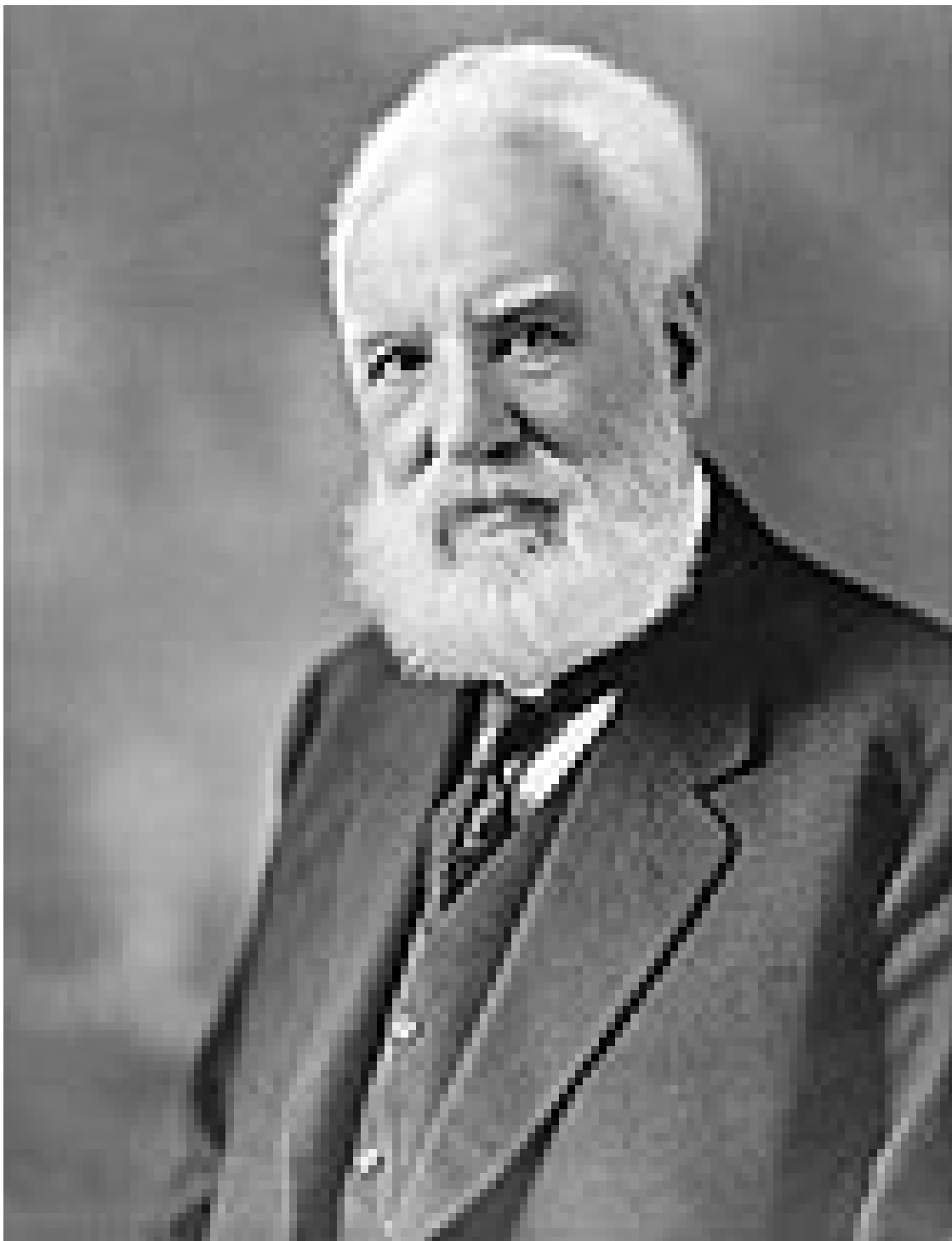




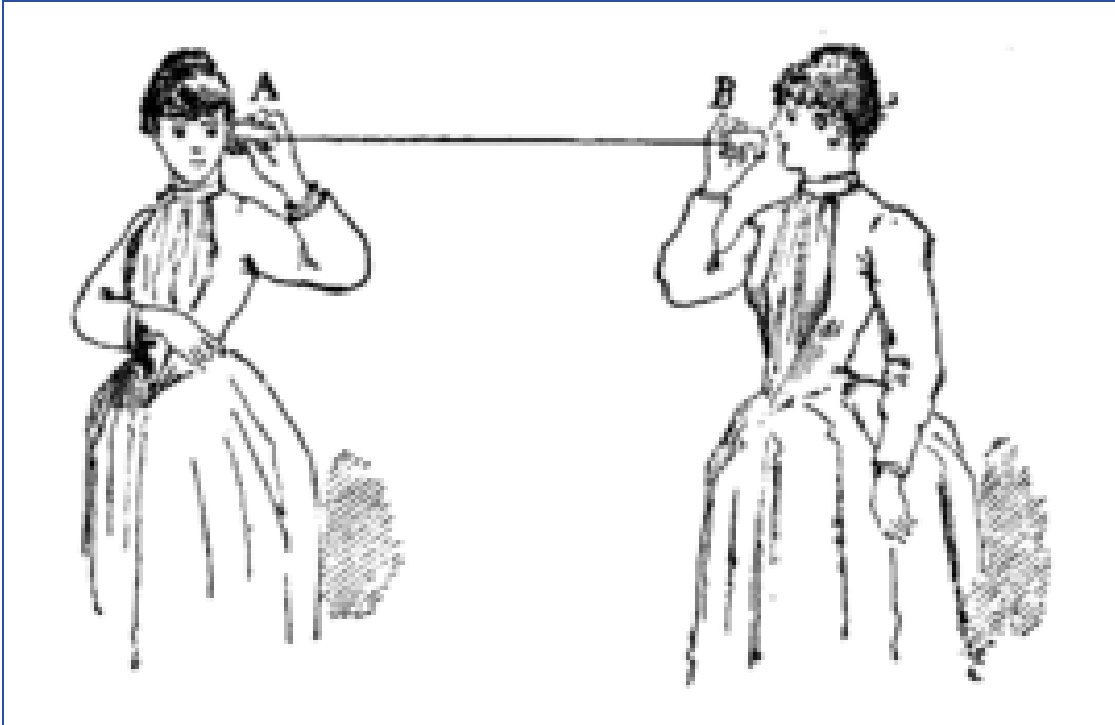
Newsletter October 2026

Telephone Comes to Sutter Creek "Can you hear me now?"

The world was changed forever when, in 1876, Alexander Graham Bell (below) became the first person to patent a practical electric Telephone.



However, he is not to be credited with the original idea of remote communication. Mechanical “telephones” , also called “acoustical telephones” in the form of hollow pipes or the famous cans and string method had been toyed with, sometimes seriously, for centuries.



These things really work. Look out AT&T!

The Smithsonian Museum has a gourd and stretched hide version from Peru which dates to the 7th century A.D. The telephone was an extension (pun intended) of the Electro-mechanical telegraph invented by Englishman Francis Ronalds, in 1816.

In America, an electrical telegraph was independently invented and patented by Samuel Morse in 1837. The famous Morse Code was developed by his assistant, Alfred Vail, although why this code is not called the Vail Code remains a mystery. This signaling alphabet was used to transmit America's first telegraphic message across two miles of wire in January of 1838.

Credit for the actual invention of the electric telephone is disputed even today. Undoubtedly an invention of this complexity and magnitude was not the result of one man sitting alone in his room with his ideas. It came about as a product of argumentative competition and a driving desire to be "first" among preeminent inventors of the day. Along with Bell, men such as Antonio Meucci, Phillip Reis, Elisha Gray, and Thomas Edison are all credited with the telephone's invention.



Antonio Meucci



Phillip Reis



Elisha Gray



Thomas Edison

Claims and counter claims were further confused by a huge number of lawsuits claiming patent rights. The Edison and Bell patents prevailed as dominant telephone technology and upheld by court decisions in the United States.

Although the modern telephone resulted from the work of many people, Bell was undisputedly the first to patent it.



Telephone company lineman – 1880's.

Telephone service reached Amador County in the late 1870's in order to link mining operations, suppliers, manufacturing facilities, and hotels along the length of the Mother Lode.

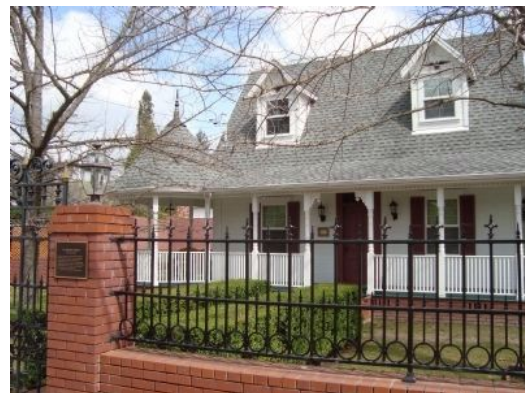


First commercially viable telephone – the “stick” telephone.

Mining centers such as Amador City were connected as early as 1878. In 1896, Sutter Creek’s very first recorded installation was at the home of Virgin Norton at 134 Broad Street.



Historical marker at 134 Broad St.



134 Broad Street Today

The first home of Sutter Creek’s switchboard may have been in the Brignole building annex – today the home of the Sutter Creek Visitor Center at the corner of Main and Keyes Streets. This is hear-say and not yet verified.



At any rate, a short time later, around 1905, the Dennis Drug Store on Main Street (above) was sold and became the Morris and Siebe Drug Store (below) and is today the home of Choc-O-Latte coffee shop.



Morris & Siebe Drug Co. on
right



The home of Choc-O-Latte
today on right.

Soon after the change, the Sutter Creek Telephone Company installed a manual cord switchboard large enough to occupy the north half of the building.



Rose Tam Siebe at her switchboard some time before World War I.

Rose Tam Siebe, wife of owner Henry Siebe, became the operator of the switchboard, a position she held for several decades until local switchboards began phasing out in the 1950's.



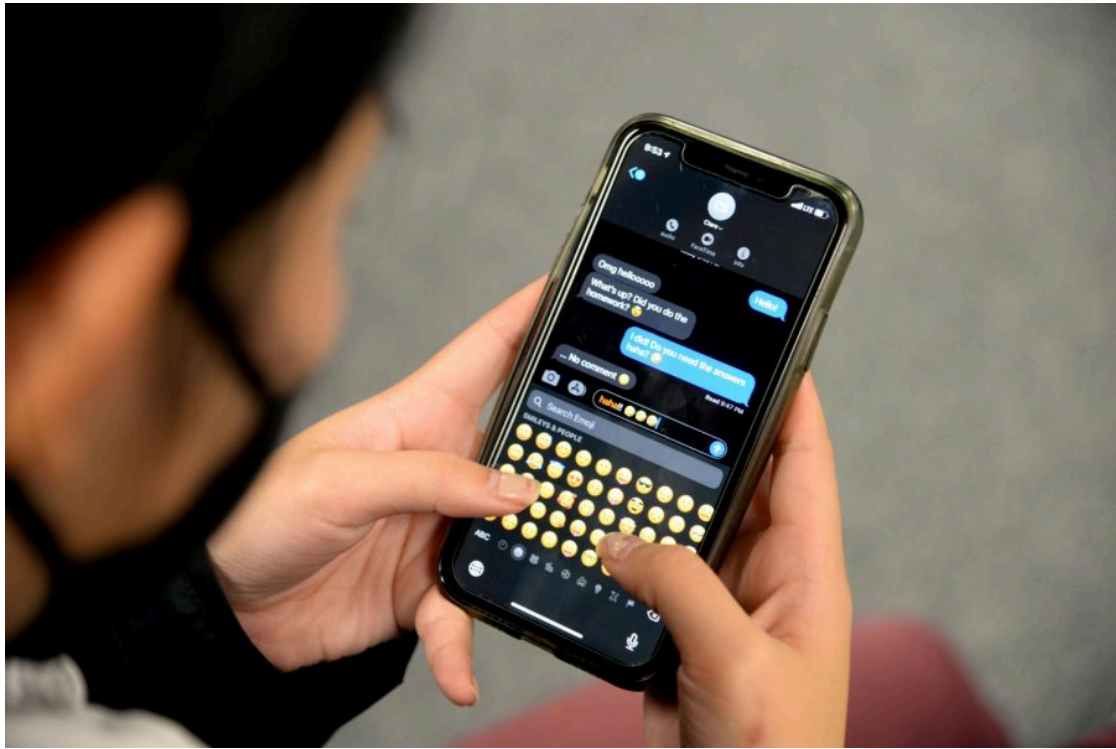
The rotary dial telephones (above) themselves changed little from the 1920's through the "Swingin' Sixties" when push buttons hit the scene (right). So cool!



Who among us baby-boomers hasn't had a phone in avocado green or harvest gold somewhere in the house, sometime in the past?

Phone numbers also changed as exchanges grew, going from two digits to names – Sutter Creek was Congress7 (for 267) – to today's 10 digit numbers. Of course, today,

texting is the “thing” and love it or hate it, appears to be here to stay – at least for now.



Long distance communication has gone from "unnecessary luxury" to "necessity for survival", although sometimes that long distance is only across the table.

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