



Making the Hillsides Blossom With Light

Somewhere in the shadows of the early history of radio looms the mysterious figure of Nathan B. Stubblefield. Nathan B. Stubblefield? Nora Blatch? Reginald A. Fessenden? Professor Amos Dolbear? Where do they get those names?

Nathan B. Stubblefield was born in, grew up in, lived in, and died in Murray, Kentucky. The citizens of that miniscule town were affectionate towards their mad radio genius, and erected a monument to Stubblefield in 1930. They called him *The Father of Radio*.

Stubblefield was poor, and a mystic. He was a mendicant and a martyr to his invention. Everyone wanted to steal his invention from him. Jim Lucas said that his home was so wired, "that if a stranger approached within a half-mile, it set off a battery of bells." And Stubblefield, stubby mystic that he was, said "*I have solved the problem of telephoning without wires through the earth as Signor Marconi has of sending signals through space. But, I can also telephone without wires through space as well as through the earth, because my medium is everywhere.*"

My medium is everywhere. Nathan B. Stubblefield, the **self-taught inventor** of Murray Kentucky, who would later tell people that he would turn whole hillsides light with *mysterious beams*. Stubblefield, the mystic of the mystic transmission of waves everywhere, through air and land and water, to the nether reaches of the stars.

Everybody knew about Stubblefield's Black Box. The Black Box made the light, and the voice, out of the air. In 1892 (14 years before Fessenden's experiment from Brant Rock) he handed his friend Rainey T. Wells a box, and told him to walk away from the shack. Stubblefield always lived in a shack. Wells said later, "*I had hardly reached my post when I heard Hello Rainey come booming out of the receiver. I jumped a foot and said to myself 'This fellow is fooling me. He has wires someplace.'* [Wells moved a few feet further on]. *All the while he kept talking to me but there were no wires I tell you.*"

This fellow is fooling me...there were no wires, I tell you. Early radio, radio magic, the magic of sending the voice through nothing. Nathan B. Stubblefield, the magician with the black box and all the lights, the man who could make the voice travel through thin air.

They stole his invention. Of course: they always do. **The Wireless Telephone Company of America** set up by "promoters" and "speculators." Smooth talkers (unlike unverbally mystic

Stubblefield) who jacked up the price of the stock and disappeared. Stubblefield wrote for the prospectus:

I can telephone without wires a mile or more now, and when the more powerful apparatus on which I am working is finished, combined with further development, the distance will be unlimited...

The apparatus on which I am working...distance...unlimited. Nathan B Stubblefield died in 1928 in a shack in Murray, Kentucky. He died of starvation.

Stubblefield called the New York promoters a bunch of "damned rascals." He said they were "defrauding the public." What he meant was that they were defrauding his dream of unlimited voices, for unlimited distances, and unlimited lights. The mystic of radio with his loops and coils and magic was being defrauded; and all he wanted was to make the ether speak.

Nathan B. Stubblefield. Defrauded by the promoters who wanted to take his loops and coils and Make Money. And Stubblefield was hurt wrenched torn by these animals from the city, these damned rascals. He went back home to his shack in 1913. And for fifteen years was barely seen. Sometimes the neighbors saw him "from a distance." For fifteen years, nothing, except:

Some observers reported seeing mysterious lights MYSTERIOUS LIGHTS and hearing weird sounds WEIRD SOUNDS in the vicinity of Stubblefield's home.

Two weeks before his death, Stubblefield visited with a neighbor, Mrs. L. E. Owen. He asked her to write his story. He said,

"I've lived fifty years before my time. The past is nothing.

"I have perfected now the greatest invention the world has ever known. I've taken light from the air and the earth as I did with sound ... I want you to know about making a whole hillside blossom with light..."

Nathan B. Stubblefield. Locked in his shack. Starved to death. The man who took the Black Box and made words travel through the space around us. The man who created *strange noises and weird lights*. The man who would *make a whole hillside blossom with light*.

Nathan B. Stubblefield. Of Murray Kentucky. Dead at seventy. Of starvation, and too many visions.