

European Telephones Story: BTMC Golfball Candlestick

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Fig. 1 - BTMC Candlestick phone in the 1910 BTMC catalog. One of these phones was a candlestick phone given the nickname "Golfball". This was because of the bulbous section in the middle of the stem that housed the switching mechanism.



Fig.21 - Golfball candlestick of collector Filip Van Steenkiste

In the U.S.A., the Bell Telephone Company and Western Electric Company decided that it would not be practical to export telephones and switchboards to Europe. European manufacture was the solution. In 1882, the Bell Telephone Manufacturing Company (BTMC) was founded and opened a factory in Antwerp, Belgium. Its ownership was shared between Bell and Western Electric. In 1890, BTMC became a 100% Western Electric subsidiary.

The BTMC factory quickly evolved a range of European phones to compete. In the earliest models, they used some parts brought in from other manufacturers until they could design their own versions. In other phones, they copied local styles. Most of these designs never made it back to the U.S.

The Golfball was quite innovative. The solid back transmitter is hinged at the top to a vertical rod, which can be pulled out about 1½ inches for adjustment of height. On some Golfballs there was a hook fitted directly opposite the switch hook arm to take a watch receiver. This allowed a second person to listen in on the telephone call.

Source of information: article by Laurence Rudolf, *The "Golfball Telephone,"* in the THG Journal Nr 66, Spring 2009. ☞

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