

# Abstracts

## Heinrich Hertz: A Short Life (May 1988 [T-MTT])

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C. Susskind. "Heinrich Hertz: A Short Life (May 1988 [T-MTT])." 1988 *Transactions on Microwave Theory and Techniques* 36.5 (May 1988 [T-MTT] (Special Issue Commemorating the Centennial of Heinrich Hertz)): 802-805.

Heinrich Rudolf Hertz was born in Hamburg on 22 February 1857, the 125th anniversary of the birth of George Washington. His grandfather, Heinrich David Hertz (1797-1863), was a scion of a wealthy Jewish family that had been resident in Hamburg since the 1780's; his grandmother, Betty Auguste Oppenheim (1802-1872), was a daughter of the estimable Cologne banking family. In 1834, when their oldest child, Gustav Ferdinand Hertz (1827-1914), was not quite seven, they were all converted to the Lutheran faith. Heinrich David Hertz was there-upon admitted to the full rights of a Hamburg citizen and presently became one of the city-state's 192 burgesses. His son Gustav (the physicist's father) later received the same honor, was elected to Hamburg's senate, and ultimately became head of its judicature (in effect, minister of justice). He was the first of his clan to attend a university, at Gottingen; in 1856 he married a classmate's sister, Anna Elisabeth Pfefferkorn (1835-1910), the daughter of a Prussian army surgeon and descendant of a long line of Frankfurt burghers. They had five children, of whom Heinrich Hertz was the oldest.

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