

“Time and space die. . . .”

“The Telegraph Song,” 1858

Though delayed by foul weather, tardy subscriber payments, and rattlesnakes pestering line-construction crews, Minnesota’s first telegraph office opened August 29, 1860.

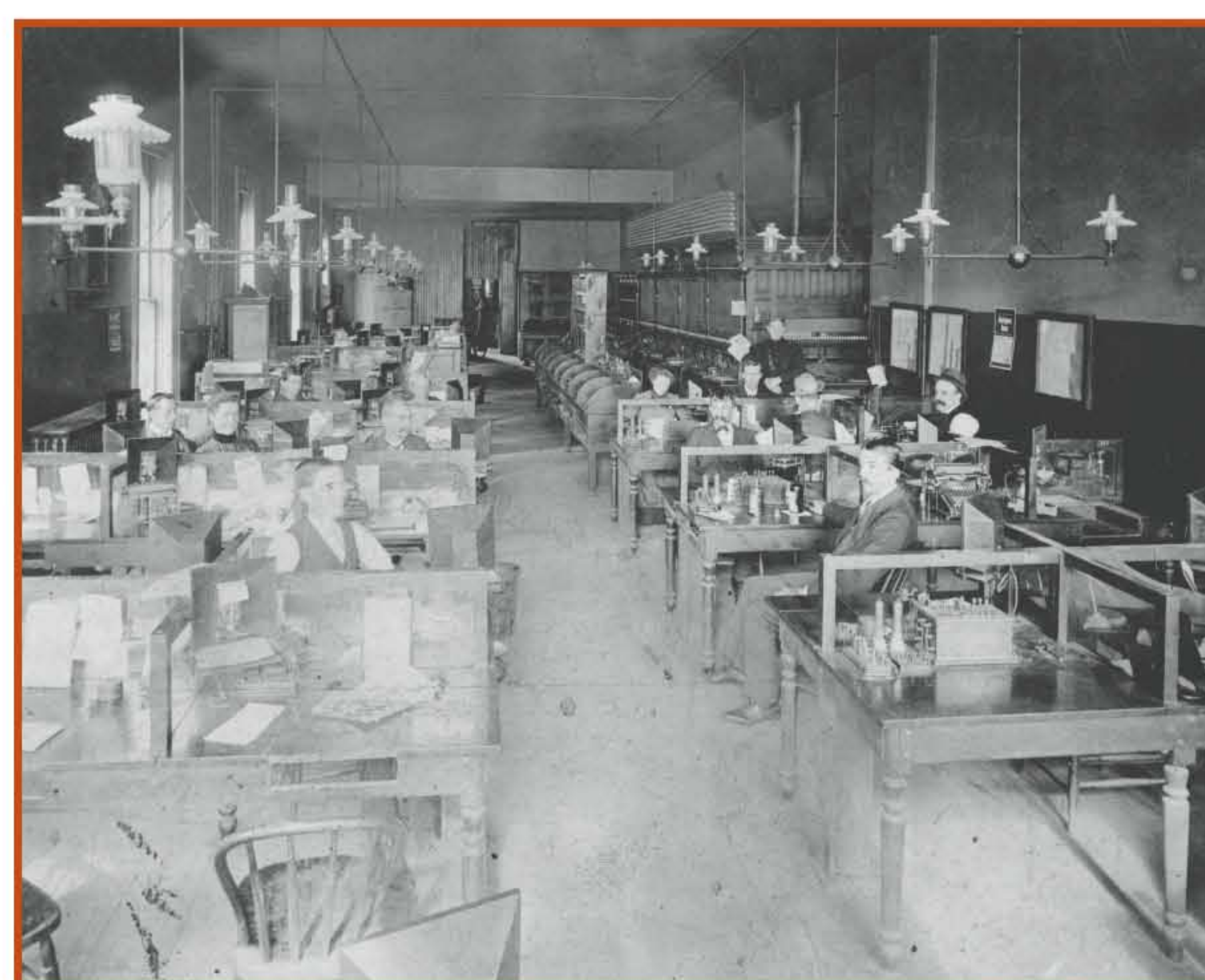
A celebratory message was sent to New York governor William Seward: “We are enabled to send this, the first message ever transmitted by lightning from St. Paul to the East, as complimentary to you.” Then, as today, people experienced instant communication with its conveniences as well as its demands.

Because of the telegraph the businessman has to keep up constant interaction with distant correspondents without time for quiet and rest. He goes home after a day of hard work and excitement to a late dinner, but he is interrupted by a telegram. The poor man must eat his dinner as fast as possible to send off his reply.

W. E. Dodge, businessman, New York, 1868



Northwestern Bell Telephone Company operators, Minneapolis, 1920



Western Union Telegraph office, Minneapolis, about 1895



Margaret Thompson Wallner, age 22

Courtesy Wallner family

“When I was an operator, I would put on my headset and sit with about 50 or 60 other operators facing a huge board. When the lights signaled that a customer wanted to make a call, we would place a plug into the hole and answer, ‘Number, please.’ The customer told us the number, and then we would place the matching cord into the exchange section, such as Colfax or Drexel, and dial the number. When they hung up, the lights went out and we’d disconnect the call by pulling out both plugs. It paid \$14 per week.”

Margaret Wallner, Minneapolis, MN, 1925, from *Seven Generations of Stories: the Autobiography of Margaret Thompson Wallner*

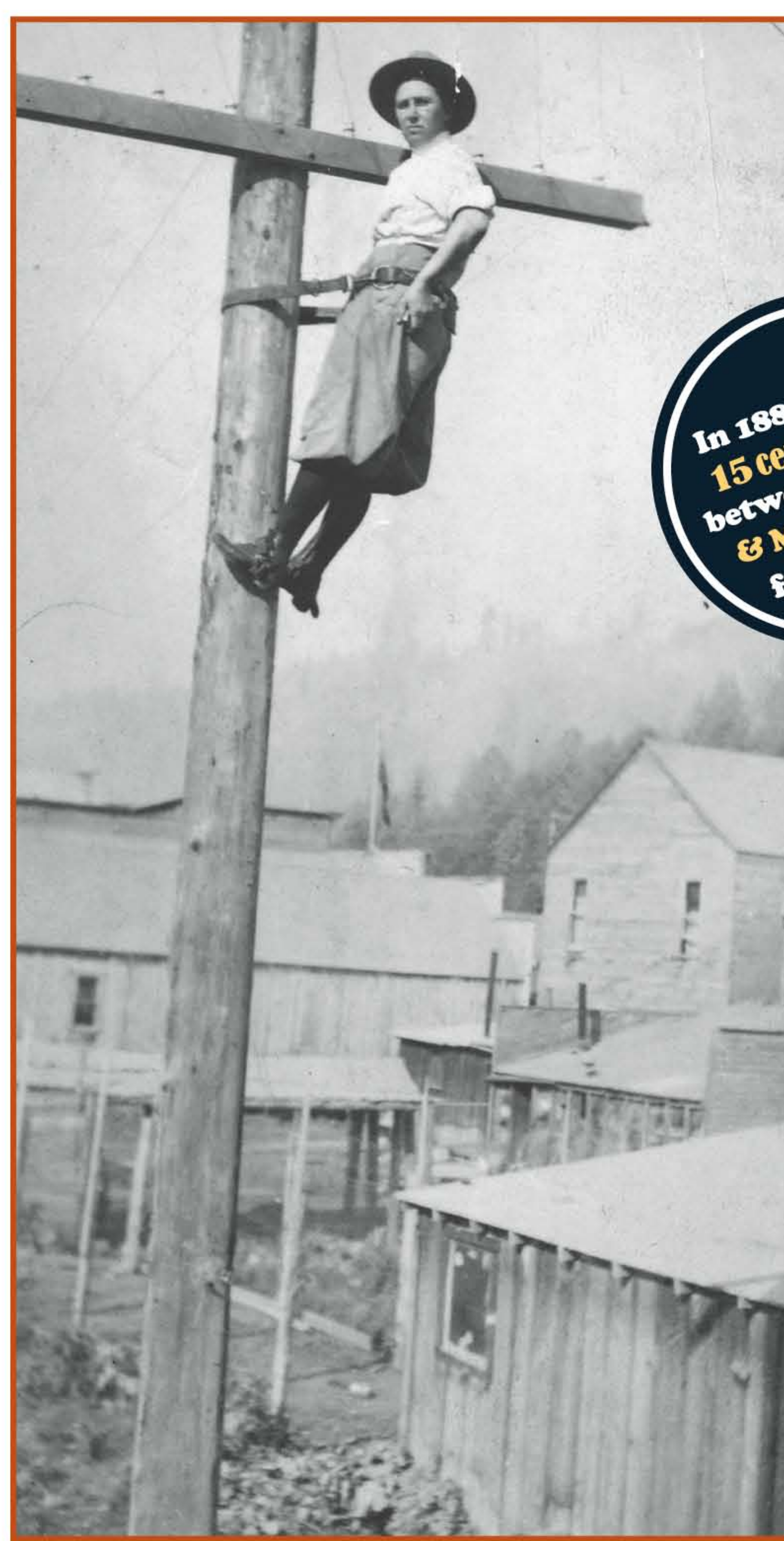
I am addicted to my iPhone, from my alarm in the a.m. to checking email, texts, Facebook, Twitter, to playing Skee-Ball and the ever addicting DoodleJump. As our phones/devices keep us in the know, is that a real connection? I don’t know how many times I have pulled out my phone during dinner conversations or perused my Twitter while on the phone with a friend. My little iPhone is glaring at me. I don’t want it running my life. Wish me luck!

Gina Zeidler, photographer, Minneapolis, MN



Gina Zeidler, photographer, Minneapolis, 2011

Courtesy Gina Zeidler



Telephone lineswoman, about 1930

In 1889, it cost 15 cents to call between St. Paul & Minneapolis for 5 minutes.

