

Cyrus West Field:

Breaking Barriers in Intercontinental Communication with the Transatlantic

Telegraph Cable

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When we started thinking about ideas for NHD, we were pretty sure we wanted a technology-focused topic. Our research led us to learn about the Transatlantic Telegraph Cable. We thought it was interesting that instead of being just a brand-new technology, it greatly enhanced an older one. It worked with the telegraph to send long-distance messages across the Atlantic Ocean. After we researched it more, we decided we wanted it to be our topic for NHD since it broke barriers in intercontinental communication.

When we first started researching the Transatlantic Telegraph Cable, we began with general but trustworthy sources to understand the topic as a whole. Overall, the the Library of Congress website helped the most, especially by providing most of our primary source images. Another useful website we used was called Atlantic-Cable, it gave a lot of primary sources, and first-hand accounts of the process and creation of the cable.

We decided to do a website as our category since two of us had already created a website for NHD last year. When we did it before, we really enjoyed researching and constructing a website, so we wanted to try again. However, when we tried out the new website platform, we found out that NHDWebCentral was more difficult to use than Weebly was last year. We just took things slowly

and spent a lot of time trying to master it. We eventually got the hang of it, and we even learned some HTML/CSS to make creating and editing our website easier.

Our topic fits this year's theme "Breaking Barriers" because the Transatlantic Telegraph Cable broke huge barriers in communication. Before the Transatlantic Cable, the only way to send messages or information intercontinentally was through letters. However, this method took many days, even weeks, because the letters had to be sent from one person, sorted, delivered to a ship, sent across with the ship, then sorted again, and finally delivered to the recipient. With the cable, one could send messages between continents in a matter of minutes. It was very expensive at first, so only the very wealthy could use it, but it eventually became more efficient, which made it cheaper for everyday people as well. It's almost impossible for Americans today to imagine waiting a month to hear important news. We get impatient when Wi-Fi is slow. That's why we think the Transatlantic Cable must have seemed almost magical in its day, breaking barriers of time and distance.

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