

# The company's founding and initial expansion

1847–1865

**Werner von Siemens laid the foundation for today's Siemens AG in 1847 with his design for the pointer telegraph.**

Werner von Siemens recognized the potential of electric telegraphy early on. In 1846, the young inventor made a major improvement in the electric telegraph that had been developed by Charles Wheatstone and William Fothergill. His invention was the start of a success story that has now continued for 170 years. Siemens entrusted the construction of his telegraph to precision mechanic Johann Georg Halske after convincing him of the merits of this simple, but reliable system.

## **Beginnings in a back courtyard – Telegraphen-Bauanstalt von Siemens & Halske**

The telegraph construction company *Telegraphen-Bauanstalt von Siemens & Halske* was established in Berlin in October 1847. In a building in a back courtyard at Schöneberger Strasse 19, Werner von Siemens and Johann Georg Halske set up a ten-man operation. One week after the company's founding, the pointer telegraph's design was patented in Prussia.

In 1848, the Prussian government commissioned Siemens & Halske to build an electric telegraph line from Berlin to Frankfurt. This project was the company's first great success story, attracting widespread attention because of its link to a major political



Werner von Siemens' electric pointer telegraph laid the foundation for a successful company's history.



event: Siemens had completed the line in time for the announcement that the King of Prussia had been elected German Emperor.

**Internationalization begins – Siemens & Halske overcomes its first sales crisis**

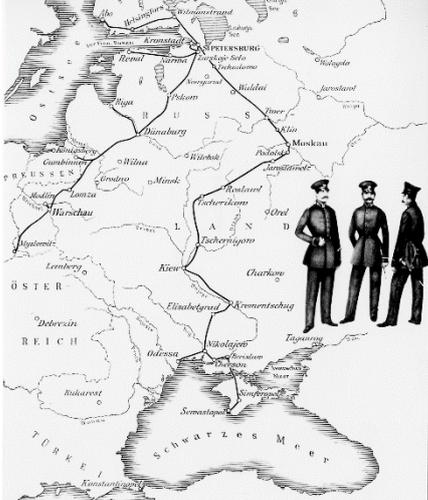
Yet, like many entrepreneurs before and after him, Werner von Siemens had to learn how difficult a beginning can be. In the early 1850s, the refusal of the Prussian government to award follow-up contracts plunged the young company into an existential crisis. In response, it turned its attention to foreign markets, where business opportunities with Russia and England provided fresh momentum. In 1853, Siemens & Halske began building the Russian state telegraph network.

Stretching from Finland to Crimea, the network was some 9,000 kilometers long. For its maintenance, the company signed service contracts with the Russian government. In 1855, Werner von Siemens converted the company’s Russian office in St. Petersburg into an independent operation headed by his younger brother Carl.

The company’s activities in England were also making good progress. Responsibility for the English business was assigned to Werner’s brother Wilhelm, who later moved permanently to England and changed his name to William Siemens. The English subsidiary Siemens, Halske & Co. was founded in 1858. Renamed Siemens Brothers in 1865, the company focused primarily on the production and laying of submarine cables, which, starting in 1863, were manufactured at Siemens’ first cable factory at Woolwich on the Thames.

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The Russian telegraph network was the first step toward a global presence.



From Woolwich to the world: On the banks of the Thames, Siemens produced the submarine cable that would provide fast communication across the Atlantic.