



John Denman's Phone Number Was Cranford 1

[The following article is excerpted from William B. Bragdon's *Cranford: An Outline History* (1937).]

The inauguration of the public phone in Cranford was probably brought about indirectly by the influence of the progressive activities of the citizens. It has been related how [Emmor K.] Adams constructed a phone system for the benefit of the Detecting Society, and in the winter of 1890 a bill was contemplated in the Legislature for a renewal of its charter. Likewise, some of the younger boys acquired the "Telephone Bug," and connected neighboring houses with sets of instruments. This innovation, however, soon had the grown-ups studying, the Morse Telegraphic Code, and the fever spread to such an extent that before long fifteen homes were in communication and a telegraphic organization formed. About this time, on October 3, 1890, a newspaper published that, "Cranford will soon have telephone connection with the rest of the world and mankind," so it may be assumed that a public telephone company had become apprehensive and realized the necessity of the speedy installation of some system with a wider scope.

It was not until 1894, however, that definite action was undertaken, and on February 8th a newspaper announced that, "An agent will be in the village in a few days to connect dwellings with the telephone service." Again, on February 6, 1895, this paper stated that, "The proposition that is being agitated to secure a telephone system seems to be arousing considerable interest among the citizens." On February 16th, the message came that, "The exchange for the Cranford Mutual Telephone Company will be in the Opera House Block." Then on February 4, 1896, a newspaper continued that, "Judge Van Sickle of Elizabeth yesterday issued a writ of certorari [sic] against the Cranford Mutual Telephone Company."

Finally, on October 4, 1899, a report was received that, "The Central Office of the New York and New Jersey Telephone Company at Marien's Drug Store is now in operation. Eight of the fifty phones of the subscribers have already been connected." One, therefore, assumes that a legal controversy had occurred and that the latter company had been declared the winner. Then, in 1926, the New Jersey Bell Telephone Company took up the burden. John C. Denman was the first subscriber, with Number Cranford 1.