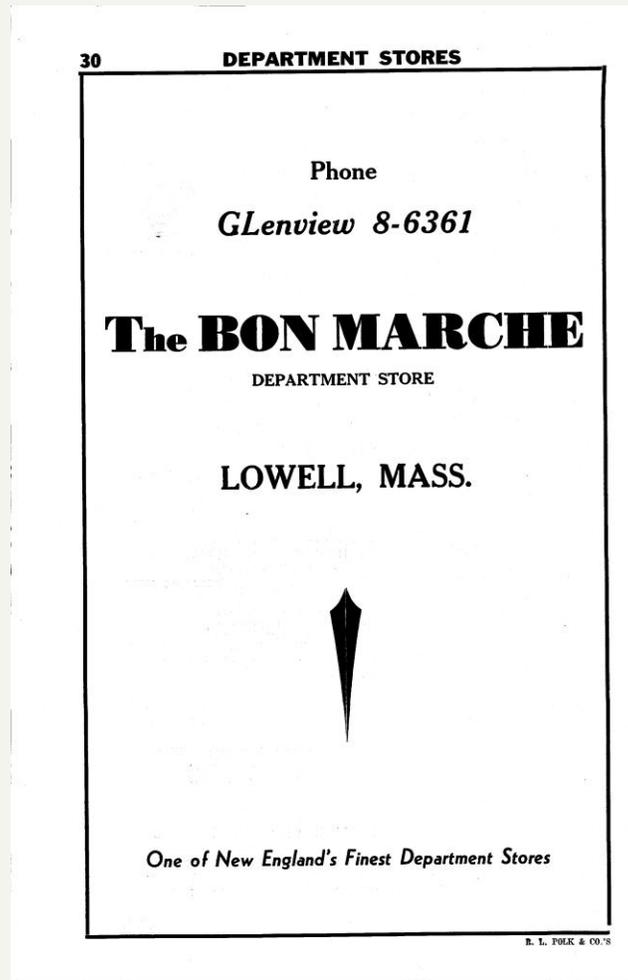
To Call	From	Dial
<i>GLenview</i>	<i>ULysses, MOntrose, NIagara, OLiver, MYrtle</i>	"G" and "L" plus five figures of the number
<i>ULysses</i>	<i>GLenview, MOntrose, NIagara, OLiver, MYrtle</i>	"U" and "L" plus five figures of the number
<i>MOntrose</i>	<i>GLenview, ULysses</i>	"M" and "O" plus five figures of the number
<i>NIagara</i>	<i>GLenview, ULysses</i>	"N" and "I" plus five figures of the number
<i>MYrtle</i>	<i>GLenview, ULysses</i>	"M" and "Y" plus five figures of the number
<i>OLiver</i>	<i>GLenview, ULysses</i>	"O" and "L" plus five figures of the number



NEW ENGLAND TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH COMPANY

So, how did it work? If you were dialing within a central office (or telephone exchange name), you needed only to dial the five figures, as explained above. If you wanted to call outside of your central office, the two letters were added.

There's something nostalgic and 'mid-century sounding' to a phone number like BEechwood 45789, or more locally, GLenview 8-6361, which was the telephone number to reach one of Lowell's largest department stores, the Bon Marché. Today, in an era of Skype and email and text messages, it's hard to imagine the same sort of nostalgia being attached to a phone number.



This entry was posted on Friday, March 23rd, 2012 at 6:38 pm and tagged with [Central Office](#), [New England Telephone](#), [Telephone exchange](#) and posted in [Billerica](#), [City Life](#), [history](#), [lowell](#), [Massachusetts](#), [minutiae](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed.