

Letter from Gardiner Greene Hubbard to Alexander Graham Bell, September 24, 1878, with transcript

L. 1878 Bell Telephone G.G.H. to A.G.B. Sept.24 New York In u.A.G.B's dissatisfaction

I have a letter from Mrs. Hubbard in which she writes that you "feel you have not been justly dealt with by the Tel.Co., which means tho he does not say it you (me) and Mr. Sanders it seems that is a feeling which has grown and grows stronger and deeper and affects very seriously Mabel's peace of mind as well as Alec's and mine", that you sacrificed your time and thought for two years "with the distinct understanding that as soon as the Co. was formed he should receive a compensation for time and services as well as the payment of actual expenses", further that you do not express your feelings to me because I am Mabel's father. This it seems to me is the very reason why, if you have such feelings, you should write fully to me on the subject, otherwise you are doing both yourself and myself great injustice.

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In u agreement a. G. Bele

If there was any understanding of the kind you state, it has not been fulfilled, you have been unfairly and unhandsomely treated, and if you had expressed your views and made a claim upon the Company, or on me would be justified in feeling wounded and aggrieved.

I never knew of such an understanding, if there was one I am ready as far as is in my power to carry it out. I cannot afford to have any misunderstanding with you, and rather than lose the love, trust and confidence of you and Mabel I would surrender every share I have in the stock of both the Bell and New England Telephone Company. If you will state what sum you think you should have, though I cannot pay you the amount in cash I can and will transfer to you stock in either of these companies, or in any other property I have,

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sufficient to pay the the amount, or, 3 third, you may chose any one, and we will state our views in writing to him, and let such referee decide what sum is due from Mr. Sanders and myself to you, and I will pay such amount as he finds due in the stock of either of these Cos. at its selling price. If that is not enough then state what you want, and if in my power I will do it, only pray do not suspect me of intentionally wronging you.

By our original agreement I understood you were to give your time and services to develope your invention, we to pay the expenses of taking out the patent. In 1876 the invention seemed of greater value than we had supposed, and we then associated with us Mr. Watson, and we agreed to pay him for his services and besides to give him an interest in the patents. Then I believe you for the first time (though I may be mistaken) gave up your time to the work, and we, I supposed, as an offset paid Mr. Watson the same 4 wages he had been receiving from Mr. Williams, and also Mr Williams bills, neither of these things were we required to do under our agreement with you. I supposed as an offset to this you were to give your time. If there was a further agreement , or if, as Mrs. Hubbard writes there was a further “understanding” I have forgotten it. Because I do not remember it it is no proof that there was not such an understanding. It was your duty when the Bell Telephone was organized in July 1877, to have made out your claim and presented it, when it would have been allowed and settled.

I believe in the success of the Bell Telephone Company, that it will make as large returns to us as we have ever expected. I look forward with pleasure to my connection with the company, but rather than have you feel I have acted unhandsomely towards you I would willingly sacrifice my whole interest in the invention.

I have intended to write you fully and frankly and have only to ask that you will answer my letter freely and fully.