


**DO YOU HEAR ME? DO YOU HEAR ME?**  
**INVENTION OF THE RADIO**


**WHEN?** 1905

**WHERE?** Wilkes-Barré, PA

**EVENT** Many credit Father Josef Murgas of Wilkes-Barré as the true inventor of wireless communication over land.



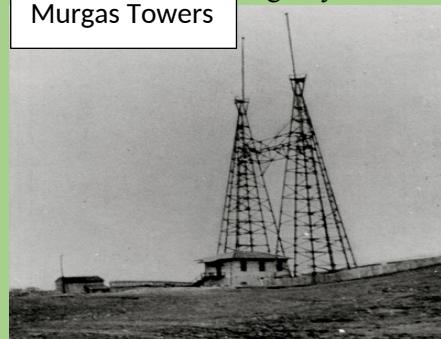
**Father Josef Murgas**



\*priest, artist, inventor, patriot  
 \*patents for spinning fishing reel, wireless telegraphy (15)  
 \*artist has works in U.S., Slovakia \*largest butterfly and moth collection in North America

**Who** invented the radio? Many people would be quick to credit the Italian inventor, Marconi. However, others support a local Wilkes-Barré priest as the real designer. In fact, when Marconi's own assistant sued him for patent infringement, a judge dismissed the case saying that the first patent belonged to Wilkes-Barre resident Father Josef Murgas.

Born in 1864, Murgas was an avid student interested in religion, art, and science. Father Murgas came to this country in 1896 from Tajov, Slovakia. He eventually became the pastor of the Roman Catholic Slovak Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus on North Main Street in Wilkes-Barre. By 1905, he was able to send messages using a system of musical tones that moved faster than the dots and dashes of Morse



Murgas Towers

code. Then he successfully sent a telegraph signal over land-- something that Marconi had failed at. The mayor of Wilkes-Barre, Fred Kirkendall, used the device to transmit a message to Mayor Alexander O'Connell of Scranton on November 23, 1905. The Times Leader writes in *A Proud Legacy*, "A month later he rewired his transmitter, attached a microphone, and sent his voice over the airwaves. 'Do you hear me? Do you hear me?' Murgas asked. One of his assistants did hear him on a homemade receiver." Unfortunately, Murgas faced major challenges in the next few years. Three of his most important employees died in the

same year. Wind destroyed the tower he had built in Scranton and he was in need of funds to carry on his work. Therefore, in 1912, Murgas met with Marconi and his assistant.

"I have just handed over to Marconi my work of many years. . .I did what I thought was the best to do. I am already up in age and not very well. My strength is failing rapidly; I don't believe that I have very long to live. I do NOT want this Patent to be lost to the human race. . .Mr. G. Marconi is a younger man; he has a better chance to live longer. He also is a scientist, and so I

gave him the Patent with all the pertinent information. He will work hard to get the station built for the transmission. God help him."

Although wireless transmission was one of the accomplishments that drew attention to this man, it was not his sole life's work. In his younger years he was also a painter who studied under some of the most famous artists in Europe. Two of his paintings are the Sacred Heart of Jesus and another entitled The Assumption.

In 1905, after a visit by fellow clergymen and several laity, Father Murgas founded the Slovak Catholic Federation. It became the largest Catholic Slovak organization in America and served the material and spiritual needs of Catholic Slovaks in the United States and in Europe.

Father Murgas was an artist, inventor (holds seventeen patents), scientist, and priest. He worked tirelessly for his parishioners and tried to improve their lives, the lives of those who lived in the community, his adopted country and his beloved Slovakia. He passed away on May 11, 1929 after delivering an early morning Mass. He is buried in Dallas, Pennsylvania.

#### CHECK IT OUT ONLINE:

1. [Murgas Radio Club](#)
2. [Father Murgas](#)
3. [PA Historical Marker](#)

#### PRINT SOURCES

Kashatus, William. *Valley With A Heart*. Luzerne County Historical Society and Luzerne Community College. 2012.

#### SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Research the patents filed by Murgas. How have they benefitted our society?
2. Find out why Murgas felt he had to leave his beloved Slovakia.
3. Where was Father Murgas's church located in Wilkes-Barré? What happened to the building?
4. Why is historic preservation important to a community?