

Process Paper

When my family was discussing topics for my National History Day project, my dad suggested undersea fiber optic cables. Although they have a large influence on communication, I found that these cables were a little too recent, so I decided to look at the history of its origins. I found that the transatlantic telegraph cable literally formed the backbone of our communication today, and I decided that it fit this year's theme perfectly, Communication in History: the Key to Understanding.

At first, I researched websites to get some basic key information. After I felt like I had researched enough, I went to a university library and got a big stack of books, which were a mix of primary and secondary sources. During this time, we also got a personal interview with a professor from a nearby university. With COVID-19 restrictions keeping us mostly at home, I began looking for primary sources online. Some really good books and the Library of Congress provided many primary sources and many different perspectives of how people viewed the laying of the transatlantic telegraph cable and its importance.

After I finished researching my primary and secondary sources and conducting the interview, I gathered my thoughts in a short paper that I could use as a template for completing my National History Day project. After getting the paper done, I shortened it and added it to the website. While I was completing the website, I thought that many images could make the user of the site more interested, so I began looking for images and even some quotes for my website, to help portray the views of the people at the time of the construction of the transatlantic telegraph cable. I added multimedia to enhance the understanding of my topic.

I saw that some people were arguing that the telegraph and the transatlantic telegraph cable did not have a large effect on the history of the world. I thought the exact opposite: that the transatlantic cable influenced our world greatly, and many people, like Samuel F. B. Morse and Cyrus West Field made the laying of the transatlantic telegraph cable possible. I believed it changed the world as we know it.

Before the transatlantic telegraph cable was laid, the main form of communication between North America and Europe was by sailing across on boats. Sailing across the Atlantic took many days, and the sea could be unpredictable, sometimes making it so that messages would not even make it to the other side of the Atlantic. The laying of the transatlantic telegraph cable solved this issue. Instead of taking days, messages took only hours to get sent from one end, and received from the other end of the Atlantic. Fiber optic cables are modeled on the original transatlantic cable, and messages can now travel at the speed of light. Over 99% of digital communication today passes through fiber optic cables. The transatlantic cable changed history greatly and influenced the world in a positive way.