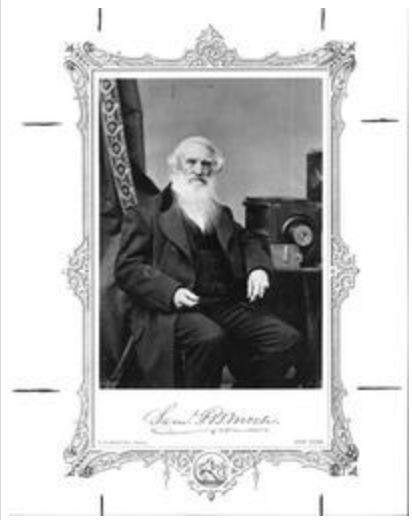
Samuel Morse.

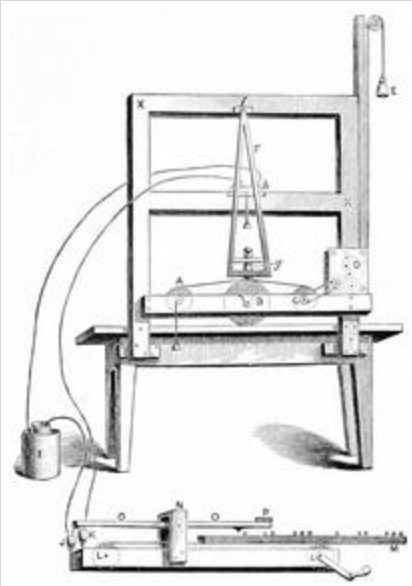
Published in: Salem Press Primary Encyclopedia, 2023, Topic Overviews K-5

- **Born:** April 7, 1791
- **Birthplace:** Charlestown, Massachusetts
- **Died:** April 2, 1872
- **Place of death:** New York, New York

Samuel Finley Breese Morse was born April 27, 1791. He was educated at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts and Yale College in New Haven, Connecticut.



Samuel F. B. Morse Library of Congress



Technical drawing of Samuel F. B. Morse telegraphy apparatus By unknown artist [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

His interest was electricity but his love was art. Morse's father, Jedidiah, opposed an art career for his son, however. When Samuel's art was praised by others his father sent his son to study in London in 1811.

This same year Morse wrote to his mother to tell her of his safe arrival in London, but because of the distance she would have to wait four weeks to receive the letter from her son. Morse wrote, "I wish that in one instant I could tell you of my safe arrival." This is believed to be the first sign of Morse's interest in speeding up the communication process.

Morse stayed in Europe for four years. When he returned to the United States in 1815, he found that Americans were not interested in buying art. He continued to work within the art community selling his work whenever he could. In 1835, he became a professor of art at the University of the City of New York.

Before gaining the professorship at the University, Morse had been inspired to invent the telegraph to write information that could be sent long distances. In 1832, while on the steamship *Sully* , Morse met a gentleman who told him of the Europeans' experiments with electromagnetism.

Morse felt if you could see electricity in any part of a circuit , you should also be able to transmit thoughts through a circuit.

Maryland state historical marker commemorating the transmission of the first telegraph message by Samuel F. B. Morse on 1844-05-24. By EikwaR (Own work) [CC0], via Wikimedia Commons

Through the rest of this voyage Morse made drawings of his plans.

It took years of hard work and learning to develop the telegraph because Morse had little knowledge of electricity. Morse spent most of his time working on the telegraph, so he had little time for his teaching. Even the possibility of poverty did not keep Morse from pursuing his goal.

Morse probably made a practical model of the telegraph by 1835. In 1837, Morse finally perfected his invention enough to apply for a patent on the American Electro-Magnetic Telegraph.

In 1843, the United States Congress contributed $30,000 to build a telegraph line from Washington, DC, to Baltimore, Maryland. In May 1844, this line sent its first practice message, "What hath God wrought."

With the success of this transmission more telegraph lines were built around the country. In 1856, with the opening of Western Union (a mail and message carrying company), more lines were placed to transmit messages from coast to coast. Western Union stopped its telegram service in 2006. A company named iTelegram has delivered telegrams since 2003.

The dots and dashes used to make up the telegraph messages are known as the Morse code. The dot is made by pressing and releasing the lever quickly, while the dash is made by holding the lever a little longer. Morse died in 1872.

Morse's Inventions Include:

- telegraph
- Morse code

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Morse, Samuel Finley Breese, and Edward Lind Morse. *Samuel F. B. Morse: His Letters and Journals* . 2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2014. Print.

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