



Great Inventions

The Telephone



When I left my house yesterday, I forgot to bring my cellphone. I didn't want to go back for it, so I was without it all morning. I must confess that it felt strange. The cellphone is an important device. But who invented it? As always, I started to investigate, and the answer I found surprised me.

In 1854, an Italian engineer and inventor who lived in New York, by the name of Antonio Meucci, built a device to communicate from his office, on the ground floor of his house, to his bedroom, on the second floor, where his paralyzed wife was. Rheumatism caused her paralysis.

Meucci called his invention the telephone. This Italian engineer had already built a precursor of the device, a pneumatic telephone used today in the Teatro della Pergola of Florence. After his trip to the United States, he perfected this invention at the Tacon Theater in Havana during his short stay in Cuba.

In 1860, Antonio Meucci took his telephone, like the one seen on the right, to a public demonstration and transmitted the voice of a singer for a considerable distance. The Italian Press in New York published a review of the demonstration.



Did Meucci patent his invention? Apparently, in 1871, Meucci didn't have the 250 dollars needed to patent his telephone and only got a caveat of preliminary procedure for submitting documentation, valid for one year and renewed it for two more years.

Not long after, Meucci offered a demonstration of his telephone to a businessman named Edward B. Grant, vice president of a subsidiary Western Union Telegraph Company, and left a copy of the invention with him. The demonstration never happened; when Meucci asked them to return his materials, they replied that the device was lost. This is where the controversy began. According to some researchers, the Meucci telephone model had been lost in the same Western Union laboratory where the famous inventor Alexander Graham Bell conducted his experiments.



In 1876, Alexander Graham Bell obtained the patent for the telephone in the United States. Meucci asked a lawyer to complain to the office of patents in Washington because Meucci had a preliminary processing notice, but the lawyer never did.

A subsequent investigation revealed the crime of prevarication by some patent office employees in collusion with the Graham Bell company. Therefore, the United States Government initiated legal actions for fraud against the Alexander Graham Bell patent. Unfortunately, the process fell into a procedural delay due to the continuous appeals filed by Bell's lawyers until it was closed in 1889 at the death of Antonio Meucci.

More recently, on June 11, 2002, the Official Bulletin of the House of Representatives of the United States published Resolution No. 269, which honored the life and work of Antonio Meucci. In that resolution, the House of Representatives recognized that it was Antonio Meucci, and not Alexander Graham Bell, who invented the phone. The resolution also recognizes that Antonio Meucci demonstrated and published his invention in 1860 and concludes with formal recognition of the authorship of the telephone by Antonio Meucci.



Bell got the telephone patent in 1876, and in 1877 he created the Bell Telephone Company, a company that grew very quickly. By 1886, more than 150,000 people in the United States had phones in their homes.

The phone would completely change communications throughout the world. Now you could talk to someone else, even if you were miles away. Over time, the phone would evolve to mobile wireless technology; it then evolved into wireless high-speed data transmission. Because of all these innovations, we have smartphones with an internet connection.

Now, we feel that we can't live without our cellphones. When I got home, the first thing I did was look for my cellphone. I was so happy when I had it in my hands again. I had some messages from my friends and an important call. At that moment, I understood that it's not about the phone itself, but about everything that this great invention can do for us.



Name _____

Date _____



THE TELEPHONE

Answer the questions.



1. Where is the first telephone that Meucci made still being used?
 - a. the U.S.
 - b. Italy
 - c. the Teatro della Pergola, Florence
 - d. the Tacon Theater, Havana
2. Who made a review of the Meucci demonstration in 1860?
 - a. the Italian Press of New York
 - b. the New York Times
 - c. the Corriere della Sera
 - d. the Washington Post
3. Why didn't Meucci patent his invention?
 - a. He didn't want to patent it.
 - b. He didn't have 350 dollars.
 - c. They didn't leave.
 - d. He didn't have 250 dollars.
4. In what year was the telephone patented?
 - a. 1860
 - b. 1866
 - c. 1876
 - d. 1880
5. Why was the case closed in 1889?
 - a. Meucci died.
 - b. Meucci gave up.
 - c. Bell paid Meucci.
 - d. A judge decided.
6. What crime did some employees of the patent office commit?
 - a. falsification
 - b. prevarication
 - c. fraud
 - d. cheating
7. Who published an Official Bulletin in 2002 with Resolution No. 269?
 - a. the Italian Press of New York
 - b. the patent office
 - c. the House of Representatives
 - d. the Italian government
8. In what year was the Bell Telephone Company created?
 - a. 1876
 - b. 1877
 - c. 1880
 - d. 1886
9. Should the name of the creator of the phone be changed in the history books? Why?

10. Why do you think the phone is important?

