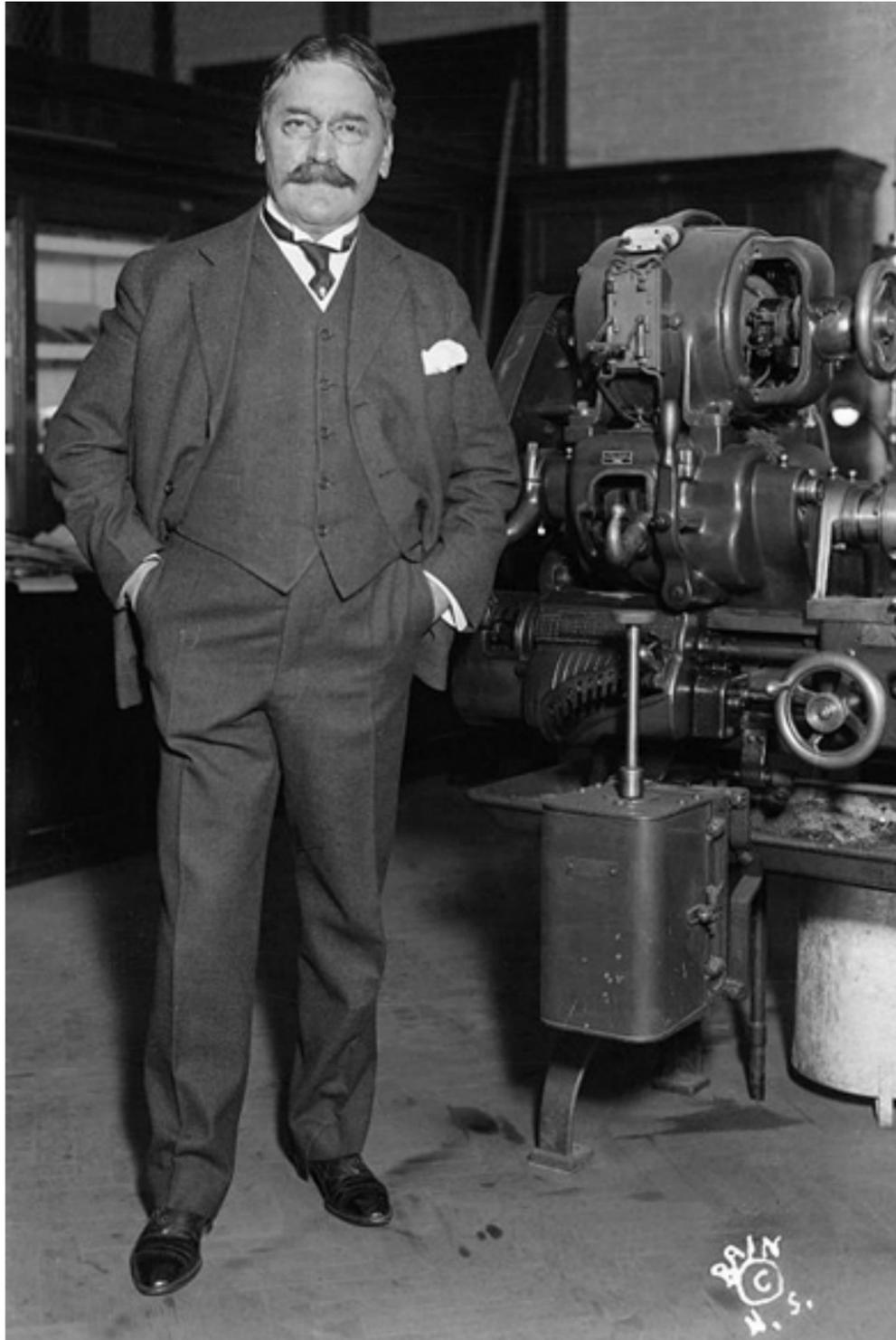


# Michael Pupin

Physicist, chemist (1858 – 1935)



Courtesy of Konstantin Nusic,  
Serbian Stamps Shop, Belgrade.

Michael Pupin, a Serbian immigrant who had worked his way to the highest plane in applied science, had given us the long-distance telephone. Readers of Pupin's *From Immigrant to Inventor* understand why its author was a Centurion, an honor his coils, great as they were, could never by themselves have won him.

ROGER BURLINGAME

Pupin (AKA Mihajlo Idvorski Pupin) was a Serbian-born physicist and physical chemist, best known for his numerous patents. He emigrated to the U.S. as a teenager and worked a series of menial jobs before entering Columbia in 1879. In college he was known as an exceptional athlete and scholar and was elected president of his class in his junior year. He graduated with honors in 1883, and obtained his Ph.D at the University of Berlin in 1889. He returned to Columbia University to become a professor in the newly formed department of electrical engineering.

In 1899, Pupin obtained a patent for loading coils at various intervals (called "pupinization") along a transmission line that greatly extended the range of long-distance telephone communication. He became wealthy when he sold the rights to AT&T.

In 1911, Pupin became a consul of the Kingdom of Serbia in New York. In his famous Fourteen Points speech to Congress in January 1918, WOODROW WILSON, inspired by his conversations with Pupin, insisted on the restoration of Serbia and Montenegro, as well as autonomy for the peoples of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy.

Pupin received the Edison Medal in 1920 for his work in mathematical physics and its application to the electric transmission of intelligence. Columbia's Pupin Hall, the site of Pupin Physics Laboratories, was named for him after his death in 1935. Pupin's autobiography, *From Immigrant to Inventor*, won the Pulitzer Prize in 1924.

Professor Pupin was a resident of New York and Norfolk, Connecticut. He was a Century member for 25 years.