

The Automatic Electric AE1 and derived phones by overseas companies

By Jan Verhelst, Mortsel, Belgium

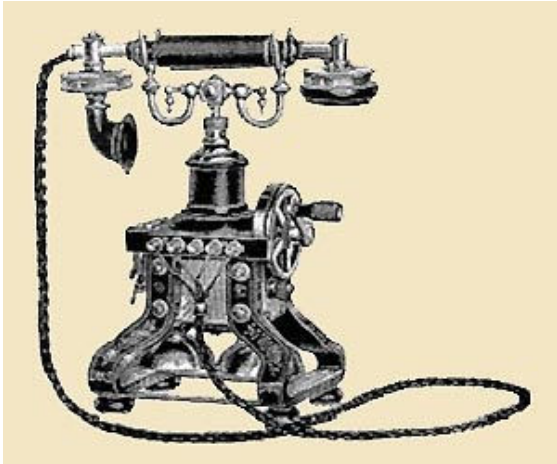


Figure 1: The Ericsson skeleton phone, designed around 1890 with a combined handset

Originally telephones had a separate unit for speaking and listening. The Swedish company Ericsson designed already around 1890 a telephone with the transmitter and receiver in one single unit for their so called skeleton phone.

This became immediately popular in Europe, but for one reason or another not in the US.

The Type 1A Desk Monophone



Type 1A Monophone—Automatic
Cat. No. AA-18



Type 1A Monophone—Man., Conv.
Cat. No. AA-19

Figure 2: The Automatic Electric Monophone (from 1925 on)

In 1925, Automatic Electric introduced a “monophone” with a so called “*first handset telephone of the modern type*”, see Figure 2, which was basically an introduction of the European handset into the United States combined with a new styling of a telephone set. It was similar to a candlestick in that its only components were the handset and dial, the phone required a separate bell set with induction coil.

In a 1928 Engineering bulletin of Automatic Electric, the advantages of the “European handset” were highlighted. For using the separate transmitter and receiver (as usual for American phones) the user needs both hands. “*In using the European micro telephone, the use of only one hand is necessary, and the transmitter is naturally held in the correct position for conversation, regardless of whether the head is turned.*”

Automatic Electric was a member of a holding company, who owned also a couple of overseas companies such as *ATM Liverpool*, *United Kingdom*, and *ATEA Belgium*. It is interesting to see that the sister companies were making derivative versions of this so called Monophone AE-1.



Figure 3: The ATM Strowgerphone

ATM made basically the same phone as AE, The major difference was the BPO type 164 handset.



Figure 4: ATEA version

Also for this phone a standard ATEA handset (patented in 1928) was used¹ ²

All companies had several versions, we just want to highlight the communalities between the companies. Also the Italian subsidiary Autelco should have made such phones,

but I did not find pictures of it. Interesting to see is the communality in the cradle:



Figure 5: Cradle - Automatic Electric version



Figure 6: Cradle – ATM version



Figure 7: Cradle – ATEA version

Sources

- <http://www.phone-pages.org.uk/old.htm>
- <http://www.mvtelonline.com>: Mike's vintage telephones
- <http://www.britishtelephones.com/atm/strowgerphone.htm>
- <http://www.britishtelephones.com/atm/mono.htm>

¹¹ I was happy to obtain this phone from TCI member Arwin Schaddelee from the Netherlands.

² This phone was also distributed by ATM, and ATM installers gave it the nickname "the hambone phone"