

Sent:		
To Ofc	Rcv Ofc	By
At		M

Morse Telegraph Club

Vancouver "DI" Chapter

TELEGRAM

Msg No.
Filing Time:

Four words that changed the world – "What Hath God Wrought" – Samuel F.B. Morse, May 24, 1844

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Morse Code – Instant Messages 1844-Style

In 1844 Samuel F. B. Morse invented the telegraph and the Morse code widely used by American and Canadian railroads. Telegraphy provided the first nearly instantaneous communication over long distance:

Upon the advent of the transatlantic cable around 1897, it was learned that certain coded letters of Morse's alphabet (c, o, r, y, and z) were difficult to transmit by cable, so the code was modified and became known as International Morse code. That was adopted by the Armed Forces, the Scouts, and amateur radio fans, while railroads continued to use Morse's original code. In both codes, about a third of the letters are the same. About a third are completely different, and about a third are inverted, so a group of dots and dashes may mean one letter in railroad code but another letter in international code.

Railroad code (American Land Morse Code) is said to be about 20 percent faster. Railroad telegraphers transmitted about 20 to 45 words per minute. The receiving telegrapher pounded the message directly onto a special typewriter (called a mill).

These telegraph instruments are over 80 years old. The transmission key puts on and interrupts an electric current, causing dots and dashes. The much-used "bug" arrived in the 1890s: dots are made by pressing the left side of the bug key with the thumb, while dashes are made on the right side. The bug allows less tiresome transmission, clearer reception, and faster operation.

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