

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Elisha Gray, March 2, 1877

COPY p. 150 – 5. "Boston University, March 2, 1877. Elisha Gray, Esq., Chicago:

My dear Sir, — I was somewhat hasty, I must confess, in sending my telegram, for of course you are not responsible for all the ill-natured remarks that may appear in the newspapers concerning me.

I am sorry that my telegram should have prevented you from making the experiments you desired, for it is my sincere desire to oblige you in any way I can. I am glad that you are willing to do me justice, and must thank you for saying a good word for me occasionally. I may say that it has uniformly been my custom to make honorable mention of your name in multiple telegraphy, and give you the credit of being an independent inventor.

I have not generally alluded to your name in connection with the invention of the Electric 'Telephone', for we seem to attach different significations to the word. I apply the term only to the apparatus for transmitting the voice (which meaning is strictly in accordance with the derivation of the word) whereas you seem to use the term as expressive of any apparatus for the transmission of musical tones by the electric current.

I have no knowledge of any apparatus constructed by you for the purpose of transmitting vocal sounds, and I trust that I have not been doing you an injustice. It is my sincere desire to give you all the credit that I feel justly belongs to you.

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I do not know the nature of the application for a caveat, to which you have referred as having been filed two hours after my application for a patent, excepting that it had something to do with the vibration of a wire in water, and therefore conflicted with my patent. My specification had been prepared months before it was filed, and a copy had been taken to England by a friend, I delayed the filing of the American patent until I could hear from him. At last the protests of all those interested in my invention, deprecating further dealy, had their effect, and I filed my application without waiting for a conclusion of negotiations in England. It was certainly a most striking coincidence that our applications should have been filed on the same day.

I have been kept so busy during the past few days correcting the examination papers of my normal school, that I have been unable to write.

In haste, Yours truly, Alexander Graham Bell."