

# Time Out

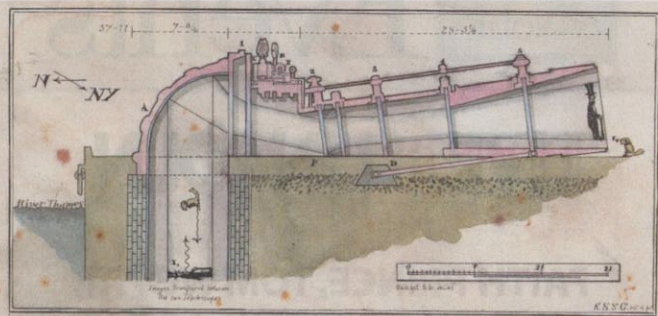
## New York

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# Around Town

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## Scoping mechanism



An eccentric Englishman revives a forgotten Victorian invention. Maybe.  
By **Erin Clements**

More than a century ago, British inventor Alexander Stanhope St George supposedly devised plans for an apparatus that would allow visual communication across the Atlantic via a series of subterranean tunnels. Sadly, St George's device, the Telectroscope, never moved beyond the planning stages and his maps and drawings languished in the family archives for generations—or so the tale goes. Five years ago, St George's great-grandson Paul discovered the blueprints and decided to bring the

Telectroscope to life. On Thursday 22 at 10am, the younger St George will unveil his steampunk contraption at both Fulton Ferry Landing in Brooklyn and London's South Bank. (Residents from the two cities will be able to mug at each other at all hours through giant monitors.) Though we doubt St George's far-fetched explanation of the Telectroscope's mechanics (satellite technology is a likelier method), the charming 53-year-old deserves credit for maintaining the charade so thoroughly.

**So, you actually dug a tunnel from London to New York?**

I didn't build it—I connected existing tunnels. I was able to access lines in the middle of the Atlantic with

over from when people laid the first telegraph cables—the “Victorian Internet.” I used mirrors to enlarge the images and bring them up from underground, like a periscope.

**What's the typical reaction when people hear about the project?**

It's usually, “Is he mad?” I've learned to downplay it a bit.

**We already have television and webcams. Why bother with a Telectroscope?**

I want art to be out in the real world, so that everyday people can participate. There's a real theatrical aspect: People in Brooklyn will look through the lens and perform for people in London, and vice versa. The Telectroscope will be a beautiful object, but it will also engage people's imaginations.

**How has the idea been received here so far?**

When I landed at JFK, this huge security guard said to me, “Why have you come here?” I said, “I'm here for a site visit—I'm thinking of building a tunnel through the earth.” Instead of locking me up, she got really excited. There was a long queue behind me, and she ignored them. We talked for about 20 minutes, and she just really liked the

idea. I thought, With enthusiasm like that, it's got to work here.

**What do you hope people will use the Telectroscope for?**

Proposing to their fiancés, or seeing family members. But I'm not trying to write a script—I want to be shocked and surprised.

**Which side of the Atlantic do you think will be more creative?**

I imagine New Yorkers will be better in front of it. We Brits tend not to show our emotions.

*The Telectroscope is on view at Fulton Ferry Landing Thu 22-Jun 15. See Ongoing.*

St George, and his ancestor's diagram (above).

