



Lewis Howard Latimer (1848 – 1928)

Lewis Howard Latimer was an American inventor and patent draftsman. His work included making the lightbulb more practical and the invention of the telephone.

Latimer was born in Chelsea, Mass. His parents were slaves who had escaped from Virginia. His father, George Latimer, was tried for being a runaway, but was ultimately allowed to remain in Massachusetts as a free man.

Lewis Latimer enlisted in the Navy at age 15. Returning to Boston after an honorable discharge, he accepted a position as an office boy with a patent law firm, Crosby Halstead and Gould. He taught himself mechanical drawing and drafting by observing the work of draftsmen at the firm. Recognizing

Latimer's talent and potential, the firm partners promoted him from office boy to draftsman. In addition to assisting others, Latimer designed a number of his own inventions, including an improved railroad car bathroom and an early air conditioning unit.

Latimer worked with the famous inventor Hiram Maxim at the U.S. Electric Lighting Company. While working there in 1881, Latimer patented a carbon filament for the incandescent lightbulb. The invention helped make electric lighting practical and affordable for the average household.