

About 1873 a certain Bill Carroll from Boston, who had news about Meucci's invention, asked him to construct a "telephone for scuba divers." This device should allow divers to communicate with people on the surface.

On December 28, 1874, Meucci's caveat expired. When Bell secured his own patent in 1876, Meucci took Bell to court in order to state his priority on the ground of patent infringement. Being too poor to hire a legal team, Meucci was defended only by lawyer Joe Melli, an orphan whom Meucci treated as a son.

While the trial "The U.S. Government Versus Alexander Graham Bell" was going on, the Bell telephone company set up another trial "The U.S. Government Versus Antonio Meucci."

### The trial

Meucci's electromagnetic telephone was described in L'Eco d'Italia of New York at the beginning of 1861, though all issues of the 1861-1863 period are not available in the major libraries of the United States. They appear to have been destroyed in a fire, so that Antonio Meucci had to swear in court what he remembered he wrote in the newspaper.

One of the most important pieces of evidence brought up in the trial was Antonio Meucci's "Memorandum Book." In this sort of agenda, produced by Rider & Clark, Antonio Meucci noted drawings and records since 1862 up to 1882. In the trial, Antonio Meucci was accused of having produced records after Alexander Graham Bell's invention and back-dated them. As a proof, the prosecutor produced the fact that Rider & Clark was founded only in 1863. In the trial, Antonio Meucci said that William E. Rider himself, one of the owners, had given him a copy of the memorandum book in 1862. But he was not believed. While the trial "The U.S. Government Versus Alexander Graham Bell" was going on, the Bell telephone company set up another trial "The U.S. Government Versus Antonio Meucci."

On January 13th 1887 the Government of the United States moves to Alexander Graham Bell on the grounds of fraud and misrepresentation.

Bell Telephone Company obtained reason in the trial "The U.S. Government Versus Antonio Meucci" by a sentence on July 19th 1887 by judge William J. Wallace, who ruled that Meucci

had a mechanical and not an electrical telephone. According to Wallace's ruling, "The experiments and invention of one Antonio Meucci, relating to the transmission of speech by an electrical apparatus, for which invention a caveat was filed in the United States patent-office, December 28, 1871, renewed in December, 1882, and again in December, 1883, do not contain any such elements of an electric speaking telephone as would give the same priority over or interfere with the said Bell patent.

The application does not describe any of the elements, of an electric speaking telephone. Its opening statement refutes the possibility that Meucci understood the principle of that invention. His speaking telegraph would never have been offered to the public as an invention if he had not been led by his necessities to trade on the credulity of his friends; that he intended to induce the three persons of small means and little business experience, who became his associates under the agreement of December 12th, 1871, to invest in an invention which he would not offer to men like Ryder and Craig; and that this was done in the hope of obtaining such loans and assistance from them as he would temporarily require." The judge was scathing in his criticism of Meucci's claims and his behavior, and concluded that Meucci was deliberately involved in attempts to defraud investors.

In fact, when the Bell Telephone Company sued Meucci's backers for patent infringement, their defense was that they could not have infringed on Bell's patent, since Meucci's "telephone" had never even worked.

Meucci died before the Court reached a verdict for his own case, which was closed at the death of the prosecutor.

### Historical debate

The question of whether Bell was the true inventor of the telephone is perhaps the single most litigated fact in U.S. history, and the Bell patents were defended in some 600 cases. Meucci was a defendant in American Bell Telephone Co. V. Globe Telephone Co. and others.

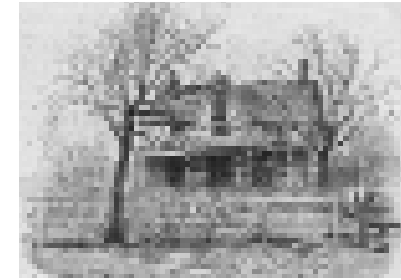
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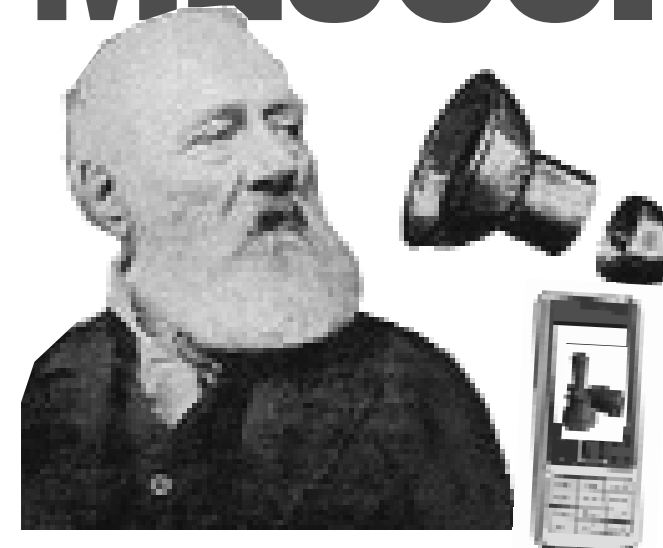
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## ITALIAN HERITAGE & CULTURE MONTH COMMITTEE OF NEW YORK, INC.



# ANTONIO MEUCCI



# 1808-2008

the **TRUE** inventor  
of the telephone

Staten Island, New York

# Antonio Meucci

(April 13, 1808 - October 18, 1889)



Antonio Meucci (April 13, 1808 - October 18, 1889) was an Italian inventor. He developed a form of voice communication apparatus in 1857 and has long had champions arguing that he should be credited with the invention of the telephone.

Meucci set up a voice communication link in his Staten Island home that connected the basement with the second floor. He was unable to

raise sufficient funds to pay his way through the patent application. He filed a patent caveat in 1871, which expired in 1874. In 1876, Alexander Graham Bell patented the electromagnetic transmission of vocal sound by ondulatory electric current.

There is also held a belief that the reason Bell got the idea was due to the fact that Meucci's wife sold Meucci's documents and projects for a mere \$6 while he was suffering a fever and unable to leave bed.

The United States House of Representatives recognized that legally, "If Meucci had been able to pay the \$10 fee to maintain the caveat after 1874, no patent could have been issued to Bell"; then Meucci would have been considered the inventor of the telephone.

On January 13th, 1887 the Government of the United States moved to annul the patent issued to Bell on the grounds of fraud and misrepresentation. The prosecuting attorney was the Hon. George M. Stearns under the direction of the Solicitor General George A. Jenks.

On July 19th 1887, the judge William J. Wallace (Circuit Court, S. D. New York.) concluded: "The experiments and invention of Antonio Meucci, relating to the transmission of speech by an electrical apparatus, for which invention a caveat was filed in the United States patent-office, December 28, 1871, renewed in December, 1882, and again in December, 1883, do not contain any such ele-

ments of an electric speaking telephone as would give the same priority over or interfere with the said Bell patent."

The United States House of Representatives in its resolutions HRES 269 IH dated October 17th 2001 and HRES 269 EH dated June 11th 2002 resolved that the life and achievements of Antonio Meucci should be recognized, and his work in the invention of the telephone should be acknowledged.

## Biography

### Florence, Italy

Meucci was born in Florence, Italy, in 1808. He studied chemical and mechanical engineering at the Florence Academy of Fine Arts and later worked at the Teatro della Pergola in Florence as a stage technician, assisting Artemio Canovettii. In 1834 Meucci constructed a kind of acoustic telephone as a way to communicate between the stage and control room at the Teatro della Pergola. This telephone was constructed on the model of pipe-telephones on ships.

He married costume designer Estere Mochi on August 7, 1834.

He was alleged to be part of a conspiracy involving the Italian unification movement in 1833-1834, and was imprisoned for three months in Italy.

### Havana, Cuba

In October 1835, Meucci and his wife left Florence, never to return. They had accepted the proposal of a Catalan theater manager, don Francisco Marti y Torrens, and emigrated to the Americas, stopping first in Cuba, where Meucci accepted a job at then called Great Tacón Theater in Havana (at the time, the greatest theater in America). In Havana he constructed a system for water purification and reconstructed the Gran Teatro, which had been almost entirely destroyed by a hurricane.

In 1848 his contract with the Governor expired. Meucci was asked by some doctors to work on Franz Anton Mesmer's therapy system on patients suffering from rheumatism. In 1849 Meucci developed a popular method of using electric shocks to treat illness and subsequently made an experiment developing a device through which one could hear inarticulated human voice. He called this device "telegrafo parlante" ("talking

telegraph.") In 1850, the third renewal of his contract with don Francisco Marti y Torrens expired. Meucci's friendship with the general Giuseppe Garibaldi made him a suspect citizen in Cuba. On the other hand, the fame reached by Samuel F. B. Morse in the United States encouraged Meucci to make his living through inventions.

### Staten Island (NYC), USA

April 13, 1850 Meucci and his wife left Havana to immigrate to the United States, settling in the Rosebank area of Staten Island, New York, where he would live for the remainder of his life. In Staten Island he helped several countrymen committed to the Italian unification movement ("Risorgimento") and escaped from political persecution. He invested the substantial capital he had earned in Cuba in a tallow candle factory (the first of this kind in America) employing several Italian exiles. For two years Meucci also hosted in his cottage his friends the General Giuseppe Garibaldi and Colonel Paolo Bovi.

Campeggi, who arrived in New York two months after Meucci. They worked in Meucci's factory. In 1854 Meucci's wife Estere became definitively invalid because of a serious form of rheumatoid arthritis, whereas Meucci continued his experiments.

### The first electromagnetic telephone

In 1856 Meucci reportedly constructed the first electromagnetic telephone. He constructed this as a way to connect his second-floor bedroom to his basement laboratory, and thus communicate with his wife. Between 1856 and 1870, Meucci developed more than 30 different kinds of telephones on the basis of this prototype. About 1858 the painter Nestore Corradi made a sketch of Meucci's invention.

In 1860 he began to look for funding and started in Italy looking for Italian capitalists willing to finance his project. However, military expeditions led by General Garibaldi in Italy had made the political situation in that country too unstable for anybody to invest. Then Meucci decided to publish his invention in the New York Italian-language newspaper "L'Eco d'Italia."

### Bankruptcy

At the same time, Meucci was led to poverty by some fraudulent debtors. On November 13, 1861

his cottage in Staten Island was auctioned. The purchaser allowed the Meuccis to live in the cottage without paying a rent, but Meucci's private finances dwindled so that he soon had to live on public funds and by depending on his friends.

During the years 1859, 1860, and 1861 Meucci was in close business and social relations with William E. Ryder, who was interested in his inventions, paid the expenses of his experiments, and invested money in Meucci's inventions. Their intimate relations continued until 1867.

In August 1870, Meucci reportedly obtained transmission of articulated human voice at the distance of a mile by using a copper plait as a conductor, insulated by cotton. He called this device "teletrofono."

While he was recovering from injuries that befell him in a boiler explosion aboard the Staten Island Ferry, Westfield, Antonio Meucci's financial and health state was so bad that his wife Estere sold his drawings and devices to a second-hand dealer to raise some money.

### The caveat

On December 12, 1871 Meucci set up an agreement with Angelo Zilio Grandi (Secretary of the Italian Consulate in New York), Angelo Antonio Tremeschin (entrepreneur), Sereno G. P. Breguglia Tremeschin (businessman), in order to constitute the Teletrofono Company. The constitution was notarized by Angelo Bertolino, a Notary Public of New York. Their society funded him \$20, whereas \$250 was needed in order to pay for that sort of patent. Meucci then only had the money to pay for a caveat on December 28, 1871 at the U.S. Patent Office. The caveat is numbered 3335 titled "Sound Telegraph" and gives a brief description of the invention.

In summer 1872 Meucci and his friend Angelo Bertolino went to Edward B. Grant, Vice President of American District Telegraph Co. of New York, to ask for help. Meucci asked him for permission to test his telephone apparatus on the company's telegraph lines. He gave Grant a description of his prototype and a copy of his caveat. Up to 1874 Meucci had only enough money to renew his caveat while looking for funding for a true patent. After waiting two years, Meucci went to Grant and asked him to be given back his documents, but Grant answered he had lost them.