Telephony 101 – Handset Desk Stands January 13, 2013

Hello All,

As always, please send any questions about the reading assignment directly to me at oldtimetelephones@goeaston.net. I will bundle questions if necessary, repeat the questions, and give answers in an e-mail to the TCI List Server before moving on to the next reading assignment. This way everyone will benefit from these questions and answers. By sending questions directly to me, we will avoid unnecessary clutter on the List Server. Previous reading assignments, notes, questions, and answers are available in the TCI Library at http://www.telephonecollectors.info/telephony-101/.

Please read Chapter 11, Handset Desk Stands, on pages 63-68.

The concept of a handset with both a transmitter and a receiver was thought very soon after the basic telephone patent was issued, and fairly early handsets were manufactured. Although the Bell System actually made some early handsets, they stubbornly resisted widespread introduction of handsets with a solid-back transmitter because of their poor performance, in the Bell System's view. As you will read, the two performance issues were the position dependence of the solid-back transmitters and acoustic feedback

Regarding acoustic feedback, the Bell System was afflicted by its own success in circuit design. They had developed and patented a so-called booster circuit that put a whopping big signal on the line and significantly improved long-distance operation. But this circuit had a really annoying side effect called a sidetone. When you talked into a transmitter with the receiver to your ear, your own voice was much louder in your receiver than in the receiver of the party you were calling. This loud sidetone would be picked up by the transmitter through the hollow handle of a handset and set off a howling or squealing noise – uncontrolled feedback. So the Bell System held off its major introduction of a handset until they had developed a non-positional transmitter and an anti-sidetone circuit (well, almost developed this circuit). You will read about sidetone effects in Chapter 17.

In this chapter you will also read about some very interesting and attractive handset desk stands. But like the candlestick desk stands, these contain only the transmitter, receiver, hook switch, and sometimes a dial. The ringer, coil, magneto (for local battery), and condenser (for common battery) require a separate box to make a complete telephone.

I have included what I called "space savers" in the chapter on handset desk stands because they incorporate the same features of a handset desk stand (handset, hook switch, and sometimes a dial) and are of the same vintage as the handset desk stands. I believe that Bell System Practices (BSPs) refer to these as "hanging handsets," although collectors used to call them space savers. The term "space saver" seems to be out of favor at the present time.

If there are any questions about the current reading assignment, we will deal with the questions before moving on to the next reading assignment.

Ralph

Telephony 101 – Handset Desk Stands January 18, 2013

Hello Again,

A reader noted that, on page 65, I say a D1 handset mounting could be called either a 102 or a 202 depending on what subset type is connected. He said that it was his understanding that the B1 type was called 102 and the D1 oval shape was called the 202, and then asked which was correct.

The book (2nd Edition) is correct, although I had it wrong in the 1st Edition. In the early days of ATCA and TCI, it was common practice to call the A-type an AA1, the B-type a 102, and the D-type a 202. However, after lengthy discussion on the list server and elsewhere – and reference to Bell System Practice documents – it was realized that this nomenclature was wrong.

Some old collectors with long memories may even tease you by advertising an AA1, knowing that AA1 is a part number on the common plastic shell of a 300-type telephone rather than a rare A-type desk stand.

Ralph