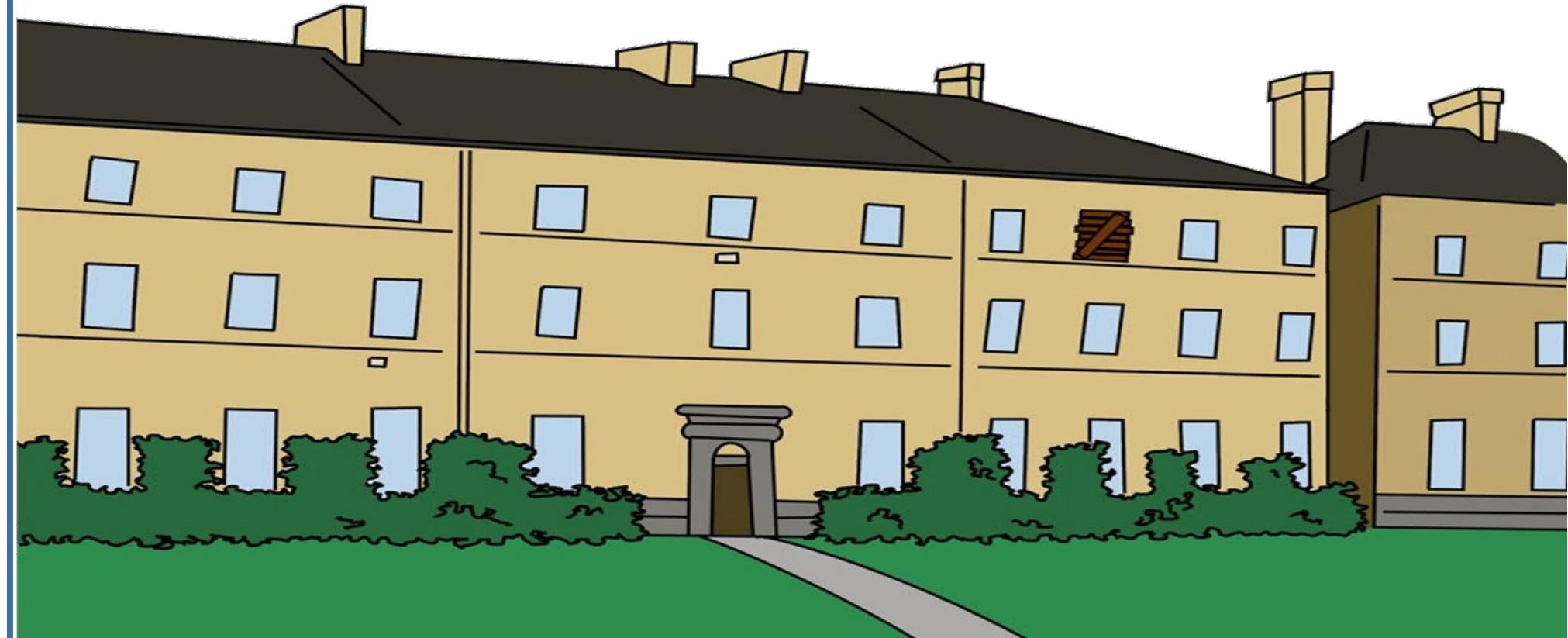


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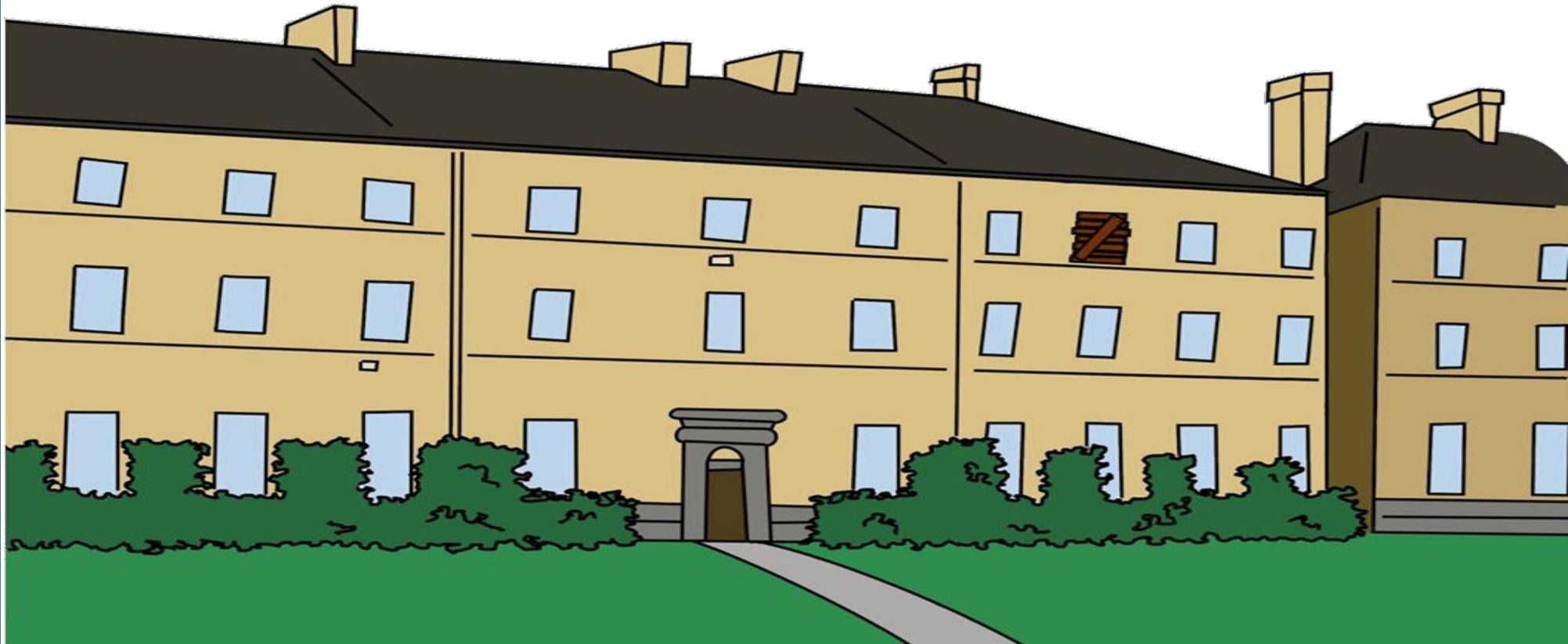
Presents

"The Life and Times in Victorian London"



Baker Street Elementary

The Life and Times in Victorian London
066 -- A Tale of Two Watsons -- February, 2022



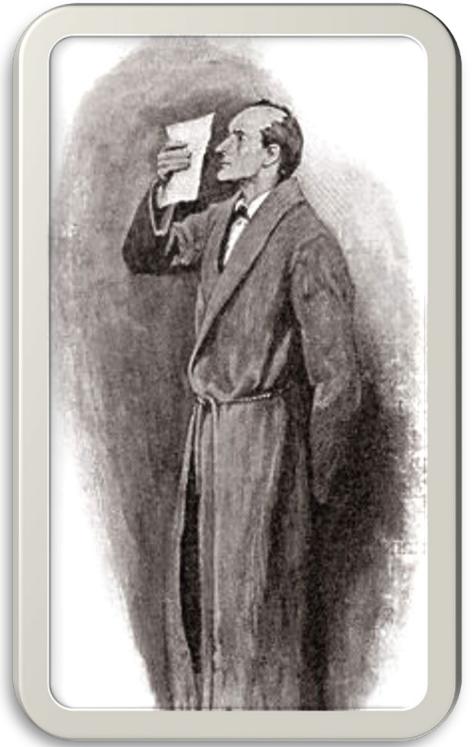
*Welcome to topic # 066...
today Master Doyle and I
will be looking at the
telephone and telegraph.*



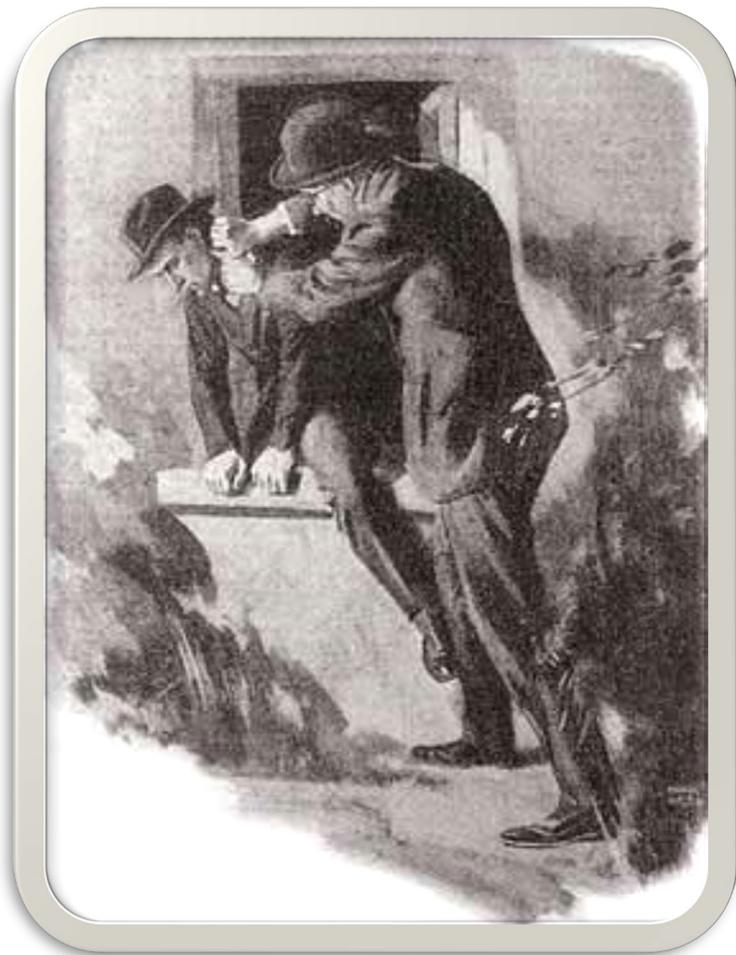
While the instrument carrying Alexander Graham Bell's cry for help to his assistant, ("Watson, come here, I need you,") made its appearance in Britain a year...



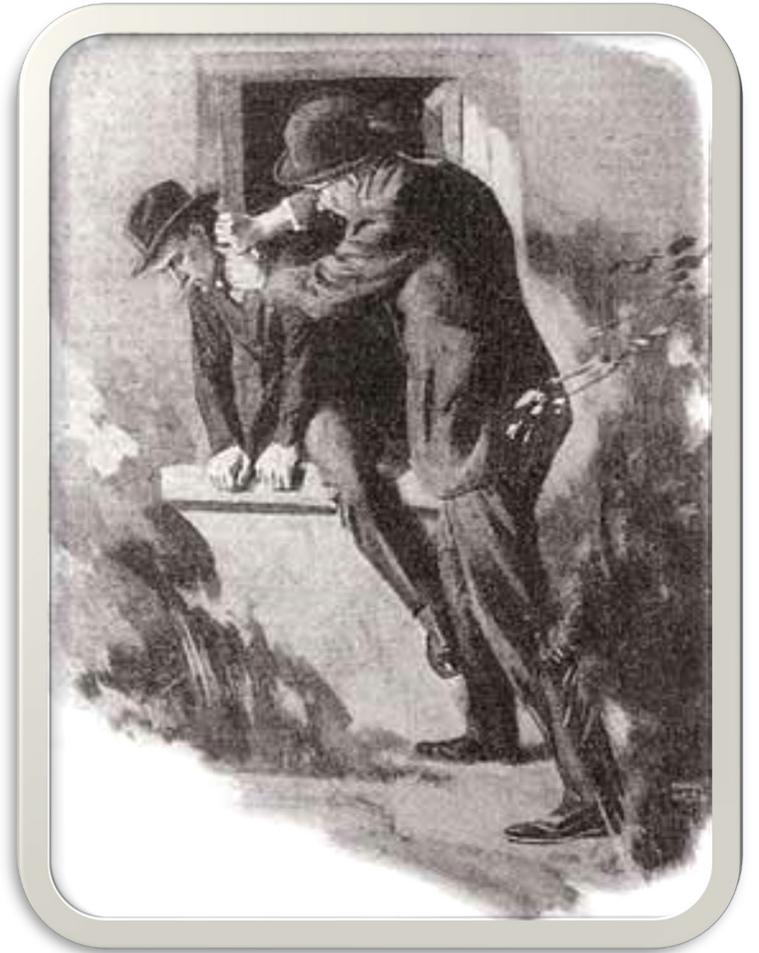
...after the famous call, Sherlock preferred to telegraph his plea for assistance to me, reflecting one British Post Office engineer's assessment that Britain had no need for the device.



This preference for telegrams is confirmed by finding no references in the Sherlock Holmes' stories to Holmes ever telephoning me.

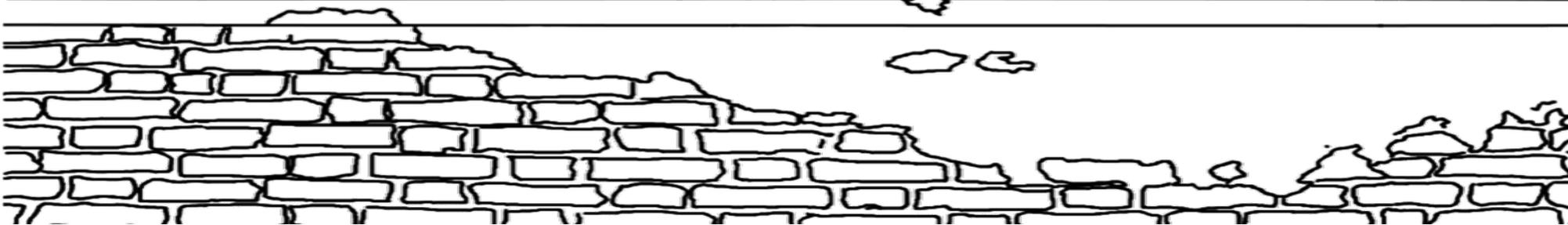


*Once I do call my friend
from Little Purlington in "The
Adventure of the Retired
Colourman."*

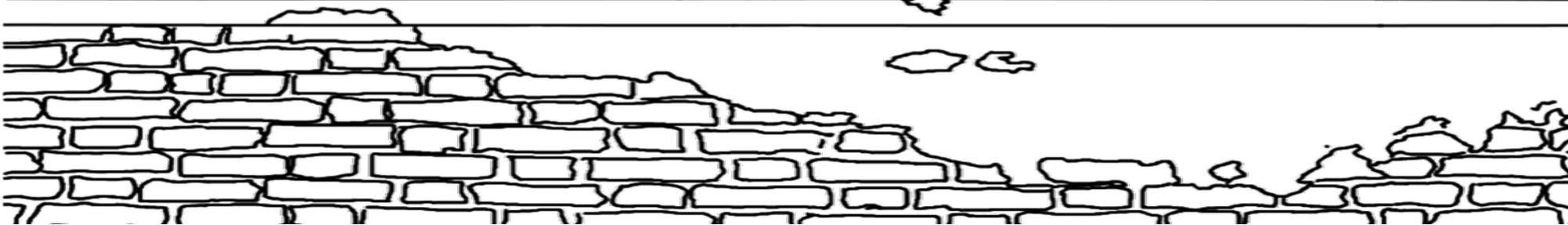




Telephones are mentioned in five additional stories: "The Sign of the Four," "The Man with the Twisted Lip"...



"The Adventure of the Illustrious Client," "The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier," and "The Adventure of the Three Garridebs" and...





...telephone directories are consulted in another two: "The Adventure of the Stockbroker's Clerk" and "The Adventure of the Three Gables."

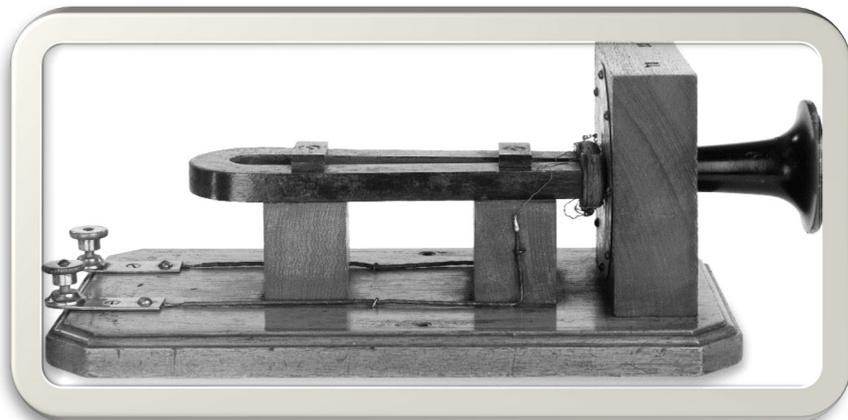




This scarcity of telephone use may represent the instrument's rockier history in England.



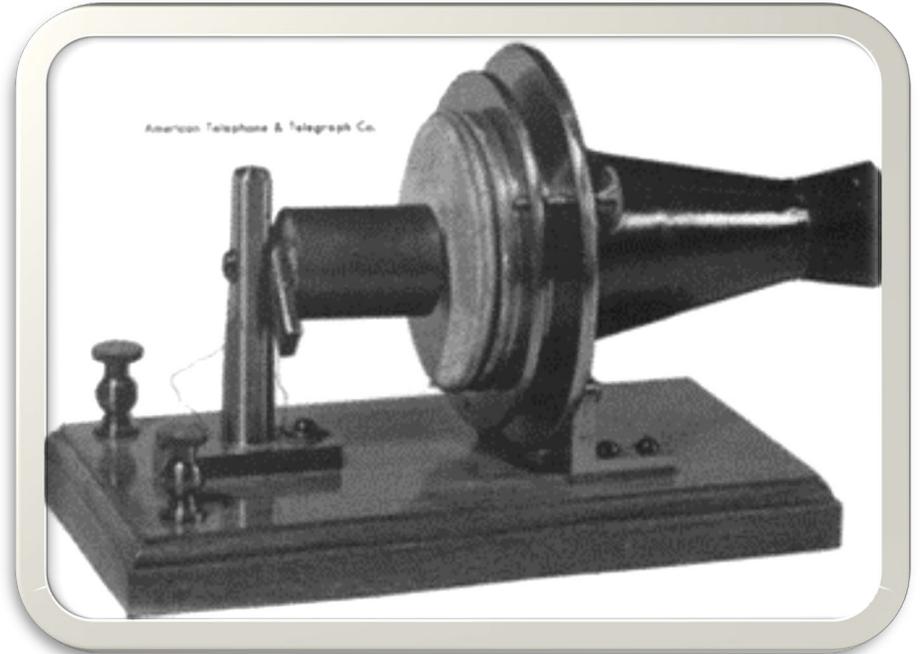
From its inception, the various telephone designs (of which Alexander Graham Bell's represents only one) have involved...



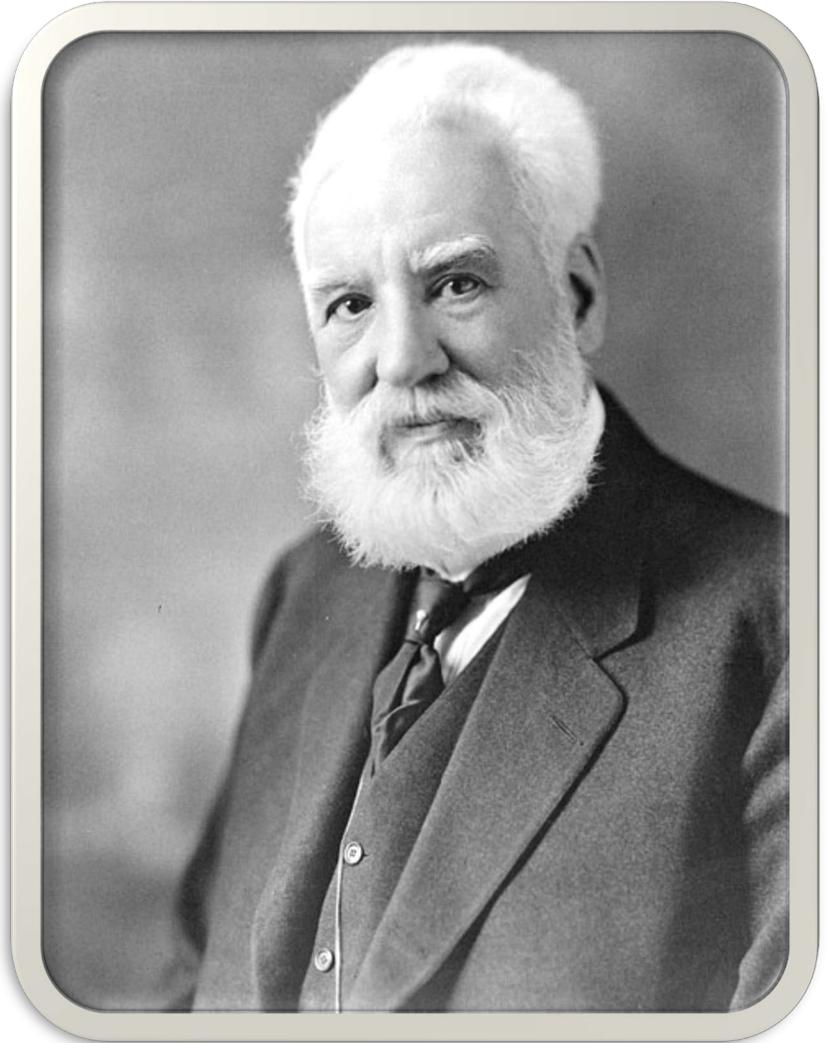
*...a power source, a switch
hook, a dialer, a ringer, a
transmitter, and a
receiver.*

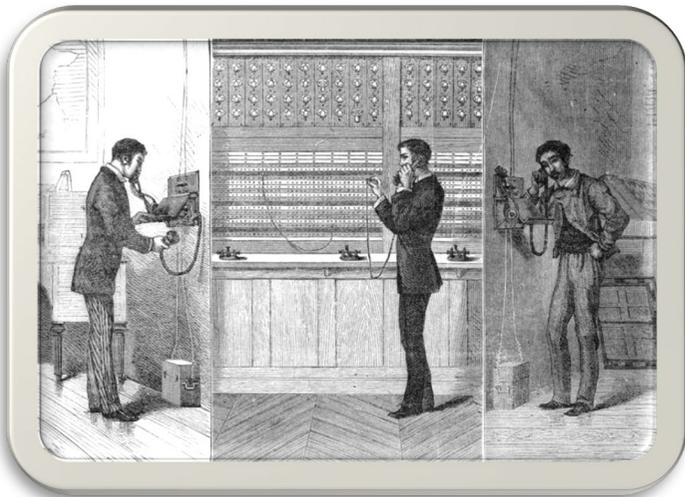


The transmitter and receiver each house a membrane which sound waves cause to vibrate. Vibrations from the transmitter flow along wires to be recreated in the receiving membrane.



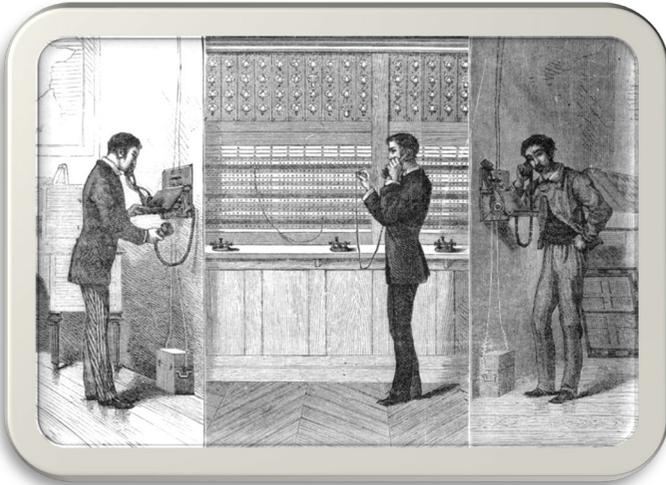
When Bell patented this device in 1876, he included not only the instrument, but the system to link them.





At the beginning, the structure involved non-insulated wires similar to telegraph wires connecting the device to a central point...

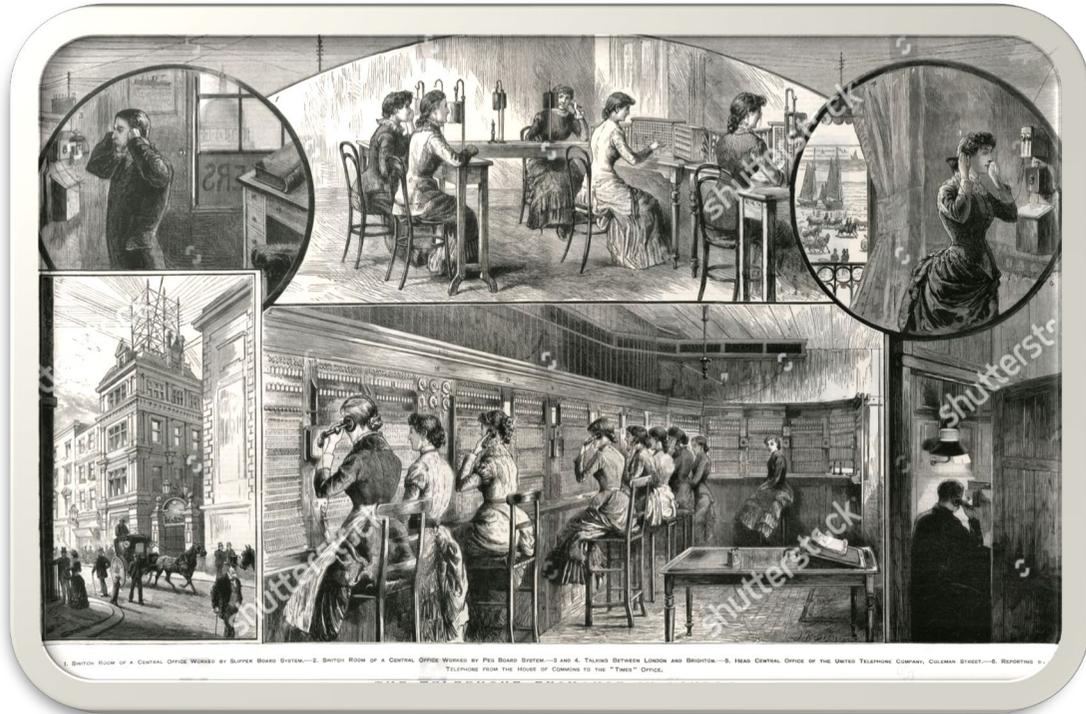




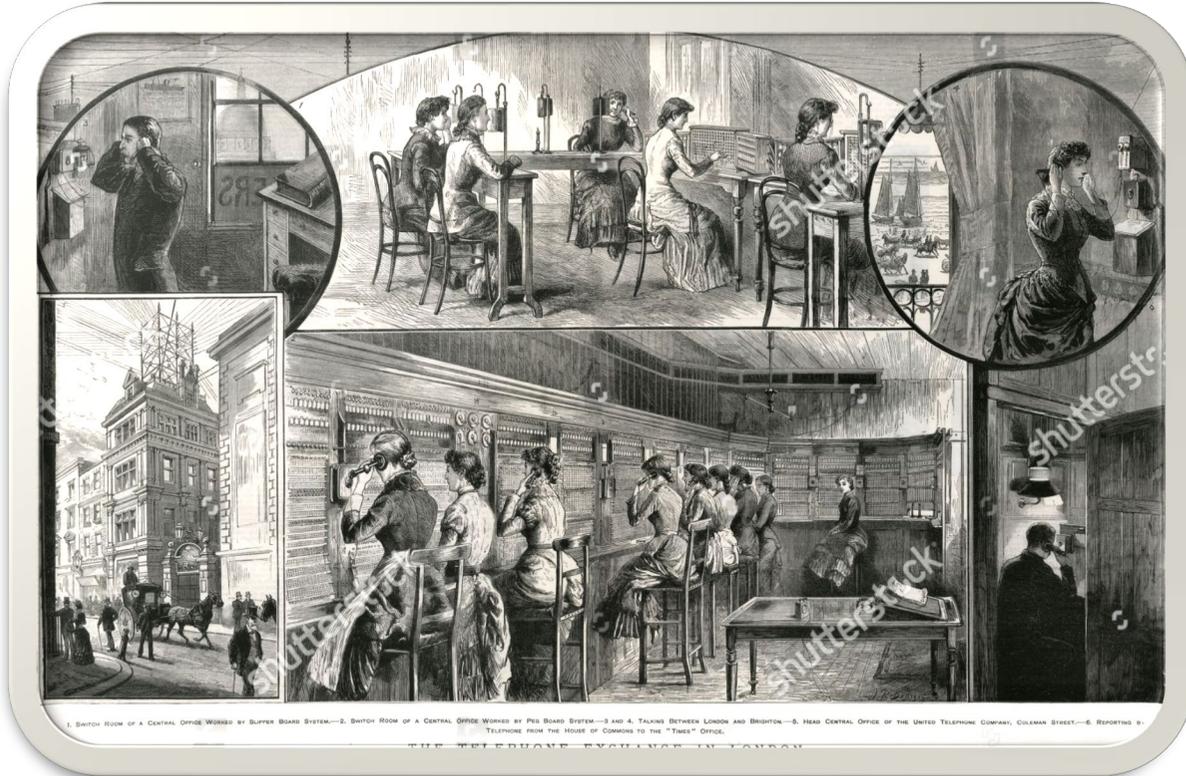
...or exchange, where a switchboard operator would connect the caller to the receiver's wire using a short cable.



The increase in the number users and the poor transmission quality of the wires made it difficult for the signal to carry...



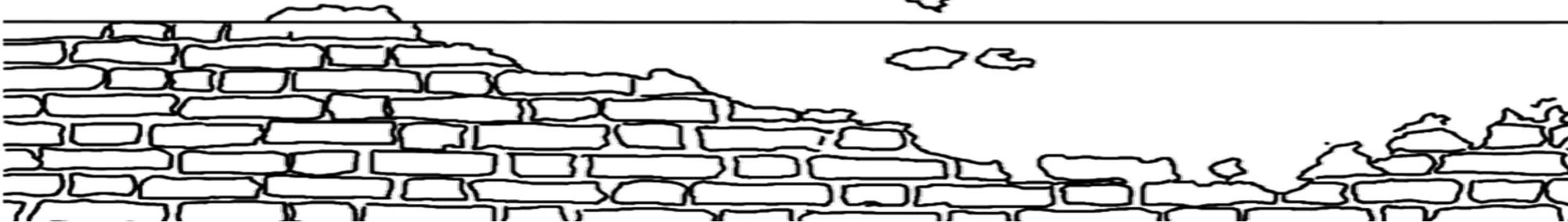
...as long a distance as a telegraph line until the invention of hand-drawn copper wire.



Within a year of the patent, the telephone was presented around the world as a curiosity.



It first appeared in Britain in 1877 when Sir William Preece, chief engineer for the British Post Office, demonstrated the instrument.

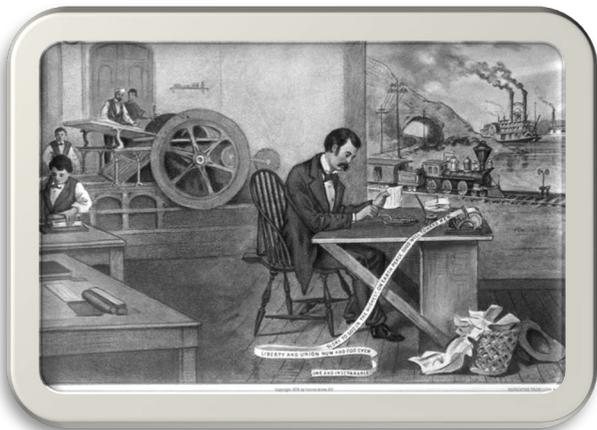


He famously noted to the House of Commons two years later the telephone was not necessary in Britain because they had plenty of messenger boys.

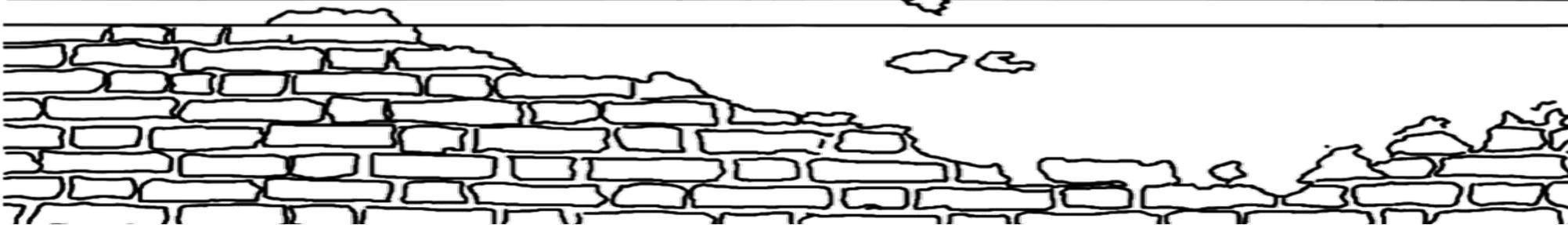


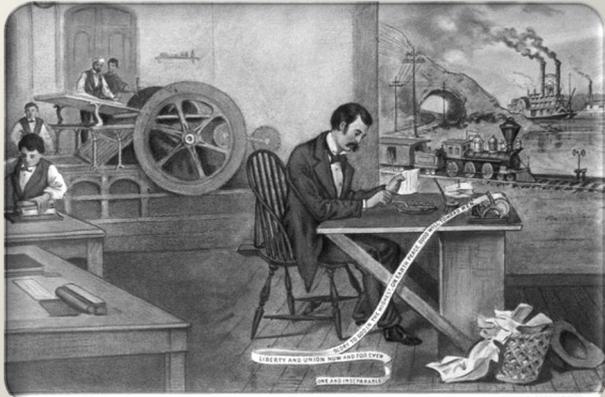
Regardless, following a demonstration to the Queen in 1878, Bell created the Telephone Company Ltd. to sell his instrument in Britain, and soon had a number of subscribers.





The Telephone Company Ltd., however, faced stiff competition from the Edison Telephone Company of London Ltd. because the second offered lower rates.





Ironically, an 1880 court decision gave control over the budding service to the British Post Office...





...noting telephone conversations could be considered a form of telegram, which this government agency already controlled.



The judgement gave the Post Office a monopoly over service, and the organization created the National Telephone Company.



The Post Office became a separate non-governmental entity in 1969 but still ran the telecommunications system until 1981...



...when British Telecom was created as a public corporation, and the same year announced the discontinuation of telegram services.



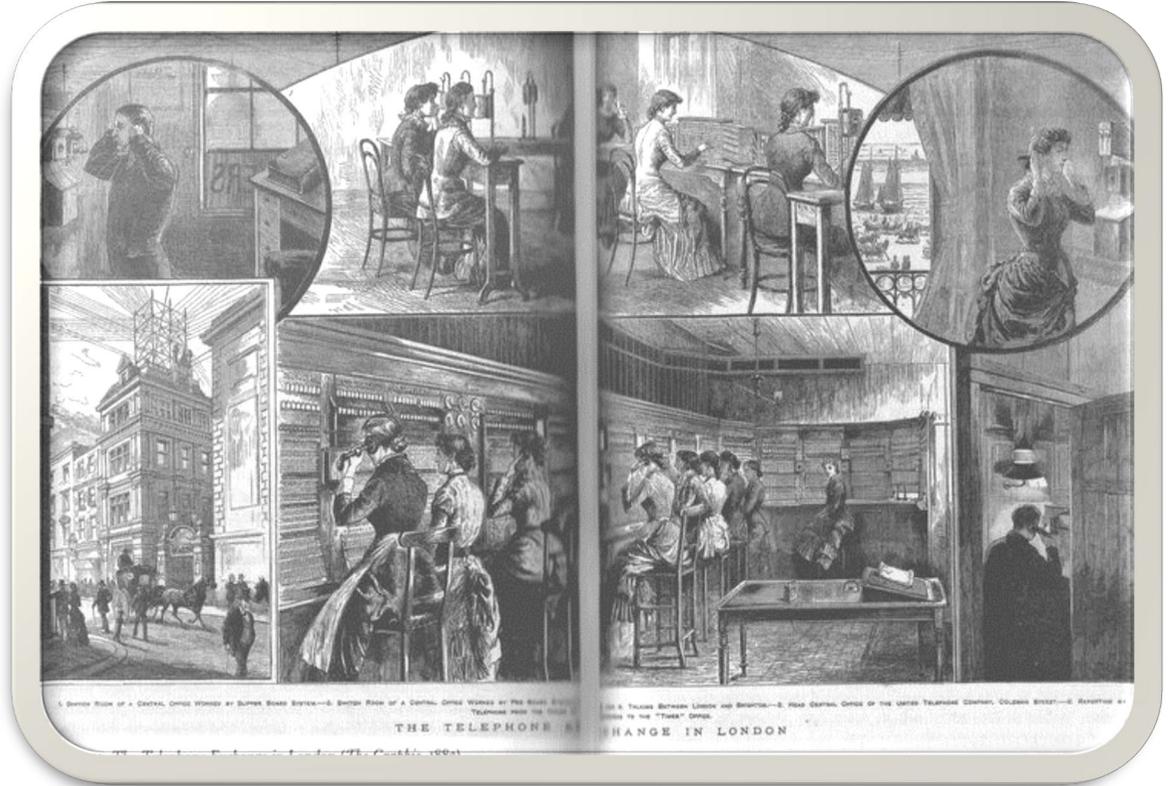
For the public, the Telephone Company converted some telegraph exchanges into telephone exchanges...



*...as well as offering
public call offices in
railway stations and
general stores.*

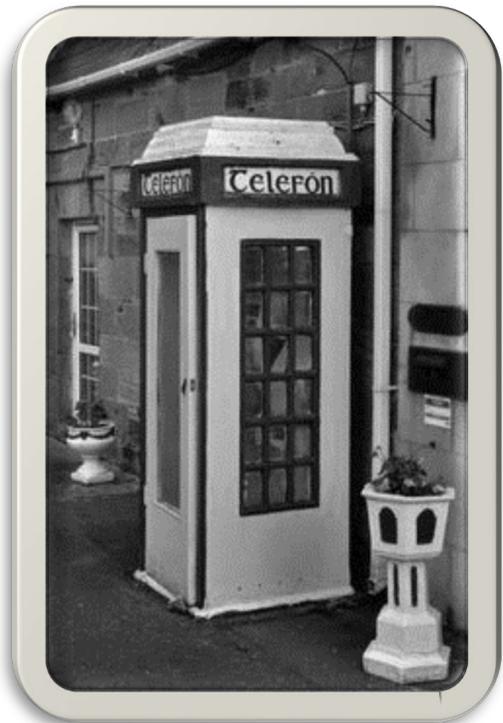


The original call offices were small wooden huts where anyone could make a call for a "tuppence."

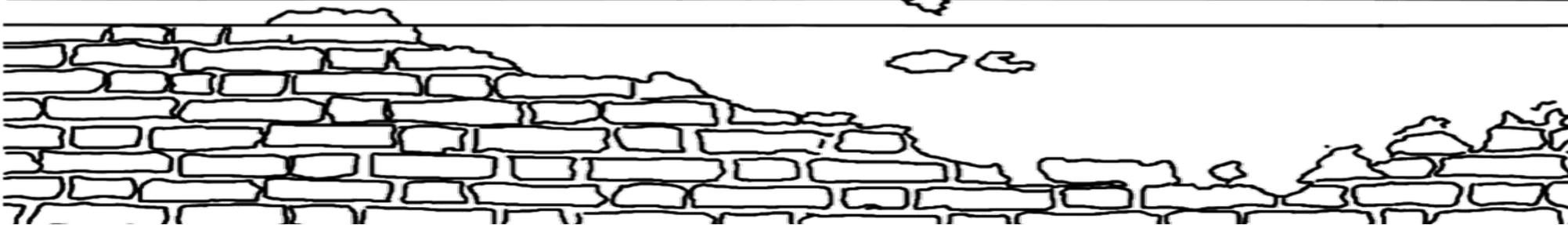


*These early call
offices had no
standard design until
1921.*





That year, the Post Office introduced a kiosk specifically designed for the telephone.



Made of reinforced concrete, they could be painted to match their surroundings.





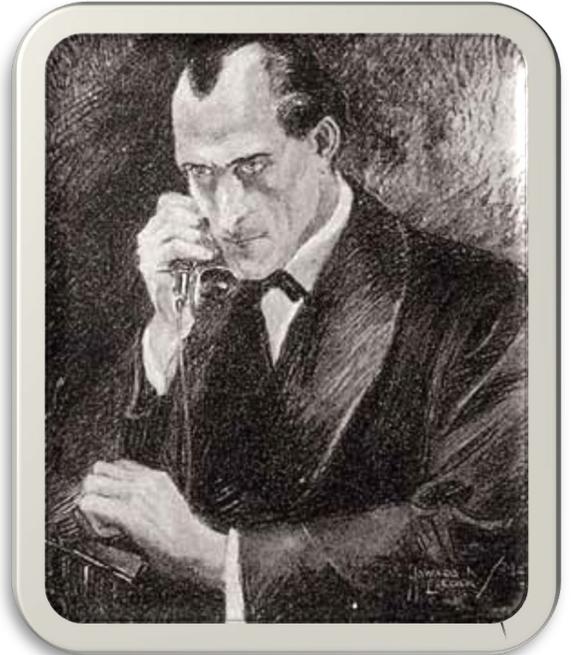
*Not until 1926 was
the iconic red
telephone kiosk
designed.*



Other designs were introduced over the next forty years, the last in 1968.



Despite their colleagues' preferences for one form of communication over another, (telephone...

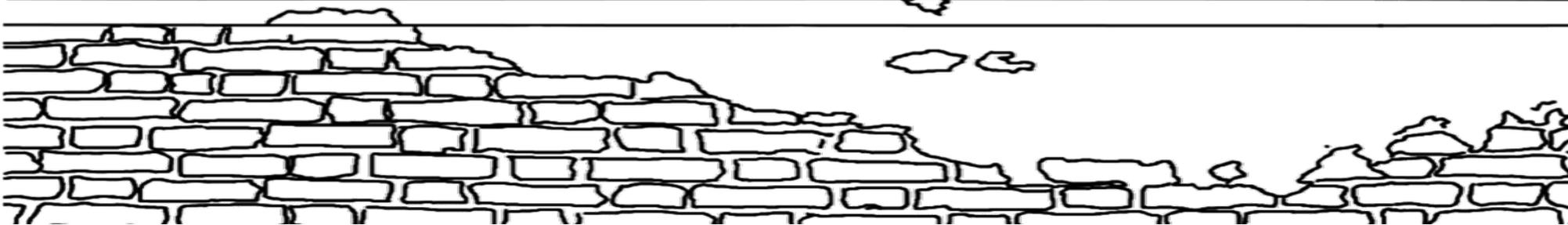


...vs. telegram) when the plea arrived, Edison's Watson and I quickly responded to the call.



*So we have completed
topic # 066 in our
series...*

*Yes, but we'll be
back with another
topic soon...*



References for this topic:

- 1) <https://www.nytimes.com/1976/03/07/archives/mr-watson-come-here.html>
- 2) <https://www.britannica.com/technology/telephone>
- 3) <http://the-eye.eu/public/WorldTracker.org/Computers/Computer%20Science/Huurdemann%20-%20The%20Worldwide%20History%20of%20Telecommunications.pdf>
- 4) <https://owlcation.com/humanities/history-of-the-telephone-system-uk>
- 5) <https://www.btplc.com/Thegroup/BTshistory/Eventsintelecommunicationshistory/index.htm>
- 6) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Telegram_messenger
- 7) <http://home.bt.com/tech-gadgets/history-of-the-red-telephone-box-kiosk-11364141615834>



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"The Life and Times in Victorian London"

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JOE FAY

LIESE SHERWOOD-FABRE

RUSTY MASON

&

STEVE MASON

