

Fig. 6 - John Sherman

Steve Hiltz, who take an annual trip to visit collectors all over the western United States. This year, their “two-week, six-state, 4,200-mile” (per Vern) road trip included this show, where they busily bought and sold



Fig. 7 - Greg Ercolano and his 1A2 KSU

even more phone equipment. Too much is not enough...

Dan Golden’s tables in the front of the hall displayed a nice selection of wood and desk phones, all for sale. He’s holding a special jeweled phone from a limited set made by a Chicago jeweler for famous clients, including Mae West (remember her?).

Over on the right side of hall, Oscar-winning (yes, *that* Oscar; for CGI rendering software), Greg Ercolano demonstrated his 1A2 KSU (Key System Unit) controller. Greg

wanted a 1A2 system for his office, became fascinated with Bell’s original system, and developed, in his spare time, an elegant printed-circuit board 1A2 controller that works with all 1A2-compatible keysets and provides all the functions these systems originally provided (and perhaps more). If you want to buy one, go to <https://www.seriss.com/1a2-ksu/>. As a bonus, his system comes with amazing documentation. You can see it all at his website.

John Sherman was everywhere in the hall. His “Never Forget” tee shirt captured the spirit of the show.

Remember that beautiful swirl phone that caught your eye on your first pass through hall? It’s gone. Russ Kirk snapped it up the instant he saw it. But don’t worry—you’ll find something better at next year’s show. *You can see all these photos full-size and in color in the Bonus Pages.* ☛

## Introduction to the “European Telephone Story”

by Jan Verhelst

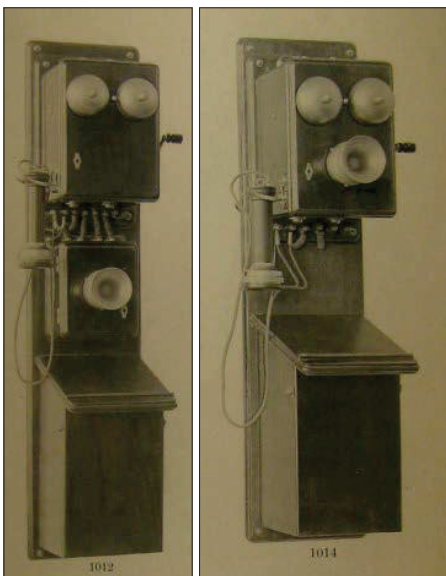


Fig. 1 - Original 2 and 3 box phones

For a long time there have been discussions about who invented the telephone. Several people participated in the development such as Philipp Reis, Antonio Meucci,

Elisha Gray, and others.

However, it was Alexander Graham Bell who created in 1876 a working telephone. Luckily he found himself in an environment that could patent and commercialize that invention. The telephone was introduced in the USA, and pretty soon also worldwide, including Europe.

For example, in the wake of Bell, a telephone company was set up in Antwerp to import telephones and exchanges from the US. But soon it became clear that the transport costs and import duties were too high, and it was decided to set up a local company: Bell Telephone Manufacturing Company to manufacture telephones and switchboards in Antwerp, Belgium.

However, the styling of the original American devices (such as the two and three box telephones) did

not match the taste of the European upper-class people. Fortunately, the newly erected Swedish company Ericsson gave phones a different look.

This luxury product became a real piece of furniture, fitting into the homes of wealthier people, who were the first customers. The Ericsson styling was copied (among others) by numerous European

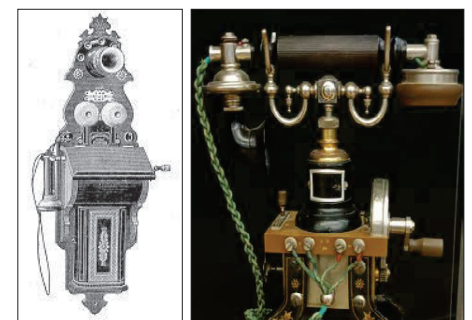


Fig. 2 - Ericsson examples of styling

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## Introduction to the...

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startups in different countries.

Ericsson's designs may have found their way back to the USA, such as the skeleton phone, but American collectors are mostly not familiar with unique designs from different European suppliers.

Noteworthy in this context is the wide variety of beautiful telephone "furniture" in France circa 1900. Alain Groult, president of the French Telephone Collectors' Club commented, "Around 1900 there were several competing indepen-



Fig. 3 - Samples of French styling

dent telephone networks in France.

To recruit customers, they offered ever more beautiful phones than their competitors. As a result, the French heritage of telephones is incredibly beautiful.

In the coming issues of *Singing Wires* we will describe uniquely European telephones. They are not better, but different, adapted to local requirements. ☛

**PLAN TO ATTEND  
THE LANCASTER SHOW  
JUNE 7 & 8, 2023**

# The Telephone is the Instrument of the Devil

by Marika Ehrenkrona ([ericsson.com](http://ericsson.com))

News of the telephone spread quickly in Sweden. In 1885, Stockholm had the greatest telephone penetration in the world. Nowhere else were there as many phones in use. Expansion of telephone service outside the capital also started quickly, thanks to the many local telephone associations.

Only a few years after the telephone was first demonstrated in Stockholm in 1877, the general public was thus aware of the new invention. At first, phones were found in general stores, telegraph offices and drug stores. The general store received a telephone number such as 1 or 2 and acted as a news center for the village. People went to the store and asked if anyone had phoned. If so, the proprietor would read the message.

Not everyone was thrilled by these developments, however. The telephone was often viewed with skepticism and not a little fear. There was something magical about sounds coming from a thin wire, and many people were afraid that the contents of the lines would spill out in some way if there was a break. Many elderly persons refused to touch a telephone for fear of electrical shock. Others tried to take advantage of the telephone, relates Peter Andersson in his



Fig. 1 - Early Telephone station

book, *Telecommunications Yesterday and Today*. In some towns persons suffering from rheumatism went to the telephone stations in the hope that the electrical impulses received by their bodies would cure them.

The greatest fear, however, was that the telephone was in some way able to attract evil spirits, or at least thunder and lightning. In one town it was in fact difficult to obtain premises and to recruit a manager for the telephone station, since there was widespread concern about the possible effects of the telephone lines and electricity in the station.

The build out of the telephone network quickly became evident to rural residents, who saw telephone poles being set in the ground and "telephone acrobats" climbing the poles to draw lines that crisscrossed the countryside. In the cities, lines were drawn across the roofs, creating over

time an extensive network of telephone antennas and lines above the rooftops.

The telephone thus provoked anger. There were farmers, land owners and property owners who refused to allow this nuisance to pass over their land or buildings or who simply pulled down lines and destroyed them. Theft and sabotage were common as the telephone network expanded. And in the churches, the preachers likened the telephone to an instrument of the devil.

Today, the misconceptions arising from new technology cause us to smile.

"At the same time, it is often wise to be critical when new technology is introduced," observes Lars Ingelstam, professor in the technology and social change program at Linköping University. "We shouldn't call people idiots just because their perception of new technology has now been shown to be incorrect."

The telephone changed people's lives, just like the automobile would do a few decades later. And technology in general has continued—and will continue—to affect our lives deeply, bringing both fear and hope. ☛