

## **Granville T Woods: One of Americas Greatest Inventors**



### **Granville T. Woods**

On April 23, 1856 Granville Woods was born in Columbus, Ohio to parents Cyrus Woods and Martha Brown. His family experienced poverty so Woods only attended school until the age of ten, he then began working to help his family survive. He worked in a machine shop where he would learn mechanics; information also suggests that he worked as a railroad engineer, engineer on a British ship, railroad worker and blacksmith. Woods became interested in electrical engineering and began learning as much as he could about electricity and its concepts. From 1876 to 1878 he was enrolled into a technical college where he studied electrical and mechanical engineering, upon graduation he began working on a steamship called the "Ironsides". After working on the "Ironsides" for two years Woods was promoted to the Chief Engineer of the "Ironsides". Upon returning to his home state of Ohio he began working at the pumping stations for the Springfield, Jackson and Pomeroy Railroad Company. His next step was becoming an engineer with the Dayton and Southwestern Railroad Company.

Woods was a very brilliant and capable engineer, but he was still a black man working in a white mans world. He was continuously being denied opportunities and losing out on promotions because of his race. Channeling his frustrations, Woods and his brother Lyates created the Woods Electric Company. During the time Woods was traveling as an engineer he developed the ideas for one of his most popular inventions, the multiplex telegraph. He gained his first patents in 1884 for the steam boiler furnace and the telephone transmitter. His next patent was for an apparatus that combined a telephone and a telegraph called the "telephony", the invention allowed someone

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from a telegraph station to send messages through a single wire. The invention became very popular and Woods would sell the rights of the device to the American Bell Telephone Company. In 1887, he gained another patent for a device that allowed the train stations and the engineers on the trains to communicate while the trains were moving; the device is called a synchronous multiplex railway telegraph.

White supremacy began to rear its ugly head again, Thomas Edison attempted to steal Woods' patent for the synchronous multiplex railway telegraph. Edison filed a lawsuit but was not successful, after the legal matters were settled Edison offered Woods a position in the Edison Electric Light Company, Woods declined the offer and remained the owner of his own company and inventions. In 1892, he created an electrical system that supplied electricity to trains every twelve feet without having wires or batteries exposed; it allowed the trains to travel without the fear of electrical malfunctions. Woods was responsible for inventing the power pickup device in 1901, and he gained patents for the improved air brake systems from 1902 through 1905. He was responsible for creating over fifteen appliances for railways and held close to sixty patents for his inventions. On January 30, 1910 Woods died in New York City as one of, if not, the greatest inventor in American history. Granville T. Woods, we proudly stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rSBzE2tlglw>

References:

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