



THE TELEGRAPH

MANY YEARS AGO, BEFORE WE HAD TELEPHONES, COMPUTERS AND FAX MACHINES, PEOPLE TALKED TO EACH OTHER BY TELEGRAPH.

SOUNDS WERE MADE BY THE OPENING AND CLOSING OF AN ELECTRIC CIRCUIT, AND DIFFERENT SOUNDS WERE MADE FOR EACH LETTER OF THE ALPHABET AND NUMBER. THIS WAS CALLED THE MORSE CODE AS IT WAS INVENTED BY A MAN CALLED SAMUEL MORSE ABOUT 160 YEARS AGO. COMPUTERS WERE INVENTED USING THE SAME IDEA.

WIRES WERE STRUNG OVER POLES, USUALLY ALONG THE RAILROAD TRACKS, IN ORDER TO SEND THE TELEGRAPH MESSAGES. TRAINS WERE DIRECTED BY THE TELEGRAPH. A MESSAGE WOULD BE SENT TO THE STATION AGENT OR OPERATOR BY THE TRAIN DISPATCHER. THE AGENT WOULD TYPE OR WRITE THEM ON A TRAIN ORDER FORM AND HAND IT TO THE TRAIN ENGINEER.

IF SOMEBODY DIED, OR A BABY WAS BORN, PEOPLE OFTEN SENT AN ANNOUNCEMENT BY TELEGRAM TO THEIR FRIENDS AND RELATIVES.

BUSINESSES OFTEN SENT MESSAGES TO OTHER BUSINESSES.

RESULTS OF HOCKEY, BASEBALL AND FOOTBALL GAMES WERE SENT BY TELEGRAM. THERE WOULD BE A TELEGRAPH SET AT THE GAME, WHERE AN OPERATOR WOULD SEND IT PLAY BY PLAY, JUST LIKE A RADIO OR TV ANNOUNCER DOES TODAY. EVEN THE DRINKING BARS IN FAR AWAY PLACES LIKE ALASKA AND THE YUKON HAD TELEGRAPH SETS SO THEY COULD GET MESSAGES AS TO WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN THE REST OF THE WORLD.

PROBABLY THE MOST IMPORTANT USE OF THE TELEGRAPH WAS FOR SENDING NEWS TO NEWSPAPERS. IF SOMETHING HAPPENED, REPORTERS WOULD BRING THE STORY TO THE TELEGRAPH OPERATOR, WHO WOULD SEND IT BY MORSE CODE TO THE NEWSPAPERS OR MAGAZINES.

MANY FAMOUS PEOPLE STARTED OUT THEIR CAREERS AS TELEGRAPH OPERATORS. THOMAS EDISON, WHO INVENTED THE LIGHT BULB, WAS AN OPERATOR ONCE NEAR STRATFORD, ONTARIO. MR. SEARS, WHO STARTED THE SEARS STORES, WAS ALSO A TELEGRAPH OPERATOR, AS WELL AS GENE AUTRY, A FAMOUS COWBOY MOVIE STAR.

SO YOU CAN SEE, THE TELEGRAPH PLAYED A VERY IMPORTANT PART IN OUR HISTORY, AND IT IS SOMETHING WE SHOULD REMEMBER.

Typical Telegraph Line

