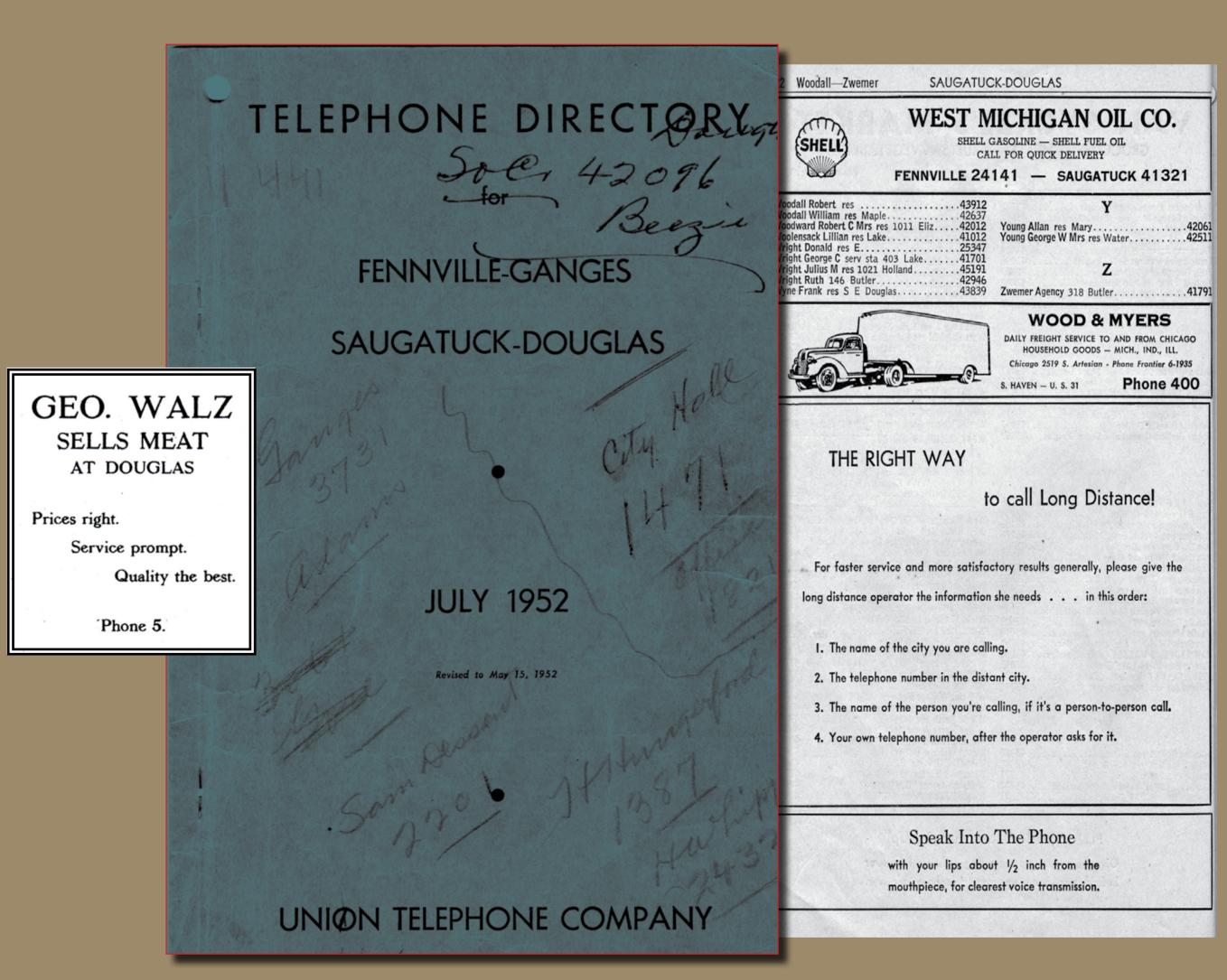# Why did farmers start the first area telephone company?

The first telephone system, before 1900, was the Saug-atuck-Ganges Telephone Company and one of its major purposes was for fruit growers to communicate with the piers at Pier Cove. If the weather was too rough, or the boat too full, he would carry his fruit to Fennville and put it on the train. In summertime in the 1920s as the tourist trade began to boom, the local telephone operators depended on local boys to deliver (for a tip) incoming messages to visitors in cottages or living on their yachts.

When the Saugatuck-Ganges Telephone Company began in 1895, it was the first cooperative telephone company in Michigan, and probably in the country. Some of the rural lines had as many as 15 customers on a party line. Dial phones arrived in 1940 with the local exchange Ulysses 7, but for calls within the exchange you one only needed to dial the last four numbers. Then one morning about 1970, with no advance warning, residents had to dial the whole number. To this day when many local people are asked their telephone number they will give you only the last four numbers.



Business cards and advertisements show the evolution of area telephone numbers. Originally the telephones in a village were simply numbered. The Geo. Walz meat market was Douglas 5, but by the 1950s the S and D Taxi was summoned with a number which began with a 4 followed by four digits. By 1962 the area including Allan - - - Antiques was part of the Ulysses exchange, later converted into numbers – 857.