

## **CIS – Precursor to the Internet:**

When computer gurus Bill Gates and Steve Jobs were toddling around in grade school, Jonathan was leading the world in developing a mind-boggling concept we now call the Internet.

As Jonathan was the first “New Town” planned in the nation, our country’s best and brightest came together to brainstorm and develop ways to make people’s lives better. Not only did Jonathan want to bring people together by physical connections of walkways and clustered mail stations, our community also sought to connect people technologically.

In the late 1960’s, General Electric was researching the concept of connecting people electronically by wiring cable to each home. This would allow people to communicate with each other through their television sets.

GE sent Ed McCormick, its director of research, to establish a company in Jonathan called Community Information Systems (C.I.S.). The directive of C.I.S. was to take the leap from idea to reality in establishing the first interconnecting community cable system in the world. Each house in the early neighborhoods was wired with cable and given a small keyboard hooked up through our televisions.

Each home received an identification number. The number received was a cross between a cable access ID number, a social security number, and a zip code. The household number would allow identification for accessing the cable system, giving directions for house locations and other purposes. It also was the forerunner of our current nine digit zip code system. The idea was that you could mail a letter to someone needing only their name and their household number.

As such, the reason for six digit house numbers for original Jonathan homes was this: the first digit refers to Jonathan, the first “New Town” in the nation. The second digit refers to the first village or section of Jonathan developed. The next two digits refer to the neighborhood areas developed (it was supposed to tie to neighborhood numbers). The last two digits refer to a house number within an area. As no neighborhood was ever to have more than ninety-nine households, there would never be a need for more than two digits. (For example: the address for Jane Doe at 110928 Von Herten Circle means City One, Village One, Area Nine, House 28.

The next time you get on the Internet, catch a show on cable television or address a letter with a zip code, remember that Jonathan provided the testing ground for the early development of these important communication systems.

- **“Ahead of its time”** by Jules Smith  
*Chaska Herald* newspaper, August 1997  
30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary focus article