



Earliest handsets

Originally telephones had a separate unit for speaking and listening. The Swedish company L.M. Ericsson designed a telephone with the transmitter and receiver in one single unit for their so called skeleton phone already 1890.

This became immediately popular in Europe, but for one reason or another not in the US.

Left: Fig. 1. The 1892 desk set which came to be the symbol for LME's telephones for several decades. It was later reproduced in LME's trademark. Picture: Ericsson.



Fig 2: The Type 1A desk Monophone, Auto & Manual

In 1925, Automatic Electric introduced a "monophone" with a so called "first handset telephone of the modern type", see Fig. 2, which was basically an introduction of the European handset into the United States combined with a new styling of a telephone set. It was similar to a candlestick in that its only components were the handset and dial, the phone required a separate bell set with induction coil.

The advantages of the "European hand-set" were highlighted in a 1928 Engineering bulletin of Automatic Electric. To use the separate transmitter and receiver (as was usual for American phones) the user needed both hands. "In using the European micro telephone, the use of only one hand is necessary, and the transmitter is naturally held in the correct

position for conversation, regardless of whether the head is turned."

Automatic Electric was a member of a holding company, who also owned a couple of overseas companies such as ATM Liverpool, United Kingdom, ATEA, Belgium and Autelco, Milan, Italy. It is interesting to see that the sister companies were making derivative versions of this so called Monophone AE-1.



Fig 3: The ATM Strowgerphone
 ATM made basically the same phone as AE, The major difference was the BPO type 164 handset.



Fig 4: ATEA version
 Something similar happened with an ATEA version. For this phone a standard ATEA handset (patented in 1928) was used.



Fig 5: AUTELCO version
 Also the Italian subsidiary Autelco had a similar phone. The German collector Dirk Klaum has such a phone, but the version without a dial.



Fig 6: Automatica Electrica Portuguesa (AEP) version
 Automatica Electrica Portuguesa was a British/Portuguese company owned by ATE. It used the standard GPO handset. John Mulrane (IRL) has such a Portuguese monophone. It was built in the 1950s.



Figs 7, 8 & 9 Various cradles
 Left, Automatic Electric (USA); Centre, ATM (UK); Right, ATEA (Belgium)



Figs 10 & 11 More cradles
 Left, AUTELCO (Italy); Right, AEP (Portugal)

AEP manufactured the ATM version of the phone in the 1950s. In those days the “decorated “ cradle was not common any more. This is the typical ATM/ATEA cradle of the end of the 1930s.

Sources

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