

African American Inventors: Granville T. Woods

by RV Staff Writer A.A.

Granville Tiler Woods was born in 1856. It is thought that his mother may have been Native American and his father was black. He grew up in Columbus, Ohio, where he went to school until he was ten years old. At that time he went to work to learn how to be a mechanic and a blacksmith. He later went to work on railroads, where he became an engineer.

In 1876 Granville went to college for two years to study engineering. He left college to go to sea on a British steamship. He became the chief engineer on the steamship.

He came back to the U.S., and in 1880 he moved to Cincinnati, Ohio. There he became an electrical engineer and inventor. After some success with his inventions, such as the multiplex telegraph, he started his own company called Woods Electric Co.

For the next twenty years, Granville Woods would develop and design many new electrical devices. He would register over fifty different patents on his inventions. Sometimes he had problems with his patents. Other people, such as Thomas Edison, would claim they had invented something before Granville. Granville would have to prove he invented it, and he did so many times.

During his career, he designed or improved such things as the way trains can send messages to each other when they are moving and brakes on trains. He worked on many different ideas, including egg incubators, telegraphs, and phonographs. He sold many of his patents and devices to General Electric (GE) and Westinghouse, which were large companies that developed electrical products.

Granville Woods died in 1910. He contributed much to the electrical world with his inventions, ideas, and devices.

Questions

1. What did Granville Woods do when he left school at 10?
2. What was one thing that Granville Woods discovered or designed?
3. What problem did Granville Woods have with patents?
4. What was a company that Granville Woods sold his patents and devices to?