

THE EVOLUTION OF THE TELEPHONE

Telephones were invented so that sound could travel over wires and people who were far away from one another could talk to each other.



The First Telephones

Telephones were invented by Alexander Graham Bell in 1876. The first words ever spoken on a telephone were when Bell said to his assistant, "Mr. Watson, come here! I want to see you!"

There was no way to dial on this phone because each phone was connected to just one other phone. Most people who had telephones had one in their home and one in the office or place of business.



Switchboards and Exchanges

By the 1880s, a new invention was introduced to allow telephones to connect with more than just one other phone. It was called a switchboard. When people wanted to place a call, they would get the operator on the line and then say who they wanted to call. The operator would connect the call by plugging one line into another.



The buildings where the switchboards were located were often called exchanges. Most towns in NH had their own exchanges until the middle of the 20th century.



Telephone numbers started to be used at the same time, but the first telephone numbers used both words *and* numbers.

Telephones also got smaller during this period too.

Phone Numbers



In the 1950s, rotary phones became popular.

You could dial the number for your own call, and an electric switchboard would make the connection. Switchboard operators weren't needed anymore.

Push button phones were introduced in the late 1970s. It was much easier to push the buttons than to use your finger to turn the heavy dial of a rotary phone.



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Pay Phones and Phone Booths

If people needed to make a phone call when they were away from home, they probably had to use a pay phone, which is when you put coins into a public telephone to pay for the call. Pay phones were invented in 1889.

Most pay phones were located in telephone booths. Phone booths were also invented in 1889.

There aren't many pay phones or phone booths left anymore. Now most people have cell phones to make calls.



Wireless Phones

The first wireless telephones were developed in the early 1970s. They worked differently from earlier telephones. Wireless technology was invented in the 1880s when it was used to send wireless telegraph messages. It was later developed for radios, which became popular in the 1920s.

Wireless technology sends sound through electromagnetic impulses and radio waves instead of wires.

The first wireless phones were pretty big, but they got smaller and smaller over the years. Some wireless phones were specially made to work in cars. Now cell phones can work anywhere they can get a signal!

