

## Is He the Father of the Wireless Telephone or Radio?

**June 12, 1892**

- 1 I visited Nathan Stubblefield this morning. Although he's thirty years old, he is like a large child, always playing around with his inventions.
- 2 I wasn't surprised when Nathan came out, holding a black wooden box about the size of an egg crate. "Take this," Nate said. I took it. The box was heavy, though not hard to carry. Cloth was stretched over the round holes cut in front, and some wires and knobs stuck out here and there. Nathan twisted the knobs for a few moments before going back inside to retrieve another box similar to the one I was holding. He sat on the edge of the porch and started fiddling with that box.
- 3 "Walk up that hill to that fence post." He pointed to a hilltop, about two or three hundred yards away.
- 4 At the top of the hill, I rested the box on the fence post. Just as I did, the box hummed and crackled. "Hello, Rainey!" Nate's voice said behind me. I jumped a foot off the ground. Below, Nate sat on the porch leaning over his box.
- 5 I started laughing. "That's a good trick, Nathan! How'd you do it, stretch wires under ground? You sure did a good job of hiding them."
- 6 "There are no wires," Nate's voice crackled from one of the cloth-covered holes in the box. I searched; there *had* to be wires.
- 7 "There's no such thing as a wireless telephone," I mumbled.
- 8 "There is now!" Nate's voice responded, loud and clear.
- 9 Back at his front porch, I handed Nathan his fantastic box. "When are you going to start selling these things? Because I sure want one! Everybody in town's going to want one."
- 10 Nathan shrugged and shook his head. "In a year or two, maybe, when I get all the problems worked out. Don't tell anybody until I get a chance to perfect it."
- 11 Most people in town thought Nathan Stubblefield was a strange man, and a dreamer. Now, when people know what I

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know, they will change their minds pretty quickly!

### January 1, 1902

12 Nathan Stubblefield started the year out by demonstrating his wireless telephone to the town. He had half a dozen listening stations set up all over Murray City. They were boxes very much like the ones he showed me years ago. From a transmitter in his house, Nathan could send his voice all over town.

13 I was in the back room of Hanson's General Store, crowded with folks, all laughing and cutting up. "What's ol' Stubbie going to do this time, make it snow gumdrops?" asked Burt Hanson, chuckling. He bent over the box, examining it, tapping it with his fist.

14 Just then, the box crackled and hummed. "Happy New Year!" Nathan's deep voice filled the room and Burt nearly tumbled over backwards. The crowd fell silent and wide-eyed with

disbelief as they listened.

15 After a short speech, Nathan's son played his harmonica and whistled a few tunes. When the show ended twenty minutes later, everybody in town rushed outside into the cold and cheered.

### August 23, 1902

16 Nathan demonstrated his wireless creation from the deck of a steamboat on the Potomac River in Washington, D.C. People a mile away heard his voice as clearly as if he had been standing beside them. Surely, it's only a matter of time now before everybody knows about Nathan Stubblefield.

17 *Nathan Stubblefield failed to file the proper paperwork to prove his inventions were really his own. He died penniless and unknown in 1928. In 1930, the people of Murray, Kentucky, erected a monument to Nathan Stubblefield, with an inscription calling him "the inventor of radio."*