

“A PATIENT WAITER IS NO LOSER”

From Morse to Edison to Marconi

The weatherman said we’re having an ice storm tonight. As I gaze out the window I watch the ice slowly collecting on tree branches and electrical wires. I wonder how long it will be before they come crashing down and the lights go out. NO ELECTRICITY!

Oh, how much we have come to depend upon those little flowing electrons! They warm our home and illuminate the darkness on a cold winter’s night. We can cozy up to a warm meal after work and keep in touch with world happenings over our televisions, computers and phones. How spoiled we all are.

It really wasn’t that long ago when kerosene lanterns and candles lit the homes of our ancestors. Wood and coal warmed their homes and cooked their food. Newspapers and letters connected them to the outside world. And of course there was the TELEGRAPH!

The electrical telegraph was developed and patented in the United States in 1837 by Samuel Morse. His assistant, Alfred Vail, developed the Morse code signaling alphabet with Morse. On January 6, 1838, Morse sent a telegram across 2 miles of wire. It read, “A patient waiter is no loser.” It was on May 24, 1844 when Morse sent “What hath God wrought?” from Washington to Baltimore using repeater technology. Transatlantic communication was accomplished on July 17, 1866.

Thomas Edison developed many devices which greatly influenced life worldwide. He worked as a telegraph operator

in his early teens and spent many years working on various inventions. His accomplishments varied from incandescent light, to a practical light bulb, from an early phonograph to the generation and distribution of electricity. He formed the Edison Electric Light Company in New York in 1878. In 1880 he patented electric distribution. Then in 1882 he opened the first generating electric power distribution center in Pearl Street Station, New York. It provided 110V (volts) direct current to 59 customers in lower Manhattan. On August 9, 1892 Thomas Edison received a patent for 2-way telegraph (Duplex telegraph). Finally, here in the year 2010 I pay my electric company, Commonwealth Edison, for providing electricity to my home. If only my grandfather had gone ahead and purchased that stock in the early 1900s!

Guglielmo Marconi sent and received his first radio signal in Italy in 1896. He is considered to be the inventor of radio. On January 18, 1903, from Wellfleet, Mass., he sent a message of greetings from President Theodore Roosevelt to King Edward VII of the United Kingdom marking the first transatlantic radio transmission originating in the United States. In the early 1900's wireless telegraphy proved to be an effective communication in sea disasters.